



# Debates

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## **Wednesday, 14 August 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.

### **End-of-life issues**

**MS PORTER** (Ginninderra) (10.00): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that, with an ageing population in the ACT, there is a pressing need to start and sustain a conversation, both in the general community and amongst health professionals, regarding end of life issues;
- (b) that as part of the 2013 Budget, the Government included \$1.2 million in funding to increase community awareness and uptake of advanced care plans;
- (c) that on 4 May 2013 the ACT Local Hospital Network Council held an End of Life Issues and Decision-Making Forum, as part of its community engagement strategy, that produced a report with six recommendations;
- (d) that the Government will soon release its Palliative Care Services Plan 2013-2017, which will provide strategic direction for the continued development of palliative care services in the ACT, now and into the future; and
- (e) the need to ensure that there is an informed and open debate in the community on the need to provide all citizens with the right to die with dignity; and

(2) calls on the Government to continue raising end of life, palliative care and advanced care planning as issues for community discussion and action.

In recent weeks and days, the ACT community has begun to speak with greater openness and maturity about death and the process of dying. It is a sad part of life but it is inevitable. It happens to everyone. And it is in the interests of the entire community—those of us who are older, those with chronic or life threatening illness, carers, families—and the health system itself that we create a more open culture of talking about the end of life.

My own experiences of some years ago, watching my mother die in a four-bed ward in an aged care facility, with no palliative care available, and no choice, and more recently being with my husband and his family while we sat with his father, thankfully afforded palliative care, have influenced my thinking. This has certainly motivated me to ensure that a positive conversation about end of life is initiated in the ACT.

The ACT government is working with our health service to lead this discussion in our community. The first step is to start the conversation, with our communities and with our families, to talk about what we want and what we do not want, what we value and what questions we ask when our loved ones are facing the end of life.

The ACT Local Hospital Network Council helped to start this conversation by hosting the end-of-life issues and decision-making forum on Saturday, 4 May this year. This was the first time that the community, medical professionals and health services had come together to discuss issues around end-of-life care. The Chief Minister and I were both pleased to be able to attend.

The aim of the forum was to engage in a meaningful dialogue with the community and health clinicians to identify ways to improve the system of the end-of-life care and decision making. The forum was an extremely constructive event and although many different opinions were shared, there was a strong consensus that everyone should be able to make decisions about their end-of-life care and should be supported by a system that respects their wishes.

At the completion of the forum, the Local Hospital Network Council made a number of recommendations: to increase community engagement and awareness about end-of-life care, to increase community awareness of advanced care planning, to increase resources for advanced care planning, including training of more staff, to clarify the legal framework around advanced care plans and create simpler, legally binding tools to enable advanced care planning, to ensure advanced care plans are easily available and systems act upon them and to recognise the issue of futile care. Work has already progressed on a number of these proposals, and the report released yesterday sets the right direction for us to carry on this discussion.

Importantly, the ACT government has backed up our advocacy with action. As part of the 2013-14 budget, the government has increased funding for the respecting patient choices program by \$1.2 million over four years. Respecting patient choices is an advanced care planning program in the ACT. The program is funded by ACT Health and is available to all members of the community. Advanced care planning provides a quality assurance process for an individual to appoint an attorney for health and personal and/or financial matters. The individual can then discuss and document their wishes and choices about future healthcare for a time when they may be unable to make these decisions, particularly towards the end of their life.

The increased funding will provide an additional 1.4 full-time equivalent staff members, in addition to the one full-time employee currently working on the program. The additional staff will be dedicated to improving the level of community education and awareness across the ACT and increase the uptake of advanced care planning across the community and within particular groups.

Those who suffer from chronic disease, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and financially and socially disadvantaged groups often suffer most when they face the end of their life and have not had the support to plan for this time before it was too late. This new

initiative will help to address the inequities in our community. In collaboration with the community, the advanced care planning program will develop education and awareness materials, and a mobile clinic will be trialled.

Palliative care is another area that will experience a growth in demand as our population ages, and we need to respond to this challenge now so that people can receive the care and dignity they deserve at the end of their life. As I said, my previous experience with my mother was that palliative care was not there when she needed it. Once again, I believe, and the ACT government believes, that the right thing to do by our community is to talk about this issue and to create the system to handle palliative care in the most compassionate and dignified way possible.

That is why the government will shortly be releasing the ACT palliative care services plan 2013-2017. This plan incorporates strategies for new and emerging models of care in the provision of palliative services and will aim to create a more integrated, cohesive network of services across acute, community and primary healthcare settings. The plan identifies six goals and associated strategies for ongoing development of palliative care services in the ACT. In particular, these goals relate to issues around education and awareness of palliative care, access to services and continuity of care.

The development of the plan included demand projections, workforce needs now and in the future, community education, support for non-government organisations and the identification of possible future models of care. It called on the experience of consumers, carers, clinicians, non-government organisations, advocacy groups, Calvary Health Care and Southern New South Wales Local Health District.

Most importantly, it put the needs of the individual, their family, their carers and their friends at the centre of the discussion and will continue its work with this focus. The ACT Palliative Care Services Plan Steering Committee will be overseeing the implementation of this plan and will monitor progress against each of the six goals.

I hope this important conversation maintains the momentum it has been given by receiving more media and community attention, as it has in recent days. It will never be easy but we must change our culture to make it normal and to support those people who are making these vital decisions.

The government's action in this area is helping to raise awareness of the issues surrounding end-of-life decisions. The practical initiatives we are delivering will increase the resources and the range of advanced care planning opportunities and will improve palliative care planning and delivery in the ACT.

Together with healthcare professionals and members of the community, we are moving the ACT towards being a jurisdiction which talks about the issues that surround the end of a person's life and also their plans for when this time comes to pass. A dignified death, as free as possible from pain, is a right we should all expect, and I encourage members to take part in the public conversation in their own communities.

Of course one cannot talk about end-of-life issues and choices without acknowledging the question of voluntary euthanasia, which is a choice that many in our community, if asked, will talk about as their preference if they are faced with prolonged, unbearable suffering with no prospect of recovery. In June 2013, I undertook a study tour in order to research aspects of the law and practice in relation to the end-of-life issues in three countries in Europe, that is, Switzerland, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Belgium, all of which have either legislated for voluntary euthanasia or amended the penal code to allow assisted suicide.

In examining the different forms of legislation and codes, I met with nearly 40 experts, including members of the medical professions, lawyers, ethicists, parliamentarians, policy makers and other stakeholders. I also undertook several site visits and examined the regulation and administration of the different models where they occur. I was fortunate to also meet with palliative care practitioners and patients, those involved in developing and improving palliative care policy and advising governments in this area.

I learnt about the long history of discussion and debate that had taken place in relation to end-of-life issues and the emerging debates in relation to calls to amend the legislation, particularly in Belgium, and also calls to look at the role and validity of end-of-life directives or advanced care directives and the role of medical practitioners in honouring those. This is also under great debate in Belgium. To do justice to this experience in the course of this debate or to try to pay full respect to those who shared their knowledge and expertise with me is not possible.

There is still a good deal of research on this subject to be carried out in order to inform the community conversation and whilst many would like to see voluntary euthanasia legislated for in Australia, this is not yet the case. As members know, after legislation on the rights of the terminally ill allowing euthanasia in the Northern Territory was enacted in 1995, the commonwealth government disallowed the legislation. The federal parliament then passed the Euthanasia Laws Act 1997, also known as the Andrews bill, which expressly prevents the territories passing legislation allowing euthanasia. Under this legislation and under the self-government act, the ACT is expressly forbidden to enact such legislation.

After my study tour, I think I would say that I am like Woody Allen, whose quote is hanging behind the door of Dr Benoit Beuselinck, a research oncologist in a major hospital in Belgium:

I have questions to all your answers.

I will conclude, though, by sharing the statement, a plea by Professor Marc Englert, a retired cardiac specialist, as I left him on the last day of my study: “You must have courage.”

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.11): I thank Ms Porter for bringing this motion to the Assembly today. These are important if not sometimes uncomfortable issues to discuss. Before I talk about the substance of some of the

issues I want to raise, I want to raise the issue of euthanasia so it is very clear as we talk about these issues what the position of the opposition is. As Ms Porter raised, section 23 of the self-government act essentially means this is not an issue that should be debated in this place. I hope this is not some sort of move by stealth to try and hide behind what should be a good motion to raise this as an issue in this Assembly.

The opposition's position is that we support the status quo of section 23. It is a conscience issue, but it is quite clear that this is not an issue that should be left to this Assembly to dictate because the implications are national. These things are best dealt with at a national level or certainly by larger jurisdictions that have more checks and balances on their parliaments. I think that is a position that has been made clear over time, and I want to put that on the record as I speak further about these issues.

When it comes to end-of-life issues, the medical, ancillary and health support professionals involved in palliative care—the end-of-life work—those individuals who choose to give their time and experience helping people as their lives are ending, deserve a great deal of respect and thanks from us all in the wider community. The fact is that death and dying is inevitable, and it is an experience that eventually touches each of us individually in a myriad of challenging, daunting and sometimes frightening ways, either as we face our own death or experience the approaching end of a loved one. I know a number of people in this chamber have had to deal with this personally, be it recently or over time, and it is a very difficult issue for individuals to deal with. It is an experience we can never fully be prepared for, even as our loved ones, particularly our parents, age. We can never be quite prepared for the final day.

Professional and well-planned and funded palliative care and end-of-life planning is a mark of a caring and civilised society which has its priorities right, to recognise the needs of all its community members at every stage of life's journey. The Canberra Liberals are pleased to note and acknowledge the recommendations of the recent ACT Local Hospital Network Council that held its end-of-life issues and decision-making forum. I have read the report that was tabled by the Chief Minister yesterday, and I will go to some of the key issues in that report.

Management of death is a health issue. In the past death was seen as something that was beyond the health system. Medical practitioners were perhaps focused on health outcomes at the beginning of life and throughout life but not at the end. Medical involvement sometimes was viewed as simply to issue the death certificate. But increasingly and correctly we are accepting death and dying as health matters.

As a caring society we need to address our society's culture around death and normalise death and dying. The sooner health professionals have contact with people who can help us accept the fact of dying, the better the outcomes and the experience will be for all of us. An important part of a well-lived life should be a death which is as good an experience as it can be made. The report actually talks about a healthy death. When I read that, I struggled with the concept of a healthy death, but I understand what the report is trying to get at—that is, we should not view death as something that is not normal or something we should avoid talking about. It is a part of life's journey.

It is important to recognise that, despite current palliative care and the wider acceptance of the role of the whole health system, care is needed. Our health service management needs to take these issues seriously and ensure that action is taken to embed sound palliative care practices across the whole system. I acknowledge that, by its nature, talking about death and advanced care plans, or ACPs, is complex. It involves medical and legal language, emotions, values, cultural mores, religion and family. In our multicultural, multi-faith society, the issues of health-system managed palliative care takes on new dimensions.

These are very sensitive issues that touch the dying and their families at emotional and sensitive times. I imagine we would have different views on the approach to these matters within this chamber. As we move to provide more and better palliative care programs, we need to acknowledge that.

The key recommendations of the ACT Local Hospital Network Council forum include greater involvement and understanding across the community in end-of-life issues. I agree there needs to be education and discussion in our community to make sure people understand what happens at the end of someone's life and so we normalise those end-of-life discussions.

Another recommendation is increased information and awareness of the usefulness and benefits of advanced care planning. It is very worthy to make sure the individual has got a plan and that that is understood by family members and loved ones, so that the needs and the desires of the person who is dying are acknowledged when they perhaps move into a state where they cannot make decisions for themselves.

A greater acceptance of the value of advanced care planning amongst all carers and professionals is important as well so that health care professionals acknowledge the needs, desires, and wishes of those who are dying. Another recommendation is clarifying and simplifying the legal framework for advanced care planning so there is a common framework and set of documents for them. That seems self-evident to me. We should be taking steps to make advanced care planning easily available, and options in end-of-life situations should be openly discussed. That, again, makes a lot of sense.

I will now turn to some of the organisations involved with palliative care and end-of-life issues in our community across the public sector and the many volunteer groups, religious groups, charities and community groups that are involved in what is a very difficult but important stage of people's lives. I would particularly like to mention Palliative Care ACT, which is part of the national organisation, Palliative Care Australia, comprising the eight state and territory palliative care organisations, and the Australia New Zealand Society of Palliative Medicine, which shares the vision and mission and aims of Palliative Care Australia. And together, Palliative Care Australia members network to foster, influence and promote local and national endeavours to realise the provision of quality care at the end of life for all.

Palliative Care ACT works through a network of volunteers to deliver palliative care services, raise funds and support palliative care initiatives in the ACT. They bring a



rich mosaic to their work with the dying. Currently there are 135 volunteers, and I acknowledge that Jon Stanhope was a previous president of what was then called the Palliative Care Society. I declare a conflict of interest—I am also a member of Palliative Care ACT. The volunteers undertake comprehensive training that provides them with the knowledge, the confidence and the compassion to care for the dying.

I also acknowledge the amazing compassionate work done by the staff at Clare Holland House. Clare Holland House is a hospice serving the ACT and the region. It was subject to a great deal of interest a few years ago when there was debate about the ownership of that organisation, and all of us in this Assembly probably became far more aware of the role of Clare Holland House, and it is an important role.

Clare Holland House is under the management of the Little Company of Mary Healthcare. It is fully funded by the ACT government, and I commend the government for that. The environment is made as much like a home as is possible where families can remain close and are encouraged to participate in care and decision making. People are admitted into Clare Holland House for a number of reasons. Sometimes complex symptoms are best managed by a medical person for a short time and, once settled, people can return home. I acknowledge that palliative care in the home is very important as well. It is not just a matter of dying in an institution; for many people dying in their homes is the best outcome, and I acknowledge that the ACT government has invested in supporting palliative care in the home setting as well.

Palliative Care ACT provides volunteers at Clare Holland House. That is a collaborative effort, and that is great. Many of us who have visited Clare Holland House would have seen the labyrinth that overlooks Lake Burley Griffin. It is a garden setting that complements the nearby environment, meditation and healing garden which was established by the Canberra Interfaith Forum. Its paths are suitable for wheelchairs and other mobility aids. Because of its location adjacent to bike paths and the lake, the general community is also encouraged to walk the labyrinth. It is a beautiful setting at Clare Holland House, and I know a number of us would have known individuals, friends and family members who have experienced the end of their lives in that establishment and would know firsthand the fantastic care they got.

I look forward to the government's response to the report. I hope this is an area where we can, as far as possible, maintain a bipartisan approach. It is an important discussion to have and continue to have in our community. I made those comments about euthanasia not to in any way try and step away from the debate, because I think it should be open. But I think putting that debate to the side and saying it is not something we will pursue in the Assembly, it is not something we are advocating for at any level, will allow us to have a more open debate about end of life without people who are necessarily pro or anti-euthanasia turning it into a euthanasia debate. I commend Ms Porter for bringing this motion to the Assembly. It has the support of the opposition.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (10.24): I would also like to thank Ms Porter for raising this issue today. It is one which is also of great importance to the Greens. The Greens would like Canberra to be a place which is more respectful of and responsive to its ageing population's aspirations and needs. The Greens also want to ensure that ageing Canberrans have the best quality of life that we can provide in their later years.

As the ACT Minister for Ageing, I have heard about a broad range of issues which relate to older people in the ACT that they have raised with me. Because of the nature of the portfolio I get to meet many of our active ageing Canberrans. They are involved in so many varied activities that I think I would probably exhaust the Assembly if I were to describe them all. Whether they are dancers, gardeners, walkers, researchers, carers or volunteers in many capacities, our older Canberrans have an extraordinary program.

The ACT's positive ageing strategy and programs provide a framework for many of these activities and will continue to do so into the future. At the same time, people also speak to me of the issues of morbidity and mortality—"What do we do when we start to get less mobile and able and what do we do when we come to the end of our lives?"

As members have already touched on today, this is something that is very personal, something that people often find very difficult to talk about. But certainly people in their later years to some extent have a very pragmatic perspective on this issue as well as, I guess, a focused perspective. These questions become perhaps less ones of policy discussion and ones very focused and real for them.

The ACT Greens took an older persons initiative to the election last year which included announcements about an Older Persons' Assembly being held twice in four years and new funding to expand advanced care planning, which we believed was very important. As a result, these items were included in the 2012 Labor-Greens parliamentary agreement. I was glad to see advanced care planning funded in this year's budget to the tune of \$1.2 million over the next four years. I would like to move the amendment circulated in my name that reflects that fact. I move:

Insert new paragraph (1)(c):

"(ca) that funding for Advanced Care Planning to enable ACT Health to develop and implement a range of appropriate care planning tools is part of the shared agenda between ACT Labor and the ACT Greens in the 2012 Parliamentary Agreement;"

This funding will enable ACT Health to develop and implement a range of appropriate care planning tools, including establishing a mobile clinic. I believe this will be a relief to many older and elderly patients and those with chronic illnesses and their families over coming years. The advanced care planning process assists people to think about future medical scenarios they may face and what type of treatment they would wish to receive. It provides clear directions from a patient to their carers when the patient is no longer able to communicate their wishes. It also assists patients with their right to refuse future medical treatment.

Establishing such a process also helps the patient think through the various scenarios which may arise over the course of their illness rather than discovering the range of decisions necessary as they suddenly appear. Advanced care planning is an important way to assist older people to think about future medical scenarios they may face and what type of treatment they would wish to receive in such situations. It also makes

formal their views and decisions about their own life so that this is clearly understood by both family and professionals.

Prior to this additional funding, the respecting patients' choices program run out of the Canberra Hospital promoted the advanced care planning process. It was being administered by one part-time ACT Health staffer. This staffer also promoted advance care planning to other ACT Health staff. Increased resourcing for increased ACT Health staff dedicated to the program and improved promotion of the program will benefit more people, as many older people are simply unaware of the program. Of course, if they are unaware of it they are not able to avail themselves of it. That increased promotion will be very valuable and will give more Canberrans access to the information that can help them shape these decisions and be prepared for things that will eventuate but which they perhaps would not foresee without that information.

The issue of euthanasia has been raised in the debate this morning. The Greens have also been proactive in putting discussions relating to the right to die with dignity on the agenda. We do believe that a person who has a terminal illness and who is experiencing unacceptable pain, suffering or distress should be able to choose to request assistance from a medical practitioner to end their life. For this to occur, safeguards must be in place to ensure that the patient has decision-making capacity and is making the decision autonomously.

A bill that could have provided a more compassionate option for a very small number of terminally ill people experiencing unacceptable pain, suffering or distress was introduced by my Greens New South Wales colleague Cate Faehrmann in the New South Wales Legislative Council earlier this year. It garnered unprecedented support across the state and cross-party support within the chamber.

Of course, as Mr Hanson has touched on, a private member's bill by Kevin Andrews 15 year ago does ban the ACT from legislating dying-with-dignity laws. My federal colleague and Australian Greens spokesperson Senator Richard Di Natale has been agitating to restore this right to the territories. Those who oppose this campaign should explain why residents of Australia's territories do not deserve the same democratic rights as people in the rest of the country.

I would hope that this is a moot issue in this Assembly, but it seems from this morning's discussion it clearly is not. I believe it is a fundamental right for all Canberrans that we should have the same ability to make decisions on these matters as other jurisdictions in Australia, rather than being treated as some sort of inferior jurisdiction or a jurisdiction not capable, not trusted, to take its own decisions in these matters.

I think also many Australians would take comfort in knowing that they have some control over the way in which they die. Certainly the public opinion polls show that more than 70 per cent of Australians support the right to die with dignity. I think this is an issue that will not go away and will continue to be discussed in many fora as part of this broader discussion that Ms Porter has started this morning.

In May this year, the ACT Local Hospital Network Council held an end-of-life and decision-making forum in a world cafe-style consultation. Remarks have already been made about that today. But it seems to me that this was an invaluable forum. It included a broad range of discussions around the various end-of-life pathways. This is something which does not get much broad community discussion as it is often seen as somewhat taboo. Yet most of us have had elderly relatives who have had to deal with these very real issues. I think the simple holding of the event, in light of that sense of taboo and the difficulties around the issue in itself, was a very positive action.

The forum's recommendations added to that. They were very useful in that they identified a range of actions that need to be carried forward. They include the need for increased community engagement and awareness about end-of-life care and advanced care planning, including targeting a range of culturally and linguistically diverse communities. It also included legitimating and resourcing advanced care planning, including training staff in the area, which is exactly what the Greens election initiative and the parliamentary agreement item is targeting.

As I said earlier, there is a huge concern that there was really only one part-time staff member in the ACT whose job it was to ensure that hospital staff knew about advanced care planning. Obviously, training more staff in this area, not just at TCH, is key. Training a broad range of staff across hospitals and aged-care facilities to be able to have direct conversations with individuals and their families about death and dying and to recognise key decision-making points is a valuable service.

The roundtable also identified clarifying the law around the legal framework for advanced care planning to create simpler legally binding tools to enable advanced care planning. A common framework and common documents will help all involved in this area. It would ensure that advanced care plans are easily available and recognisable and that these plans are recognised and respected. Creating a way for these documents to be transferable across facilities and health practitioners is also an important action necessary in this area.

The last recommendation relates to enabling futile care to be legitimately recognised. People deserve the right to be able to state when they do not want particular care anymore, and for clinicians to be able to cease that care and redirect patients to palliative or end-of-life care. These are obviously very difficult issues for many people in the community, but it is an area of great importance which we must not be afraid of discussing, because in discussing it and being open about that, being transparent, enabling people to have time to consider these issues, makes these difficult issues less difficult, in my view.

I also take this opportunity to quickly raise the issue of the ACT Older Persons' Assembly. Australia's first Older Persons' Assembly was held here in the Legislative Assembly in 2011 as a result of a motion brought forward by Ms Bresnan in 2010. It provided both MLAs and government with an opportunity to hear firsthand the issues of concern to older Canberrans and for these issues to be debated in a public setting.

The Greens then called for the Older Persons' Assembly to be held twice over the coming four years to maintain an ongoing debate about the issues that matter to older people in Canberra. This is an item in the parliamentary agreement. They will be held in 2014 and 2015 with an age-friendly cities conference to be held this year in October 2013, which I think will be an excellent precursor. I mention the Older Persons' Assembly because I think it potentially is a forum where some of these discussions may be appropriately carried forward. It will be interesting to see how the discussions coming out of the local area health network paper and roundtable might evolve into some of these other matters.

Madam Speaker, the motion before us today calls on the government to continue to raise end-of-life issues, including palliative care and advanced care planning. This conversation will necessarily discuss futile care and therefore also euthanasia—a much needed discussion point in our community, and I thank Ms Porter again for raising this today.

I support this motion because I think that it is very important for people to have control over the end period of their lives and to ensure that they are able to have a say about it in a way that is informed, in a way in which they feel comfortable and confident that their choices are being respected and that their choices are being well informed.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The question is that the motion be agreed to. Mr Hanson.

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.36): I believe it is the amendment.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Sorry, you are quite correct. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

**MR HANSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a rare opportunity for me.

**Mr Rattenbury:** You get another go.

**MR HANSON:** It probably will not happen again in a hurry. Watch out, question time! The opposition—I will not be supporting the amendment because I think that Mr Rattenbury is trying to do a couple of things. Firstly, he is an advocate for euthanasia. That is his party's position. It seems that he is pushing euthanasia in this place. He wants a repeal of section 23 and so on. I do not agree with that and I am disappointed that he is using this debate about the end of life to advocate for that position. It is something that is—

**Mr Rattenbury:** You talked about it. Why shouldn't I?

**MR HANSON:** That is why I am not supporting it, Mr Rattenbury.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Rattenbury, members have been heard in silence in this discussion.

**MR HANSON:** The point that I am making is that I do not support what Mr Rattenbury is saying. I do not support euthanasia being debated in this place. Mr Rattenbury is talking about his federal colleagues and their position on euthanasia and his New South Wales colleagues and their support for euthanasia. Quite clearly, that is his agenda. It is the Greens agenda. What I am saying is that I disagree with that. I think that, having heard his speech, I would have great caution in supporting anything Mr Rattenbury put forward.

Secondly, his amendment says that it is part of the shared agreement between ACT Labor and the ACT Greens in the 2012 parliamentary agreement. I seek your guidance on this, Madam Speaker, because I get confused about where that can be talked about and where it cannot. In the last Assembly when the opposition tried to raise questions in question time about the Greens-Labor parliamentary agreement, Mr Rattenbury, the then Speaker, ruled that out of order because that was not a document of any authority. It was a political document between two parties. Therefore, it was not something that was subject to the Assembly and so on.

It seems that the Greens can move motions or amendments about the Greens-Labor parliamentary agreement as if that carries some weight in this place. But when we tried to ask questions about it, Mr Rattenbury said, "You cannot talk about it." I would perhaps seek your advice, if you have any, Madam Speaker, on just what authority this document carries and when we can or cannot talk about it. Can we ask questions about it; can we move motions about it; can we move amendments about it? It is at this point now where I would have to say I am a little confused about the status of this document within the Assembly.

I will leave it there. I will await your guidance. I just indicate that what Mr Rattenbury has put forward I think is pretty much an exercise in self-congratulations. I do not think it adds to the debate. Having heard his words, I am very sceptical about any agenda that Mr Rattenbury would have when it comes to this issue.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Before I call the next speaker, I thank Mr Hanson for raising this matter with me beforehand. It gave me an opportunity to think on the subject and seek advice. My advice was that Mr Rattenbury ruled out of order questions in relation to the Greens-Labor agreement in the last term because standing order 114 states:

Questions may be put to a Minister relating to public affairs with which that Minister is officially connected, to proceedings pending in the Assembly or to any matter of administration for which the Minister is responsible.

There was no minister responsible for the Greens-Labor agreement. I think it was informal; it was essentially an agreement between two parties and no-one had ministerial responsibility for it. That is my understanding as to why questions were ruled out of order.

There was also discussion in the last Assembly as to the status of the Greens-Labor agreement, the document itself. The administration and procedure committee was

asked whether it could be put on the Assembly website. The administration and procedure committee declined to put it on the Assembly website because it was considered a political document.

However, I think that this inclusion here is probably within the rules. It does not offend any of the standing orders, Mr Hanson. It is, I would suggest, an issue that may be of some concern to some members. As it currently stands, I think—this is my personal view—that the substantive part of the amendment could be expressed if it concluded after the words “planning tools”. The bit about the Labor-Greens agreement is problematic but it does not offend the standing orders in any way; so I will let it stand. However, this may be something that the administration and procedure committee might like to consider in respect of whether there is a better way of handling it.

**Mr Hanson:** Thanks, Madam Speaker. I am not questioning the ruling in any sense. But what this amendment does, though, is to purport that the funding that is in the budget is as a result of the Labor-Greens agreement. That is essentially what this amendment says. It says that the funding for advanced care planning in ACT Health to develop and implement a range of appropriate planning tools is part of the shared agreement in the parliamentary agreement.

I suppose what I am saying is that this now has implications in terms of questions that we can ask in question time because what this is saying is that it is now funding in the ACT budget as a direct consequence of the ACT Greens-Labor parliamentary agreement. I am not asking for a ruling. But it is maybe something I could ask you to consider so that in future if we are asking questions about the ACT Greens and Labor parliamentary agreement in question time, noting that the Greens are saying that the funding in the budget is as a consequence of that, that is now something that is in the purview of all the ministers and their responsibilities that they have to address.

You cannot have your cake and eat it, I suppose, Madam Speaker. You cannot say that the reason we are doing this in the budget is because of the parliamentary agreement. Then when we ask questions of ministers about the budget or about matters in the parliamentary agreement, they say that this has got nothing to do with it, that is a political document.

It does open up a can of worms. It seems that there is great inconsistency in the application of the parliamentary agreement in respect of what is in and out of order in this place. I am not asking for a ruling now. I am just asking that you consider it and maybe get back to the Assembly with further rulings.

**Mr Rattenbury:** On the matter that Mr Hanson has just raised, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Sorry, we have to deal with this within the standing orders. Mr Hanson was speaking. He asked me for a ruling. I have given my ruling. Do you want to seek leave to speak? I think that would be the best way of dealing with it.

**Mr Rattenbury:** Mr Hanson has just had quite a dissertation on it; I just—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Sorry, but the thing is that I need to do it within the rules of debate.

**Mr Rattenbury:** Sure.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Would you like to seek leave?

**Mr Rattenbury:** I seek leave to perhaps clarify the question Mr Hanson has just raised.

Leave granted.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo): I think this is becoming unnecessarily complicated. My recollection of last Assembly was that many questions around the parliamentary agreement were allowed when they were framed as asking about a specific subject matter. And as you rightly identified in your earlier comments, Madam Speaker, the advice at the time was that a minister could be asked about any matter in the parliamentary agreement that they were responsible for, but it was more the generic political questions that were being asked about the agreement that were considered problematic at the time. So I think Mr Hanson is painting an unnecessarily complicated picture, and I might offer those thoughts at this time.

**MS GALLAGHER** (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education) (10.44): I thank Ms Porter for bringing the motion to the Assembly and acknowledge the very significant interest that she has shown in matters around end-of-life planning and, indeed, the extent she has gone to to research it, which has included a study trip, which she has outlined, and a lot of meetings and discussions around formulating her view on this. This is exactly what members are elected to this place to do, identify issues of particular interest, work hard around them and then see how those interests can be debated and explained in the Legislative Assembly.

There is no doubt that the ACT community welcomes the idea of examining death and dying and ways to ensure that end-of-life decision making, and particularly individuals' end-of-life decision making, is upheld and respected, but more needs to be done. The Local Hospital Network Council have identified this, and I congratulate them for the work that they did with their end-of-life and decision-making forum in May this year, which both Ms Porter and I attended, where experts were brought from a range of different areas across the health, community and consumer movements to discuss what needs to change in end-of-life care and decision making or what needs to improve. I think overall it was an extremely positive day.

The report that was released by the council was sent to me and was tabled in the Assembly yesterday. It focused on increasing community engagement and awareness about end-of-life care to increase community awareness of advanced care planning, to increase resources for advanced care planning, including training of more staff, to clarify the legal framework around advanced care plans and create simpler, legally binding tools to enable advanced care planning and to ensure that advanced care plans



are easily accessible and systems act upon them and also the discussion around recognition that at times perhaps the most appropriate care is not providing further treatment.

Work is already progressing in a number of these areas, and Health, I think, have already started the work. But the increase in funding, which is part of the shared agenda between ACT Labor and the Greens—and indeed we made some commitments of our own around it in the election campaign—is about respecting patient choices, making sure that there are the resources to underpin the work that needs to be done to ensure people are getting the information they need and then making the decisions they need about their care.

This will include the translation of advanced care planning information and documentation into other languages and also looking at culturally appropriate information to be provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and of course targeting financially and socially disadvantaged groups.

A mobile clinic for advanced care planning will also be set up and trialled in the community. The Health Directorate will be tendering for a community organisation to deliver the advanced care planning education and awareness program in the community, with the overall outcome of the increased resources ultimately to increase awareness and uptake of advanced care planning. I think there is a huge capacity to improve the uptake of advanced care planning and increase the understanding and uptake of advanced care planning within specific population groups.

It is interesting to look at the amount of interest in the health system overall. Just take the example of the beginning of life and the issues around women and their choices around birthing, the amount of work, the amount of education, the amount of lead-up care that they actually get before they have a baby, including the different options available to them. Would they like midwife-led care? Would they like doctor-led care? Do they want shared care with their GP? Would they like a low-intervention birth? Do they need a high-intervention birth? They are all options that are canvassed comprehensively, not just with the expectant mother but with her partner. Indeed, I am sure many women are discussing it with their family.

But when you look at end-of-life care, it really could not be more different in terms of the informed decisions that are taken by people, when they are well, about what they would like to see happen if they are in the situation where they have got to consider how they want end-of-life care and treatment provided to them. And that is the issue here. We do not talk about it enough. People do not think through what type of care they would like or, indeed, whether they would like any care to be provided at that time. And that is because it is a hard conversation to have with your family.

I lost both my parents to terminal cancer very young. You are dealing with the fact that your parents should not have been ill in the first place, and it is an extremely difficult conversation to have. I think everyone tries to focus on, “Don’t worry, you will get better.” There are all these other options before you put up the white flag and say that there is not anything further that can be done.

I would say that, having been through that process, my views on advanced care planning and the importance of it have really been defined in the sense that what someone wants when they are able to make those decisions, compared to the pressure they are under when they are not really in a state of mind to make decisions, can be very different. And it can be very distressing for people who watch that and who understood what they thought people wanted and then, having to make those decisions on their behalf, is very difficult. If they had a plan that was clearly documented—and neither of my parents had that—and indicated exactly what they wanted to have happen, it would have made it a lot easier on the people who were around and who were having to make those decisions.

I see that all the time. I have individuals come to me, and there are cases that I am aware of, where perhaps families have been distressed by some of the choices their loved one has made or has indicated to their clinicians they wanted followed. And if that differed from what the family believed was the right course of action, it is amazing just how distressing that can be. It usually follows that person's passing that these matters are still being agitated about what was the right decision to take.

Indeed, I have had it from doctors as well who have spoken to me and who feel kind of legally compromised at times about disagreements among families around clinical decision making. I think some of the acknowledgement through the Local Hospital Network Council's report that looking at ways to ensure that the legal framework around advanced care plans and creating simpler, legally binding tools to enable advanced care planning is really important, and ensuring that systems are able to act upon those plans is just as important.

When we go to the issue of palliative care, this is again a hidden area of the health system. It does not get a lot of attention. It does not get attention like the emergency department or elective surgery does. For me, it has always seemed a little unusual, perhaps because this is as important as any other area of the healthcare system. There is not any quality assessment, sort of performance assessment framework, that is attached to palliative care.

But we are lucky here that our services are very high quality and that we are putting more and more into palliative care services and responding to where we think the need is the greatest, which includes people's desire to have palliative care provided at home, and also understanding that palliative care is not just provided at the end of life, it is actually something that can be provided through an individual's illness. At different periods, their requirements for palliative care will be different.

The government will support the amendment. I think this was getting, as Mr Rattenbury said, overly complicated. I have taken a number of questions during this parliament on the ACT Labor-Greens agreement. It was heavily canvassed in the previous parliament, and I see no reason why it should not be acknowledged. It is a factual statement.

In relation to euthanasia, I think the point Mr Rattenbury was making—and I do not want to verbal him—was around the principles of having our parliament constrained

because of a view from the commonwealth on a matter of principle. The Labor Party supports the principle outlined by Mr Rattenbury that we should be able to make laws and determine these matters for ourselves. The actual issue of whether euthanasia should be legalised is a completely separate matter to the principle that we and the Northern Territory are treated differently from the states. So I do not think whipping up a frenzy around euthanasia is relevant here.

Amendment agreed to.

**MS PORTER** (Ginninderra) (10.55): I thank members for their contribution to the debate. Mr Hanson raised the fact that section 23 of the self-government act, which I have already mentioned, specifically prohibits the ACT passing any legislation in relation to voluntary euthanasia. I did in fact acknowledge this. It is rather like the elephant in the room. It is certainly a matter that will always be raised in the community when one raises end-of-life issues. I would agree with what the Chief Minister just said about the principle of whether the ACT can actually enact its own laws. I do agree with Mr Hanson that this is not the subject of this debate in this place today.

This motion is not, as Mr Hanson says, some kind of sneaky way or move by this government. It is more an honest recognition of the larger debate in the community. Mr Rattenbury acknowledges that it will always be raised and will be raised in community conversation.

As I said, my mother was not afforded palliative care and my father-in-law was, and these two experiences, whilst having some similarities, were also starkly different in regard to their care and support and the manner in which they died.

In all of the countries I visited, many talked to me about the role and the value of palliative care. Members will be interested to know that Switzerland are currently releasing a new palliative care strategy as well, and they look to Australia as leaders in this area. In fact, they send their health officials and people who come from the palliative care association in Switzerland to Australia to learn from us. I spoke with senior bureaucrats in the Swiss health system, in their department and in the palliative care association, and they were very supportive of what we were doing here in Australia.

In the Netherlands and Belgium, there is a great emphasis on palliative care, especially in making sure that this is something a person has access to and is supported by very early in their journey. As the Chief Minister was saying, this is not something that you need to suddenly become interested in towards the end of your particular illness.

End-of-life directives, as we have discussed, are very important. As I said, the roles of these directives are the subject of much debate in Belgium, in particular whether the current sunset clause of five years that they have there should be relaxed. However, these directives are extremely important, as I said, and it appears to me they feature very strongly in all the countries I visited. This question and other questions about end-of-life issues will now be the subject of this conversation that we have started here today.

Regarding Mr Rattenbury's amendment, which we have passed, I have no difficulty with that. I did not quite understand Mr Hanson's difficulty with it.

Members have concentrated much on those that are older in our community, and we must not forget that being terminally ill is not something that, sadly, is exclusive to those who are older. Being terminally ill or having unbearable suffering, sadly, may be the fate of those much younger and in fact is the fate of numbers of our younger citizens, including children. They need end-of-life care and they need the same options as we older people do. In fact, how young people under the age of 18 can influence decisions about their end of life is also the subject of much debate, particularly in Belgium, and may be the subject of amendments in the federal parliament there, possibly after the upcoming federal election in Belgium.

I thank the Chief Minister for her leadership in this area, for her support of this conversation on end-of-life issues and for sharing her own experiences with us. I also commend all those who have been working and will continue to work on addressing these issues, including ACT Health, the ACT Local Hospital Network Council, Palliative Care ACT and clinicians who have been joining in these conversations. There is still quite a long way to go, and the conversation no doubt will be quite a robust one from time to time and will be a very interesting opportunity for us all.

I will conclude by again sharing the statement by Professor Marc Englert, that retired cardiologist I mentioned, who said, as I left him, "You must have courage." I take from that the message that one does need courage to continue to explore these questions of choice and support in relation to the end of life in a respectful, rational and compassionate way. I am glad to have had the opportunity of being able to bring on this motion this morning as the beginning of my contribution to the conversation my government is initiating about the end of life.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

## **Employment—public sector**

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo-Leader of the Opposition) (11.01): Madam Speaker, I seek leave to amend my motion as published in the notice paper by omitting the words "dishonest and deceptive" and substituting the word "misleading", based on your advice that the term "dishonest and deceptive" is unparliamentary.

Leave granted.

**MR HANSON**: I thank members. I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the importance of ACT and Federal public sector employment to the ACT economy;

- (b) that ACT and Federal Labor and ACT and Federal Greens have cut or plan to cut at least ten thousand public servant jobs; and
  - (c) that ACT and Federal Labor and ACT and Federal Greens continue to be misleading about the extent of the public service job cuts they have made and plan to make in the future;
- (2) calls on the Chief Minister to stop threatening ACT public servants with further job cuts; and
- (3) reaffirms its support and respect for the ACT and Federal public service.

It gives me great pleasure to move this motion in the Assembly; it is something that is dear to the hearts of all of us here and has been the subject of much debate in the Legislative Assembly.

What I would like to talk about today is the importance of both the ACT public sector and the federal public sector to our economy. We on this side view the public sector as integral to the stability and growth of the Canberra economy. This is not to say that we do not want to see growth in the private sector. I note that today the chamber of commerce had a forum about the pressures that they are experiencing. We have had much to say, and I commend Mr Smyth, particularly, for his advocacy for the private sector and I also commend Mr Wall, as the shadow minister for small business, for his recent work there.

But there is no doubt that a strong and vibrant public sector is best for the long-term interests of Canberra. It is at the core of our economy. There has been much said in this place, and there has been much said in the media. It has been the subject of motions, including motions moved by Dr Bourke. We had amendments moved by Mr Rattenbury. We have had various speeches made by Mr Barr and Ms Gallagher.

What I want to do is put on the record the truth about what is happening as opposed to the smear and fear that we have seen from those on the other side, in particular the Labor Party, but most notably the Greens, who seem to take a position on any particular issue whichever way it suits them politically. The truth is that jobs have been cut in their thousands, jobs are being cut right now in the public sector, and the plan is for many more thousands of jobs to be cut. And they are just the ones we know about, noting that no doubt there are plenty more down the track.

When you add all that up—what has been cut, what is currently being cut and what is planned to be cut—it is about 10,000 jobs. Under the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd governments, supported by their mates the Greens every step of the way, we have seen or are seeing about 10,000 jobs cut. What has been evident is that our local federal members and members here in the Legislative Assembly, be it Mr Rattenbury, Mr Barr, Ms Gallagher or others, simply have not been up-front and honest when they have been talking about the Labor Party's cuts.

The reason for it, and the reason for those cuts that have been made by the Labor Party, supported by their mates the Greens, is evident. It is the train wreck of the

national budget that we are seeing. It is the disaster that has been wreaked by Labor, with their Green mates, on the national budget that is causing this problem, which is causing the job cuts impacting on Canberra families right now. We need to identify who is responsible. Who is responsible? Who has been in government for the last six years?

The reality is that after 7 September whoever are in government are going to face some tough economic times, some tough decisions. That is endorsed by Mr Barr, who has said that. The federal budget is experiencing unprecedented debt and deficit after years of mismanagement by Labor and the Greens.

Since 2007, when the federal Labor government came into government, all we have seen is deficits. In fact, all we have seen for the last few decades is deficits. In fact, there are people in parliaments who have not seen a Labor Party surplus in their lifetime. As a result of that, the total gross debt is likely to reach about \$300 billion in the forward estimates. We have seen five deficits; we have seen record debt of \$192 billion; and there is no credible path back to surplus.

*Mr Barr interjecting—*

*Mr Doszpot interjecting—*

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Mr Barr! Could you sit down, please, Mr Hanson?

**MR HANSON:** Could you stop the clock please, Madam Deputy Speaker?

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Yes. Mr Barr and Mr Doszpot, you are not having a conversation across the chamber. You will have a chance to speak later. Mr Hanson has the floor.

**MR HANSON:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Well might Mr Barr interject; he is very uncomfortable. The truth is that Labor was out there saying—remember?—that there was going to be a surplus. In 2012-13 there was going to be a surplus—“come hell or high water” was the quote. That was asserted over 200 times. I remember getting stuff in my mailbox. I cannot remember whether it was Gai Brodtmann or whether it was Senator Lundy who said that Labor had delivered a surplus.

**Mr Coe:** Of lies.

**MR HANSON:** Yes, a surplus of mistruths. What we now know is that that simply was not true. They had not delivered a surplus. What we are seeing are deficits. What is the deficit planned for the coming year? \$30 billion now? That is the truth.

At every step of the way, the deficit—the debt, the pressure on our economy—has been supported and championed by their mates the Greens, who want a bob each way. They want a bob each way, don't they? They want to say: “Spend all the money. Rack up the debt. Rack up the deficit.” But when the Labor Party or the Liberal Party talk about reducing the size of the public service, the Greens say, “No, that is not fair.” It is, one could argue, somewhat hypocritical.

It is going to be challenging for anyone to get the federal budget back into surplus, but there is one side telling the truth, trying to be honest about this, and then there is another side that is anything but. We have seen the federal Labor government impose efficiency dividends that have led to job cuts—as I said, 3,000 or 4,000 job cuts. That is what is happening. Any of us who know friends or family in the public service will tell you that the squeeze is on. But that is not what they told us, is it? That is not what they said. The reality is this, and I will quote from the *Canberra Times* of 8 May 2013:

The federal public service shed more than 2500 jobs last year, the first time in a decade the Commonwealth bureaucracy has shrunk.

The latest APS jobs snapshot from the Public Service Commission shows there were 2608 fewer public servants in December 2012 than employed in June that year, as Labor's cost-cutting and efficiency dividends began to bite in earnest.

No squealing from the Greens then. No, they were just patting their Labor mates on the back.

Increases in the efficiency dividend of four per cent are putting pressure on departments and we have seen redundancies in the public service: Defence, 972 jobs; the ATO, 420; the Department of Human Services, 1,078 jobs. And there were other departments. Finance and Deregulation announced redundancies; there was a call for 60 voluntary redundancies in the Department of Finance and Deregulation. The department of broadband and the digital economy announced 100 voluntary redundancies. Treasury announced 150 redundancies. The department of education and workplace relations—around 500 redundancies. Entire agencies have been abolished under federal Labor in cahoots with their Greens mates.

It is quite clear that that is not where it ends and that there is more pain to come for the federal public service under Labor and the Greens. In a media release of 8 August 2013, Community and Public Sector Union national secretary, Nadine Flood, another CPSU mate of the Chief Minister, said: “The CPSU estimates that based on the Economic Statement issued 2 August 2013, that at least 5000 jobs will be cut over the next three years.” And that is just what we know about. Five thousand jobs!

We have heard so much from those opposite about what is going to happen to the ACT economy; we have heard the concerns that they raise about job cuts. And I agree: we do not want to see any job cuts. But let us not be in denial about what is happening right now, what is planned under the Labor-Greens government, and what this government has been saying about it. The *Canberra Times* of 12 August, in an article headed “Worst purge in 15 years”, said:

Federal government workplaces are expected to cull more than 4000 jobs over the next 11 months ...

Analysis completed by the *Canberra Times* showed that 4,000 public service jobs would be cut in the 2013-14 financial year. The article said:

The staffing purge would be the worst in 15 years ...

The staffing purge, Madam Deputy Speaker. That is what is happening. That is what is happening right now as a result of Labor and the Greens, and that is what is happening right now in our public service. When these people get up on their high horse, complain and run the fear and smear campaigns that they do, just remember the staffing purge that is happening right now after six years of chaos under Rudd and Gillard and Rudd again—who knows who is next—ably abetted by their mates the Greens. It is hypocritical.

What did Mr Barr say on 30 November 2011? He said that the job losses would be limited. He said:

... it's not as dramatic an impact ... as you might have feared ...

No, nothing to see here! He said:

... there's a sense that it could be around 300 within the total public sector.

He has got his figures wrong by an order of magnitude, because we are now looking at at least 10,000. Mr Barr was saying, "No; just 300."

You can go through the *Hansard* and see what people like Gai Brodtmann said. We know what Andrew Leigh said on the *ABC*. He said that the impact will be limited. Be limited? He said:

This is a modest change.

A modest change? He said:

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

That is what we were being told—no job losses here. The reality is that we are seeing a staffing purge under Labor and the Greens. Meanwhile they are telling us that there is nothing to see here.

Gai Brodtmann was out there saying that there were not going to be any job cuts, that they are bad for the economy. She said:

Unlike the Liberals, we believe that a strong public service is essential to support the community ...

That is simply not true. Show me where any Liberal has said that we do not support a strong public service. Show me that. Anybody? No. This is exactly right; what we are seeing is hypocrisy.

The federal coalition has been honest about what it is going to do. What it is going to do is have a hiring freeze over the forward estimates. It has said that we are not going to employ people as essentially a position becomes vacant—voluntary redundancy. We do not like that; we do not want to see that. But as Andrew Barr said, whoever



gets into government has got some tough times ahead. The real difference is that whilst the federal coalition has been honest, what we have seen from Labor and the Greens is dishonesty. Meanwhile, as the *Canberra Times* reported and as the CPSU were saying, we are seeing a staffing purge. The hypocrisy is rank.

It is not just at the federal level. We have seen it at the ACT level as well. The government that, with their CPSU mates, ran a scare campaign about what the ACT Liberals might do then got back into government. Then, as the CPSU started shafting them, we saw job cuts in the budget. What we are seeing now is a government that is trying to squeeze down the wages of nurses and public servants, saying that if they do not accept the wage negotiations, if they do not accept what the government is saying, there are going to be job cuts. As the CPSU said, they are basically threatening us. Some of the quotes are extraordinary; it just shows what the government is doing.

Vince McDevitt from the CPSU said:

... the government should be prioritising jobs over public art and the “flying sky pig”.

They’re robbing Peter to pay Paul and that’s when you see fiascos start to happen ...

It’s like crisis management, the way they do business.

That is exactly right. Whether it be federally or locally, it is the fiascos; it is the mismanagement. That then comes down to who is paying for it. Who is paying for it right now? Federal public servants and ACT public servants. It is not Jeremy Hanson saying that; that is the CPSU. It is Nadine Flood federally and Vince McDevitt locally who are saying that about what is happening right here and now.

ACT public servants have been shafted. They accuse the government of delaying the start of negotiations to ensure an inferior offer. And what about the nurses? The nurses say they have been insulted and it was disrespectful.

I commend this motion to the Assembly but I finish with this point: let us have honest debates in this place and let us not have any more of this hypocrisy from Labor and the Greens.

**MR BARR** (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Community Services) (11.16): The government will not support Mr Hanson’s motion today, and I will move amendments shortly. From the outset it is fair to say that in that speech Mr Hanson has shown more cheek than a sumo wrestler. It is laughable. Given what he said last week about bringing federal issues into this chamber in the federal election campaign, it is the height of hypocrisy and borderline offensive that he has just given the speech that he has. For a party that has form, a party that does not care about jobs or about public servants, to suggest that the ACT government is in some way cutting public sector jobs is just a complete misrepresentation of the facts. I draw Mr Hanson’s attention to the amendments that I will now move, and I seek leave to move the amendments together.

Leave granted.

**MR BARR:** I move:

(1) Omit paragraphs (1)(b) and (c), substitute:

“(b) the number of full-time equivalent staff in the ACT Public Service has increased in recent years. The actual for each year has been reported as follows:

(i) 18 419—2011-2012;

(ii) 17 741—2010-2011;

(iii) 16 995—2009-2010; and

(iv) 16 721—2008-2009;

(c) the ACT Government is committed to not reducing the size of the ACT Public Service;

(d) the alternative approach of Liberal State and Territory governments is to reduce the size of the public service, including recent cuts of:

(i) 12 800 staff in Queensland;

(ii) 10 000 staff in New South Wales;

(iii) 4 200 staff in Victoria; and

(iv) 1 000 staff in Western Australia;

(e) that the Commonwealth Shadow Treasurer supports reducing the size of the public service in Canberra by 12 000. This was confirmed in his recent statement that ‘If you want to start with cuts we have said we will cut 12 000 public servants out of Canberra. That is the starting point.’; and

(f) the Assembly is concerned at any major job losses in the Commonwealth Public Service—especially those in the ACT;”.

(2) Omit paragraph (2), substitute:

“(2) reaffirms its support and respect for the ACT and Federal public service.”.

To be clear, this is the audited information on the level of employment within the ACT public service going back over the last five years, so any suggestion there has been a reduction in the number of public servants employed by the ACT government is wrong. That is a fact, a fact you need to acknowledge, Mr Hanson. You need to acknowledge it, and I look forward to your support for the amendments because they state the facts about public sector employment in the ACT.

**Mr Hanson:** Where are the facts about 10,000 federal public job losses?

**MR BARR:** I will come to federal employment in a moment.

**Mr Hanson:** Where is it? Where is it?

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Stop the clock, please. Resume your seat, Mr Barr. Mr Hanson, I think you will recall that I asked Mr Barr to allow you to speak in silence before, and Mr Doszpot. I am now asking you to pay the same respect to Mr Barr. He has the floor. You have had your opportunity, and you may also make some remarks in closing the debate. Mr Barr.

**MR BARR:** This approach from the ACT government, as outlined in paragraph (1)(b) of the amendments I have put forward, stands in marked contrast to what is occurring in other states and territories. Let us have a look: 12,800 jobs gone in Queensland, nurses and teachers amongst them; 10,000 in New South Wales; 4,200 in Victoria; and 1,000 in Western Australia in their most recent budget. This highlights exactly what is going on in other jurisdictions, and it is a very clear contrast between the policy approach of this government and that of the conservative state governments elsewhere in the country.

We are seeking through these amendments to confirm the facts and confirm the Assembly's commitment to the public service in the ACT. We recognise the important services our public servants deliver and the important roles they undertake day to day for this community, and there is a very clear contrast between this government's approach and that of other state and territory governments run by Liberal administrations. That is the actual record; they are the actual numbers and the actual decisions that have been taken by state Liberal governments around the country.

At the commonwealth level, the commonwealth government's *State of the Service Report 2011-12* shows 67,631 APS employees were located in the ACT at June 2012, up from 64,676 12 months earlier. So let us put this on the public record for the Leader of the Opposition: an increase of 2,955 employees, or 4.6 percent, over the 12-month period. Let us be clear: the public service in Canberra was 2,955 larger in June 2012 than it was in June 2011.

The Public Service Commission reports that the proportion of APS staff in the ACT increased from 38.9 percent in June 2011 to 40.8 percent in June 2012, continuing, as they say, a steady rise that has been occurring for several years. If you go back and look at the size of the Australian Public Service in 2007 when Kevin Rudd was elected, it was 143,846. In 2012 it was 168,580. So that would appear to be a 25,000 increase or thereabouts, which, presumably, is what Joe Hockey and others have been babbling on about when they say they want to cut jobs in Canberra. They want to slash at least 12,000, and they are on the public record on numerous occasions. Joe Hockey, on *ABC News Breakfast* on 11 May 2013, when asked how he would pay for all of their election promises, said:

If you want to start with cuts, we have said we will cut 12,000 public servants out of Canberra. That is the starting point.

Again, to the *Canberra Times* on 7 May:

And we've said the public service here in Canberra has to be reduced by 12,000 over the first two years as a starting point.

As a starting point. Joe Hockey, 3AW, 14 February 2013:

Then they continue to criticise us for saying that we're going to reduce the size of the public service in Canberra by 12,000. But we are doing it because the public service in Canberra has increased by nearly 20,000 since Labor was elected.

So, Mr Hanson, who is right? You or Joe Hockey? And if the public service has not increased by 20,000 over this period, why does Joe Hockey want to cut it?

**Mr Hanson:** Madam Deputy Speaker, a point of order.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Resume your seat please, Mr Barr. Stop the clock.

**Mr Hanson:** You have made a couple of rulings, Madam Deputy Speaker, about interjections, but, under standing order 42, I ask that Mr Barr address his comments through you. If he is asking me questions directly it makes it a little bit difficult for me not to respond.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr Hanson. I suggest that you, in fact, do not respond. Mr Barr, address your comments through the chair.

**MR BARR:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Through you, the challenge for the Leader of the Opposition is to state clearly whether he believes Joe Hockey and the rationale that his federal colleagues are putting about the country pretty much everywhere but Canberra—but, to his credit, at least Joe Hockey said it to the *Canberra Times*—where the number of 12,000 quickly grows to 20,000 and where the language used to describe the work of those public servants is pretty poor.

We all remember that quote from Mr Hockey in May that there is a golden rule for real estate in Canberra: “You buy Liberal and you sell Labor.” Joe Hockey in May, words directly from the Liberal Party. That is not our interpretation; they are Mr Hockey's own words. And this is the great problem for Mr Hanson and the hypocrisy of raising this issue today, having criticised Mr Rattenbury last week for bringing another issue forward, that, with so much cheek, he has the temerity to bring this one forward today. Hypocrisy in the extreme. But we know it is the Liberal Party way.

**Mr Hanson:** Madam Deputy Speaker, a point of order. I wonder if you could rule on “hypocrisy” and whether that is unparliamentary.

**Mr Rattenbury:** On the point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, I believe Mr Hanson used the exact same word in his own speech just 10 minutes or so ago.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr Rattenbury. I was about to say the same thing. Mr Hanson, in your speech you, in fact, used that word frequently, so—

**MR HANSON:** So “hypocrisy” is all right, now?

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I think “hypocrite” is not allowed. I do not believe you are allowed to call a member a hypocrite, but I think “hypocrisy” in context is quite acceptable.

*Members interjecting—*

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you. Are we all finished having conversations across the chamber? Yes. We will now get on with it. Mr Barr.

**MR BARR:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. So it is very clear. The facts are available for the Leader of the Opposition in terms of the relative size of both the ACT and commonwealth public services in terms of employment within the Australian Capital Territory. Those facts, it would appear, are not contested at the federal level. Mr Hockey certainly uses those facts to justify his desire and that of the federal Liberal Party to cut those jobs from the ACT in particular. There appears to be recognition at least from the majority of the Liberal Party that those jobs exist, were created and are based in the ACT. Mr Hanson appears to want to deny that fact, but, in doing so, you would think it would undercut the argument that has been put nationally by his federal colleagues.

Those facts are clear and on the record, and it is interesting to look at that long-run trend—the public service has continued to grow in the last six years. The suggestions that the current federal Labor government has cut the size of the public service are just wrong. They inherited 143,846 public servants and there are 168,580 now. That is more. So any suggestion, whether it is from the CPSU or Mr Hanson, that there has been a reduction in the commonwealth public service is wrong. Joe Hockey believes there has been an increase and—

**Mr Hanson:** So you’re quoting Joe Hockey and I’m quoting the CPSU.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson!

**MR BARR:** In this instance, on this issue, Joe Hockey is right; there has been growth in the public service. That is true, yes. No-one is contesting that fact. Yes, there has been growth. So let me repeat this for you, Mr Hanson, one more time: in June 2007 there were 143,846 commonwealth public servants; in June 2012, 168,580. Yes, the public service has increased. Joe Hockey is right on that, and anyone who looks at the figures and can comprehend that 143,000 is less than 168,000 will comprehend there has been an increase. You appear to be the only one in denial on that point—

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Mr Barr, address your comments through the chair.

**MR BARR:** Madam Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition appears to be the only one in denial on that point. The question is: is it a good or a bad thing that there

has been growth in the public service and growth in jobs in the ACT? Our view is that this is a good thing for the ACT; we are pleased to see the proportion of commonwealth public servants in the ACT has increased, and that is why amendment 2 of my amendments reaffirms our support and respect for both the ACT and the federal public services. We note that both have grown in recent times, and that point needs to be acknowledged, and it is in the amendments I put forward. The only party arguing for a reduction in the number of public servants in Australia and in the ACT is the federal Liberal Party. They are the only people arguing for that.

Public service numbers have increased under Labor from 143,000 to 168,000. That is not a cut. It does not matter how many times those opposite wish to argue the other case, there is no world in which 168,000 is less than 143,000 when it comes to public service positions. The only party arguing to cut jobs, 12,000 as a starting point, is the Liberal Party. That is clear. The facts are clear and on the table. That is what these amendments do, and they put the lie to the gross hypocrisy of those opposite. The Leader of the Opposition is showing more cheek than a sumo wrestler today with this motion.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Before Mr Rattenbury starts, I remind members that if they want to make a point of order, when they stand they should say that that is what they are doing. Otherwise it appears that they are jumping to their feet to do something else—maybe talk to the amendments or I am not quite sure what. If members want to make a point of order, they should say so.

Also, Mr Hanson, would you listen to Mr Rattenbury in silence. Your interjections are becoming a little bit more than is desirable. In fact, I do not want you to interject at all during Mr Rattenbury's address, so please remain silent. Mr Rattenbury.

**Mr Hanson:** It will be a struggle, but I will try, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Do not start before Mr Rattenbury even begins. Mr Rattenbury.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (11.33): This motion moved by Mr Hanson today really did strike me with some surprise after I received the documents from administration and procedure yesterday and after the shellacking that Mr Hanson dished out to me last week when I sought to raise a federal issue here. He came in here all fired up and puffed up and gave me the most extraordinary spray about my attempt to debate an issue that I thought was of significance but that Mr Hanson thought was inappropriate.

His political hypocrisy is such that last week he could say that the issue of asylum seekers was clearly a federal issue and not in the purview of this Assembly. This week not only does Mr Hanson move a motion about federal issues but also we have his colleague Mr Doszpot whose motion about federal issues comes up next.

As it happens, I think it is quite appropriate that these matters are raised in the Assembly today. I am quite happy to discuss the substance of them, but we see the extraordinary level of hypocrisy from Mr Hanson and the sheer lack of shamelessness

about it. There is a sheer lack of shamelessness about it. One week he stands up and says something that I thought, frankly, was so unparliamentary. But then he comes back the next week and does something completely different. The double standards of it and the duplicity of Mr Hanson in his own behaviour are quite extraordinary.

This week, presumably at the behest of his former leader and wannabe senator, Mr Seselja, he has decided that federal issues are in the purview of the Assembly. He has come here to muddy the waters on Liberal Party plans to get rid of thousands of federal public servants. This points to the diminished role Mr Hanson brings to the role of opposition leader. He clearly does not have his own ideas. He is a cipher, a zero. By colloquial definition of the *Macquarie Dictionary* he is a zed, and that is a lower case zed, as much as he is a lower case leader. Nonetheless, as I said, I do agree that Mr Hanson is entitled to bring this issue forward.

It is important for the ACT through this Assembly to represent a view on what federal parties are proposing to do to Australia and to Canberra. It is quite appropriate that we discuss this issue. It is also important that the Assembly reflects the views of Canberrans on other issues such as asylum seekers. We in the Assembly represent the residents of our national capital, a place where many people's work relies on looking out and across the whole country, considering the impact of a range of issues on the whole of Australia. We need to recognise that Canberra is perhaps the least parochial city in Australia and that we have residents who are the most outward looking in the country.

We also need to recognise the importance of the federal public service in terms of Australia and in terms of the economy of the ACT. This is Greens policy as reflected by me as minister when I am working with my Labor colleagues to maintain the size of the ACT public service workforce. It is important to provide the services that we as a community expect the government to provide.

A strong public service also assists the broader ACT economy through improved consumer sentiment, a stronger retail and public services sector and more visitors to Canberra to conduct the business of government. But Mr Hanson also tries to argue that federal Labor and the federal Greens have some sort of plan to cut the public service. The trouble with this assertion is that it is simply not true. In fact, Christine Milne, the leader of the federal Greens, had this to say on 2 August, when giving her views on federal Labor plans. I quote Senator Milne:

We shouldn't be slashing money from the aid budget or the public service in a rush back to surplus.

Kevin Rudd's attack on the public service has been dressed up as an "efficiency dividend". But what it really means is significant job losses and the axing of vital programs and services.

This is another example of Kevin Rudd adopting Tony Abbott's attack on the public service rather than having courage to take on the big mining companies or the fossil fuel sector who can afford to contribute more.

Mr Hanson's assertion in his motion that federal Greens have cut, or plan to cut, at least 10,000 public service jobs simply has no basis in fact. Let us see him produce the evidence of any Greens policies that suggest that that is what the Greens want to do. It is not the Greens' policy position. It is not the position that anybody in my party has put. For Mr Hanson to move a motion suggesting so is simply dishonest and reflects badly on his research, or lack thereof.

Mr Barr has taken some time to go through the situation in the ACT. His amendments spell that out in some detail. I do not reflect on that any further other than simply to say that I appreciate having the actual facts put on the table for the purposes of the motion. I will be supporting Mr Barr's amendments. It is important that we do discuss these issues, but I think Mr Hanson would do well if he wants to raise these issues to try to have some accuracy in his motion rather than simply making up the bits that suit his political agenda.

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella) (11.38): I rise to move a technical amendment to Mr Barr's amendments, which will remove part 3 from Mr Hanson's motion.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I am confused about where you are moving the technical amendment, Mr Gentleman.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I am moving an amendment to Mr Barr's amendments. I seek to add the words "remove paragraph 3 from Mr Hanson's motion".

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I have just been advised that a copy of this will be distributed in a moment.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I will talk to the motion whilst it gets distributed. I move:

Add the following amendment:

"(3) omit paragraph (3)."

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The question is that Mr Gentleman's amendment to Mr Barr's amendments be agreed to.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** That is right. Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to bring some history to the Assembly. It is my personal history of the life and times of 1996 and the Howard government. Of course, before John Howard was elected he provided a promise in his election campaign to cut public service jobs by 2,500.

The reality, of course, between 1996 and 1998 was 32,400 jobs. As an exact witness to those job cuts, I think I have mentioned in the chamber before that I was working at that time in the federal government printing office in Kingston. The building was used as the departure lounge for the whole department of admin services. Under the Howard government, with Max Moore-Wilton at the head of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet—Max the Axe his nickname was at the time—they disassembled the whole of the department of admin services, not just an agency. It was the whole department of admin services.



A quarter of the building at the printing office was used as the departure lounge. Public servants that were made redundant were able to use those facilities to make phone calls and do some courses whilst their period was being borne out before they left without a job. It was quite a distressing time for me to see that occur.

It did not just occur, of course, at admin services. Later on it went through other departments as well. I will go to that in a minute but I want to give a really distinct recollection of one of the occurrences there. That was the termination of permanent Comcar drivers who were asked to take their Comcar cars to the printing office and front an interview with a single person there acting on behalf of PM&C.

They would go in for an interview in a closed room in an office. They were handed a letter which said, “Your services are no longer required. You are now made redundant,” and they were given a cab fare home. There was no time to discuss other options, as occurred for the rest of the department of admin services.

**Dr Bourke:** Shameful!

**MR GENTLEMAN:** It was simply shocking. And I think there were around 110 or 115 then-permanent Comcar drivers. At the end of the period there were about five. The last permanent Comcar driver finishes in the ACT at the September election this year. He lives in my suburb actually and I see him most mornings. He is a lovely fellow.

It was quite a distressing time to see all that occur. Hundreds of lives changed in that period and I saw the actual personal hurt of those that had lost their jobs and, of course, who were unable to find other jobs because the whole of Canberra was suffering. As you would be aware, we went through a depression during the period.

Of course, with that dramatic loss of jobs and inability to gain other employment in the territory a lot of people left. Those that stayed saw their house prices dramatically reduced. The median house price, according to reports in the *Canberra Times*, dropped some \$25,000. In those days the median house price was \$150,000. So that was a dramatic hit to those that had made purchases. In fact, it was not far from the time that I purchased my first house. The cuts in house prices were quite dramatic.

After the printing office was finally sold off to the private sector, all the people that used to work there left. Some were retained by the new owner of the printing service, but not very many. After that I went to the Department of Defence. I was working in building R8. At the bottom part of the building was the media liaison section. In that area they had Army news and defence news—all those sorts of operations that occurred within the defence regime. But they also had media liaison that went out to the public.

On a Friday morning all staff in the section were called to the conference room at Russell R1. They were not told why. They were told that there were some staff changes about to occur. On the first PowerPoint slide all of the appointed positions for the media section were shown. There were 240-odd positions in the ACT. They were

all on the first PowerPoint slide. The button was pressed and the second slide came up showing 110 positions, roughly, left in the media liaison section. If your position number was not on the second slide, you were made redundant. Death by PowerPoint was the name of the operation that occurred at Defence at that time.

Of course, that was only the media liaison section. There were many other sections that were hit at the same time. It was quite a dramatic turn of events for those of us that were employed in the federal public service in those years. I struggled to come back to terms after those cuts occurred.

As I mentioned, John Howard promised 2,500 cuts to the public service. The reality was 32,400 over the period 1996 to 1998. Tony Abbott, Joe Hockey and their colleagues have begun, as we have heard from the Treasurer, at 12,000 cuts, with some of the opposition members in the federal parliament saying that there will be 20,000 cuts. If the ratio is going to be similar to the promises that John Howard made prior to his election, I think we are all in for a very tough time should the federal opposition win government in September.

We have heard some recent comments from Mr Seselja in particular in relation to those cuts. He provided almost the same description that I did in regard to house prices and the recession in an article in the *Canberra Times* most recently. He confirms the comments that I have made in regard to house prices between 1996 and 1997. In the article, in brackets, it says that, "We had the lowest median house price under the Howard government between that period." So even the new opposition Senate candidate for the ACT, the Liberals candidate Zed Seselja, has indicated that that was a tough time for Canberra. My view is that maybe there is a tough time ahead.

That amendment to the motion has now been distributed. I support the amended motion.

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (11.47): I will speak to the amendments and close the debate. We will be supporting the technical amendment that Mr Gentleman moved, but we will not be supporting the amendments from Mr Barr because he is missing the point of the motion. The point of the motion is quite clear. I do not think there is any dispute about what is happening. My motion notes the importance of the ACT and federal public sector employment to the ACT economy. I think we would all agree with that. It also notes that the federal Greens, along with Labor, plan to cut about 10,000 jobs. The irony is that I am quoting the CPSU and Andrew Barr is quoting Joe Hockey. It is a bit of an alternate universe that we find ourselves in.

The facts are there; the facts are clear. It has been very well documented and reported. The reality is that the federal government has cut jobs, and is planning to cut more jobs. The CPSU say it, the *Canberra Times* did some analysis, and it is quite clear that that is what is happening. So let us not pretend that these job cuts are not occurring.

This is the problem, and it is, I suppose, the nub of the next point in my motion, which is that ACT and federal Labor and ACT and federal Greens continue to be misleading about the extent of public service job cuts they have made and plan to make in the

future. And this is the point. Mr Gentleman talked about Howard saying one thing and then another thing happening. Let us not forget that in 2010 we were told repeatedly by federal Labor, including by the local representatives, that there were not going to be job cuts. That is what we were told. We were assured, a bit like when we were assured that Labor was delivering a surplus.

However, we know Labor never delivered a surplus, and we know, based on the analysis that has been done by a number of people, including the CPSU, that the cuts are about 10,000. That is what we know about. God knows what will then happen if Rudd, Gillard, Shorten or whoever the Labor Party put up next were to get back into government, or how many thousands would be cut.

It is quite evident that none of us here in the Assembly want to see jobs cut federally or locally. We all support growth. We want to see jobs here in the ACT. But the nub of this motion calls on this Assembly to have an honest conversation about it, not just try and run a one-sided argument about what is happening.

The reality is that the coalition are not actually in government. They may or may not win the next election. But we know what has happened, because it is in the budget and other documents. We know what has happened under the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government, supported by Brown and Milne. We know that 10,000 jobs have either gone or are going.

We also know that the ACT government have been threatening local workers. The CPSU have come out and said that the government are threatening their workers. They are using the fear of job cuts to try and screw the wage negotiations down. I read the quotes in my speech, and if I get time in closing I will go to them. So Katy Gallagher is out there threatening. That is not my assessment; that is the CPSU's assessment. So I think it is pretty reasonable for this Assembly to call on the Chief Minister to stop threatening ACT public servants with further job cuts. I think that is a reasonable thing to call for.

Mr Barr in his amendments said, "There has been growth in the ACT public service," but he forgets to mention that we are seeing 100 going out of Education, we are seeing 17 out of CIT, we are seeing 38 out of CSD, and they are real jobs that are going.

Finally, the motion states that the Assembly reaffirms its support and respect for the ACT and federal public service. I am encouraged to see that Mr Barr has maintained that element.

The summation of what we have discussed today is that jobs are being cut in big numbers and that the government has not been honest about that—either members in this place or federal members. The reason is that the federal government has presided over a disastrous budget situation. We have seen, in the forward estimates, the debt ceiling approaching \$300 billion.

I remind you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that when the government took over there was no debt. There was money in the bank and there were services. As much as Mr Gentleman and others bemoan the fact that when Howard got in he made some tough

decisions, I remind members that when Howard got in, unemployment in the ACT was eight per cent. When Howard left, it was 2.5 per cent. As Mr Barr said the other day, in answer to a question without notice:

The one observation I will make is that, regardless of who wins elections, in the medium and long term it would appear that governments of both political persuasions do in fact increase the size of the public service in the ACT over time ...

So we have seen a lot of fear-mongering from those opposite.

I will address the issue of whether we should be debating this in the Assembly or not. If I open up my computer, I have some good quotes here that I can point to. The reality is that we have talked about jobs in the ACT repeatedly, because they are important. No-one is disputing that federal jobs are important to the ACT economy. I note that Dr Bourke moved a motion and made a speech about the effect of Mr Abbott's plan for the Australian public service on Canberrans. He raised that in May, so it is clearly a matter for debate.

Mr Rattenbury called on the Speaker to write to Mr Abbott and request him to respond in writing to the Assembly on his intentions for the Australian public service. He talked about Canberra-based entities. This is an ACT issue. Jobs in the ACT are an ACT issue. But with respect to the point I made, I quote from the *Canberra Times*:

Mr Rattenbury unsuccessfully proposed a resolution requiring the ACT Government to write to Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Opposition Leader Tony Abbott expressing grave concerns at the treatment of asylum seekers, including the transfer of refugees to PNG and Nauru.

I think that even a simpleton would understand that there is a significant difference between talking about public sector jobs in the ACT and the relevance that that has to our Assembly, and the fact that that is within the purview of the ACT Legislative Assembly, and Mr Rattenbury's attempt to get this Assembly to write to the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition regarding transfer of asylum seekers from Christmas Island to Nauru and PNG. I think that even a simpleton could understand that one is a direct ACT-based issue and the other one clearly is not; it is a national issue.

So I stand by my comments. As Mr Rattenbury has agreed, this is an ACT issue. Mr Barr would agree that this is an ACT issue. No-one is going to disagree. It is regularly talked about in business councils and so on. But no-one is going to stand up in here—other than Mr Rattenbury, I think—and say that the transfer of refugees from Christmas Island to PNG is an ACT-based issue. It is not. That is the point that I go to.

This again highlights some of the issues raised by Mr Rattenbury in his speech. He seemed to be playing the double role of a minister and a Green, but he then reflected on what was parliamentary, what was not parliamentary and so on; he still wants to be the Speaker. So we not only have the dual personalities of Mr Rattenbury; we seem to have three of them. He not only wants to be a minister and a Green crossbencher, but clearly he is feeling some frustration about not being the Speaker anymore.

In closing, we will not be supporting the amendments because they do not go to the nub of the issue. I stand by what we say, and we should all agree on it here. We support the ACT public service. The Chief Minister should not be threatening them. We want to see a strong and vibrant public service. And we should all be honest about what is happening, whether we are Labor, Liberal or Green.

**Mr Gentleman's** amendment to **Mr Barr's** proposed amendments agreed to.

Question put:

That the amendments, as amended, be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

Noes 8

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

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Before I call Mr Doszpot, I would like to draw members' attention to a quote from *Erskine May's Treatise on the Laws, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament* on page 499 of *House of Representatives Practice*, where May says:

Good temper and moderation are the characteristics of parliamentary language. Parliamentary language is never more desirable than when a Member is canvassing the opinions and conduct of his opponents in debate.

I would like to draw members' attention to that, as that is how we aspire to conduct debates in this place. I was listening to the debate and on all sides it was pretty unedifying. I lost count of the number of times the word "hypocrisy" was used. "Hypocrisy" has from time to time been ruled as unparliamentary, but for the most part it has not. But I think that members should reflect on whether they can conduct themselves in a better way than they have this morning. I call Mr Doszpot.

## Retirees—challenges

**MR DOSZPOT** (Molonglo) (12.02): I move

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that the ACT has one of the fastest growing populations of people aged 60 years and over and this is expected to grow from 15.5 percent of the ACT population to 19 percent by 2020;
  - (b) that retirees, particularly self-funded retirees in the ACT, are suffering under discriminatory Labor government policies both at the federal and ACT level;
  - (c) that the federal Labor-Greens government promised to make no changes to superannuation but broke that promise;
  - (d) cost of living pressures such as rates and other taxes and poor economic management, together with a shortage of retirement housing options are all creating unfair financial difficulties on Canberra's independent retirees; and
  - (e) these issues are forcing Canberrans who are nearing retirement to either continue working to ensure they have sufficient funds to meet daily living expenses or selling up and moving to cheaper housing interstate; and
- (2) calls on the government to:
- (a) recognise the difficulties that current cost of living pressures are causing older Canberrans;
  - (b) stop the tax reforms which are tripling rates for older Canberrans; and
  - (c) write to the Prime Minister to highlight the uncertainty caused by federal Labor policies on older Australians who choose to retire in Canberra.

As medical science extends out the average living age further and further, people aged over 60 are becoming an increasingly higher percentage of our population. Here in the ACT we have one of the fastest growing populations of people aged over 60 years of age, beaten only by the Northern Territory. As the older persons assembly staged here in this Chamber in 2011 highlighted, a growing ageing population will in future years present a number of challenges for government in a range of areas, including housing, transport, health, disability, aged care and employment. Indeed, as the older persons assembly also discovered, it also represents a range of opportunities and a resource that can be tapped to assist in a range of areas.

So it is, indeed, disappointing that the Labor Party, at both the federal and local levels, has continued to discriminate against and within the aged community. I refer, of course, to self-funded retirees. Our motion states that retirees, particularly self-funded retirees in the ACT, are suffering under discriminatory Labor government policies, both at the federal and ACT levels. And, indeed, they are. Of course, those on the other side of the chamber will be quick to deny that and direct our attention to their blueprint. As we know, they always produce a glossy brochure. This one is called a strategic plan for positive ageing and purports to set out progress towards an age-friendly city and supports for seniors. But are we really an age-friendly city? I do not think so, and I suspect very few in the ACT community would agree with that sentiment.

In Canberra it is estimated we have nearly 20,000 self-funded retirees, most of whom are ineligible for concessions for their rates, utilities and healthcare costs. That means if you have been prudent in your earlier years, planned for your retirement and made sensible and responsible choices throughout your life, this city is absolutely not friendly to you—or at least this government and its current federal counterpart are not friendly to you. Indeed, in the Labor Party lexicon, it seems the term “self-funded retirees” is synonymous with a group of persons held in low regard. To many in the Labor Party, self-funded retirees are seen as the rich, the retired idle rich, who use elaborate mechanisms to reduce tax and try to make themselves eligible for undeserved benefits and concessions.

In truth, the typical self-funded retiree in Canberra, according to National Seniors Australia research, has an income between the \$44,100 cut-off for part-payment of the single age pension and the \$50,000 upper threshold for the commonwealth seniors health card. It suggests they continue to bear the brunt of cost of living increases with little ability to generate extra income. While they pay full price for their utilities and other living expenses, their income is frequently reduced to less than the cut-off for eligibility for a part-age pension payment.

Certainly at the federal level—and it sets the tone for subsequent state and territory approaches, as I have just indicated—independent retirees are seen as a ripe source for mining additional revenue. Just look at superannuation changes. The federal Labor-Greens government promised to make no changes to superannuation, but we know what happened there—they broke that promise.

If we look at how Labor treats superannuation, we will see the duplicity of their policy approach. On the one hand they champion themselves as the party that delivered compulsory superannuation and, indeed, they did deliver that. But having done that, they now regard it as their own tax plaything. Over the past five years Labor has cut concessional contribution caps from \$50,000 and \$100,000 down to \$25,000, freezing indexation as well. Labor also cut super co-contribution benefits for low income earners from \$1,500 to \$500. That is despite pre-election promises of no change. For the past three years federal Labor have been promising to re-increase concessional contribution caps to \$50,000, but they have continuously deferred implementation. They have now broken that promise too by proposing an increase to just \$35,000 instead.

Labor’s cuts to concessional caps and to super co-contribution benefits have reduced the incentive for people to save through super. At the federal level, and so it goes through to the territory level, Labor cannot be trusted on super because, over the past five years, they increased taxes on super by more than \$8 billion, predominantly targeting low and middle income earners, despite, again, a pre-election promise of no change to super. Those changes included a \$3.3 billion Labor cut to super co-contribution benefits for low income earners, reducing the co-contribution benefit from \$1,500 down to \$500. So, after promising never to tax super payments for the over 60s, Labor is now proposing to tax super payments for the over 60s, albeit through the back door. After promising to re-increase concessional caps to \$50,000 they are now increasing them to just \$35,000.

We should be encouraging as many Australians as possible to save more so they can look after their own needs in retirement and not be a burden on the public purse by having to rely on the aged pension. But, in reality, why should we bother? When they do save for their own futures, the Labor government treats them as second-class citizens and charges them for as much as they can on as many things as they can.

In the ACT, independent retirees have a hard time. We have high costs of housing and high costs to relocate when we want to downsize. In the older, inner Canberra suburbs where transport is more efficient and health services are more accessible, house costs are high and rates are tripling. We have a limited supply of group and co-operative housing for older Canberrans, especially single older Canberrans. For people on fixed incomes or, indeed, reducing incomes—as many of our self-funded retirees are following the GFC and the drop in international share markets—living in the ACT is not a cheap exercise. The older persons assembly highlighted again and again the lack of transport and the dependence on cars, which are not cheap to register and insure. So many things that go to making life expensive for this sector are there.

During the budget process, the Council on the Ageing ACT highlighted access to health, access to affordable and accessible transport and housing as issues of concern. They would like to see improvements to our transport, better community bus services to hospitals and more housing options. Interestingly, like government, many associations representing the aged fail to highlight any particular support for self-funded retirees. Similarly, the ACT Greens 2012 election policy neglected this group in their older people election initiative. And many of their promises in that document were exclusively for concession card holders.

To Labor and the Greens, self-funded retirees are a forgotten group of people. However, the Canberra Liberals recognise how they are overlooked and how tough it has been for them in recent years. As the motion highlights, there is pressure on older Canberrans to keep working to help stretch their savings to their older years. There are difficult decisions to be made about meeting increased living costs and whether downsizing is an affordable option when there is no financial support for them to do so.

Retirees on limited and fixed incomes are facing the reality of Labor's rate rises. Remember, these are the rate rises that Canberra Labor said were not happening. But just ask Canberra's 20,000 independent retirees how they are faring—they know how real and how high these rate rises are. But the ACT government will argue they have addressed this issue through passage of the Revenue Legislation (Tax Reform) Amendment Bill 2013 earlier this year. Section 46(2)(f) of the legislation expands the eligibility criteria for rates deferral to households with at least one owner who is 65 years old or older. On the face of it, this seems a relief for retirees. But the devil, as usual, is in the detail.

These deferrals are indefinite and incur an interest charge. This is insidious and suggests that general rates will, over time, increase to the extent that more seniors will have problems paying them. In this light, this initiative to expand the deferral scheme is predatory. It allows seniors to defer payment but with an interest charge, which, quite frankly, amounts to a death tax.



When you examine what other options are available to senior Canberrans, there are a number: energy concessions for electricity and gas with a maximum combined utility rebate of \$374.82; water rates attract a 68 per cent a quarter rebate; sewerage attracts the same; the ACT spectacle service provides one free pair of bifocal or trifocal glasses every 24 months; and there is a taxi subsidy scheme for seniors with a profound activity limitation. All these are provided to seniors on a pension but none is available to seniors who are supporting themselves in retirement. Quite oddly, while excluding self-funded retirees from accessing the taxi subsidy scheme, it is open to asylum seekers with mobility limitations.

Chief Minister and Treasurer, Canberra Liberals care about what is happening to seniors in this territory. My motion is a result of the many calls from and meetings I have had with individuals and clubs, like Probus, University of the Third Age and many others, who are still making quite a contribution to Canberra even in their retirement and simply want the government to understand the predicament they face through the actions of both the ACT and the federal governments.

As I have already indicated, a significant number of self-funded retirees—around 20,000—are ineligible for the aged pension or other allowances in the ACT simply because they have done the right thing all their lives—they have worked hard, paid their taxes and contributed to their own retirement plans. They now want to enjoy the fruits of their labours, only to have the Labor Party deny them that.

Nationals Seniors Australia in their 2013 submission to the ACT 2013-14 budget informed the ACT government that older people are not ageing in place within the ACT and are choosing to retire elsewhere. They have said the government needs to introduce measures to retain them, and I will briefly quote from their submission. The research and a national comparison appear to indicate that:

... older people are not ageing in place within the ACT and are choosing to retire elsewhere. Measures to retain older people within the population would therefore be of benefit to maintain the social capital that comes with a range of people across all age groups. This could be an area for consideration by the ACT Government.

I suggest, Mr Barr, this should be a priority consideration for the ACT government. We call on the ACT government to recognise that they have discriminated against a significant proportion of older Canberrans and it is time it stopped. We call on the government to recognise the difficulties that current cost of living pressures are causing older Canberrans. We call on the government to stop the tax reforms which are tripling rates for older Canberrans. And we call on the government to write to the Prime Minister to highlight the uncertainty caused by federal Labor policies to older Australians who choose to retire in Canberra.

**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) (12.16): I thank Mr Doszpot for his motion because it is important that the Assembly continues to recognise the issues of ageing Canberrans. In some ways it has been a particularly good morning for that,

with the earlier discussion raised by Ms Porter. I think we have canvassed today an important range of issues for the ageing members of our community.

I also note that Mr Doszpot does have a genuine interest in these matters and I think it is disappointing that he has brought a tangled motion of genuine issues entwined with some rather partisan threads. And on those grounds, I will not be able to support the motion.

The ACT certainly has a fast-growing population of older Canberrans, and there are many issues that they face. I think this is well recognised. It is going to be one of the great challenges for this nation in coming years. As the population gets older, there are a multitude of issues that we as a society are going to need to address. Whether it is in urban design, in the provision of health services or in a whole range of things that we could probably have several days of discussion on, there are incredible policy challenges coming down the line around the issues of an ageing population.

What I should note from Mr Doszpot's motion is that he has particularly raised the issue of changes to superannuation. I should be quite clear that there is not a federal Labor-Greens government and there is certainly not a federal Labor-Greens shared policy on superannuation, as he has alluded to in his motion. The federal Labor government does have control of superannuation policy, and there is nothing in the agreement between the two parties around that matter.

But let me turn to where the ACT government does have responsibility. Mr Barr, with his portfolio responsibilities, will also make some comments shortly around some of the matters that Mr Doszpot has raised. But certainly as the Minister for Ageing in the ACT, I can say that the ACT government has a very significant range of policies and initiatives directed towards making it simpler for assisting older Canberrans with a range of matters.

Mr Doszpot started off with some really good comments in the early part of his speech about the challenges that arise but I was surprised by the poor reflection on the positive ageing plan because it actually does set a really important framework and is a recognition from the ACT government that this is a really important issue, one that we do want to have a clear strategy on and a focus for government. I think that that is a solid foundation for the government to be focused on, issues for older Canberrans.

There are policy areas right across the spectrum, as I have touched on, where the government is seeking to take this seriously. I spoke earlier about the age friendly cities and communities conference which is taking place later this year. And I think that is an example of the government's focus on trying to bring these issues into debate, into public discussion. I fear talking about some of the issues the government is talking about, as I suspect there is going to be a derisory response that says, "That issue of itself is not the real issue. That is not the thing I am talking about today."

But I guess the point I want to convey on some of these issues is that the government is seeking to work on these issues for older Canberrans, and each of these things forms a part of a larger puzzle of seeking to ensure there is a focus, a discourse and a series of practical responses to the challenges that older Canberrans face, whether it is

in areas of information and communications, with things like seniors' e-News or the new, centralised Assistance website, which was launched in 2012, to provide a central point of information on concessions available to assist with cost of living expenses. Work is being done to provide a high level of information and communication.

When it comes to health and wellbeing, there is, of course, all of the breadth of the ACT health system that is targeted around that, but there are some specific things around seniors, with grants and sponsorships for activities to promote positive ageing and social inclusion amongst older people. Under that program there are a series of targeted activities. There are all sorts of other things going on that are about respecting and valuing older Canberrans, such as Grandparents Day, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. These are the things which, again, paint the picture.

I think housing and accommodation is a particularly important area where the ACT government does provide considerable support. Obviously the provision of public housing in the ACT is the single biggest financial investment in this area, with a large number of older Canberrans paying rent that is well below market value, and that important community service obligation is being fulfilled through the public housing system.

Then there are other specific programs, for example, the recent allocation in the budget to design options for new age-specific units. That is something that Housing ACT has been very focused on in recent years, to try to provide more accommodation in that regard.

When it comes to transport and mobility, the ACTION gold card is, I think, a well-known benefit to older Canberrans, and I think this is very important because it does help promote mobility in the city. In the most recent budget, we saw the qualifying age for an ACTION gold card reduced from 75 to 70, which will provide free bus travel for an additional 9,000 older Canberrans. Clearly, this specifically lowers their living costs but also increases the likelihood of staying mobile and socially active and connected.

We also have the electronic taxi smartcard being introduced by late 2013 which will support seniors to more easily move around in their community by offering a simpler and more efficient system for clients of the taxi subsidy scheme, many of whom are frail and elderly.

One of the areas I am particularly interested in is actually work in retirement and the discrimination against older people in the workforce. There has been some very interesting recent work provided by the Australian Law Reform Commission which I have been having some quite detailed discussion about with the Community Services Directorate about how we might move forward some of the recommendations in that.

I think this is an area where, as a community, we are getting it wrong, in the sense that older workers are not valued in the way that they should be. There is a sense that people do not have skills anymore once they reach a certain age, and this is clearly a false and unfortunate perception that is out in the community and one that I think we all need to play our part in helping to break down.

There are many other initiatives that are around in the ACT government and that are particularly targeted at seniors. As I say, I fear, in raising some of them, there will be a derisory response that says, "They are not the essential points that we are trying to make."

I listened very carefully to Mr Doszpot's speech today. I think that he has raised some important points. They are ones that I am certainly thinking about and working with my agency to try to address issues. Some of these are federal issues. And I think that it is incumbent upon all of us in this place to raise them.

As I said at the start, unfortunately those important issues are being woven with a partisan thread, and that does make this motion one that I will not be able to support today.

**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) (12.24): I thank Mr Doszpot for raising the motion and Mr Rattenbury for his contribution. I do not think it is fair to make some of the statements that Mr Doszpot has today. So the government will not be supporting the motion as it currently stands. There are obvious inaccuracies within the motion that Mr Rattenbury has highlighted.

I think I will start on a point of agreement, though, rather than going to points of disagreement. First off, I think it is fair to note that the ACT has one of the fastest growing populations of people aged 60 years and over. That does tend to belie, though, the suggestion from Mr Doszpot at the conclusion of his speech that no-one wants to retire here. The facts would tend to indicate the contrary. In fact, Canberra is increasingly home to generations of families who choose to stay here for our city's unique and unparalleled quality of life and particularly to access our world-class health system. So I do not think the claims that have been put forward by Mr Doszpot are correct.

But let me go to the crux of Mr Doszpot's argument around taxation reform, and let me begin with stamp duty. As part of the government's tax reform, stamp duty is to be phased out over a period of around 20 years. Let us be clear—and Mr Doszpot alluded to this in his comments—one of the most significant cost pressures on older Canberrans is the cost of stamp duty when they make a decision to downsize their housing. And Mr Doszpot has confirmed that. What tax reform means for older Canberrans is significantly reduced stamp duty fees when they choose to downsize.

Mr Doszpot also referred in his comments to the costs of running a motor vehicle and particularly the costs of insuring a motor vehicle. Tax reform means that the cost of insurance taxes goes down. Taxes on insurance are abolished, a big cost saving for those who are running a motor vehicle.

Mr Doszpot calls for transport improvement. The government agree, and we have got a significant program of transport improvement. The only party in this place who do not appear to support transport improvement is the Canberra Liberals. We have made, through this budget, a series of improvements to the government's concessions program. Nearly 17,000 households access the general rates rebate of up to 50 per cent of general rates.

The pensioner duty concession scheme has been further expanded, further cutting stamp duty, from 1 July this year. The full duty concession, which means households only pay \$20 in stamp duty, is available to eligible pensioners purchasing properties valued at up to \$580,000. A partial duty concession is available to eligible applicants purchasing properties valued at up to \$733,000. In the case of a vacant block, a full duty concession, only \$20 payable in stamp duty, is available for land valued at up to \$302,000, and a partial duty concession is available for land up to nearly \$350,000.

The government provides a wide range of concessions, and I am pleased to share with the Assembly information about these concessions and the number of older Canberrans who access them. The energy concession has risen by 10 per cent to \$322.10. The government estimates that nearly 25,000 households will access this concession in 2013-14. The utilities concession for water and sewerage rates increased by 2.5 per cent this year to a maximum of \$84.05. That is expected to be accessed by nearly 19,000 households. Combined, this is a total of over \$400 in savings for households on their energy and utility bills.

Mr Doszpot has outlined in his comments—and I will re-confirm that—that there is access to concessions under the spectacle subsidy scheme, the taxi subsidy scheme, for motor vehicle registration, for drivers licence, rental rebates, amongst other schemes. The government has also provided assistance to seniors card holders, as the Minister for Ageing has noted, through the gold card now being available for everyone over 70, and through a 10 per cent concession in the motor vehicle registration, which increases to a 28 per cent concession for a gas vehicle.

Self-funded retirees with medical conditions can access, through the concessions program, the spectacle subsidy scheme, the utility costs of life support equipment scheme and the taxi subsidy scheme.

The government will not be supporting this motion today because it contains inaccuracies and uninformed contributions, an example of Mr Doszpot running an approach based on baseless scare campaigns. We think that older Canberrans deserve better from this place; so we cannot be supporting resolutions to this effect. We will get on with the job of delivering for older Canberrans, particularly through the abolition of a number of taxes that older Canberrans pay now and should not have to pay, particularly tax on insurance and stamp duty.

*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 12.30 to 2.30 pm.**

### **Questions without notice Canberra Hospital—data centre**

**MR HANSON:** My question is to the Chief Minister and Minister for Health. Minister, this week you advised the Assembly about the outage at the Canberra Hospital on Monday. You stated:

An incident occurred where someone inadvertently pressed the main override power switch which controls the network and some clinical systems across the campus. This resulted in the shutdown of the business system and infrastructure hosted within the TCH data centre.

Minister, what safeguards are in place at the Canberra Hospital to prevent someone from inadvertently pressing the main override power switch and why did these safeguards fail on Monday?

**MS GALLAGHER:** The Health Directorate will brief me once they have done a full review of the incident and when that is available I will update the Assembly. At the moment the information I have shared with you is all the information I have received to date. But, of course, this matter is being reviewed by the directorate and as more information becomes available, it will.

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

**MR HANSON:** Thank you, Chief Minister, and you may need to take this on notice as well. Has the data from the paper records been updated on the relevant clinical systems, has this process been checked and how reliable is that updating process?

**MS GALLAGHER:** They will be updated. I cannot tell you whether they have all been updated across all the systems. They will be updated and then they will go through the data verification process. I would also add that the director of data integrity—I think it has a slightly different title—has been appointed to the Health Directorate in the last month. That is a new position. It is separate from this issue, but in terms of data verification that position has been filled. If there are further changes that that person believes need to be done to ensure that data processes are all they need to be, they will be implemented.

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

**MR DOSZPOT:** Do Calvary hospital or other areas of ACT Health use the clinical systems that were closed down? If so, what impact did this have on clients of the relevant areas or staff?

**MS GALLAGHER:** Calvary does use similar systems. We are in a process of trying to align more of the IT systems across both hospitals. I am not advised that Calvary was implicated in any of the issues that occurred on the Canberra Hospital site, but I am awaiting a full briefing on it. I have been provided with some early information. I am not aware that Calvary was involved in terms of the shut-down of the system.

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

**MR DOSZPOT:** What other ACT government agencies rely on infrastructure hosted within the TCH data centre? What impact did the closedown have on the relevant agencies?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I do not believe that there are other directorates relying on the TCH data centre or the systems that were affected. But, again, if I am wrong I will come and update the Assembly.

**Mr Doszpot:** We were affected.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Questions without notice. Mrs Jones.

**Ms Gallagher:** On the systems that were affected. You do not use EDIS here.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Are you two finished? Questions without notice. Mrs Jones.

### **Government—executive contracts**

**MRS JONES:** Madam Speaker, my question is to the Chief Minister. Last week, you advised the Assembly that a number of executive contracts that should have been tabled within six sitting days had not been. You also tabled 41 long-term contracts, 57 short-term contracts and 37 contract variations. How many of those contracts had not been tabled within the mandatory six sitting days? What is the reason the relevant contracts were not tabled in the Assembly on time?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I would have to go through and see which ones were not tabled on time. There are a significant number that were not. We are undergoing an audit process at the moment. The information I have to date is that there have been lapses in the tabling of executive contracts that date back to 1996. So it is an extensive piece of work that is underway to ascertain why that situation has occurred.

There are issues in terms of the dating. There were no unsigned contracts tabled last week, but there will be three unsigned contracts tabled tomorrow. There were undated contracts. Again, the issue of dating is around meeting the tabling requirements; it is not relevant to the period of time of the contract. So, yes, there have been significant breakdowns in the tabling of executive contracts dating back many, many years. We are in the process of cleaning it up.

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

**MRS JONES:** Could there be a little bit more information, if possible? What was the reason that you had not tabled the relevant contracts on time and for how long has the problem existed where contracts have failed to be tabled on time? Is it just since 1996 or is it possibly before that?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I have seen some information to date that indicates it has been probably in every calendar year since 1996 until now. I do not think there is a standard reason why. There are some process problems—the difference between how short-term contracts and long-term contracts are executed. There are differences around performance elements or performance agreements that underpin the contracts. There is a whole range of different reasons that can be offered.

My own view is that the Assembly has expressed its view about what should be done under the Public Sector Management Act, and that standard has not been met by the public service. As soon as I became aware of this—and it was in relation to a question that Mr Hanson asked in estimates around a particular individual—when I went to further questioning around the processes which led to the non-tabling of that contract, I became aware that there were several hundred others that had not been done, as I said, since 1996.

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

**MS LAWDER:** Chief Minister, which directorates have had the biggest problem with not ensuring that contracts have been tabled on time?

**MS GALLAGHER:** It is right across the board. I do not think there is a particular directorate. It goes back to when Mr Smyth was minister for urban services. There are many that were not tabled then. There are many that were not tabled in Treasury, in Chief Minister's, in health and community care when it was health and community care.

There does not seem to be a serial offender. In the last 12 months, for example, I think that there have been around 1,900 contracts executed. That gives you the scale of the business process that has been managed across government. From my understanding, there are several hundred, for whatever reason, that have not been tabled over those many years. It is a small part, but when you look at it over many years there are a substantial number that have not met the tabling requirements.

The tabling requirements are an accountability measure and a reporting for information only. It has not affected the validity of the contracts or the nature of the employment arrangements, but it has failed in terms of an accountability process to the Assembly, which is the important one.

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

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, will we, by the end of tomorrow's sitting, be completely up to date with the tabling of all contracts?

**MS GALLAGHER:** We will be up to date with the tabling of all current contracts. As I said, there is an audit underway looking at contracts for employees whose contracts have ended, who are no longer employees of the ACT government or whose contracts date back many years. Those contracts are not available as many of them have been archived. So they are not available for tabling, but we are undergoing that audit process now. As I have more information available about it, I will update the Assembly.

### **Water—Murray-Darling Basin**

**MS LAWDER:** Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development. Yesterday, you said in response to a question from



Mr Doszpot about funding for water catchment plans under the Murray-Darling Basin management plan:

That funding is now reflected in an exchange of letters between me and Minister Burke and is contingent on the commonwealth accepting a business case on the expenditure of that \$85 million.

Will you table the business case and the letters exchanged between yourself and Minister Burke and the business case in the Assembly by close of business today? If not, why not?

**MR CORBELL:** I am happy to table any correspondence between myself and Minister Burke on the matter. In relation to the business case, the business case is currently the subject of consideration by the commonwealth and it would not be appropriate to release that business case until the commonwealth has concluded its deliberations on the proposal.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Supplementary question, Ms Lawder

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, has the federal government given any indications of in-principle support for the projects outlined in the business case?

**MR CORBELL:** I am advised that at officer level officials have indicated broad support for the business case proposals.

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

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, for how long will funding for these projects be delayed as a result of the ACT failing to reach agreement with the commonwealth on the business case before the start of the caretaker period? When are we likely to see work start on these projects?

**MR CORBELL:** It is worth pointing out that the government's business case was submitted well ahead of the commencement of the caretaker period, a number of months ahead of it.

**Mr Smyth:** Define "well ahead".

**MR CORBELL:** A number of months ahead of it, and the government is not able to control or dictate the time frames of federal elections.

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

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, when did you submit the business case to the commonwealth and why did you fail to get the business case approved by the commonwealth before the start of the caretaker period?

**MR CORBELL:** If Mr Doszpot thinks that I am able to compel or force the federal minister for the environment to accept our business case within a time frame of my choosing, he has rocks in his head.

**Health—cardiac survival rates**

**MS PORTER:** Madam Speaker, my question, through you, is to the Minister for Health. Can the minister advise the Assembly about the improvements that have been made to cardiac survival rates in the ACT over the past decade?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I thank Ms Porter for her question on the very important issue of cardiac survival rates in the ACT and the improvements we have seen over the past decade. I believe this is an issue that has been canvassed in the media over the last month, where recognition was given to the ACT health system for the improvements that have been seen in both the access to treatment and the consequential survival rate.

In July this year, the Heart Foundation released statistics compiled from ABS data showing that heart attack death rates across Australia have dropped dramatically over the past decade. Nationwide, the reduction was 39 per cent over the past decade, but the ACT saw the most significant drop, 60 per cent, between 2001 and 2011. In 2001, 146 people in the ACT died from heart attack, and by 2011 this had reduced to 70.

This is important and I think shows the gains that have been made despite the increase in our population over that period. We saw a 60 per cent decline in death rates despite a 14½ per cent increase in the ACT's population and a 95 per cent increase in the number of people admitted to hospital with a heart attack in the same period.

There have been many changes in medical treatment for the prevention of heart attacks over the past decade, including the use of new technologies. In the 1980s, blocked arteries were opened with the use of clot-dissolving agents. However, since the 1990s, arteries are now opened mechanically through stent insertion to open the arteries. Canberra was one of the first hospitals to perform this type of procedure.

There are many other processes that have been developed to ensure that treatment is carried out quickly, with early activation and intervention. Optimal treatment for a heart attack is within 90 minutes, with early administration of thrombolytic therapy, which is a medication given to dissolve clots within a time critical time frame. Also, patients in cardiac arrest are triaged category 1 and seen immediately. Patients who present with chest pain of a likely cardiac nature would be categorised as category 2, to be seen within 10 minutes.

The Canberra Hospital does very well in this regard. We have also led the way with cross-border access to cardiac services which provides patients who live in southern New South Wales access to early diagnosis and rapid treatment for heart attacks. Through a joint initiative, New South Wales paramedics treating patients with a possible heart attack are now able to acquire and electronically transmit an electrocardiogram to the Canberra Hospital emergency department, enabling urgent decisions to be made regarding appropriate treatment.

This is a success story for the ACT health system. It is a success story for the emergency department and the way that people presenting with cardiac troubles, cardiac symptoms and in cardiac arrest are treated quickly and are able to receive

treatment in the cardiac catheter lab, usually within one hour of presenting with symptoms.

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

**MS PORTER:** Minister, what other initiatives have brought about improvements in the cardiac survival rate?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I thank Ms Porter for the question. Initiatives include advances in technology to enable quicker and more effective treatment for patients. The Canberra Hospital has also opened a chest pain evaluation unit, which is a new unit designed to fast-track treatment of low risk acute coronary syndrome patients. The unit is designed to promote early diagnosis and safe intervention for low risk patients. This four-bed unit sits within the coronary care unit and works closely with the emergency department. The research shows that fast-tracking these patients delivers better results for their outcomes, and patients who require surgery are managed pre and post surgery during the acute phase of their illness.

The Canberra Hospital also provides a cardiac rehabilitation program, which consists of patient education, providing information about management of cardiovascular disease, secondary prevention, diet, exercise, medication, and social and emotional issues. The rehabilitation service also includes an exercise program which provides information about how to return to activities such as work. The final stage of the program includes a maintenance exercise program.

Mr Tony Stubbs, who is a very strong advocate for heart health and who leads the Heart Foundation here in the ACT, said at the time that the foundation's report was released that anyone in Canberra can ring 000 and seek an ambulance and will be on the table in surgery within one hour. Mr Stubbs also noted that the ACT's cardiac survival rate can be attributed to a mix of better technology, improved emergency systems and, importantly, our less congested roads.

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

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, what are the risks associated with repeat heart attacks for heart attack survivors?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Sorry, can you repeat the question, Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, what are the risks associated with repeat heart attacks for heart attack survivors?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** It is marginally there. Minister for Health.

**MS GALLAGHER:** It does relate to cardiac survival rates.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Yes, but he did not say that.

**MS GALLAGHER:** Heart attack survivors. Unfortunately, high cardiac survival rates mean that many more people are living with heart damage and disability as a result of having suffered a heart attack. The evidence suggests that people who have survived a heart attack are also at higher risk of having another. The statistics released by the Heart Foundation found that across Australia in 2011, 55,000 people were hospitalised because of a heart attack and that half of those were due to a repeat event.

Risks associated with repeat heart attacks include sudden cardiac death and worsening heart muscle function. So part of the job of providing the treatment and care for people surviving their heart attacks is to lower the risks of those people having subsequent heart attacks and work with them to change their lifestyles to ensure they have good cardiac health following their heart attack episodes.

Again, I think credit where credit is due: the health system gets a lot of negative press, but in this area I think it shows how hard the entire hospital system has worked with the non-government sector and regionally with New South Wales to make sure that if you are in our region and you are experiencing heart attack symptoms, you will get first-class care and treatment that you would not necessarily find in lots of other places in the world right here in Canberra provided by suitably qualified staff. The results speak for themselves.

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

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, what lessons have been learnt from these survivors that can provide actions for people to take to minimise their risk of cardiac events?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I thank Mr Gentleman for the question. Steps to minimise risk of heart attacks include lifestyle therapy, and most particularly the management of diet and exercise. We are doing a lot of work in collaboration with the Heart Foundation, the University of Canberra and GPs to increase the screening of patients in primary health care for heart risk factors and the management of those risk factors, such as high blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes and smoking, and making sure that people are aware of the risks associated with those lifestyle factors.

We are also looking at making sure that all patients who have a heart attack are managed through appropriate medications, including blood thinners, blood pressure lowering agents and cholesterol lowering agents. With all of these interventions, the majority of which are within the control of the patients themselves, the chances of another heart attack are reduced by 70 per cent.

I think we should acknowledge that there have been great gains made in the treatment of people experiencing cardiac arrest and significant improvements in cardiac survival rates in the ACT, much better than we are seeing across the country.

## Visitors

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Before I call the next question, Mr Doszpot, could I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the members of the Belconnen Probus Club who are here as guests of the parliamentary education group. I welcome you to our Assembly.

## Questions without notice

### Parking—Telopea Park

**MR DOSZPOT:** My question is directed to the Minister for Territories and Municipal Services. Minister, from Monday of this week parking on the west side of Telopea Park is prohibited and a two-hour time limit is to be imposed in adjacent off-street car parks. What was the reason for TAMS to make this decision and what consultation was taken prior to the policy change?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I thank Mr Doszpot for the question. This is a matter that has been in train for some time. Residents in the area have contacted Roads ACT with concerns about safety, particularly their ability to get out of their driveways with vehicles parked in the street. As members may recall, it is a 60 kilometres an hour zone down that street.

TAMS has undertaken investigations into this. The road is of a width that is right on the borderline of whether there can be full-scale parking there or not. There was some suggestion that the centre-line be moved to allow for both vehicles to be travelling in both directions and a level of parking. TAMS took those various options to the residents and there was strong feedback indicating that the residents felt the safest option would be to have no parking on Telopea Park west.

In respect of the parking areas inside Telopea Park, they have now been made a two-hour zone. That is to facilitate the fact that up until now those parking areas, members may again recall, are dirt car parks within Telopea Park. They have been used by office workers to park there all day. People who wanted to access Telopea Park during the day, particularly mothers with young children, found that they were unable to get a parking spot. So that has now been turned into a two-hour zone to enable people to access it during the day.

As part of the changeover, information is being provided about alternative all-day parking areas in the region. There is a three-hour parking zone in the middle of Wentworth Avenue, which will be suitable for some people, and there is also free all-day parking near the bus depot markets.

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

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, what arrangements have been made for when there are matches at Manuka Oval for match-day parking then at Telopea Park?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I do not believe there is a specific arrangement on that one, Mr Doszpot. I would have to check whether the two-hour zones are seven days or five days—Monday to Friday. I cannot remember. But each time there is an event at Manuka Oval, a specific temporary traffic management plan has to be prepared. That is done as a partnership generally between the Economic Development Directorate, as the agency responsible for Manuka Oval, through territory venues and events, and TAMS. So that is something that would need to be prepared in that context.

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

**MRS JONES:** Minister, were any studies done to assess traffic and parking demands over a variety of times during the week and weekends before arriving at this decision? If so, what were the results and, if not, why were those studies not undertaken.

**MR RATTENBURY:** What I will do, Mrs Jones, is I will take part of that on notice to see what information is available if you would like the specific details. As I indicated earlier, there was a series of discussions undertaken between Roads ACT and the residents in the area, but Roads, of course, looked at it more broadly. I will have to take on notice some of the specifics and provide those to you at a later time if you wish.

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

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, this change has been brought about by the concerns of residents. How often does this kind of advocacy lead to parking arrangements changing?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I think this is one of the very challenging issues that the government is trying to deal with at the moment—the tension between the desire of Canberra’s residents to not have any cars parked on their streets and the desire of Canberra residents to drive to work and park for free. This is quite a challenge for the government because there is a disconnect between these two positions, one that the community is quite engaged in in terms of it evoking strong passions on both sides of the argument.

It varies depending on the location. Certainly the areas around the parliamentary triangle are areas that particularly come into focus. But there are areas around Woden. Residents in suburbs such as Lyons, Chifley and Curtin have written to me about these kinds of matters. They have been the two areas where I have particularly received representations.

The approach TAMS takes is to try and balance the competing issues. For example, in Forrest, where there is a school, restrictions have been put in place because it particularly evokes a safety issue around the coming and going of children and extensive parking in the street. It is done on a case-by-case basis, depending primarily on safety factors, but also on the ability of residents to get in and out of their street during certain times and the width of those streets and the capability to have parking in them. There is not a hard and fast rule as such. It is something where TAMS tries to draw the best outcome for as much of the community as possible.

### **Disability services—Disability ACT**

**MR WALL:** My question is to the Minister for Disability, Children and Young people. Minister, the transition to the national disability insurance scheme will see the opening of a DisabilityCare office here in the ACT. Minister, what role will Disability ACT fulfil once the DisabilityCare office has commenced operation in the territory?

**MS BURCH:** I thank Mr Wall for his question. I think it is a work in progress. Certainly, DisabilityCare will cover most, or a significant number of, folk with a disability in the ACT. But there will still need to be a directorate function with an agency about a broader disability strategy that is not captured by the service provision within DisabilityCare.

There is no doubt that the direct employment of many disability support officers may change and the role and function of Disability ACT will certainly change. We will continue to have a presence, as will Therapy ACT, but that presence and functions will no doubt change.

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

**MR WALL:** Minister, when will the DisabilityCare office commence operation in the territory, and are any locations currently sited?

**MS BURCH:** It is very early in discussions, but, as I understand it, they are looking to have a presence come the end of this year to give them a six-month presence in the ACT. These are very early discussions at this time. Certainly I and a number of officials have a very strong interest in having them co-located in Conservation House with Disability ACT so those natural partnerships can grow and develop, but it is early days.

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

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, when will individuals be able to meet with DisabilityCare Australia here in the ACT to begin planning for their own transition to the new funding model?

**MS BURCH:** It is something that has been raised with me, which is why I would like to see a presence established by the end of this year. Certainly, as we have moved through the enhanced service offer, I am very pleased to note that there were over 1,300 applications for the enhanced service offer for the first round. So that tells me two things. One is that our information session and how we promoted those grants worked. It also indicates the level of interest people have in the ACT about enhanced and improved services.

As part of the enhanced service offers we employed individual planners. So some of that early thinking, that early work with clients and their families about how they start to think differently about choice and control, has indeed started through the enhanced service offer. As I said, DisabilityCare is yet to be formally structured. I would like to see it here by the end of the year so that process can start.

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

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, what are the key advantages of the move to DisabilityCare under the NDIS?

**MS BURCH:** The move to DisabilityCare has been, I think, well articulated. We have a number of launch sites already now in play, and we will certainly join that in July of next year. One of the fundamental thrusts of this is to give choice and control to individuals and their families and also to, in many ways, take out the inequity out of the different systems operating in different states and jurisdictions. It is about fair and reasonable access to support for all, no matter where you live.

### **Budget—concessions**

**MS BERRY:** My question is to the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer please outline for the Assembly the concessions contained in the 2013-14 budget to support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our community?

**MR BARR:** I thank Ms Berry for the question. The 2013-14 territory budget provides a significant range of concessions for households, most notably in the areas of energy and utilities, general rates, fire and emergency services, drivers licence and motor vehicle registration fees, public transport fares and the ACTION gold card. Concessions are also available to meet the cost of spectacles, the energy costs of life-support equipment, the taxi subsidy scheme and energy and water efficiency programs.

The 2013-14 budget increases the concession rebate on electricity bills by 10 per cent and the rebate on other utility bills by 2.5 per cent. The two rebates combined save 25,000 eligible households over \$400 per year.

The 2013-14 budget also provides assistance to first homebuyers through the increase in the first homebuyers grant from \$7,000 to \$12½ thousand. Eligible purchasers will also have access to the homebuyer concession scheme. This reduces stamp duty to as low as \$20 for some households.

Households also receive assistance in the 2013-14 budget through the provision of affordable housing programs. These are in addition to the provision of public housing for people who have difficulty obtaining housing in the private market or who have special needs. In the 2013-14 budget, \$133 million is provided to cover the gap between the market rent of public housing stock and the amount which tenants are charged.

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

**MS BERRY:** Can the Treasurer outline how the ACT government targets its concessions program.

**MR BARR:** The government's cost of living support concessions program is targeted at those who need it most. Concession programs help offset the cost of living pressures for some of the lowest income households in the territory, particularly targeting those in the lowest income quartile. These programs are designed as a safety net for Canberrans.



The government's targeted assistance strategy is aimed at those people and families who sit just above the concessional safety net and are not receiving government income support but are at risk of financial shock. These families typically have incomes falling in the second income quintile and are more likely to experience financial stress but are less likely to seek assistance from community or welfare organisations. The focus of the government strategy is on easing household pressures and reducing the shock of a big bill hitting the household budget.

The ACT government assistance website provides information on the range of ACT and commonwealth government funded programs. The site now receives 7,500 monthly visits. I can advise the Assembly that over 85 per cent of these visits are from first-time users. Examples of the programs available include the no interest loan scheme, to support people who are unable to access mainstream credit; and the energy efficiency improvement scheme, which requires energy retailers to assist households to reduce energy costs. That scheme now also assists small businesses. And \$5½ million is made available by the government to reduce public dental waiting lists.

In addition, a range of assistance programs are available at all household income levels. For example, the government provides assistance for the purchase of a first home through the enhanced first home owner grant.

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

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Treasurer, can you outline what further measures the ACT government is taking to support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our community?

**MR BARR:** The 2013-14 budget is providing substantial funding to support ACT households with the costs associated with caring for disabled family members. The budget invests a \$5.5 million allocation over two years for enhanced services to prepare the territory for the full rollout of DisabilityCare from 2014. This is in addition to the \$10.6 million in funding received from the commonwealth government for this purpose.

DisabilityCare will deliver a new system of disability support focused on the needs and choices of people with a disability and will significantly reduce the associated cost of living pressures on those ACT households.

Funding is also provided for disability support services such as school transport, additional learning resources for students with complex learning needs, payroll tax rebates for organisations who employ people with a disability and a drop-in centre for people with a profound disability.

The 2013-14 budget also funds an extension of the energy efficiency improvement scheme, which has helped 2,000 households in the last six months reduce their energy costs by around 22 per cent per household. The ACT government is also reducing cost of living pressures by reducing study costs for eligible persons through the Indigenous scholarship program, extending the trial of free bulky waste collection services for

eligible pensioner and concession card holders and, of course, for everyone in the ACT through abolishing the tax on insurance.

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

**DR BOURKE:** Treasurer, what sort of consultation does this targeted assistance strategy stem from?

**MR BARR:** I thank Dr Bourke for the question. The government sought extensive consultation with the community sector, with agencies and organisations who, as part of their day-to-day work, are assisting people and households in need. We have consulted widely within ACT government as well to garner the good ideas of people who work within the ACT public service delivering services to Canberrans.

That consultation has extended to people who have an interest in the interaction of federal payments and the national tax system with the territory's own taxation system, looking at things like effective marginal taxation rates, working also with organisations who are delivering services such as providing food to households in need.

It has been an extensive consultation process that has led to this policy strategy and to the particular outcomes of the 2013-14 budget. I am very pleased that this budget, delivered by a Labor government, ensures that those who are most in need receive the support that they deserve.

### **Bushfires—preparedness**

**MR SMYTH:** My question is to the minister for emergency services. Minister, of the 24 recommendations in the Auditor-General's report on the ACT's bushfire preparedness, six were identified as high priority. They relate to the following: preparation and approval of bushfire operational plans; across-government project management; land management agreements; ACT Rural Fire Service brigades; strategic bushfire capability; and competency training and incident management team capability. Minister, why are we still getting recommendations from the Auditor-General in 2013 that are very similar to those made nearly a decade ago by the McLeod commission and Coroner Doogan?

**MR CORBELL:** I thank Mr Smyth for the question. The Auditor-General's response in her audit, as I have said before, is a strong endorsement of the framework and the capability of our Emergency Services and the fact that we have come a very long way since 2003. The Auditor-General makes that observation herself—that there has been substantial improvement in the delivery of emergency services since the terrible bushfires of January 2003.

So let us be in no doubt about the complete context in which the Auditor-General made her observations about areas for further improvement. As I have said before, the government always welcomes audit conclusions that identify areas for ongoing improvement in the management of different areas of government operations. This one is no different. But the Auditor-General herself has said clearly and unequivocally

that the framework for managing bushfires is a robust one and that there has been substantive improvement since 2003 and commends our Emergency Services for the work they have done to make sure our city is better prepared than ever before to deal with the threat of bushfire in the coming years.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, given the rapid approach of the next fire season, when will the government take action to implement these high priority recommendations so that we do not continue to hear them in repetition?

**MR CORBELL:** The ESA has a comprehensive program of ongoing improvement and implementation to ensure we are ready for every bushfire season. I think our emergency services demonstrated that beyond question in January this year when we saw a series of lightning strikes in Namadgi National Park with about 48 hours before dangerous, very hot, heightened-fire-danger weather conditions arrived that would have pushed any fire from the north and north west towards the urban area. Our response demonstrated that we have learnt the lessons. Our response demonstrated that we had the capability, the organisational strength, the people on the ground and the systems to get those fires out. And we got them out through rapid, aggressive attack so that they did not spread when the wind change arrived and they did not present a danger to our city. That, above all else, is a very clear indication of how well we have learnt from 2003 and how well prepared and how hard our emergency services work to be prepared for those types of circumstances.

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

**MR WALL:** Minister, why does your government continue to ignore the advice of experts and independent reviewers with regard to bushfire preparedness?

**MR CORBELL:** We do not.

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

**MR WALL:** Minister, why does your government continue to fail in its duty to the people of Canberra to have proper bushfire mitigation systems in place?

**MR CORBELL:** Fail in our duty, Madam Speaker? What is the overriding duty? To get the fire out. That is the overriding duty. And what happened in January this year? The fires were put out, and they were put out promptly. They were put out aggressively. They were put out because of the investment this government has put into equipment, into communications, into training, into helicopters, into vehicles on the ground, into lightning detection systems. That is what the real test is: did the fires get put out? Did they get put out before the dangerous north-westerly wind change arrived? Yes, they did.

### **Arts—Street Theatre**

**DR BOURKE:** My question is to the Minister for the Arts. Minister, can you update the Assembly on the progress of the capital upgrade of the Street Theatre to turn it

into one of the three arts hubs envisioned in the government's response to the Loxton review of the arts?

**MS BURCH:** I do thank Dr Bourke for his interest in the arts. Indeed, earlier this month I had the pleasure of officially opening the \$3 million upgrade of the Street Theatre which was completed on time and on budget. The completed works include a new rehearsal venue, new seating in the main theatre, approved acoustic treatments, a new box office and cafe, expansion of the foyer space and additional administrative spaces. The upgrade not only supports the makers of theatre, dance and music but also provides new opportunities for Canberrans to come to shows, visit the cafe and support Canberra's exciting performing arts scene.

Indeed, a key priority of the ACT arts policy framework that I launched last year is to enhance existing arts hubs to build vibrancy, to support best practice and to increase access to and participation in the arts. This investment in arts infrastructure is about planning for our city's artistic needs and forms an important part of the ACT government's vision to establish arts hubs in Canberra.

To put this in some historical context, two years ago the ACT government engaged independent consultant Peter Loxton to review Canberra's art sector, with over 500 individuals, artists and representatives from arts organisations participating in the review. The report made a number of recommendations around enhancing and reforming arts policy and sparked some major reforms around how we support arts in this city.

I am proud, as arts minister for more than two years now, to have been able to progress many of these reforms, the establishment of the arts hubs being perhaps the biggest reform that we have embarked on and which I can report is well and truly on its way to being realised. The vision is to establish a visual arts hub in Kingston, a performance arts hub at the Street Theatre, a music hub at the Ainslie Arts Centre and, following the budget we hope to pass this week, we lay claim to be well on the way to delivering on these commitments.

The completion of the works at the Street Theatre is a significant milestone for the Canberra arts community, and I commend Monarch Building Solutions for turning that vision into a reality at Street Theatre.

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

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, what opportunities will the upgrade provide for Canberra's performing arts community?

**MS BURCH:** The intention of establishing the arts hubs is to facilitate a sharing of administration and resources so that local arts organisations can concentrate more on the arts activities and programs. The creation of the arts hubs will add more vibrancy to the local arts sector by increasing the critical mass for a number of local arts organisations. I believe that they will be an important platform to further develop the city's art sector.

At the Street Theatre, the upgrades which have been completed will enable the Street Theatre staff, who previously worked from a temporary demountable cabin, to now work in a professional environment and take the Street Theatre into the future. There is also provision for visiting artists or groups to use the administrative spaces to progress their work. The rehearsal space will enable a wide range of theatre, dance and other performing arts people to rehearse in a purpose-built venue. The improved dressing rooms provide performers with appropriate backstage facilities and the café will add to the vibrancy and the experience of the Street Theatre. The new administration suite of offices has a number of individual work stations designed to allow for independent producers, visiting companies or individual artists to operate on a short-term basis while presenting performances at the Street theatre—all while developing new work as part of the Street Theatre's program. This will allow the Street Theatre to continue to broker new projects, programs and partnerships in a model of dynamic creative performing arts hubs. I commend the work of Caroline Stacey and her team at the Street Theatre and I look forward to the exciting productions that the facilities will enhance.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, you mentioned arts hubs in your answer then. What is the progress with the Kingston arts hub and when will we see construction start?

**MS BURCH:** In this budget you will see a commitment to progressing Kingston as a visual arts precinct. A key part of that precinct is to have Megalo relocate. I was pleased to go to their first formal membership exhibition just recently. If those opposite have not been there, I encourage you to go. I think that the renovation of the old LDA offices has been a fantastic bit of construction work and renovation work. I know that Megalo are pleased in many ways to be home.

The Kingston area has a long history and association with print. So it was always right and fitting for Megalo to be part of that precinct, which they have now become part of. Already the synergies and conversations between the Canberra Glassworks and Megalo have continued. We will continue to work to make sure that Kingston is developed into the visual arts precinct that we have all hoped for. It has always been a very strong personal disappointment of mine that in many ways that progress and that vision has been stalled through the activities of members in this place.

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

**MS BERRY:** Minister, what other work is the government doing to progress the arts hubs vision to plan for the future needs of Canberra's arts community?

**MS BURCH:** I thank Ms Berry for her interest in the arts. As I have mentioned, the government has made significant progress in establishing the three arts hubs, and this budget makes considerable investment towards that, not just at Kingston and Ainslie but also in one of Canberra's most important community arts assets in Gorman House Arts Centre.

At Kingston, as I have just said, the budget commits \$300,000 to progress the planning of the visual arts precinct there, and I am pleased that work will progress and that Megalo is, indeed, one of the plank tenants down in Kingston.

In addition, I have instructed artsACT to commission some work around the Fitters Workshop to determine what needs to be done to make that building compliant with health and safety requirements so it can be used by community groups. I anticipate that work to be occurring over the next short while. Speaking with Megalo and Canberra Glassworks, I know they have expressed an interest in the use of fitters in supporting their future exhibitions.

### **Transport—light rail**

**MR COE:** My question is to the Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development regarding light rail. Minister, in August 2012 the ACT government made a submission to Infrastructure Australia for light rail or bus rapid transit. A few months later the government decided to go ahead with light rail. Minister, what information became available between the time of the submission and the time that light rail was decided, and did that information support light rail over buses?

**MR CORBELL:** The IA submission was not a submission asking IA to choose between bus rapid transit and light rail. That is wrong. The submission to IA was a request for funding to further develop analysis of the two options, not to choose between one or the other. That is one of the misrepresentations that Mr Coe has persistently made in the public debate.

The government took the decision in the lead-up to the October election that we had to demonstrate and bite the bullet on what was the most appropriate transport mode for the city. There have been extensive and detailed investigations, dating all the way back to the mid-1990s, about the best options for the corridor. The government was privy to the analysis undertaken in the development of the business case which showed that, by the higher density land use value model, LRT was the preferred option.

The choices we have as a city are pretty stark and pretty clear. We can continue to develop as business as usual, with more and more people living far away from the city centre—

**Mr Coe:** A point of order, Madam Speaker, on relevance. The specific question was: what information became available between the time of the submission and the time where the government decided to construct light rail?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Corbell, can I ask you to be directly relevant to the question.

**MR CORBELL:** Madam Speaker, we did not commission any new or additional analysis during that time because there was over a decade of analysis already available. Instead we took the decision, Madam Speaker—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Sit down, Mr Corbell. Can you stop the clock please, Clerk. I have asked you to be directly relevant to the question. The question was: what new information did you come across between—

**MR CORBELL:** And, Madam Speaker—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Let me finish my sentence. What new information did you become aware of between September and when you announced the policy on light rail? So can you be directly relevant to that.

**MR CORBELL:** Madam Speaker, can I draw your attention to my answer, which was that no additional information became available, and I was elaborating on that. I do not know why you have just called me to order, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Have you finished answering the question?

**MR CORBELL:** No, I have not.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Okay, but are you going to be directly relevant to the issue?

**MR CORBELL:** Madam Speaker, could I draw your attention to the fact that when you previously called me to order and asked me to be relevant, I immediately stood up and, in direct response to the question which was asked, which was what additional information became available to the government, I said that no additional information became available to the government. I do not understand on what basis you have further called me to order after that point.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** If that was the answer, have you finished the answer?

**MR CORBELL:** I am asking you, Madam Speaker, why did you further call me to order?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Because I thought you were not being directly relevant. Perhaps I misheard you, Mr Corbell, but I did not think you were being directly relevant to my ruling to ask you to be directly relevant.

**MR CORBELL:** Madam Speaker, I am not quite sure how much further directly relevant I can be than to say that no further information became available, and I was elaborating on that.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Okay, so that is the answer to the question?

**MR CORBELL:** No, I am elaborating on that, Madam Speaker, as I am sure I am allowed to do under the standing orders.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Okay, could we start the clock then, if you are elaborating.

**MR CORBELL:** Am I able to proceed, Madam Speaker?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Yes.

**MR CORBELL:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. We have a very clear choice as a city. We can continue with business as usual. We can continue with the development of suburbs that are further and further away from the core central services that citizens need, or we can make the change and a choice—

**Mr Hanson:** Madam Speaker—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Do you have a point of order, Mr Hanson?

**Mr Hanson:** I do actually have a point of order, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Okay, you need to say “point of order” when you stand up.

**Mr Hanson:** You have asked the minister to be directly relevant. The question was very specific about whether there was any additional information. The minister has answered that in part, and now I question whether he is being relevant to the actual question or not.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Corbell has said that he received no other information but he does have time available to him. Could we stop the clock? He still has time available to him. It is a bit of a moot point. Mr Corbell is entitled, whilst being relevant and talking about the information he may or may not have received, to talk about the government’s policy.

**MR CORBELL:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. So we can either continue to develop in the way that we have or we can make some strategic long-term investments that change the pattern of development in our city, that allow more people to live close to the city centre, so they can have more affordable housing options.

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

**MR CORBELL:** They do not like it, Madam Speaker, because this government—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Sit down, Mr Corbell. You are not entitled to comment on whether someone takes a point of order. Mr Smyth on the point of order.

**Mr Smyth:** Under standing order 118B, is the minister now debating the subject and therefore in violation of the standing orders?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Nice try, Mr Smyth. Mr Corbell, would you like to proceed?

**MR CORBELL:** Not now, Madam Speaker, not with eight seconds left.

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

**MR COE:** Minister, on what date did the ACT government advise Infrastructure Australia that light rail was the preferred mode.



**DR BOURKE:** A point of order, Madam Speaker, on relevance. We have really, really found out what this question is about. It was about what new information did the minister become aware of between September and the announcement of the light rail. Now this is something completely different.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The standing orders, Dr Bourke, say that one supplementary question may be asked by the member who asked the original question provided the supplementary question is relevant to the original question. I think the original question was about Infrastructure Australia and the choice between light rail and rapid bus transit. The question has no preamble and arises out of the answer given. I think Mr Coe asking the responsible minister when he made a decision in relation to a particular mode is directly relevant. Mr Corbell.

**MR CORBELL:** Infrastructure Australia was advised when the government was re-elected and returned to office to implement its program.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, if no information came to light after your application to Infrastructure Australia, were you wasting Infrastructure Australia's time by putting in your original submission?

**MR CORBELL:** No, because unlike those opposite we actually take the view that government is empowered to set and determine policy, policy that it believes is in the best long-term interests of our city. There is no doubt that light rail is the best choice for our city. Those opposite would have you believe that buses are going to be the way we are going to manage population growth of up to half a million people. Not even you believe that, Madam Speaker. You are on the public record saying as much, Madam Speaker.

Mr Coe now wants us to believe that bus rapid transit should be built down Northbourne Avenue. Where is he going to put it? Is he going to bulldoze the median strip and build a two-lane road down the middle of Northbourne Avenue? Is that what he is going to do? Alternatively, is he going to close off a traffic lane in each direction on Northbourne Avenue for his buses? Is that what he going to do? Alternatively again, is he going to do what he tried to do on Adelaide Avenue and Belconnen Way, where cars and buses use the same lane. What I would say to that is that that does not sound a lot different from what we have right now.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, what were the higher social benefits for light rail that you referred to in your media release of 27 July this year, assessed as part of the cost-benefit analysis?

**MR CORBELL:** "Higher social benefits" refers to a range of factors, including the fact that more people will choose to walk or cycle. We know that the catchment for people choosing to undertake part of their journey by walking or cycling is larger

when it is a fixed rail route compared to a bus route. People are prepared to walk or cycle a bit further because they know that the light rail is there and it is a fixed, permanent, reliable, convenient and rapid service. Those are the types of benefits.

The other social benefits that accrue relate to things like the fact that you will see more people living close to the city centre—more people living close to where they work, more people living close to where they shop, more people living close to cultural communities and other recreational, retail and professional services.

These are good things for our city. Those opposite perhaps want to consign Canberrans to a future where you live far away from the city centre and you have to own two, three or four cars just to make your journeys every day, facing increasing costs with petrol, insurance, registration, congestion, loss of time and loss of productivity.

This government does not want that future for our city. The future this government wants for our city is a future where people have fast, reliable, convenient and sustainable public transport, where people do not have to own two or three cars to get around the city, where people do not have to be consigned to living far away from the city centre. We want more affordable housing close to the city centre. A project like capital metro galvanises those outcomes and creates them in a manner that no other transport mode can do.

### **Crime—statistics**

**MR GENTLEMAN:** My question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney, can you please outline the results of the ACT criminal justice statistical profile for the June 2013 quarter?

**MR CORBELL:** I am very pleased to report that this Labor government continues to see positive downward trends in personal and property crime. We are seeing continued, sustained downward reductions for property and personal offences, as reported in the statistical profile that I tabled in the Assembly yesterday.

Let me highlight to members some of the improvements in community safety that have been delivered in the past 12 months. First of all, in the area of robberies, including extortion and related offences, robberies have decreased by 35 per cent in the last 12 months. That is 89 fewer robberies over the past 12 months compared to the 12 months previously.

Motor vehicle theft has decreased by 27 per cent in the last 12 months. That equates to 321 fewer Canberrans' cars being stolen, because of these improvements in community safety. Burglary and break and enter offences have decreased by 14 per cent, with 375 fewer homes burgled or broken into in the past 12 months compared to the 12 months previously.

Assaults have decreased by nine per cent, with 212 fewer offences in the area of assault compared to the 12 months previously. Public order offences are down by nine per cent, with 91 fewer offences. And property damage is down by eight per cent, with 471 fewer offences.

This Labor government and its programs are working to create a safer city for all Canberrans. More police on the street, a comprehensive property crime reduction strategy, partnerships with police to tackle alcohol-related crime and violence, new reforms to liquor licensing laws are delivering results and creating a safer city for all Canberrans.

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

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Attorney, how do you account for the 46 per cent drop in juvenile detention for Indigenous people?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Who is ministerially responsible for the detention of juveniles?

**MR CORBELL:** Juvenile detention figures are reported in the statistical profile I was asked about, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I realise they were reported in the statistical profile. I am asking for some guidance on whether it is within your ministerial responsibility to answer a question about juvenile detention.

**MR CORBELL:** Insofar as I tabled the profile, yes, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I think that is probably a fairly tenuous link. I think I have to rule the supplementary question out of order. Any more supplementary questions?

**Mr Gentleman:** Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Sorry, you cannot ask another supplementary question. Ms Porter.

**MS PORTER:** Attorney, can you advise whether the decrease in property crime is in line with the target set out in the property crime reduction strategy?

**MR CORBELL:** They are consistent with the targets set out in the government's property crime reduction strategy. That strategy has set a target to reduce reported ACT burglary crime by a further 10 per cent and motor vehicle theft by a further 20 per cent by 31 December 2015 on a 2010 baseline year. These targets are based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics' publication *Recorded crime—victims, Australia 2012*, which presents national statistics relating to victims for a selected range of offences recorded by police during the 2010 to 2012 calendar year.

It is important to understand, of course, that property crime is a high volume crime. It is susceptible to fluctuations. The main aim of the strategy and its targets is to lower and sustain lower levels of burglary and motor vehicle theft over the life of the strategy. The criminal justice statistical profile shows that in the 12 months to June 2013, as I have just outlined, there have been significant decreases in almost all property crime-related offences. The challenge is to sustain these moving forward.

ACT Policing is undertaking a range of measures to do this. For example, ACT Policing has continued its new initiative where dedicated patrol members are accompanied by a forensic crime scene officer to attend priority 3 property crime incidents, including burglaries. This new approach leads to better sharing of information and intelligence in relation to crime and it also assists the victims of crime by providing a one-stop-shop attendance, recording and investigation service rather than having multiple visits on multiple occasions.

ACT Policing also continue other important measures such as project safe plate to help drive down levels of motor vehicle theft and theft also of registration plates. *(Time expired.)*

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

**MS BERRY:** Attorney, what other work is the government doing to reduce crime statistics across the ACT?

**MR CORBELL:** The government continues with a range of other measures to tackle property crime in the ACT. We are increasingly focusing our efforts on interventions with those groups in the community who are more susceptible to be engaged and caught up in crime. So whether it is engaging with people who live in, for example, low income areas or low income households more vulnerable to crime, assisting those people, particularly young people, to choose a job or to choose training or to choose further education over the choice of getting back into or deciding they want to commit crime is a critical intervention that we continue to pursue in partnership with community organisations.

These and other strategies are outlined in the property crime reduction strategy, and the government will continue to build on the excellent results we see, the significant reduction in crime we see and the significant reduction we see in the number of Indigenous young people caught up in crime. We are seeing fewer Indigenous people being remanded after arrest by the police as a result of the types of interventions the government is putting forward. These are all very, very important. We have seen a 46 per cent reduction in the number of Indigenous young people remanded in custody in the past 12 months. That is a great outcome.

So we can drive down crime. We can reduce the number of Indigenous young people caught up in crime. We can reduce overall the number of young people caught up in crime. And those are the types of measures the property crime reduction strategy, in partnership across government, is going to drive.

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

## **Crime—statistics**

### **Speaker's ruling**

**MR RATTENBURY:** Madam Speaker, might I just seek your indulgence for a clarification on Mr Gentleman's earlier supplementary question. Mr Gentleman asked

specifically about the changes in the criminal statistical profile which Minister Corbell tabled in the Assembly. You ruled the question out of order. As I understand it, through being the minister responsible for justice and community safety, including being the minister responsible for police, this would be quite relevant to Mr Corbell's portfolio. I am unclear why the question was ruled out of order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Unless I misheard—and I am open to correction from Mr Gentleman, because he probably has the exact wording—he asked what had caused the reduction in Indigenous youth incarceration, or words to that effect. My understanding is that Minister Burch is the minister responsible for Indigenous youth incarceration.

**MR CORBELL:** On that point of order, Madam Speaker, I am the minister for police. Of course, police arrest Indigenous young people. If police are changing the methodologies, the mechanisms or the interventions they use to reduce the number of arrests they have to undertake, surely I am the responsible minister.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I am sorry, but my understanding of the administrative orders is this. I will reflect on the administrative orders because this has caused some consternation amongst members. Either way I will come back to the Assembly, but if, on reflecting on the administrative orders and the wording of the question, I think I have made an error, I am perfectly happy to acknowledge that I made an error. But on the basis of the question I heard and my understanding of the administrative orders, it would be a question better directed to Minister Burch.

On reflection, perhaps Minister Burch could have answered the question. Mr Corbell could have referred the question to Minister Burch and perhaps we could have got around it then. If members want to indulge us on this occasion, I could ask whether Minister Burch wants to answer the question.

**MS BURCH:** I think I will refer to Mr Corbell. The question was in relation to statistical reporting. They do not come into my care unless they have been through the law and order process. So the question was right for the Attorney-General to answer.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** No. I am sorry, but I have made a ruling. I have said that I will reflect on the content of the question and the administrative orders and I will come back to members. I have asked members whether they would like to hear an answer to the question from the minister who I think is responsible under the administrative orders for youth incarceration. Do members not want to hear an answer to the question?

**MR CORBELL:** Madam Speaker, question time has been closed by the Chief Minister.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** That is right.

## **Retirees—challenges**

Debate resumed.

**MR SMYTH** (Brindabella) (3.44): I thank Mr Doszpot for bringing on this motion today. It is very important that we take care of older Canberrans, and that means all of them—those who might be on a pension, those who might suffer from a disability, and those who are self-funded retirees. It is not enough for a government to care for some of the constituency; they must care for all of them. We do, indeed, as Mr Doszpot has said, have one of the fastest growing populations of people aged over 60 years in the country. It is disappointing that the Labor Party, at both federal and local levels, have continued to discriminate against and forget some sectors within that age group, particularly the self-funded retirees.

Within my portfolio responsibilities we have seen how increases in water and power bills and general costs for everyday items have meant self-funded retirees and seniors on fixed incomes will have to reassess how they spend their money. On the tax front we saw just last May how the ACT Treasurer's tax reforms will, in effect, slug seniors with a death tax in addition to tripling their rates. One of the key reasons the Canberra Liberals opposed the Treasurer's tax reforms was the impact of unreasonable general rates increases on Canberra home owners, particularly those on low or fixed incomes.

We were also concerned it will make it more difficult for retirees to continue to live independently. In this regard, it is noteworthy that changes to the Rates Act at section 46(2)(f) expand the eligibility criteria for rates deferral for households with at least one owner who is 65 years or older. It is also worth noting that these deferrals are indefinite and occur with an interest charge. This is insidious. It foretells that general rates will increase to the extent that more seniors will have problems paying them. In this light, this initiative to expand the deferrals scheme is, in fact, predatory. It allows these seniors to defer payments but with an interest charge which, in fact, amounts to a death tax.

We are opposed to Labor's increased taxes on super at the federal level where we have already seen the federal government make huge tax increases and take large amounts of money from superannuants. And they intend to do more if re-elected. In contrast we have seen that an Abbott government would not make any detrimental, unexpected changes to super. Of course, that allows superannuants to prepare and plan for their futures.

We recognise that concessional contribution caps and super co-contribution benefits for low income earners are too low as a result of Labor's cuts over the past five years. Over the last five years Labor has cut concessional contribution caps from \$50,000 and \$100,000 down to \$25,000 as well as freezing indexation. Federal Labor has also cut super co-contribution benefits for low income earners from \$1,500 to \$500. That is despite pre-election promises that no change would occur to superannuation.

For the past three years federal Labor have been promising to re-increase concessional contribution caps to \$50,000 but have continuously deferred implementation. On Friday they broke that promise as well by proposing an increase to just \$35,000 instead. Federal Labor's cuts to concessional caps and to super co-contribution benefits have reduced the incentive for people to save through their super. We should encourage as many Australians as possible to save more so that they can look after

their own needs in retirement and not be a burden on the public purse by simply having to rely on age pensions.

We as a federal party have long been on the record as saying that in government we would revisit concessional contribution caps and co-contribution benefits for low income earners as soon as the budget is in a strong enough position to afford it, because we have also seen over the last six years the running down of the budget by federal Labor. This, of course, impacts on local residents and, in particular, local self-funded retirees.

The federal Liberal Party have said they would release a policy on how best to encourage increased super savings by Australians in an appropriately targeted and fiscally sustainable way closer to the election. The fiscally responsible time for us to make the final judgement on this is when we know the true position of the budget. The secretaries of Treasury and finance released the PEFO yesterday, so I look forward to seeing that policy. I know a lot of self-funded superannuants in the ACT are looking forward to that policy, because they know that under the Rudd-Gillard years their savings have been eroded. They have seen their cost of living increase, and many of them find themselves very much constrained in what they are able to do.

For those who do not know, since Kevin Rudd was elected Prime Minister in 2007 the cost of living has soared. Over the past five years under Labor we have seen across the nation, as an average, increases in electricity prices by 94 per cent, gas prices by 62 per cent, water and sewerage rates by 63 per cent, the cost of medical and hospital services by 41 per cent, the amount of rent people are paying by 30 per cent, the cost of insurance by 45 per cent, and public transport fares by 24 per cent. That is an outstanding effort by a government to cripple people with the cost of living.

It is important that we make sure we constantly assess the impact on people. That is why this motion brought forward by Mr Doszpot today is very important. It is a shame members opposite will not support it. They worked their way out of it, and it was interesting. I do not think Mr Rattenbury mentioned self-funded retirees in his speech. I do not think he mentioned them at all. As for Mr Barr, saying things like, "It is not fair to make such statements," well, that is a stunning bit of repartee. Mr Barr recites a list of things they may or may not have done and then attacks Mr Doszpot for inaccuracies and uninformed opinion. That is very strong debating technique!

Federal Labor cannot be trusted on super, just as local Labor cannot be trusted on their promises about rates not tripling. Both local and federal Labor are having a huge detrimental impact on self-funded superannuants in the ACT. Over the past five years at the federal level Labor has increased taxes on super by more than \$8 billion, predominantly targeting low and middle income earners, despite a pre-election promise of no change to super. Another broken promise from federal Labor. Those charges included a \$3.3 billion Labor cut to super co-contribution benefits for low income earners, reducing the co-contribution benefit from \$1,500 down to \$500. And after promising never to tax super payments for the over-60s, Labor is now proposing such a tax, albeit through the back door.

After promising to re-increase concessional caps to \$50,000, they are now proposing to increase them only to \$35,000. The increased Labor taxes on super announced on

Friday were just the beginning. Mr Swan, when Treasurer, would not rule out more super taxes in the budget. We know Labor looked at a whole series of nasty tax increases on super over the past year and only backed off under intense public and internal pressure. Then it was revealed that Penny Wong wanted to go much further, with Bill Shorten clearly wanting it known out there that he had stopped Swan and Wong in their tracks for now. So we have internal dissent and a commitment from Labor to tax them more. They must have been taking lessons from Mr Quinlan with that famous motto of squeeze them till they bleed but not until they die.

Labor are not serious about easing the cost of living burdens on self-funded superannuants. If they were, they would make sure that they had policies in place to do so. Against that, there is the federal coalition's position. They are against Labor's increased taxes on super that were announced. They are supportive of increased concessional caps and fixing the excess contributions issue, and that they do it in a fiscally responsible way. They are opposed to Labor's new bureaucracy to keep bad governments in check. The best way to sort out a bad government is at an election, and, of course, we all know that is now just a couple of weeks away.

The Canberra Liberals understand that superannuation and savings form a crucial part of everyone's livelihood. Labor has threatened this, either through taxes they levy on seniors or, in the case of superannuation, through cutbacks on contribution levels and discouraging people from providing for more of their own self-funded retirement. Whether it be slugging seniors who cannot pay their rates increases with a death tax or attacking seniors' superannuation, this opposition will not unilaterally move the goalposts on seniors' hard-earned savings and investments.

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (3.54): It is not my intention to speak for long, but I want to commend Mr Doszpot for bringing this motion before the Assembly. Mr Doszpot has been a great champion for older Canberrans over the last few months. He has been out in our community speaking to many groups and many individuals, finding out what issues affect them directly. It is as a result of that hard work that Mr Doszpot has been advocating within the Liberal Party room on a number of issues. He has come to the Assembly with this motion today, and I commend him for that.

There is, no doubt, a number of older people in our community who are self-funded retirees and who are doing it very tough. I reflect on the situation of my parents and a number of their friends—people who have worked very hard over a long period of time—who saw a lot of their savings in superannuation disappear through the GFC. The expectations they had of a comfortable retirement went. As a result, they are doing it very tough.

A number of changes being made to policy, both federally and locally, are making an already bad situation worse. Locally a number of policies set by the government are having a detrimental effect on self-funded retirees and their cost of living. Most notable, as Mr Smyth has just been talking about, is the impact of the massive increase in rates. We will argue in this place till the cows come home about whether they are tripling or not, but nobody is arguing about whether they are going up exponentially. You only need to get your latest rates, as I did, to know that is the case. For self-funded retirees living in their own homes, that is a really difficult issue.



In fact, the Commonwealth Superannuated Officers Association appeared before the estimates committee and they made that point—you can read it in *Hansard*—that for older Canberrans living in their own homes this tax change is not fair. It is hurting them disproportionately. So there might be winners out of Mr Barr’s tax reform, but there are definitely losers, and certainly self-funded retirees are losers.

The other issue, of course, is that of superannuation and the federal government’s hit to superannuation. There is no doubt that that is, again, yet another layer of burden and of reduced income coming on a group that is already suffering in terms of reductions in their savings and an increase in their cost of living and their outgoings.

I reflect on an article from the *Financial Review* headed “Labor goes after super tax breaks” by Laura Tingle:

The federal government is considering cutting billions in superannuation tax concessions to pay for expensive new policies ... For the first time, the government is also focusing on super tax benefits after people retire, when pensions paid by superannuation are tax free.

When Labor commissioned the Henry review of the taxation system in 2008, it excluded any discussion of ending the tax-free status of superannuation pension payments.

This is the same government that is trying to run a scare campaign federally about GST. This is the Labor government that excluded any talk about superannuation from the Henry tax review and then did exactly that. At some stage many superannuants probably voted Labor because they had been told: “We’re not going to touch your super. We’re not going to have this in the Henry tax review. Your super’s safe with us.” No doubt many of them did vote Labor, but I imagine that, this time around, having seen the deceit, having seen that they were hoodwinked and having seen that they are now, as a result of this government’s backflip on this issue, subject to a significant increase in their cost of living, they will probably be once bitten, twice shy on this issue.

This issue affects so many Canberrans—20,000 or so self-funded retirees. We are disproportionately over-represented by self-funded retirees in the ACT. Because of that, I have asked Mr Doszpot to liaise with our federal colleagues to take this up as a key issue in this forthcoming election. It is vital that people understand Labor’s deceit on this issue. It is important that people understand they were told one thing before an election and the government did the opposite and just how many thousands of dollars this will rip out of the pockets of many thousands of older Canberrans who have worked all their lives to set up their retirement savings and are now seeing that diminished by a Labor government.

I commend this motion to the Assembly. I commend Mr Doszpot for the work he is doing. It is not over yet. This will be a very important issue in the forthcoming weeks. I commend Mr Doszpot for the work he is yet to do in making sure this issue is put front and centre before the Canberra community in the upcoming election.

**MR DOSZPOT** (Molonglo) (4.00), in reply: Thank you, Mr Hanson, for your comments. Yes, you are absolutely right. The work is not over; the work, in fact, is just beginning. It is not very often that I have got upset in this chamber over the last five years, but I have to say to you that I am very upset this afternoon. I am very upset for a number of reasons. Primarily, we have a Minister for Ageing who has not got the courtesy to even stay here for the conclusion of this debate on something that should be one of his major concerns.

I am very upset that the Minister for Ageing spent about five minutes talking about an issue that is very important to a very large percentage of our community. I am very upset that that minister, in that five minutes, spent half the time talking about how this is a federal issue and how we are hypocrites for bringing these points up. I cannot understand the duplicity of this minister in the way that he has handled this debate so far. The Treasurer also spent about five minutes putting his side of this debate, and he also spent about half the time talking about the fact that this is a federal issue.

The issues that I have brought up have been issues that affect a lot of our Canberra community—retirees, self-funded retirees. The latter, the self-funded retirees, do not seem to be on anyone's agenda apart from ours. Mr Rattenbury has made it very clear that the policies that his party pursues do not include the self-funded retirees. I note that the minister has now come back into the chamber. I am very glad you have come here to listen to some of the points we are debating, minister.

You said that some of the points I made were actually quite complimentary and that you would agree with them. But you then said—and I do not want to verbal you, if I am misquoting you here—that this was a very partisan approach. It is not partisan. I am not standing up here for the Liberal constituency or the Labor constituency; I am standing up here for all three constituencies—Liberal, Labor and the Greens.

With respect to the people that I have spoken to, the people that have brought these issues to my attention, a large percentage of them, Mr Rattenbury, you might be interested to know, represent a lot of your constituents. They are people who have done a lot of work in the community and have retired—early retirees, self-funded retirees—and they are very disappointed with what their own representative has done for them. They have come to me, and I am bringing these issues up before you now.

How is it partisan to recognise the work this government has done in offering some of the options that are available to senior Canberrans? I quoted all these points. I said that Canberrans have energy concessions for electricity and gas. There is a maximum combined utility rebate of \$374. There are water rates concessions, a 68 per cent a quarter rebate, and sewerage attracts the same. The ACT spectacle service provides one free pair of bifocal or trifocal glasses every 24 months.

*Mr Barr interjecting—*

**MR DOSZPOT:** They are amongst the pensioners who you do support. If you want to make fun of that, Mr Barr, I am actually—

**Mr Barr:** I am not making fun of it. I am just pointing out that they are not in your motion.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I have spoken about it. If you had listened to what I had spoken about—

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER** (Mr Gentleman): Order members! Mr Doszpot, could you take a seat for a moment. Mr Barr, please do not interject across the chamber. Mr Doszpot, you need to address your comments through the chair.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. I have made it very clear in the debate so far that I am standing up for all of the Canberra constituents who have come to me on this. They represent a fair number of our retirees, our self-funded retirees and our long-term retirees. They cut across all political boundaries. There are some things that are available to standard pensioners, and I quoted those issues, but Mr Barr seemed to find that absolutely hilarious; he was having a good chuckle over there.

All of the people that we have spoken about are doing it tough. Mr Barr in his previous discourses in this chamber regarding the effects of the GFC has made it very clear how, according to him, his task was made all that much harder because of the effects of the GFC. Mr Barr, I have not heard you accept the fact that if you have found it tough, how hard it is for the self-funded retirees—those who also felt the effects of the GFC with the drop in international share markets and the effects on their superannuation. Have you recognised any of those issues, Mr Barr? Have you recognised any of those issues, Minister for Ageing, Mr Rattenbury?

These are the points that we brought to your attention here today. We have brought these here on the basis of calling on this government to recognise the difficulties that current cost of living pressures are causing older Canberrans. We are asking you to join us to stop the tax reforms which are tripling rates for older Canberrans, and we are asking you to join us in writing to the Prime Minister to highlight the uncertainty caused by federal Labor policies on older Australians who choose to retire in Canberra.

If these are partisan issues, Mr Rattenbury, I would like you to point out where they are partisan issues. These are all things we should all be able to agree to, to support the people in our community who need our help.

As far as I am concerned, I think we have covered this motion in a fair bit of detail. Mr Barr is again having a good chuckle. I do not expect anything more of him, but I did expect a little bit more of the Minister for Ageing than the way he answered this motion.

Once again, I repeat that my motion calls on the government to recognise that we have discrimination against a significant portion of older Canberrans, and it is time that it stopped. We call on this government to recognise the difficulties that current cost of living pressures are causing older Canberrans, to stop the tax reforms which are tripling rates for older Canberrans, and I am asking you to join with us to write to

the Prime Minister to highlight the uncertainty caused by federal Labor policies to older Australians who choose to retire in Canberra.

**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): Mr Assistant Speaker, I seek leave under standing order 46 to make a personal explanation.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER** (Mr Gentleman): Mr Rattenbury, do you feel that you have been—

**MR RATTENBURY**: Mr Doszpot went to some lengths to identify the fact that I had left the chamber during the discussion. It is true that I had briefly stepped out of the chamber. I simply want to take the opportunity to assure Mr Doszpot that I was listening to his speech upstairs on the internal television reticulation system. I think these matters are of considerable importance and I think Mr Doszpot was incorrect in reflecting on the fact that I was not physically in the chamber somehow indicating I had less interest in the matters.

Question put:

That **Mr Doszpot's** motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 7

Noes 8

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

Question so resolved in the negative.

## Budget 2013-14

**DR BOURKE** (Ginninderra) (4.14): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that the 2013-14 Budget sets out the Government's priorities for this parliamentary term;
- (b) that, as part of the 2013 Budget, the Government has included funding for a range of priorities and projects which will ensure that while we are building a stronger economy we are also creating fairness and opportunities for all Canberrans;

- (c) that the Budget includes a number of increased support payments, rebates and new initiatives as part of the Targeted Assistance Strategy including changes to the utility rebate, no interest loan scheme, secondary bursary scheme and flexible arrangements for the payment of parking and traffic infringements to support Canberrans facing financial pressures;
  - (d) that there will be \$3.2 million for further health services for women, children and young people, including community based care, outpatient services and paediatric inpatient services at The Canberra Hospital;
  - (e) the expansion of accessible and free nurse-led walk-in centres to Belconnen and Tuggeranong;
  - (f) that there will be \$11.2 million to further support non-government school students with disabilities, students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, and students with a low level of English language proficiency;
  - (g) the support for Canberra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community through initiatives such as Community Helping Aboriginal Australians to Negotiate Choices Leading to Employment and Success;
  - (h) further support for government school students in this Budget including initiatives such as Canberra College Cares;
  - (i) that eligible Canberrans through the roll out of DisabilityCare Australia, will be provided with individual support and assistance to meet their needs and assist them to live fulfilling and productive lives;
  - (j) the Government's support for innovative affordable housing schemes such as the CHC Affordable Housing initiative;
  - (k) the introduction of further tax reforms including a progressive rates system; and
  - (l) the revitalising of shopping centres, new drinking fountains and barbeques in recreational areas, design of new walking and cycling infrastructure and upgrades to skate parks which will contribute to Canberra being a more active and vibrant community; and
- (2) calls on the Government to continue examining ways in which we can ensure that we have an inclusive and fair society which creates opportunity for all members of our community.

I move this motion today to draw the Assembly's attention to the government's priorities in the 2013-14 budget, and indeed for this parliamentary term. The 2013-14 budget sets out the government's direction for this parliamentary term, our commitment to transforming Canberra into a city that is liveable, healthy and smart, a city of opportunity, fairness and urban renewal, a city with a strong and growing economy. We have prioritised health, education, DisabilityCare, tax reform and better government services. We have clear priorities to deliver, which include several key initiatives: capital metro, the city plan and city to the lake; and digital Canberra.

We are establishing the capital metro rapid transit light rail in our city, a transport system ready for future growth, one that will create investment and jobs and one that will spare us the congestion crippling other cities. Capital metro will revolutionise public transport in Canberra and provide a template for growth and transport options for years to come. It will be supported by integrated bus services, cycle paths, footpaths and complementary land uses.

City to the lake will create a world-class business, residential and entertainment precinct and finally link our lake to Civic. The development of the city plan will help determine the city's future development and growth and ensure that projects and infrastructure are delivered efficiently and effectively.

The centenary is the right time to rethink and re-imagine how the ACT government can work in partnership with business and the community so that Canberra optimises the benefits of the digital economy. We have high education levels, connectivity and income, and a thriving ICT sector that accounts for 10 per cent of our workforce. The ACT government is working with industry leaders to capitalise on our digital opportunities and how we can become a world-leading digital city.

But while we are investing in key transformational projects for the ACT, we are doing this in a fiscally responsible way, ensuring that Canberra is a strong and dynamic city that is an inclusive and fair society with opportunities for all.

As Mr Barr noted in this chamber last week, this government is working hard to ensure that our economy performs strongly, and is doing so against a challenging global and domestic economic climate. The ACT has created 3,500 jobs and employment has risen by 1.7 per cent, recording the strongest annual employment growth of all the non-mining jurisdictions. The ACT population continues to increase, and we have a low rate of inflation.

Unfortunately, the federal election next month creates uncertainty around job security for many Canberrans, and any loss of jobs in the APS will have a knock-on effect on Canberra business and the ACT economy. Our government's careful economic management will help ensure we have a strong economy through periods of difficulty, allowing us to assist those in need. The government has made major commitments in health, DisabilityCare and education, all investments in liveability and opportunity for the ACT.

The 2013-14 budget includes \$11.2 million to support non-government school students, including students with disabilities, students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background families, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and students with a low level of English language proficiency. This is in addition to funding to implement the national school reforms, providing an extra \$21.7 million in ACT government funding for government schools.

Supporting every Canberra student to achieve excellence in education is an integral part of ACT Labor's vision for education. One example of this is the government's commitment to move Canberra College cares, the CC cares program, into a new

purpose-built facility at the Phillip campus of Canberra College to make sure that Canberra's pregnant or parenting students have the same educational opportunities as other young people. We plan to have it open in 2015.

There is also \$1.6 million allocated in 2013-14 to support the transport of students with disabilities to and from ACT public schools. There is \$1.3 million to provide additional support for students with complex learning needs in ACT public schools. There is \$1.8 million over two years to establish the new Tuggeranong introductory English centre at the Wanniasa Hills Primary School. This new facility will provide students with limited or no background in speaking English with intensive language tuition before they settle into a mainstream school. And there is \$5 million over four years for non-government schools to establish and upgrade preschool infrastructure as well as \$2.5 million over four years to support access for non-government school students to high quality ICT infrastructure.

The 2013-14 budget also funds the Chances program, which assists members of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to complete nationally accredited training leading to employment. It includes assistance with child care, transport vehicle costs, catering and activities, utilities and consumables.

The Chances program is just one budget initiative supporting Canberra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Others include establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholarship program to support members of the community who wish to study or train to gain qualifications. The government is also working with Canberra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body.

This government is conscious of the need to provide affordable housing for Canberrans. The government has been exploring and implementing innovative solutions to address housing affordability since the first affordable housing action plan was introduced in 2007. Now in its third phase, 98—98, Mr Assistant Speaker—separate initiatives have been introduced under the plan.

CHC Affordable Housing is a key success of the affordable housing action plan. It is a major provider of quality affordable housing in the territory in the purchase and rental markets. Under its agreement with the ACT government, CHC is on its way to delivering 500 affordable rental homes and 500 affordable homes for sale by 2018.

The land rent scheme has been another major innovation in housing affordability. It allows homebuyers to significantly reduce their borrowing by providing an option to rent land from the government rather than buy it outright under a mortgage. More than 1,500 Canberrans have benefited from the land rent scheme since it was introduced.

The government maintains a requirement that 20 per cent of all new homes in greenfield estates must meet affordability thresholds. Starting in 2012, the government introduced new options for meeting the affordability thresholds to encourage innovation and diversity in the types of affordable products that are delivered.

We have also been the most successful jurisdiction in Australia, and punched significantly above our weight, in the national rental affordability scheme, the NRAS.

Under the first four rounds of the scheme 1,364 NRAS dwellings have already been delivered in the ACT, with another 1,186 approved. So far, the ACT's total of 2,550 allocations represents 6.6 per cent of incentives allocated nationally. We are punching above our weight.

NRAS dwellings not only improve affordability by contributing to the total stock of housing, but are rented at no more than 80 per cent of market rate to low and moderate income households for 10 years. The Land Development Agency's innovative OwnPlace initiative has also been very successful in providing affordable house and land packages in Bonner and Franklin, at a fixed price to eligible home purchasers that have a combined household income of \$120,000 or less. A total of 454 homes were sold through OwnPlace, with 428 already delivered.

The 2013-14 budget provided for a range of urban renewal projects right across the city, including investment in arts, sport and recreation, community parks and local shops.

The local shopping centres in Evatt, Kambah, Rivett, Fisher and Hughes will be upgraded, with \$360,000 allocated for design work. The designs will be the subject of consultation with shoppers and traders, to help bring new life to these local centres and increase their viability. Kambah and Rivett will receive minor design upgrades, while Evatt, Fisher and Hughes will receive significantly improved designs, taking into account aspects such as paving, drainage, new seating and bins, parking, lighting and landscaping;

The budget provides \$240,000 for the installation of 30 new drinking fountains across Canberra, including at town centres, parks and sporting facilities and near schools. A further \$210,000 will go towards the maintenance of the drinking fountains and the provision of refill stations as well as free, reusable water bottles for use at public events such as Floriade. Ten thousand—10,000, Mr Assistant Speaker—reusable water bottles will be given out over the next two financial years

\$200,000 has been allocated in this year's budget to undertake a safety audit of skate parks across Canberra, as well as for design and upgrade work at Kambah adventure playground and at Eddison skate park. \$200,000 has also been allocated to replace barbecues at Yarralumla Bay, Lake Ginninderra district park, Umbagog District Park, Yerrabi Pond District Park, Bowen Park and Lennox Gardens. \$1.7 million has been allocated for design and feasibility studies for new walking and cycling infrastructure across Canberra.

There are many other initiatives I could mention; I have mentioned only a few in discussing this motion.

Lastly, I would like to take a few minutes to talk about the reform of the ACT tax system. In the 2012-13 budget, the ACT government commenced significant reform of the territory's taxation system. As a result of this reform, a number of unfair taxes are being abolished over a period of five to 20 years, including duty on insurance premiums, helping every Canberra family; and stamp duty on conveyancing. This reform will continue in the 2013-14 budget. From 1 July 2013, duty on general



insurance premiums will reduce from eight per cent to six per cent. From 1 July 2013, duty on life insurance will reduce from four per cent to three per cent. Duty on conveyances will further decrease in line with the schedule announced in the 2012-13 budget. The reduction in conveyance duty is being accelerated in the 2013-14 budget for properties valued at \$1.65 million and above, with a flat rate of 5.5 per cent.

The revenue lost through the abolition of these taxes will be replaced through the general rate system, which establishes a more efficient and fairer tax base. Overall, general rates on residential properties will increase by around 10 per cent, around \$139 on average, in 2013-14.

The government does remain mindful of the impacts of tax reform on low income households. To help offset any increases in costs, the government provides assistance through the rates rebate and the rates deferral schemes. The rates rebate is increasing from \$565 to \$622 in 2013-14. This will help to alleviate the impact of tax reform for low income households. Pensioners who were in receipt of the rebate prior to July 1997 will remain eligible for a 50 per cent rebate on their rates. The government also offers the rates deferral scheme to eligible pensioners and non-pensioners that meet eligibility criteria.

I have talked about innovative projects like capital metro and digital Canberra, setting up a new and fairer tax system, and initiatives that help Canberrans in housing and education funding, with examples such as CC cares and Chances. This government, this ACT Labor government, has a vision for our future but never loses sight of the present. There are people who are relying on us now to ensure that the Canberra of today, as well as tomorrow, is an inclusive and fair society that we can all be proud to call our home.

I commend this motion to the Assembly.

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (4.28): I thank Dr Bourke for bringing this motion before the Assembly today and for the passion with which he delivered that speech. I think we all admire, whether we agree with Dr Bourke or not, the passionate way that he delivers his speeches. What I would say, though, looking at the content, is that before Madam Speaker became Madam Speaker, when she was the parliamentarian known as Mrs Dunne, she would have described this as a wally motion. She would not do that now because she is the Speaker. But back in her day she would have said that this is a wally motion. And this is a wally motion.

I will go through in some detail why it is. This is an attempt to grandstand and say, “These are the government’s achievements. This is a wonderful job they are doing and I will go through some of these case by case.” But we have a different view on this side of the chamber in terms of the direction the government is taking. The government is taking the direction that Mr Rattenbury wants it to take, and that is to be the most progressive, the most Green government in Australia. That is where they want to go.

**Dr Bourke:** Transformational.

**MR HANSON:** Transformational; they do want to be transformational with all their transformational projects like light rail. What did the Treasurer say—that basically this would be built at any cost. There is the tax reform and the great debt and deficit that they are building into the budget. We have a different view and that was articulated at the election. We have continued to make our point about where we see the city should go. We are very strong on the issue of better local services and lower fees and charges. We still maintain that that is something that the government should focus more on.

We have some policies that we have announced and will continue to fight for. They are good practical measures like the autism school that the government will not support; better funding for the Auditor-General, which the government will not support; the establishment of a fifth judge to improve access to justice, which the government will not support; an independent public service commissioner to actually make sure that some of the issues that are present in our public service—be it the bullying or other issues—are addressed properly. There are also issues like lease variation charges that are stymieing business development in this town and not threatening the public service throughout their wage negotiations.

We have a different approach. I will go through some of the particular measures. In point (b) of the motion, Dr Bourke is saying that we are building a strong economy and also creating fairness and opportunities for all Canberrans. Not true. We know it is not true, because a number of people, including commonwealth superannuants said to the estimates committee, as Dr Bourke would well know, that the tax reform is not fair for them. There are winners and losers arising from the tax reform. But it is not true that he can come into this place and say that this is fairness for all Canberrans. It is not. It picks winners and it picks losers, and there are many tens of thousands of losers out of the tax reform.

Point (c) makes reference to the number of targeted assistance strategies. The point again is that there are winners and there are losers. What we saw in the last budget is that a whole range of fees and charges are up and there are significant losers. There are some points about health services. I think we could argue that there as many bad news stories about health as there are good news stories, but we are seeing only the good news here.

Reference is made to the expansion of accessible and free nurse-led walk-in centres in Belconnen and Tuggeranong. We have talked at length about the problems with the walk-in centre, including the problems that it caused the ED. But I would also remind Dr Bourke that the government at the 2008 election promised to deliver three walk-in centres. They have delivered one that has caused real problems at the ED. Now they are promising two that have not been delivered. Whichever way you look at it, the government has done backflips and it has broken promises.

The motion makes reference to there being some money for non-government schools and students with disabilities. I support that. I would like to acknowledge the hard work that Mr Doszpot put in during the last Assembly advocating for money for people with disability in non-government schools. Support for the Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander community is mentioned. What we are doing on the one hand we are not doing on the other. Where is the bush healing farm? How are we going in closing the gap? I think when you look at the statistics and the results, we are certainly not doing as well as we should be.

The point that needs to be addressed is the fact that Dr Bourke has a one-eyed view of what this government does. This is not a balanced motion. This is just another exercise in trying to congratulate the government. I refer to the dissenting report, which also is Dr Bourke's view of the budget. He said in the report that I should be condemned for my partisan view during proceedings. Dr Bourke's view there was that Mr Hanson and perhaps Mr Smyth have one view of the government. But he has this balanced view, does he? He also said that things should be done in a collaborative manner.

Let us go through this report, the 575 recommendations, and see if we can find any balance in this report. I will look for the balance. I think there are over 500 recommendations simply commending the government for the work that they do. In fact, they commend them so thoroughly that they commend them for the same things repeatedly. I go to recommendation 16:

Dr Bourke and Mr Gentleman recommend that the ACT Government look at "tools on the market" that identify students that might benefit from a gifted and talented program.

They were so in love with that recommendation that at recommendation 19 they said:

Dr Bourke and Mr Gentleman recommend that government look at "tools on the market" that identify students that might benefit from a gifted and talented program.

They felt so passionately about that that they put that recommendation in twice. Maybe there is one from Dr Bourke and one from Mr Gentleman. They said at recommendation 17 that:

... the ACT Government looks at options for acceleration of gifted and talented students.

And in case we had forgotten, they put it in again at recommendation 20:

Dr Bourke and Mr Gentleman recommend the ACT Government looks at options for acceleration of gifted and talented students.

What a high quality product this is! What a high quality review of the ACT government! What biting analysis this is of the government's budget and its priorities! Oh, what is this? They recommend that:

... the ACT Government investigate support for accommodation programs for at-risk gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer people.

And then they say it again:

Dr Bourke and Mr Gentleman recommend the ACT Government investigate support for accommodation programs for at risk LGBTI people.

It is the same recommendation. In one they use the acronym and in the other they did not. Biting analysis! I will continue to go through this report, but there are literally dozens of recommendations that are duplicated. Do members recall Mr Barr saying, “This is worst estimates report ever.” Remember that, Mr Barr? Did you read the dissenting report? Did you feel when you were reading it that, “This sounds a bit familiar, doesn’t it?” Did you notice that the recommendations were duplicated, that many of the 575 recommendations were just the same recommendations—

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER** (Mr Doszpot): Mr Hanson, please refer your comments through the chair.

**MR HANSON:** My apologies, Mr Assistant Speaker. I refer to page 8 where literally, half the page of the recommendations are just duplicates of each other. I do not know who did the cut and paste job, but there are pages and pages commending the government, congratulating the government. It goes on and on about what a wonderfully good job the government is doing. It is so good that at recommendation 133 Dr Bourke and Mr Gentleman:

... note the small increase in ACT government fees so Sport and Recreation can ensure the highest quality of facilities.

So they are saying, “Well done for putting the fees up. Well done! That is fantastic that the government put the fees up.” They should be congratulated for everything, including putting the fees up. Let me just go through the pages and pages and pages of commending the government in this insightful review. The report states:

Dr Bourke and Mr Gentleman recommend the ACT Government emergency hospital services be commended for leading the country in consumer satisfaction.

That is an interesting view of the emergency department and the people who are waiting there for hours. There are more duplicate recommendations. They go on and on. Let us have a look at this one. Recommendation 395, I would have to say, is my favourite, Mr Assistant Speaker. You might want to listen in to this one. This only appeared once; they did not duplicate this one. I think it was so insightful it only needed to be said once:

Dr Bourke and Mr Gentleman note the ACT Government’s provision of assessment tools ... Dr Bourke and Mr Gentleman recommend the ACT

That is it. That is the recommendation: “Dr Bourke and Mr Gentleman recommend the ACT.” They do. They recommend the ACT. I am not sure who they recommend it to, but they recommend it. I think we could probably support that recommendation. They recommend the ACT.

*Mr Barr interjecting—*

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson, sit down for a moment. Stop the clock, please. Mr Barr, let us resume normal debate. Address yourselves through the chair, Mr Hanson. Please continue, Mr Hanson.

**MR HANSON:** Thanks, Mr Assistant Speaker. So we recommend the ACT. I am surprised that is not in the motion today, actually—recommending the ACT. They have everything else that they are doing. It is pretty good. Let us have a look at recommendation 509 in this insightful report analysing the budget:

Dr Bourke and Mr Gentleman noted that the ACT Government's large-scale solar auction process incorporated advice to the Minister—

Right!

Dr Bourke and Mr Gentleman recommend the Government be commended for this process.

Well done! Well done, I say. Hear, hear! Look, I think it is fair to say that perhaps they think it is unusual that the government would listen to some independent expert advice from a panel or something like that. Anyway, they probably do, and the government should be commended for that. What is this one? Recommendation 527 states in part, "Dr Bourke and Mr Gentleman recommend the ACT Government for this allocation." Dr Bourke and Mr Gentleman recommend the ACT government for this allocation. I do not know what that means. Maybe Dr Bourke can explain that one at some stage.

Here you go; do you remember how they criticised me, Mr Assistant Speaker, how this report was such a problem and how the committee was so dysfunctional? At recommendation 569 they "recommend the Assembly committees be commended for working effectively".

What they said arising from the estimates was that there is no evidence that the current committees are not working properly. There is no evidence. I am sorry; I go back to where I am condemned for being so partisan. But by the time they had got through all of the recommendations, they are commending the committee for working so effectively. That is nice, is it not?

We then have recommendation 571 where they recommend that "ACTEW be commended for its understanding of these issues" ACTEW came along and had a chat and, you know, they are commended for understanding the issues. I am being a little light-hearted but I contend that when it comes to Dr Bourke and Mr Gentleman—I certainly hope Mr Gentleman is also going to speak—these gentlemen who accused me of being so partisan, so biased in the chairmanship of the committee, do seem to have a little bit of a one-eyed view when it comes to the ACT government and their programs.

What I would say is that like the dissenting report, which is full of errors, duplications, typos, nonsense recommendations, congratulating the government and recommending the ACT, we are seeing something similar here in the motion that has been presented

by Dr Bourke. It is a wally motion. It really is a waste of the Assembly's time. I can say that the opposition will not be supporting it. I will wait to see whether we call a division or not because I really think it is probably something that is not even worth that merit.

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra) (4.42): I rise to support Dr Bourke's motion. An active government that places itself in the community, working with residents to build a Canberra that provides a good life for everyone that lives here, is something that we on this side of thy chamber aim to be. It is not surprising that yet again we hear those on the other side talking Canberra down while we are trying to talk it up, doing our very best for our Canberra community.

The initiatives presented in this year's budget show that this Labor government is an active and transformational government, one that is delivering good facilities, programs and services for the people of Canberra. Whilst the debate over the 2013-14 budget has focused on large-scale projects such as capital metro—a project, I might add, that will provide long-term benefits for all Canberrans over the coming decades—little has been said, especially by those on the other side, about the initiatives that will benefit the majority of Canberrans, especially our investments in local suburban infrastructure and targeted assistance for Canberrans doing it tough.

The commitments in this budget to revitalise shopping centres, which have already been mentioned by Mr Bourke in his speech, building new drinking fountains and barbeques like the one at Umbagog park, the design of new footpaths and cycleways and upgrades to skate parks will ensure that our suburbs remain great places to live and to raise a family.

The \$1.1 million to build high priority footpaths across the ACT, including those in the suburb of Holt, will greatly improve mobility and access to services for Canberra's parents and elderly residents, as will our recent reform to the seniors' gold card which is now accessible to Canberrans over 70 years or older. This provides free public transport to approximately 9,000 additional elderly residents.

In the past years we have invested nearly \$14 million in our suburban shopping centres. I know that this has been talked about at length but it is an important thing that we continue to mention that because these are the things that make our communities stronger and better places to live. Hawker, Higgins, Holt, Scullin and Melba have been delivered in those shopping upgrade commitments. We are building on this work by committing to the upgrades of Evatt and Florey with the designs which are currently open for public consultation.

As I have said time and time again in this place, I know how important each of our suburbs are to my neighbours in west Belconnen. So it is important that we continue to ensure our local shopping centres and community infrastructure are able to retain their important role in supporting community wellbeing and social inclusion.

It is our investments in programs and services to improve social inclusion that I turn to next, Mr Assistant Speaker. Last night I spoke briefly during the debate about this government's reforms to paying off infringements. The \$3.6 million targeted

assistance strategy will help people to retain or regain their drivers licence, vehicle registration or right to drive in the ACT by making the payment of infringements more flexible.

We are also lending a hand to around 27,000 households through an expansion to the energy concessions program. The concessions program will increase another 10 per cent under this budget, which means that the maximum concession will rise from around \$293 to \$322.

When you look at this budget in its full context and you see the initiatives and reforms that have been announced, I think you will find it very hard to say that this is not a government that seeks to build on the best characteristics of our city. Dr Bourke's motion calls upon the government to examine ways that we can ensure we have an inclusive and fair society which creates opportunity for all members of our community.

This is a challenge that I think is worth embracing by us in this government. Canberra is, for most of our residents, a city that provides great employment, good wages, excellent communities and fantastic public institutions, including our nation-leading public education and health systems.

However, there is a portion of our community who do struggle to make ends meet and who are not able to benefit from the support offered by governments. I think there is some work for us in this place and for those in the commonwealth government to do to alleviate pressures faced by people who are in insecure work or caught in the gap between federal government support and full financial and social self-sufficiency.

As someone who has spent most of her life representing some of the lowest paid workers in Canberra, I am guided in my work here in the Assembly by the need to ensure that Canberra's significant prosperity is shared by all who live and work here. I thank Dr Bourke for bringing this motion to the Assembly and I commend it to you all.

**MR BARR** (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Community Services) (4.47): I am pleased to rise in support of Dr Bourke's motion this afternoon, and I will speak on a number of the elements of it.. I am particularly pleased through this budget to be able to include funding for a range of priorities and projects that ensure a stronger economy and greater fairness and opportunity for all Canberrans. And the backdrop for this budget and the decisions that have been taken certainly reflect an economy that exceeded expectations in 2012-13.

We were very pleased with the level of employment growth within the territory economy, and to see the July 2013 figures showing an all-time record level of employment in the territory of 211,600 is, indeed, a very good outcome for our economy—the lowest unemployment rate in the country, the second highest participation rate.

As the shadow treasurer leaves the chamber, it is interesting to see where this employment growth has occurred. The industry employment quarterly data for the territory, which was updated in May 2013, shows that the bulk of this employment growth has occurred in the private sector, which has experienced a 3.2 per cent increase in employment in that period. The public sector has only grown by 0.3 per cent in the 12 months to May 2013. There are 3,408 additional jobs in the private sector and 309 additional jobs in the public sector.

The growth has come in areas of construction, professional, scientific and technical services and administrative and support services, in the main, but there has also been a positive contribution to employment growth in retail, hiring and real estate services, in education and training, in art and recreational services, as well as some private sector jobs growth in the category of safety. In the retail trade, there are 250 additional jobs. There are 15 in agriculture, forestry and fishing. Admittedly, that is not a strong area of employment within the territory economy, nonetheless, it is pleasing to see employment growth in that area.

Overall, the private sector now makes up 51.1 per cent of employment in the territory, and it has been able to achieve that level of growth without there just being a straight switch from the public sector. We saw historically, going back to the election of the Howard government in the early 1990s, essentially a whole bunch of people sacked from the public sector or their jobs outsourced. It was just the same people doing the same work, contracting to government rather than undertaking work within the commonwealth government. At that time you saw this split between private and public employment shift to 60 per cent private, 40 per cent public.

But that quickly reversed by 1999, with the commonwealth government bringing back in a number of the positions that it previously outsourced only a few years earlier. And with the very strong growth in public sector employment in the territory over the last 15 years in particular, we have seen the trend move closer to balance—50 per cent public employment and 50 per cent private employment. But in the last little period, the growth has largely come in the private sector in those areas that I identified. This reflects policy changes the territory government has made, in particular, increasing the payroll tax threshold, and our business development strategy. And it is clear that there has been a response from that, and that is reflected in this data.

Dr Bourke is right in highlighting, as part of this coming budget and, indeed, in last year's budget, a series of measures aimed at building a stronger economy. And we are seeing the evidence of that in the ABS data.

The motion also talks of increased support payments, rebates and new initiatives that are part of the government's targeted assistance strategy, and I outlined those in detail in question time today. But just to reiterate, the budget provides a range of concessions for households in energy and utilities, general rates, fire and emergency services, drivers licence, motor vehicle registration and public transport, and we are particularly pleased in this budget to be able to lower the age of eligibility for the ACTION gold card to 70. That is an important reform that we are pleased to support in this year's budget.



We have also provided assistance, through this year's budget, for the no-interest loan scheme to support those who are unable to access mainstream credit, enhanced the energy efficiency improvement scheme and provided funding to reduce public dental waiting lists. All of this goes to create fairness in our society and to ensure that we are targeting our assistance to those most in need.

I will spend the remaining time available to me today to touch on the government's taxation reforms, which are also aimed at creating a fairer society. In last year's budget I unveiled a reform package to make the taxation system simpler, fairer and more efficient. We do so in a revenue-neutral way. Reforms were made in the first year to the general rates system to make it more progressive. One-quarter of all households in the territory received a general rates cut. The previous system levied rates at the same rate on all properties regardless of their unimproved value. The government has introduced a system of marginal tax rates to make the collection of residential and commercial rates more progressive, not dissimilar to the principles that apply for income taxation.

For the residential sector, four thresholds and rating factors were introduced from 1 July 2012. The four thresholds introduced last year continue in 2013-14, but there have been changes to the rating factors for each threshold and the fixed charge. The 2012-13 budget also made commercial rates more progressive. Three thresholds and marginal rates were introduced. The thresholds remain the same in the 2013-14 budget but with changes to the rating factors. This budget builds on the significant changes last year by continuing to use general rates as the most efficient mechanism for raising tax for the territory government. The rates rebates scheme has been expanded, as has the rates deferral scheme.

But importantly, we are cutting and abolishing a number of the most inefficient and unfair taxes that are levied in this country. Getting rid of tax on insurance is a priority for the government. Cutting conveyance duty on every single property in the territory is also a priority. And this is particularly important to allow younger Canberrans to get into their first home and also for older Canberrans who wish to downsize. We are removing that barrier of stamp duty. Slugging people \$40,000 or \$50,000 upfront is not fair and should be changed. And that is what the government is doing.

The tax on insurance is unjust. It is taxing a product that we all should have. We should not be putting a tax on that product, and we are getting rid of it. And we are the only jurisdiction in the country to do so. But everyone will be paying 10 per cent less on all of their insurance premiums in three years' time when this reform is complete. And that saves households and businesses thousands of dollars a year.

In a boost for renters, the 2012-13 budget reduced land tax for three-quarters of the rental properties. An average saving of \$208 a year on land tax and lowering of insurance duty made it more affordable for Canberrans to take out insurance. The land tax changes have ensured that those landlords are able to either minimise or reduce rents that they charge in this city. And we have seen evidence in recent data that shows that rents are stabilising and falling in some places. So the taxation reforms are making our city fairer, not just for today but for decades to come. It is an important reform for this territory.

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella) (4.58): I rise today to support this motion. In all of the debate occurring around the budget this week, this motion provides a good opportunity to take a calm look at many components of our budget and the policy agenda which are often overlooked. There are hundreds of different initiatives all targeting important needs in the community and are all part of our commitment to fairness and opportunity across the ACT.

The initiatives being delivered under the targeted assistance strategy are a perfect example. They are supporting Canberrans who struggle to meet everyday living costs and unforeseen expenses. The Chief Minister recently signed off on the second progress report on implementation of the strategy. And it is good to see we are making important progress.

In 2012-13, we have seen a great awareness and uptake of the energy and utility concessions. Energy concessions are available to pensioners, veterans and healthcare card holders and cover both electricity and natural gas, providing an annual rebate of up to \$292.82 last financial year. Utility concessions provide eligible concession cardholders an additional \$82 rebate for the 2012-2013 year to offset the rise in the basic utility costs, including water bills.

These rebates make a big difference to the quality of life of some of the poorest people in our community, which is why the 2013-14 budget provided a 10 per cent increase in the energy rebate and a 2.5 per cent increase in the utility rebate, bringing the total to \$406.15, quite a strong support base there for those people who are amongst the poorest in our community.

The 2012-13 budget also provided \$714,000 over four years for the expansion of a no-interest loan scheme and a further \$40,000 for Care Inc. to provide financial hardship and the no-interest loan program. The no-interest loan program targets individuals on low to middle incomes who do not meet the criteria for the scheme but who find themselves unable to cope financially with changes in their circumstances. This could be the result of a loss of a job, illness, financial stress or some other significant change in their circumstances. Both the no-interest loan scheme and the financial hardship no-interest loan program offer no-interest loans of up to \$1,500 for necessities such as whitegoods, furniture or health aids.

In micro credit, the budget establishes an advice and support system worth more than \$400,000 over four years for eligible people from a range of targeted groups, including migrants, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, young people, women, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex individuals. The program will provide interest-free and fee-free loans to eligible low income earners who want to establish or expand a small business and builds on the successful brilliant ideas program currently managed by Lighthouse.

This micro credit program fills the gap in the business finance area through loans which will range from \$3,000 to \$10,000, depending on the scale of the businesses and the viability of the proposal. The program will also provide business workshops, training, one-to-one mentoring, peer support and networking events.

The secondary bursary payment has also been increased from \$500 to \$700.50 a year, at a cost of more than \$550,000 over the four years, and provides greater financial support to students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. A single payment for the secondary bursary stream was introduced for the 2013 school year to assist families with the expenses that occur at the start of each school year.

Almost 4,000 more ACT residents will get low-cost dental care under the public dental scheme. Commonwealth funding of \$5.5 million for our public dental scheme will reduce public dental waiting lists, and the ACT government will honour our election commitment with \$1.7 million for a fully equipped mobile dental care van. This will enable dental services to be provided to people who find it difficult to access dental care, such as nursing home residents.

A final area of progress under the targeted assistance strategy goes to parking and traffic infringements. In May this year, a new scheme commenced which allows people in financial hardship greater flexibility in the way they pay their parking and traffic infringements. Historically an inability to pay a parking or traffic infringement notice resulted in a further financial penalty or loss of licence. This has a major impact on a person and often prevents them working.

The new scheme allows members of the community to apply for infringement notice management plans which allow payments by instalment, community work and social development programs. I am pleased to say that in just over two months of operation we have seen 613 applications approved for clients seeking to enter payment plans to acquit infringement notice penalties, and these clients have a combined total of 4,395 infringement notices valued at just over \$1 million and have so far paid back \$25,141 through the payment plans.

Beyond the targeted assistance strategy, other vital budget measures are targeting needs in the Canberra community. The importance of these items is another demonstration of the recklessness of the opposition in motions like they brought yesterday to threaten the passage of the appropriation bill.

In community care, the government has responded to higher demand, particularly in women's and children's services, with additional funding in 2013-14. This will allow more community-based care services at community health centres and in people's homes.

In health, outpatient services across the board are being increased—in cancer treatment, mental health, alcohol and drug consultations and elsewhere. And walk-in centres will open in Belconnen and Tuggeranong.

In disability care, we have prepared the ACT to lead the rollout of DisabilityCare Australia. For the first time, people with disabilities and their families can be confident they will be provided with reasonable and necessary care and support for their daily living needs. They will have greater choice and control over the support and services they can receive and who provides them. By July 2016, all ACT residents with significant and permanent disability, that is, around 5,000 people, will be covered by the scheme.

In education, we will deliver the better schools funding reforms to our schools, and that will help our universities attract more students from around the country and the world.

The last clause of Dr Bourke's motion talks about tax reform. We are creating a tax system that is better for business and fairer for families. It is a 20-year program, and it is ambitious. But the long-term benefits to the growth of businesses and investment in jobs in the ACT mean that this agenda will continue to be a high priority.

Building on changes already made, a number of further changes to the ACT's taxation and transfer system were introduced in the 2013-14 budget: cutting the duty on insurance premiums by a further 20 per cent, as you have heard, from 1 July 2013, further reducing the rate of stamp duty across all property values, accelerating the reduction in stamp duty for property transactions above \$1.65 million by introducing the flat rate of 5.5 per cent, increasing the first home owner grant to \$12,500 and retargeting the grant for the purchase of new and substantially renovated properties, further expanding the eligibility and range of the homebuyer concession scheme and introducing a payroll tax concession for the employment of school leavers with disabilities.

As this motion makes clear, the government is working in all parts of the ACT community to support the economy, support jobs and support those who suffer from disadvantage.

It is an appropriate time to make a few comments on Mr Hanson's reading of our dissenting report, and I thank him for bringing that forward—575-odd recommendations. I think that was a great effort by those from the government side in the estimates process. It should be pointed out, of course, that it could have been a collaborative opportunity there during that estimates process, but the chairman of the committee chose otherwise.

Of course, he noted today a few grammatical errors. There are certainly a couple of grammatical ones. That is because our office had to do all of the work. If we had a secretariat, as the chair had, if we had spent the \$10,000 that the chair had in extra assistance, then possibly those grammatical errors would not be there. But I am still very pleased that we did—

*Members interjecting—*

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER** (Mr Doszpot): Sit down for a second.

**MR GENTLEMAN**: I am nearly out of time, Mr Assistant Speaker.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER**: Okay, keep going.

**MR GENTLEMAN**: Thank you. But I thank him for bringing it forward, and I support this motion.

**MS BURCH** (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability, Children and Young People, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Women, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Racing and Gaming) (5.08): I am so glad that those opposite have such mirth around a very substantial and very important motion brought forward by Dr Bourke today. I am very pleased to speak on this motion today. It allows me to highlight a number of the government's priority areas—education, support for women and disability reform—each of which, as the motion states, ensure that we have an inclusive and fair society which creates opportunity for all members of our community.

*Members interjecting—*

**MS BURCH:** I note the mirth over there. Whilst it could be a matter of that side and this side, this is an opportunity for us to talk about education support and support for people with disability, which those opposite think is a laughing matter.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER** (Mr Doszpot): Ms Burch, resume your seat for a second. Stop the clock, please. Members, I would ask that a little bit of decorum come back into the place. You have had your fun. Let us listen to Ms Burch in quiet.

**MS BURCH:** Decorum, gentlemen.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Ms Burch.

**MS BURCH:** Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. On education, I would like to thank Dr Bourke for acknowledging his strong commitment to ensuring that the ACT community remains one community with opportunity for all Canberrans. Creating a strong economy is important. However, it is not enough that government deliver a strong budget and a strong economy alone; they must also ensure that the economy delivers on the needs of the community.

Governments must ensure there is fairness and opportunity for all—for example, by delivering the best teachers and the best schools. Education is the silver bullet that can overcome entrenched disadvantage. Research continues to show that a well-educated person is not only more productive and employable but also healthier, happier and lives longer. This is something this government understands all too well and it is why, over the term of the Labor government in the ACT, we have made significant investments in our education system—into the buildings, into the technology and into the people.

This government provides 13 per cent more funding for education than the national average. We have increased our investment in public education over the past 12 years by 90 per cent and our investment into non-government schools has grown by 88 per cent. As a result we have a system that is one of, if not the, best-performing sectors across the country. This has not been achieved by accident, but from a concerted effort of this government to invest in those things that matter most.

The better schools reform represents a paradigm shift in thinking on schools funding. It is a reform that goes beyond past debates on school funding, puts many old arguments to bed and establishes a system which provides equitable funding to every school based on need. It is a reform that goes beyond the simple question of how much, and goes to how to equitably allocate that funding and teacher quality.

In the ACT these reforms mean that funding to all ACT schools will increase from \$690 million in this year to \$880 million in 2019. Public schools will receive an extra \$100 million, with the Catholic system receiving an additional \$60 million and independent schools \$30 million. This reform will benefit the almost 70,000 students across the ACT from next year and many thousands in the years to come.

It is an exciting time for education. These reforms are significant and will build on this government's past achievements in providing the children of the ACT with a high quality education.

I would like to speak on women and women's inclusiveness in our society. Women's financial empowerment and understanding, promoting women in non-traditional trades and addressing violence against women are still priority areas for this government. The ACT prevention of violence against women and children strategy makes it very clear that addressing violence against women is a whole-of-community responsibility. The ACT government, through the Office for Women, continues to support a number of community initiatives which further the objectives of the strategy.

Earlier this year I announced that three ACT women's organisations had received funding through our inaugural Audrey Fagan violence prevention grants. On International Women's Day this year I announced the inaugural ACT violence against women prevention awards. These awards will highlight the work being done in our community to prevent violence against women and to support those who are experiencing violence.

Compared to men, women are less financially secure in their retirement and are less confident in planning for their financial future. The ACT government has provided funding to key local community organisations to roll out women's financial literacy programs and to develop comprehensive, long-term and accessible financial information for women.

I spoke yesterday about our work to support women in non-traditional trades. Attracting more women into building and construction and trades will open up employment pathways for women who have a passion for this particular industry and will demonstrate that women and girls are just as capable as their male colleagues in the area.

I am extremely proud of this government's commitment to DisabilityCare in the ACT. The ACT government, in partnership with the commonwealth, has agreed to the phased launch of DisabilityCare in the ACT, which progresses from July next year to a full scheme by 2016.

The initial phase, which has now commenced in other states while we are commencing that transition with the enhanced service offer, sees a co-funded enhancement of ACT disability and mental health services and a program of work to prepare the ACT prior to the transfer of ACT clients to DisabilityCare from July next year.

The first program of work includes the recently launched enhanced service offer. The enhanced service offer will be available to eligible people in the ACT in a manner which will be sustained when they transfer to DisabilityCare and will be delivered within the principles of consumer choice and control.

The first round of the enhanced service offer grants, which are being managed through Disability ACT, closed last Friday. As I think I have mentioned today, I am pleased to advise that at the time applications closed, Disability ACT had received 1,300-and-a-few applications. This is a fantastic demonstration of the momentum that is building as we lead up to full implementation of DisabilityCare and shows the hunger that our community has for this significant and meaningful social change.

The enhanced service offer is designed to meet the disability-related needs of the broadest possible range of people. All ACT residents under the age of 65 with ongoing support needs related to a disability were eligible to apply for a grant. Successful applicants will have funding paid directly to them to purchase the supports and services they need. Funding will be between \$5,000 and \$12,000 per applicant and can be used to purchase things from equipment through to vocational training, learning aids or respite and therapy services.

One of the biggest changes with DisabilityCare is the chance for consumers to determine how they will spend their package of funding and what supports and services will best meet their needs and enhance their quality of life.

The second round of grants will commence on 30 September, I understand, and I am confident that individuals who have not, for various reasons, applied in the first round will see the opportunity and will certainly be encouraged to apply in the second round. We know from our highly successful quality of life grants that these grants make a difference. The total funding for the enhanced service offer is \$7.7 million, and we know that this is just the start of what will be an enormous change for many in our community.

There has been much mirth made of repetition within various reports tabled and associated with the budget and the estimates process. I would like to draw to members' attention that repetition is indeed almost one of the aspects of many of those opposite—indeed, of you, Mr Assistant Speaker Doszpot.

I have in front of me questions on notice for estimates, No 188, No 189 and No 190, just to name the first batch I found. They were all identical in word, in punctuation, in every way, shape or form—signed by you. I have not got the date on which the letters were signed, but I suspect very strongly that those opposite, through you, Mr Doszpot, have indeed put three identical questions on notice—typed, signed and delivered courtesy of the members opposite.

**Mr Wall:** On a point of order, Mr Assistant Speaker, I ask that you request the member to refer to you by your proper title whilst you are sitting in that chair.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Thank you for the reminder. Ms Burch, I suggest that you do that. I am not quite sure how relevant the repetition you are talking about is to the current motion you are addressing.

**MS BURCH:** Mr Assistant Speaker, repetition was something that was highlighted through the Leader of the Opposition's contribution to the debate. *(Time expired.)*

**MS PORTER** (Ginninderra) (5.18): I welcome the opportunity to speak on this very important topic and thank my colleague Dr Bourke for raising it. I was very surprised when I learnt the opposition was not going to support this budget. This budget has focused on building a stronger economy, creating jobs, opportunity and fairness for all Canberrans and delivers on important social reforms. As I have said in this place on several occasions, I am proud to be part of this Labor government which has, and always will, put our community first and continues to look after those who are most vulnerable. I draw members' attention to some aspects of this budget that will benefit residents in my electorate.

I and all of those on this side of the house believe we have a great health system and we understand the need to continually invest in health to allow greater access by all Canberrans. That is why this budget has appropriated \$45.5 million for an additional 31 inpatient beds across the Canberra and Calvary hospitals to meet increasing demand, and six hospital in the home places—so important. Fifteen of these beds will be at Calvary hospital in Ginninderra and will comprise 11 general inpatient beds and a four-bed designated stroke unit.

Further to this, there is a \$12 million provision to expand access to emergency medicine and rapid assessment services at our public hospitals, from which Calvary Public Hospital, in my electorate, will establish a new eight-bed rapid assessment unit to improve access to specialist services.

Mr Assistant Speaker, this government in this budget is investing \$8.3 million to complete planning and forward design of the new University of Canberra public hospital and, as you know, when completed, this will mean access to an extra 200 beds for the people of the ACT, and particularly my Ginninderra constituents. There is a further \$9 million allocation in this budget for the expansion of the new Belconnen health centre, which will provide greater access to more high quality services, including, and importantly, a nurse-led walk-in centre, breast screening, aged care, rehabilitation services and community mental health services. All of these initiatives provide for the needs of our health system in the future and will ensure that Canberrans, and indeed my Ginninderra constituents, get access to the quality healthcare services they need and deserve.

As has been stated on numerous occasions in this place, this Labor government recognises the diverse opportunities that quality education presents to our children and young people and over the years has endeavoured to ensure that all ACT children,



notwithstanding their circumstances, not only have access to quality education and quality education facilities but, importantly, quality teaching so that they can reach their potential. And we have a very good record on this.

Mr Assistant Speaker, as you are aware, this budget includes funding for the national education reform agreement, which will focus on further improving students' learning and strengthening teaching, school leadership, transparency and accountability. No doubt many of my Ginninderra constituents will benefit greatly from this.

A further \$13 million has been set aside for the capital upgrades program for ACT schools, which will see several schools in my electorate benefit from upgrade programs such as school security improvements and classroom refurbishments to schools such as Macgregor and Mount Rogers schools respectively, staff room refurbishments at Macquarie Primary School and roof upgrades at Canberra High School. Other upgrade programs include school safety, car park and traffic safety improvements, disability access programs, water refilling stations, solar tubes and LED lighting, just to name a few.

The Canberra Institute of Technology Bruce campus will also benefit from this budget. It will see upgrades to the fire alarm panels, upgrades to Tecom security systems, a solar hot-water system at D block and upgraded signage. These undertakings are not only aimed at ensuring security for students and staff but also providing for an enhanced learning environment.

This budget, through the urban improvement program, has also focused on improving recreational opportunities to ensure that people can engage in active living. Specifically, through this program the Ginninderra community will see \$100,000 set aside to undertake access improvements to the very popular Emu Bank area next to Lake Ginninderra for local skaters and residents.

Further funds were set aside for completing the design and renewal of the play area in John Knight park, specifically the play area known as the snake house. Those of you who frequent this park know that it is a very well patronised park. The Weetangera neighbourhood oval will also benefit from the urban improvement program. These initiatives will ensure that the local community enjoys high quality facilities.

The urban improvement program will see improvements made to shopping centres in Ginninderra. Shopping centres such as Evatt, Florey, Charnwood and Cook will benefit from forward design studies, with upgrades to the former two centres set for completion in 2014. Hawker and Jamison shopping centres will see upgrades as well.

Investments such as these and many others that my colleagues have talked or will talk about acknowledge growth in my electorate of Ginninderra. My constituents will greatly benefit from the critical services and infrastructure that will be provided as a result of this budget.

To conclude, I reiterate that this budget is good, responsible and well prioritised. It will set Canberra in a better position to address future challenges, and Ginninderra residents will be better off through the many initiatives contained in it. I do not see

how members opposite cannot support this budget. I urge them to come to their senses and do so.

**DR BOURKE** (Ginninderra) (5.24), in reply: Mr Assistant Speaker, I think Mr Hanson has a problem. In fact, I think he has several problems. He criticises praise for a job well done. This is an extraordinary style for someone who wants to call himself the alternative leader. He does not seem to understand what it means to get the best out of people—that it is praise and encouragement. As a great Liberal politician once said, you catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar. Well, Mr Hanson just dipped out the acid, threw on the vinegar and ridiculed. But what did he ridicule? Not the motion; he did not even address the motion. What he wanted to talk about was to go back to last week. He jumped in his time machine and wanted to go back to last week to redebate and work over the dissenting report for the estimates committee. I think he might have lost track of time here. And, of course, ridicule is one of the lowest forms of debating tactic because it does not actually address the substance of what is being debated. It just pokes fun. It mocks, and it takes away the credibility that Mr Hanson wishes to aspire to.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER** (Mr Doszpot): Dr Bourke, this is a summing up. You are entitled to make comments along those lines, but you are supposed to be summing up at the moment, concluding your motion. Thank you.

**DR BOURKE:** Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. I am merely rebutting the arguments that were put forward by Mr Hanson. I have to go into them in some detail because he spent his entire allocated time ridiculing a report that was tabled last week without dealing with anything in the substantive motion. I need to draw that to the house's attention, emphasise it and hammer those points home, which is what I am going to do.

So, coming back to Mr Hanson's attack on a report that was tabled last week, there was no substantive argument; it was all about ridicule. At the level of an undergraduate? No. It was high school debating style. The errors in the dissenting report have already been dealt with by me when I previously raised the resourcing of non-executive MLAs, but we see this kind of repetition in other areas. As Ms Burch pointed out recently, it happened with QONS 188, 189 and 190—the same question repeated three times.

I thank my Labor colleagues who came in here today to support this motion. Ms Berry talked about the targeted assistance strategy, in particular, the help for people to make infringement payments so that they can get their drivers licences back. It is critical for people on low incomes to have their drivers licences so they can get around.

Mr Barr talked about our economy—the economic strengths of the ACT. Just two fantastic statistics that he brought out for our knowledge were that we have the lowest unemployment rate in the country and the second highest employment participation rate. These are fantastic statistics. They emphasise the economic strengths of the ACT. He also talked about the tax reform that has been implemented, a progressive tax reform helping those most in need.

Mr Gentleman talked about the targeted assistance scheme. In particular, he talked about the no-interest loans program, which is targeted to helping low and middle income families in crisis and who need help, and that is what this government is about—it is about helping people. He also talked about the increase in the secondary bursary scheme from \$500 to \$750, helping families keep their kids going to school, supporting education for those most in need.

Ms Porter focused on the benefits this government is delivering to our electorate of Ginninderra. She talked about upgrades to schools—Macgregor primary, Mount Rogers and Canberra High School, all receiving works to upgrade the facilities available for the students.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Stop the clock, please, while the Deputy Speaker takes the chair.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you. Sorry, Dr Bourke. I think we can resume the clock now. Thank you.

**DR BOURKE:** You are okay, Madam Deputy Speaker?

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I am fine, thank you very much. Sorry for the drama. I will try not to fall over again!

**DR BOURKE:** Well, I shall keep on talking about you then. In our electorate of Ginninderra Ms Porter was talking about upgrades to schools at Macgregor, Mount Rogers and Canberra High School, and then she talked about the urban improvement program that is delivering better urban facilities for Canberra families through upgrading the facilities at John Knight park, as well as the \$100,000 being allocated for access improvements to Emu Bank.

We then heard from Ms Burch, the education minister, talking about our schools, the best performing education system in the country, and our participation in better schools reform. We can think back a little bit to last year and the scaremongering by those opposite about this reform, putting anxiety into the hearts and minds of teachers, parents and students. It was shameful.

Ms Burch also talked about DisabilityCare Australia, the national disability insurance scheme. By 2019-20 the ACT government will have provided about \$167 million to the cost of care and support for people with disability in the ACT through this scheme. This will be 49 per cent of the ACT scheme's cost, which is consistent with the full scheme agreement reached between the commonwealth and New South Wales in December last year. By 2019-20 the commonwealth government will contribute around \$175 million for ACT residents, around 51 per cent of the ACT's scheme's costs. In addition, the commonwealth will cover the full cost of people when they turn 65 and choose to remain in the scheme. By 2019-20 the total joint investment of the scheme in the ACT is expected to be \$342 million.

With respect to funding for this scheme it now has a dedicated funding stream through the increase to the Medicare levy from 1.5 per cent to two per cent. Legislation was passed in the federal parliament on 16 May 2013. The ACT will be the first jurisdiction to accept all eligible residents into the scheme. By July 2016 all ACT residents with significant and permanent disability—about 5,000 people—will be covered by this scheme and it will be phased in over two years, with 2,500 eligible people transitioning from July 2014 to June 2015 and around another 2,500 transitioning to DisabilityCare Australia from July 2015 to June 2016.

Ms Burch also talked about empowerment of women, in particular, addressing violence against women. She also talked about women in non-traditional trades, which is a very important step this government has been taking.

I commend this motion to the Assembly and thank all my Labor colleagues for their input into this debate.

Motion agreed to.

## **Roads—traffic management**

**MR COE** (Ginninderra) (5.34): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) poor coordination and planning of road works has meant that several key road works projects have occurred in the ACT simultaneously with negative impacts on commuters;
- (b) temporary speed limits are often implemented too early or at times when no construction work is taking place which diminishes confidence in the temporary speed limits which are justified;
- (c) speed limits across the ACT are complicated and often seem inconsistent to motorists;
- (d) many roads have speed limits that are poorly signposted which can lead motorists to a perception of entrapment; and
- (e) there has been considerable community concern about the Government's implementation of speed cushions and other traffic calming devices; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

- (a) develop road, parking, cycling, pedestrian and public transport infrastructure before existing infrastructure reaches capacity;
- (b) ensure that road works are undertaken in a coordinated fashion;

- (c) ensure that temporary traffic management plans reflect the actual risk and requirements for reduced speed, relative to the stage of construction and time of day;
- (d) conduct an internal review of speed limit policy in the ACT, especially in suburban areas with a view to simplifying the current arrangements;
- (e) request community feedback about poorly signposted roads so that the Government can best comply with Australian Standard 1742; and
- (f) address concerns in West Belconnen by:
  - (i) removing all the speed cushions on Spofforth Street and considering alternative traffic treatments for the street;
  - (ii) following implementation of subparagraph (f)(i), undertaking an assessment of the traffic impact on surrounding roads and then considering any further traffic treatments, if necessary;
  - (iii) improving pedestrian access across Starke Street near Kingsford Smith School; and
  - (iv) ensuring that the roads in question are appropriately policed.

The opposition believes that the government should be doing better at managing the territory's roads. There are many issues with the government's decision making, from a highway and arterial road level through to suburban streets.

There are numerous examples where roadworks have been very poorly timed, which has caused considerable frustration to motorists and losses in productivity for Canberrans. Some of the clear examples that spring to mind include, in Belconnen, the roadworks on Barry Drive at the same time as roadworks on Parkes Way; in Charnwood, car park resurfacing, construction of a roundabout and the redevelopment of Woolworths, all at the same time; and in Weston Creek, or affecting Weston Creek residents, the Cotter Road, Streeton Drive, Molonglo and Heysen Street roadworks, all simultaneously. I am sure we have all got stories about or examples of roadworks in Canberra which could and should have been done better.

However the ultimate in poorly timed roadworks is, and perhaps always will be, the Gungahlin Drive extension. That is a road that was meant to be delivered at \$53 million and came in years late at a cost of \$200 million. Of course, let us not forget that that road took longer to construct than the span of the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

One of the particular frustrations that motorists come across is temporary speed limits associated, or meant to be associated, with roadworks. There is, of course, good reason why we have temporary speed limits. Such restrictions are meant to be in place for the safety of both motorists and workers, but also so as not to compromise the actual construction work being undertaken. It is pretty annoying, when you have a sign to slow down to 40 or 60, perhaps hundreds of metres before a site, to drive by and see no construction work actually taking place—see perhaps just a few remnant

witches' hats from roadworks done a few days back. This is, of course, a common occurrence throughout Canberra.

Another regular sight on ACT roads is slowing down for roadworks but there is no "End roadworks" sign or resumption speed limit sign. Therefore people do not know the appropriate time to speed up again.

These may all seem like trivial issues, but the reality is that what such mismanagement causes is apathy and scepticism towards temporary speed limits. This means that people do not have confidence that the speed limits are justified, and next time people may dangerously drive through a stretch of road which really was required to be speed reduced.

It is my hunch that the problem here is not that the guidelines for temporary traffic arrangements are not detailed enough, but in fact the opposite: they are probably too detailed and too difficult to comply with. Regardless, the current practice is not working, and the government should review how to better manage these issues.

I have unashamedly written to the government, on behalf of constituents, on numerous occasions, asking them to consider whether some traffic calming devices would be appropriate for certain areas. However, I did so on the presumption that the government would make decisions based on evidence and consultation. Unfortunately, we have had too many examples where the government has not taken a reasonable approach to such decision making.

It seems that there are roads in Canberra where traffic calming devices, or even just basic pedestrian road crossing infrastructure, would be seen to be reasonable. Yet the government refuses. One such example is outside St Thomas Aquinas Primary School in Charnwood. I have raised this issue with the government on several occasions, but I have had no success in having the school zone safety improved.

I am proud of the Canberra Liberals' 2012 election promise to install flashing lights in school zones. I think many motorists inadvertently speed through some school zones, perhaps due to a temporary lapse in concentration and/or poor signage. I think inexpensive flashing lights would help reduce the incidence of speeding in school zones and therefore make our schools safer. St Thomas Aquinas on Lhotsky Street in Charnwood is certainly a prime candidate for such lights.

Another example of mismanagement of roadworks is well known to people in west Belconnen—the Spofforth Street speed hump disaster. This story has been fairly well captured in the media, in particular in the north side *Chronicle*. An article last year with the headline "Anger at calming measures" spoke about the frustration of many residents of the suburb. I was quoted as saying:

... traffic has gone from 1000 cars a day on Spofforth Street to 300 cars, but those additional 700 cars are now on Beaufort and going quickly ... If anything, the problem is probably worse.

When the government installed 13 speed humps at a huge cost, they did so based on consultation with less than 100 households. All that happened was exactly what many Holt residents predicted: traffic was diverted through Beaurepaire, Trickett, Messenger and other streets. There was not a system-wide approach to this problem. The government took one street in isolation and created a bigger problem.

Do you know what the basis of the decision was? The basis of this decision was, supposedly, consultation through a letterbox drop to just 62 households—62 households. As a result of the government's decision, there has been disruption to thousands of households.

Through a content-rich FOI, I saw some pretty interesting letters to the government. One angry person wrote this:

The gentleman told me that if traffic is found to be behaving the same as it was originally along Spofforth St, they will look at implementing the same system in these other areas. Now, without shouting for hands up in my neighbourhood, I can tell you that no-one, apart from some affected side street residents, will be in support of this even if it is in an attempt to curb speeding. Apart from being ridiculous (13 continuous sets of speed bumps exist nowhere else in one street in the ACT, let alone in far western Belconnen access roads), this decision was made without any greater road user consultation. They just appeared before Christmas and no one was available at ACT Roads to discuss this over this period—very convenient. I was informed that residents of Spofforth St were in favour, however many weren't and I can tell you from chatting with neighbours and friends, that no-one thinks they should have been implemented over other possible options such as rolling smoothed cement speed humps, chicanes, round a bout's or even fewer of the dreaded plastic bumps.

Someone who has had a pretty fascinating journey on this issue is Ms Mary Porter. On a similar issue to that of Hawker shops, it seems that Ms Porter has been walking both sides of Spofforth Street on this particular issue. On 15 December 2011, Ms Porter put out a media release. That media release says:

Ms Mary Porter AM MLA, Member for Ginninderra, has welcomed the commencement of work tomorrow on the installation of speed humps along Spofforth Street in Holt to enhance road safety.

She went on:

The installation of the speed humps, worth \$125,000, will commence tomorrow, Friday 16 December 2011, and is expected to be completed by Christmas.

However, just five weeks later—just five weeks later, on 7 February 2012—Ms Porter said on behalf of her constituents, in a letter to the then Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Katy Gallagher:

... I have also discovered that some traffic issues remain and are still causing noisy disturbances on the road, e.g. “revving up” between speed humps, trucks

continually breaking, people pulling trailers creating noise as they negotiate the speed humps and motorbike riders driving around the speed humps to avoid them altogether.

She went on to say on behalf of her constituent:

They would like the speed humps removed if possible and the speed limit set at 60kms as there are only houses on one side of the street.

She is spot on. Three days later, on 14 February, there was another letter from Ms Porter to the minister. She said, referring to a constituent:

He has informed me that since the installation of traffic calming measures in the street he has observed that traffic noise has increased due to vehicles decelerating and accelerating when approaching and moving away from the speed humps.

The FOI has redacted the name of the constituent but Ms Porter then said that the constituent:

... has asked that the traffic calming measures along Spofforth Street be reviewed and that an increased police presence and mobile speed cameras be considered as an alternative to the current traffic measures.

Ms Porter's manoeuvrability on this issue has been pretty extraordinary. Quite simply, the government has spent around \$150,000 to create a mess.

In September last year, I hosted a public meeting on this issue which attracted around 100 people. There was unanimity in the view that the traffic on Beaurepaire Street had got much worse since the installation of speed humps on Spofforth Street as more cars were diverting through more dangerous and risky suburban roads to avoid the humps.

Now the government have announced that they will be implementing traffic calming measures across several streets in Holt, apparently to address concerns caused by the Spofforth Street speed humps and the rat-running they have created. However, I think that the government are simply treating symptoms. The problem is the speed cushions on Spofforth Street and the change of driver behaviour they have created.

The opposition calls to start this process again from scratch—that is, remove the speed cushions and then do a system-wide traffic assessment in Holt.

Our proposed course of action is a reasonable one. Rather than try to address the TAMS-created problem of rat-running through Beaurepaire, Messenger and Trickett streets, let us start this process again. Remove all the speed humps; then do an assessment. It may well turn out that all that is required is proper policing of Spofforth Street or perhaps a raised pedestrian crossing or some narrow points on one road in Holt.

The Canberra Liberals will continue to lobby for a common-sense approach and a fair deal for the hundreds of thousands of Canberrans who depend on cars to get around our city.



**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for Ageing) (5.46): I thank Mr Coe for his interest in the ACT's road transport system and possible ways to improve how it is planned and managed. I do have amendments to Mr Coe's motion, which I have circulated, and I now seek leave to move the amendments together.

Leave granted.

**MR RATTENBURY:** I move:

Omit paragraphs (1) and (2), substitute:

“(1) notes that:

- (a) major roadworks projects across the ACT have an impact on commuters and can cause travel delays;
- (b) although several key roadworks projects are occurring in the ACT simultaneously, these are timed to help address expected population and travel growth, particularly in new residential areas such as the Molonglo Valley;
- (c) Roads ACT recently undertook a review of speed limits and speed signs on Canberra's arterial roads and has implemented its outcomes; and
- (d) following community consultation, the ACT Government is implementing traffic calming measures in various parts of Canberra to improve safety and to reduce speeding, rat running and traffic volumes; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) undertake roadworks and temporary traffic management plans in a coordinated fashion;
- (b) continue to monitor and update traffic signage, including by responding to community feedback;
- (c) consider traffic concerns in West Belconnen, including specific issues such as pedestrian access near Kingsford Smith School, through Roads ACT's traffic warrant system;
- (d) implement the announced revision of traffic calming measures on Spofforth Street—which reduce the amount of speed humps and add chicanes—as well as the announced traffic calming measures on surrounding Holt streets; and
- (e) continue working with ACT police to ensure appropriate traffic enforcement on Canberra roads.”.

I thought I would move those upfront so that I can discuss them at the same time as I address the content of Mr Coe's motion. Mr Coe has raised a number of issues which I think are worthy of discussion and consideration. Roadworks are one of those things that a lot of people see and that a fair proportion of the travelling public has an interest in. Certainly since I have been the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services it is an issue that has been raised with me by the public, and it is an issue I have discussed at length with my directorate.

To get right to the crux of the matter, the issue is essentially a balance between disrupting the road network now by upgrading roads and preparing for the future growth in population and travel. This is particularly so given the rapid growth expected in areas like Molonglo and Gungahlin. I note that Mr Coe's motion in paragraph (2) (a) calls on the government to develop transport infrastructure before existing infrastructure reaches capacity. The sentiment behind that is that the government should anticipate growth. That is essentially what is happening with upgrades such as the Cotter Road duplication.

A 2010 study on Canberra's east-west corridor recommended major works to duplicate the Cotter Road between the Tuggeranong Parkway and Adelaide Avenue to cope with the predicted increase in traffic due to the development in Molonglo valley and north Canberra. You cannot really have limited roadworks and roadworks that are staggered consecutively over a long period and also proactively anticipate and account for all growth. The Cotter Road upgrades, for example, started in September last year and should be completed in September this year. It is not really feasible to delay all other works while we wait for these works to be completed.

I know that the local Liberal Party has a policy platform of delivering hundreds of millions of dollars of road duplications. These road duplications would take years to build and probably years more if no works were done concurrently.

Members, it is indulgent of me but I do note, in light of Mr Doszpot's earlier comments about my brief absence from the chamber, that Mr Coe is no longer in the chamber, having moved his motion and then delivered his speech. I will proceed nonetheless.

The reality is that there will unfortunately be periods of roadworks that impact on the travelling public. I am confident that, in the future, Mr Coe and Canberrans driving through the east-west corridor, for example, will appreciate the road upgrades when they are completed.

These points are reflected in my amendment to Mr Coe's motion. It notes that roadworks are an inconvenience to the public but that they are targeted to address specific issues, often years in advance. My amendment also retains Mr Coe's original point that calls on the government to coordinate road works and temporary traffic management plans. I am happy to take that on board and continue these efforts as we have been doing.

I sometimes hear from the community that everywhere you go, there are roadworks. This reflects, of course, the fact that the government does have a significant program of infrastructure improvements. There is a big network and a lot of work to be done, but I do agree with Mr Coe that it is important that we are vigilant about making sure that temporary traffic management plans are the right ones and that they are monitored.

Planning and development of road and transport infrastructure is always going to be challenging when you are attempting to balance the needs of current users with providing for growth into the future. And this does not just apply to roads. It applies to all transport-related infrastructure such as shared paths, bus stops and stations and footpaths and, in the future, even light rail.

Major works are required to upgrade our public transport network and our walking and cycling network. I recently announced new works in Belconnen as part of the Belconnen to city transitway project. That will create a corridor of enhanced public transport infrastructure between Belconnen and the city, which is one of Canberra's key commuter routes. There will be a dedicated bus lane on College Street, improved pick-up and set-down facilities outside Radford College, new bus stops on Haydon Drive and College Street, and improved walking and cycling facilities throughout the area. Those are works expected to be completed early next year.

I have also announced the commencement of work on the construction of a dedicated bus lane on an 800-metre section of Canberra Avenue between Hindmarsh Drive and the Monaro Highway. That is an important public transport project, but of course it will take some time and cause some disruption. It is expected to be completed by mid-2014.

I certainly accept that it can be frustrating and inconvenient to be delayed at road works. As the responsible agency for delivery of much transport infrastructure, TAMS has a key objective of minimising those frustrating and inconvenient delays for the travelling public. Ensuring that the community are aware of roadwork that may delay their commute is one action that is taken in advance of significant road construction through the use of variable message signs advising when building roads.

Road construction in particular is planned and developed over a number of years. There is a tried and tested process involving, firstly, feasibility studies, then concept and detailed design before a project gets on the construction budget. Actual construction is then undertaken against a detailed design and delivery plan that outlines key construction and traffic management milestones and that aims to deliver projects on budget and in time frames in a way that minimises the overall impact on the community. The government knows the challenges and works with the best interests of the community in mind to overcome these as best it can.

It is in the interests of everyone—road users, the community at large, governments and the people who design, plan and build roads—to ensure that transport and road infrastructure is planned and delivered on time. It is important to recognise that the construction phase of these projects follows good planning and that programming

involves challenges. Expediency is never put at the expense of safety. While measures are put in place to minimise the impact on existing traffic, these must never be at the expense of road users and road workers.

Managing temporary speed limits at worksites is a key aspect of balancing the sometimes conflicting objectives of traffic efficiency and safety. Under the Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Act 1999, temporary traffic management plans for construction projects need to be authorised by Roads ACT. Those approvals of course include conditions to ensure that appropriate safety measures, including speed limits, are in place when needed but are removed when it is safe to do so.

Roads ACT seeks to ensure consistency, not only within the ACT but also with what drivers can expect to experience across the nation, by regulating the use of temporary speed limits in accordance with Australian standard 1742.3. The Australian standard requires, in the first instance, a risk assessment to be undertaken for the level of safety risk associated with proposed works. The Australian standard then provides technical guidance as to how those risks can be best managed, and temporary speed limits are a frequent option.

Worksite speed limits are determined by a range of factors, including the proximity of workers to traffic and the traffic arrangements that remain for road users. Following the requirements identified in the Australian standard ensures that the actual risks and requirements for reduced speed are relative to the stage of construction and the time of day.

Following authorisation for the use of temporary speed limits on public roads, enforcement of worksites is the responsibility of WorkSafe ACT, and policing of the community using the roads within the worksites rests with the AFP. Good working relations between worksites and the AFP have ensured consistent and appropriate policing to support the safety of the sites. Project contractors also play a role in ensuring that the correct traffic devices are in place as the construction work proceeds. This also means that the traffic devices are removed when not required.

Roads ACT also work closely with project developers, not only in relation to the consideration of temporary speed limits and seeking any additional information before they are authorised but also in undertaking audits and visiting sites where issues are identified. And I think that is an important point, because there are times when changes need to be made. Certainly I have observed one or two that I have raised with Roads ACT and they have gone out and changes have been made. I certainly recall receiving letters from both Mrs Dunne and Mr Coe about some issues at specific sites, and Roads ACT have gone out and made adjustments.

Of course, that is not ideal. It would be better if it did not come to that, but I think where members of the public do have specific concerns, and equally members of this place, where they see issues, I would urge that they do contact me either directly or through Canberra Connect because unfortunately mistakes do get made or things do not play out in the way that they should. So there is always that possibility for improvements to be made.

Turning now to the issue of the review of speed limits that Mr Coe raised—and Roads ACT has existing processes for the ongoing review of ACT speed limits—one of the matters flagged in my amendment is the fact that Roads ACT recently undertook a comprehensive review of speed limits and speed signs on arterial roads in Canberra and has implemented recommendations from this review. In the majority of cases, the current speed limits were found to correctly reflect the surrounding environment. It involved updating speed limit signage at 164 locations, and three speed limit changes were made to three off-ramps at Gungahlin Drive. The result is a more consistent and legible road network.

In view of the existing processes which are in place, I see no reason for an additional review of speed limits, particularly as the 50 kilometres an hour unless signposted otherwise rule applies in residential areas. Residential areas all have a 50 kilometres an hour default. The 50 kilometres an hour default speed limit formally commenced in the ACT in June 2003. And this followed a trial for all local and collector streets in the ACT, which was introduced in March 2001 as a two-year trial. The 50 kilometres an hour default speed limit applies Canberra wide and is supported by the overall signage approach of 50 kilometres an hour unless otherwise signposted.

This means that unless travelling on a road signposted at 60 kilometres an hour or higher, motorists should not exceed 50 kilometres an hour. If travelling on a 60 kilometres an hour road, the lower limit applies as soon as motorists turn off that road onto any road without a speed sign. Roads ACT will continue to keep speed limits under review as the city grows and TAMS will of course respond to community feedback on these matters if and as they arise. This is reflected in my amendments to the motion.

Mr Coe's motion also refers to Spofforth Street, and he spent some time on it in his speech. It calls for the removal of all of the speed cushions there. As I have already explained in the Assembly, the government has already announced changes to the Spofforth Street traffic calming arrangements. This involves removing a number of the speed cushions and installing chicanes to help manage speed. This was decided following extensive consultation with the community.

As I have said a number of times before, traffic calming measures can be controversial but often they are needed for the safety and amenity of the community. Spofforth Street had a significant problem with speeding vehicles and volume of vehicles and it needed to be addressed. The initial investigation showed that 85 per cent of surveyed motorists travelled at or below 76 kilometres an hour in a 50 kilometres an hour speed zone.

As I mentioned in the Assembly yesterday, what this indicates is at least 15 per cent of vehicles were travelling more than 26 kilometres an hour above the speed limit. And given there are houses on that street—and any other resident in Canberra would not stand for that—I think that that is something that needs to be remembered in the discussion. Clearly changes needed to be made. The original design of Spofforth Street did not get it right but I think now we have found an appropriate balance between safety for the residents and convenience for those who do use—

*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 RATTENBURY:** The new measures will be implemented as part of a wider suite of measures on the surrounding Holt streets. My amendment asks that the Assembly support this approach. It is a more holistic approach to traffic management across the suburb and one that involved months of talking to the community about the problems they need addressed.

Lastly I note that Mr Coe's motion calls on the government to address some traffic concerns in west Belconnen. I do not believe that this is the best way to specifically pick up those matters. As Mr Coe would be aware, Roads ACT operates a traffic warrant system. This ranks and prioritises various upgrades right across Canberra. I do not think the best way to choose that prioritisation is through a motion of the Assembly, and my amendments reflect that. Of course, it is appropriate for members to raise areas of concern and, again, I am more than happy for that to be done either through my office or through Canberra Connect.

But I think the best way and the fairest way to ensure that all of Canberra is treated equally is to put these upgrades through the traffic warrant system. Roads ACT will then look at the concerns, and certainly the ones that Mr Coe has raised in his motion will be looked at and will be prioritised accordingly using the traffic warrant system. Then they can be put into the list of works that need to be done in the ACT. My amendments also seek to reflect that.

So I believe these amendments broadly pick up on the intent of Mr Coe's motion. They have specifically addressed a number of the issues that he has raised. They do not absolutely agree with all the points that he has, but I think that they are in the spirit of the conversation that Mr Coe was seeking to raise today, and I commend my amendments to the Assembly.

**MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (6.01):** I would like to speak briefly on these issues. The state of the roads is an abiding interest of mine and an abiding interest of many of my constituents. Mr Rattenbury has touched on the fact that I spend a bit of time giving him a hard time about failings in this. The standout one for me was when the Cotter Road and McCulloch Street intersection was closed for successive weekends. On one occasion I was in a line of about 10 cars that drove to the end of McCulloch Street to find that the Cotter Road was closed. We all did a U-turn at the last roundabout and drove back and there was nothing by way of a sign on Carruthers Street to give people any indication. I do not know how many people on that weekend did the same thing as the 10 or so people in the queue that I was in did. That road was closed for a number of weekends. There was improvement over time to the signs, which I think was a direct result of Mr Rattenbury's intervention, and I thank him for that.

I want to dwell mostly on the issues in relation to Spofforth Street, which has been problematic for a very long time. I have received a lot of representations over speeding both on Drake Brockman Drive and Spofforth Street over the years that I

have been in this place. There have been in the past serious issues of speeding in this area. But I want to share with members the thoughts of one of my constituents who wrote to the Chief Minister and copied it to members recently:

As the leader of a Minority Government, is it now your Government's policy that minority views take precedence over majority views?

If that is not the case, then why is your Minister Rattenbury, in conjunction with Roads ACT, implementing just such a policy in relation to Spofforth Street in Holt?

The issue I am referring to is the imposition of so-called "traffic calming measures" being forced on Holt residents, despite 60% of respondents to a Roads ACT survey emphatically rejecting what is now proposed and also rejecting what has already been imposed. These 60% have been totally ignored because their responses were, according to Roads ACT and endorsed by Minister Rattenbury, not related to the options contained in the survey!!!

How arrogant!

How contemptuous!

This was not an exercise in seeking the residents' views - it was just another exercise in further trying to justify Roads ACT's "bad planning" on this issue. Not only that, the "bad planning" started as a result of just 4 complaints about traffic issues over a period of 2 years and 8 months!

And my constituent goes on to urgently enjoin the Chief Minister to redress the issue and to intervene to deal with this issue. My constituent believes Minister Rattenbury is not taking into account the wishes of the people of Holt. My constituent said:

The Holt residents need the Chief Minister to take action. The integrity of the public consultation process needs such action to take place, and the concept of democracy needs such action to take place.

That is the sort of feedback Mr Coe and I get on a regular basis about this particularly sad story in relation to this piece of road which is emblematic of many of the problems that we experience with Roads ACT and their timing and implementation of roadworks.

In concluding, I want to reinforce the general thrust of Mr Coe's motion about poor coordination. For instance, people were trying to drive from Belconnen to Woden or vice versa—mainly Belconnen to Woden—when Parkes Way was being worked on, when Coppins Crossing Road was being worked on and when Belconnen Way was being worked on. Wherever you turned—it is now alleviated a little—for months on end there was constant congestion that made it very difficult for people to traverse town in a timely fashion and make their appointments, get to work on time and get to school on time.

I commend Mr Coe for his diligence in this matter, and I particularly commend Mr Coe for the work he has done in relation to Spofforth Street.

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra) (6.07): I support Minister Rattenbury's amendment to Mr Coe's motion. I thank Mr Rattenbury for proposing this amendment as I believe it corrects some of the deficiencies that exist in the motion Mr Coe presented today. Overall, Mr Coe's motion gives us an insight into the relentless pursuit of division which exists in most of those opposite and which been reflected throughout today. The opposition think temporary speed limits on roadworks and construction sites are something to be done away with because they can be annoying to motorists. These temporary limits are there to protect the safety of those who work on roads and construction sites. Just because Mr Coe cannot see a TAMS or construction worker on the road does not mean they are not there or that conditions are safe to be driven on at higher speeds.

Instead of recognising the concerns of working people and the responsibility we have as motorists to put safety before convenience, Mr Coe wants to pit motorists against workers. I believe this shows a lack of concern for many people who work in municipal services or the construction industry.

Turning to my backyard at west Belconnen now, we have another example of this relentless need to divide the community. Yes, the speed humps on Spofforth Street have been an issue of contention in Holt and the surrounding suburbs. The speed humps were installed some years ago as a result of significant speeding and serious accidents occurring on the street. When I was living on the street one of those accidents—and I am glad that you drew attention to the serious problems of speeding on the street—led to the death of a young child as well as a motorcyclist down as well as cars in people's front yards.

I can see how people who regularly use streets in Holt do not like the speed humps, and I can see why many people who live on Spofforth Street love the quiet that came with the speed humps. Clearly, finding a solution required community engagement by government, and this is why I welcome the work of Minister Rattenbury and TAMS, who went out into the Holt community and surrounding suburbs and spoke to the residents and road users and have come up with a sensible proposal which, I think, will improve traffic flow and discourage speeding.

Having just spent the last couple of weeks visiting residents in Holt after this announcement, I can say that the residents I have met with are quite pleased with the proposed changes and the engagement with them by TAMS. Out of this process, I think there are a couple of lessons for Mr Coe on how to engage part of our community and achieve a good result. Rather than trying to divide the community, Mr Coe could have done the responsible thing and been a leader by bringing the community together to work towards coming up with sensible solutions that everybody could have lived with.

You cannot make everybody happy, and we all know that. But by having conversations with residents instead of grandstanding, you can reach consensus. Instead, Mr Coe chose petty politicking over decent and good community leadership. He chose to pursue division and not the solution. These are not the qualities of a community leader.



In conclusion, I support Mr Rattenbury's amendment, and I urge my colleagues to do so as well.

**MR WALL** (Brindabella) (6.11): I am very pleased to be speaking in support of Mr Coe's motion today. The impact of ongoing roadworks and the lack of coordination surrounding them, the implementation of traffic calming measures, inconsistent speed limits and the lack of signage are felt by road users across the whole territory. I wish I could complain about the poorly planned roadworks that are occurring in my electorate, however, there has been a considerable absence of any for quite some time.

Road congestion as a result of delayed and ongoing roadwork is nothing new, and we may need to look at the haphazard approach taken in addressing the duplication of Tharwa Drive when it was underway and the time it took to complete. Residents of Tuggeranong have for the life of this government been made to simply swallow the fact that this government cannot get road infrastructure right, whether it be the failure to address the traffic safety and traffic flow issues in Chifley at both ends of Eggleston Crescent or the morning congestion at the intersection of Isabella Drive and the Monaro Highway, not to mention the superfluous third lane when travelling southbound on the Monaro Highway that irritates commuters on their way home. Or dare I mention the long-promised but yet-to-be delivered Ashley Drive duplication? The fact is that the maintenance and delivery of our road infrastructure and the impact it has on our community is not a priority for the Labor-Greens government we have today.

Mr Coe's motion notes the heavy-handed traffic calming measures that Holt residents on Spofforth Street have had to endure. I want to state the concern that many members of my electorate have recently raised with me regarding the traffic consultation for the Fadden and Gowrie area. Whilst it is widely accepted that improvements need to be made in this area, it is alarming that the solution is simply to install speed cushions. The realignment of Coyne Street will significantly improve safety and traffic flow, but widespread use of only one method of slowing traffic is outdated and should not be relied on simply because it is amongst the cheapest.

I also take this opportunity to mention Inkster Street in Kambah. Last week I met with a number of residents in the street who are seeking some help to try and manage traffic flowing through their street. Residents believe improvements, often simple ones, such as improving signage, could go a long way to addressing the issues they are facing. This is an issue I have written to Mr Rattenbury on, and I look forward to receiving his response in regard to this matter.

I commend Mr Coe for bringing this motion here today, and I reiterate his call to develop road, parking, cycling, pedestrian and public transport infrastructure before existing services reach capacity and the need to undertake roadworks in a coordinated and considered fashion.

**MS PORTER** (Ginninderra) (6.14): I will try not to fall over while I stand here. I want to briefly respond to Mr Coe, as he probably thought I would, in regard to his

comments about Spofforth Street, and to thank Ms Berry and Mr Rattenbury for their comments in relation to that.

When the survey of residents suggested that calming devices were called for, I thought that the number suggested might be a bit OTT, as they say. However, residents seem overjoyed. I am sure that, over time, you, Madam Speaker, Mr Coe, Ms Berry and Dr Bourke have made representations about Spofforth Street to the various ministers for TAMS. Ms Berry has outlined very distinctly, very carefully, some of the history that is behind that.

As I said, when I learned of the initial installations, I thought, “Gee, that sounds like a lot.” Residents seemed overjoyed, but I was a bit concerned about surrounding streets and whether or not there would be any impact. But I am not a road engineer, so I thought, “I am not a person that can really comment about that decision, because I am definitely not a road engineer.” I believe Mr Coe from time to time thinks he might be.

Over time, of course, all of us started to get representations about the surrounding streets and about the noise of some of the vehicles—drivers trying to do what they should not do, and that is drive at speed. The very reason why the calming traffic devices were there was to calm the traffic. If you have a calming device there, it suggests that you actually should not drive at speed over it. But of course you cannot put brains in monuments, and unfortunately some people will refuse to take a hint that they are not supposed to be speeding.

Anyway, as Mr Rattenbury says, sometimes things do not work. And they did not work. When things do not work, and people come to me, as they come to all of us, and say, “Look, this is not working for me, and I do not think that this is working for other people; I would really like the minister to have a look at it,” I do not think that it is a bad thing to actually make those representations to the minister. I do that all the time. Mr Rattenbury knows that I do. He gets a bit overwhelmed from time to time with the number of representations I make on behalf of my constituents.

Sometimes, as Ms Berry said, you get conflicting messages from constituents. You will have constituents saying, “I do not want any more bike paths on the roads.” And then tomorrow, or even the same day, you will get someone emailing you saying, “I really admire the way that you are installing bike paths on the road.” They will ask you to bring this matter to the minister’s attention.

I bring all matters to the minister’s attention. The constituents do not necessarily agree with one another, but I am not going to filter my constituents’ matters. I will represent them to the minister, and I will say to the minister, “This is what the constituent thinks, what he or she believes and what he or she suggests.” It is up to the minister and the experts that are in his directorate to come to a conclusion as to what the best answer will be.

I think that Ms Berry’s approach is an extremely sound one, if you have the opportunity—to get people together and get some consensus. I know that with Hawker we tried from time to time to get some kind of consensus. It did not work in Hawker, but I think that was because we had a pretty rocky start. It did not happen in

Nicholls either. Unfortunately, with the suggestions that I made initially about Nicholls, I was told that they could not be achieved at that particular time. But they have been achieved since; I have been very happy that some of the solutions that I suggested in the first instance about Nicholls car park were addressed at a late stage.

We all work for our constituents in the best way we can. That is the good thing about this place: we are all out there listening to our community and trying to make representations. Yes, from time to time it does get frustrating out there on the roads, but we are a growing city; we do need to cater for the amount of traffic that is on our roads now and we do need to make alterations. Our constituents would be the first people to say: "Look, I can't get to work because we have only got two lanes going in this direction. They are always chockers every morning when I am trying to get to work in peak hour. Can't we have a third lane?" Then, when we build the third lane, they say, "I am stuck in traffic because you are building this third lane." That is human nature.

I have been to Brisbane. I have been to Sydney. I have been to Melbourne. Out of all of them, I think Melbourne has got the most civilised traffic. But I have seen the work that is going on in those cities, particularly Brisbane. I have children and grandchildren in Brisbane. I have spent quite a bit of time there when I have had the opportunity. I have had to travel quite long distances to see some of my children and grandchildren within Brisbane. We are really fortunate as far as roadworks are concerned. I have never been to Brisbane without major roadworks happening everywhere. And do you know what? I checked the letters to the editor to see where the complaints are. I do not see them; I do not read them. I guess they know they need those improvements made.

So thanks very much, Mr Coe, for bringing this matter to us. As I say, we all work hard in this place for our constituents, and that is the reason why we are all here.

**MR COE** (Ginninderra) (6.21): In closing, let me say that we have heard some interesting remarks in this debate. Ms Porter's revisionist Spofforth Street history is somewhat interesting. The bit she failed to mention was that she actually put out a media release where, in effect, she was the amateur traffic engineer, saying that 13 speed humps was great, that it was a real humdinger of a result for the people of Holt. Five weeks later, when the letters started going into her office saying "Rip out the speed humps", it was a bit different.

I think Ms Berry missed the point of my motion about temporary traffic speed limits. The point is that, unless they are enforced properly, people do not have confidence in temporary traffic speed limits. Unless they are enforced properly, people are apathetic towards temporary traffic speed limits. Therefore, it is absolutely incumbent upon the government to make sure that temporary traffic speed limits in place at construction zones fairly reflect the risk posed to drivers and to workers. If you do not do that, you run the risk of people becoming apathetic. Next time they think, "The last time I drove through one of these temporary traffic zones I could speed through because there was no one there, so next time I will do the same."

If you enforce it rigorously and you make sure that the risk is reflected in the temporary traffic zone, and that the zone kicks in at the appropriate time and switches off at the appropriate time, people have confidence in the system. When you do not have an “End roadworks” sign, or when you have a 40 kilometre an hour sign hundreds of metres before alleged roadworks and there is nothing there, you erode confidence in the system. And that is when road workers actually get put at risk.

I urge the government to get on top of this issue and to ensure that there is no apathy towards roadwork speed limits in the ACT. It is absolutely vital that all road workers, all pedestrians and all motorists can have confidence that, when there is a speed reduction sign in place, it is warranted, it is justified, and they need to do it. Then, when that risk has passed, they can resume their original speed. It is very important that that system is put in place and that there is integrity behind it.

Ms Berry also spoke about consultation and that perhaps this was some sort of divisive way of doing it. Ms Berry fails to remember that it was actually my letterboxing which brought this issue to the fore. Originally, the government letterboxed 62 houses. Then I went and letterboxed 3,000 houses in Holt and Higgins. Mr Gill from Roads ACT acknowledged that that was when the letters started to flood in. I held a public meeting; I had 100 people turn up and heard views of constituents. I then did a follow-up letterbox to another 3,000 people in Holt and Higgins. As a result of that, we did get some movement. There were others that did this as well; there is no denying that. But we cannot have a revisionist history towards this as well. You need to be very careful about grandstanding accusations and who is actually grandstanding when you make those kinds of false allegations.

It is very important that we get this right. The government has let down the people of Holt and Higgins. Beaufort, Trickett and Messenger are now far more dangerous streets than they were before. I urge members to support the motion as on the notice paper.

Question put:

That **Mr Rattenbury**'s amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 7

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

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

## Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

## National Heart Foundation

**MR COE** (Ginninderra) (6.29): I rise to speak about the work of the Heart Foundation. For over 50 years the Heart Foundation has been seeking to save lives by improving heart health for all Australians. The foundation sees its purpose as being “to reduce premature death and suffering from heart, stroke and blood vessel disease in Australia”.

As part of achieving this purpose, the foundation funds research and provides practical treatment tools to improve the standard of care for those diagnosed with cardiovascular disease. The foundation is also involved in the development of guidelines for health professionals and provides information and support to those with cardiovascular disease. Support is also provided to programs designed to minimise cardiovascular health risk, including programs for smokers, physical activity, recovery and rehabilitation, and local government initiatives designed to create healthier communities.

The ACT division of the Heart Foundation has a number of programs, including the active living project, community walking groups, the Heartmoves program and the Big Heart Appeal, and it is the charity partner of the *Canberra Times* fun run.

The patron of the Heart Foundation of Australia is Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce, the president is Associate Professor Peter Sexton, the deputy president is Dr Jennifer Johns and the treasurer is Todd Roberts. The patron of the ACT Division of the Heart Foundation is Richard Rolfe OAM, the president is Andrew Caudle, the vice-presidents are Peter French and John Adams, the honorary treasurer is Rod Scott, the honorary secretary is Keith Bradley, the directors are Mike Sargent, Lisa Studdert and Walter Abhayaratna, and the CEO is Tony Stubbs.

On 26 July I was pleased to attend the inaugural Jerry Morris Oration breakfast lecture at Parliament House. The oration was named in honour of Jerry Morris, who published evidence in the 1950s that a lack of physical activity contributes to heart disease. Morris compared the working lives and heart health of the drivers of double-decker buses with the conductors on these buses and found that the conductors were at less risk of heart disease due to their constant activity.

The Jerry Morris Oration was given by Professor Adrian Bauman, who is a professor of public health at Sydney university. In his speech Professor Bauman emphasised the importance of physical activity to heart health. He noted that it is not just the health sector that needs to encourage physical activity; other sectors where changes are needed include transport systems, urban and civic design and workplace adjustment. However, Professor Bauman also emphasised that the health sector should take a more proactive approach to the promotion of physical activity.

I commend the ACT division of the Heart Foundation for all the work it does to educate the community and support those living with cardiovascular disease. For more information about the work of the Heart Foundation and the benefits of an active lifestyle, I recommend members visit their website at [www.heartfoundation.org.au](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au).

### **UnitingCare and St Margaret's Uniting Church**

**MS PORTER** (Ginninderra) (6.31): It was my pleasure on the weekend, on Sunday, to attend St Margaret's Uniting Church, Hackett, ACT, for an ecumenical worship service and also for the signing of a memorandum of understanding between UnitingCare and St Margaret's Uniting Church to transfer the management of their program, stepping stones for life, to UnitingCare NSW.ACT. I will read from the letter of invitation about the program:

Stepping Stones For Life assists people who are ageing, people living with a disability and especially families in which ageing parents are caring for an adult family member with disability. It started modestly as an activity of St Margaret's some ten years ago and with invaluable support and company-operation from UnitingCare, Disability ACT and Carers ACT, it has progressed to a point where real, tangible results are being achieved.

Ross Walker Lodge was opened in August 2011. Many of us were at that opening, which was a wonderful day. Ross Walker Lodge offers disability accommodation in the Hackett area, and it has proved to be an extremely successful program since its inception.

At the church service we met the disability carer who works there as a support worker and a housekeeper to the people in the house. She is a young woman who came to this country from Nepal and recently got her permanency in Australia—she and her husband, and they have since had a child, so it is a lovely story.

Following the service we all gathered in the hall for the signing of the memorandum and then enjoyed a light lunch. Mr Doszpot also attended the service and joined us for the light lunch.

I am sure that everyone there was very pleased by the fact that they had been able to sign this agreement. Certainly, St Margaret's needs to be commended for the work that they do in the community, and the congregation. These programs grew out of the hard work of the congregation. There are other standout examples of UnitingCare and Uniting churches in the ACT which, through their congregations, provide such support in their communities.

One can think of Pilgrim House and the breakfast club there for people who may be living rough. One can also think, in my electorate, of the Uniting Church at Kippax, through the hard work of Reverend Gordon Ramsay, the volunteers and the paid workers in that place, and the community that strongly supports that work—working with disadvantaged people in the west Belconnen area. In all churches, wherever they are, you will find this kind of work going on amongst the congregation—reaching out into their communities and helping people in the community to lead a better life. I commend all of the work that they are doing on a day-to-day basis.

## National Book Week

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra) (6.35): One of my favourite times of year has come around again. August 17 to 23 is the Children's Book Council's National Book Week. This year to celebrate Book Week I will be visiting early childhood centres to read with kids and to celebrate with the educators the importance of books and early education. Everyone in this chamber knows the importance of early reading experiences in shaping lives. Seventy-five per cent of children's development occurs before the age of five, and the foundations of lifelong literacy are laid in these early years.

Book Week is also a time to reflect on the other benefits of early reading. Books do not just improve the literacy of our children; they help shape their world view and begin to engage them in considering what kind of community they would like to live in. In honour of Book Week I would like to recommend one of my favourite stories, *Click, clack, moo: cows that type* by American author Doreen Cronin. Doreen Cronin, like many of our award-winning Australian authors, understands that even very young children are interested in and capable of exploring complex ideas and balancing competing views.

Doreen's story *Click, clack, moo: cows that type* is an illustrated story about a community of animals who find an old typewriter and discover that with the ability to communicate with Farmer Brown, they have the resources to come together and campaign for good changes at the farm.

Over the course of Doreen Cronin's series, which includes *Click, clack, moo*, *Click, clack, quackity-quack* and the very exciting *Vote for duck*, the animals do not always agree. Sometimes the interests of the cows are not the same as the interests of the ducks, and the hens and sheep make issues even more complex. But the animals of Farmer Brown's farm are committed to building a good community; so they always try to work together to find solutions that balance everyone's needs.

I think cooperation and compromise are important concepts for young children to grasp. So I was very pleased to see that acclaimed children's author Sue deGennaro, who illustrated Jackie French's fantastic *The tomorrow book* about our renewable energy future, takes up this same theme in her CBCA shortlisted book, *The pros and cons of being a frog*. In this story, two young friends learn through an argument that they have different strengths, weaknesses and interests, but that the most important thing is learning to respect each other and to get along.

Literacy and life skills are two of the benefits of children's engagement with books from a young age. But I have to say, my favourite part of Book Week is seeing the enjoyment and imagination that comes from sharing stories. When we are all done with this long sitting session this week, I encourage all of my colleagues in this place to put down the budget papers for an evening and instead share the work of one of our great children's authors with a young person in their life.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms Berry. I am just wondering whether you move from *Click, clack, moo* to *Animal farm*?

## **National Heart Foundation**

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella) (6.38): I rise tonight too to join with Mr Coe in celebrating the Heart Foundation breakfast on 26 July. Mr Coe went through some acknowledgements. I thank him for that. But what I will raise in the Assembly tonight is the actual theme behind that particular week. The theme for the Heart Foundation was "Sitting less for adults".

As Mr Coe noted, the proponent who gave us the speech, Adrian Bauman, indicated that the studies show that in this electronic age we now sit a lot more than we have in previous times. We spend time sitting at home and during travel to work. This is directly linked to an increase in health problems such as poor nutrition, obesity, insulin resistance, which can lead to diabetes, but also, of course, the risk of developing coronary heart disease.

There are many ways in which we do sit for long periods during the day. That could include having breakfast, driving to work, being at your desk at work and driving home. Here in the Assembly, for example, it is very easy to sit too much. Adults spend more than half of their waking hours sitting. Therefore, to reduce the risk of health problems it is important to be aware of how much you sit and try to move more throughout the day.

The evidence was pretty striking. There were some tests mentioned in the morning discussion relating to those that had already had heart events. The tests were between those that had stents arising from their heart event and those that had chosen to move to a more active lifestyle. The results were that those that did not have the stents and chose the more active lifestyle actually lived longer than those that had the physical stents put into their arteries.

This is a very important message from the Heart Foundation. I thank Mr Coe for bringing the matter before the Assembly. I commend everybody to sit less during their time at work and play.

## **Street law program**

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (6.41): I would like to speak today about the work done by the Welfare Rights and Legal Centre, specifically through their street law program. Street law is a program designed to assist people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness by providing them with legal advice or by connecting them with other free services which may assist. The program is designed to assist and support vulnerable Canberrans with legal problems before those problems get out of control.

The clients of the street law service face significant barriers in accessing or understanding their legal rights and problems which, if ignored, become much bigger than they need be. The lawyers at street law help with debt problems, Centrelink issues, housing concerns, domestic violence protection orders, employment rights, victims compensation, disability care and discrimination, among other issues.



Street law have an office in the city in Canberra but it is predominantly an outreach service. They visit Inanna, the Early Morning Centre, Toora women's centre and the Migrant Refugee Settlement Services to meet with those who may need their help. Most people do not know help is available to them in this area until the street law service reaches them through their outreach.

I would like to acknowledge the work of Genevieve Bolton, Jo Wright, Anusha Goonetilleke and all the staff and volunteers who dedicate their time to this valuable program. I would also like to take the opportunity to acknowledge Clayton Utz for their support of street law. I commend those involved in street law and thank them for their ongoing commitment and for taking the time to meet with me this week. You can find out more about them on the web at [streetlaw.org.au](http://streetlaw.org.au).

### **Mr Daniel Deniehy**

**DR BOURKE** (Ginninderra) (6.43): Goulburn has a proud history of contribution to Australian politics. The city is closely associated with the early republican movement through Daniel Deniehy, member for Argyle 1857 to 1859. He was the focus at a recent republican gathering in Goulburn for the inaugural Daniel Deniehy oration by Adjunct Professor Dr Jeff Brownrigg from the University of Canberra.

Deniehy declared:

My eye is fixed on one point—doing my duty and establishing Republican Institutions and advancing in every genuine method, my native land.

Deniehy was born in Sydney on 18 August 1828, the son of former convicts of Irish birth. His father became a successful merchant, enabling Deniehy to be educated at the best schools in Sydney and to further his education in England. On his return, he studied law. He was a husband, father, politician, solicitor, editor and writer for *Freeman's Journal*, the *Victorian* and other journals, and founder of the *Southern Cross*. Devoted to literature, he created a magnificent library.

In 1850s Australia there was eagerness and an interest in reformist politics amongst the citizens. Democracy was a popular concept. Republicanism was a new movement championed by Deniehy and fellow radical John Dunmore Lang. At a public meeting in 1854 at the Victoria Theatre, Deniehy made his first appearance as a political speaker. He was there to oppose William Wentworth's draft New South Wales constitution bill to establish a parliamentary upper house of hereditary Australian lordships. It was an opportunity to openly express his republicanism.

Deniehy condemned what he called "these harlequin aristocrats, these Botany Bay magnificos, these Australian mandarins, a Bunyip aristocracy". Deniehy talked about a God's aristocracy, an aristocracy based on talent and merit, not wealth or property, a similar notion to that expressed in the republican ideology of the United States. His damning and critical speech is widely credited with ending Wentworth's dreams for an Australian House of Lords.

Shortly after, in order to strike while the iron was hot, a meeting was held by the radicals on open ground near Circular Quay and attracted an audience of some 10,000 people. And it is reported that earlier speakers were eclipsed by Deniehy's oratorical power. Although the evening began to fall as Deniehy spoke—and he spoke for hours, by all accounts—the crowd insisted on his continuing, with loud bursts of applause, well into the night. Perhaps not here!

A further opportunity arose to rekindle the republican debate when the Solicitor-General proposed a war tax to assist with expenses in Britain's foreign war in the Crimea. Deniehy argued there was no reason why we, a remote dependency in a state of transition, should be compelled to bear a share of the expense. His stand against the pressures of jingoism and imperialism, the Deniehy oration argued, had a familiar resonance in Labor campaigns against conscription, the Vietnam War and the invasion of Iraq.

Propelled by his aim to open up public lands to the working class and be rid of the wealthy squatter monopoly, the bastard branches of the English aristocracy, Deniehy went for a political role in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly. He was elected to represent the electorate of Argyle in 1857. It is said that he was the only man to be found whose political opinions coincided with the great body of the electors. He was the first Australian-born politician who found his way into the parliament on his own merits and without the aid of wealth or influence of any kind.

Members of parliament were not paid, and he was eventually reduced to poverty. Further, plagued by ill-health, disillusionment and alcoholism, he died tragically at the age of 37 in Bathurst on 22 October 1865. Little Dan Deniehy, brilliant Dan Deniehy, was slight and slender, standing at only 5 feet 2 inches. Called Australia's most brilliant son, he fought gallantly for the liberties that we now enjoy. Many columnists followed Deniehy into a demand for democratic representation but fewer followed him into republicanism.

However, Deniehy, among others, believed that the day of final separation from Britain:

... cannot be far distant—when we must bid adieu ... the relationship between ourselves and the 'Old House at Home' will be one of kind sympathies and mutual goodwill.

We are not there yet. Today, I and many other Australians still believe we must revisit our relationship with Britain.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

**The Assembly adjourned at 6.49 pm.**