



Debates

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Thursday, 15 August 2013

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

Crime—statistics
Statement by Speaker

MADAM SPEAKER: Before I call the Clerk, a couple of matters arose in question time yesterday that I would like to address. Members will recall that yesterday I ruled out of order a supplementary question asked of Mr Corbell as Attorney-General. The question from Mr Gentleman, according to the proof transcript, was:

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

I ruled the question out of order on the basis of my understanding that the minister responsible for the detention of young people was Minister Burch in her capacity as Minister for Disability, Children and Young People. At the conclusion of question time a number of points of order sought clarification, and I undertook to review the matter and come back to the Assembly.

I have checked the administrative arrangements dated 13 May 2013, which indicate that the Minister for Disability, Children and Young People is the minister responsible for youth policy services including youth justice and is further responsible for the Children and Young People Act 2008, except for chapter 20, which I understand relates to child care and which is the responsibility of the Minister for Education and Training.

I have also reviewed the ACT criminal justice profile tabled by the Attorney-General earlier this week. It seems from the profile that the information on youth justice, including the ethnic mix of young people in Bimberi, would have been supplied by the youth justice services in the Community Services Directorate.

Having considered the matter, I uphold my ruling that the responsible minister is the Minister for Disability, Children and Young People. I understand it would be the convention for ministers to refer questions to more appropriately qualified ministers, but that is an arrangement for ministers themselves.

I want to address another matter that arose in question time as well. In an answer by Mr Corbell to questions from Mr Coe on light rail a number of points of order were raised on relevance by Mr Coe and Mr Smyth. At the conclusion of that, Minister Corbell proceeded to answer the question; I sat Mr Corbell down, and he objected to that.

I reflected on the transcript, and I consider that Mr Corbell was justified in objecting to that. He was miffed—I use the word “miffed”—and I would have been in similar circumstances. I apologise to Mr Corbell and to the Assembly for what seems to have been a lapse in concentration on my part.

Land Rent Amendment Bill 2013

Mr Barr, pursuant to notice, presented the bill, its explanatory statement and a Human Rights Act compatibility statement.

Title read by Clerk.

MR BARR (Molonglo-Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Community Services) (10.04): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

The Land Rent Amendment Bill 2013 will implement important changes to retarget the land rent scheme. The land rent scheme is an important affordable housing initiative in the ACT, allowing lessees to rent land from the government instead of purchasing the land outright. This assists purchasers in entering the housing market by reducing the upfront financial obligations associated with buying a property.

As part of the government's affordable housing reform measures as announced in the recent budget, amendments are being made to the Land Rent Act 2008. These amendments will ensure that the land rent scheme is best targeted to those most in need.

These amendments will only apply to land rent leases entered into on or after 1 October 2013 and will restrict entrance to the land rent scheme to only those applicants who are eligible for the discount land rent rate of two per cent. The scheme requires annual payment of land rent and currently has two bases for participation. Lessees who meet the required eligibility criteria for a discount rate of land rent are charged two per cent of the unimproved value of the land. Those lessees who are ineligible for the discount rate pay a standard rate of four per cent.

To be eligible for the discount rate, lessees must reside in the property once construction of a residence of the block is complete and cannot own any other real property. In addition, the income of the lessees must not exceed an annually determined threshold amount.

While the two per cent rate is subject to these criteria, the standard four per cent rate is available without restriction. This has resulted in a large take-up of land rent leases by builders and developers, thereby reducing availability of land rent blocks to low and middle income earners. To ensure that the scheme is more appropriately retargeted to those potential participants who will most benefit from it, the land rent scheme will only be available to those new entrants who are eligible for a discount land rent rate of two per cent. This will apply to all land rent leases entered into on or after 1 October 2013.

It is important to note that these amendments to the land rent scheme will not affect those lessees who are already participating in the scheme, either at the two per cent or

the four per cent rate. This bill makes it clear that the amendments will only affect those new lessees who are entering the scheme on or after 1 October 2013.

In addition to restricting entrance to the scheme, a number of other retargeting measures are being introduced which will ensure that the land rent scheme continues to be accessed by genuine low and middle income applicants. In the current land rent scheme, income is assessed based on lessee income only. For new entrants the income threshold will be increased and will be assessed on a household income basis. This approach will be more reflective of applicant income and will ensure that the scheme is retargeted to appropriate households.

The income threshold will be increased to \$160,000 and will align the land rent scheme with the homebuyer concession scheme. For those lessees who enter the land rent scheme after 1 October this year, it is essential that they remain eligible for the discount two per cent rate of land rent. Lessees who become ineligible for the discount rate will be obliged to transition out of the scheme, and will be provided with a two-year period in which to do so.

Lessees will have the option of converting their land rent lease to a nominal crown lease or of transferring their block to another eligible land rent applicant. Should a lessee return to discount eligibility in this two-year period, they may be able to remain in the scheme.

Those lessees already participating in the land rent scheme prior to October this year will have continued access to both the two and the four per cent rates should their circumstances change. Should a lessee who enters the scheme after 1 October this year wish to transfer their land rent block, they must do so to an eligible applicant, being a lessee who is also eligible for the discount rate of rent. This will ensure that the land rent scheme continues to be appropriately accessed by genuine applicants and low and moderate income households.

However, this bill allows the Commissioner for ACT Revenue to approve a transfer to a non-eligible applicant in appropriate circumstances. This will assist with the proper administration of the retargeted scheme and help with any anomalous situations that may result from a restricted transfer.

This bill also introduces a number of minor amendments to improve the administration of land rent. The definition of owner is clarified to ensure that potential land rent participants do not have either a legal or beneficial interest in other real property in a company name or under a trust. This will assist in limiting the scheme to genuine applicants looking to enter the housing market.

In addition, the definition of “land rent” is amended to ensure the charging of interest for overdue land rent aligns with that of both general rates and land tax. The various amendments implemented by this bill will all work together to make sure that the land rent scheme is available to those low to middle income earners who are genuinely looking to enter the housing market. These measures will ensure that land rent continues to play a vital role in the government’s affordable housing initiatives.

I commend the Land Rent Amendment Bill 2013 to the Assembly.

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

Workers Compensation Amendment Bill 2013

Mr Corbell, pursuant to notice, presented the bill, its explanatory statement and a Human Rights Act compatibility statement.

Title read by Clerk.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo-Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations and Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development) (10.12): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

The Workers Compensation Amendment Bill 2013 is an important piece of legislation that delivers on the government's commitment to strengthen work safety arrangements in the territory. The bill amends the Workers Compensation Act 1951 by allowing costs incurred by government on administering the territory's work health and safety legislation to be apportioned to workers compensation insurers. The bill reflects a modernised approach to work injury management funding and will bring the ACT's arrangements into close alignment with other Australian jurisdictions, including New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria.

The reforms set out in the bill form part of a wider suite of work injury management reforms announced in February of this year to support the expansion of the ACT work safety inspectorate. Members will recall that the 2012 getting home safely inquiry into construction industry work safety compliance highlighted a need for urgent action on the part of all ACT industries to address poor work safety cultures and achieve ambitious injury reduction targets. The government accepted all 28 of the inquiry's recommendations and has committed to a range of actions to strengthen the ACT's work safety compliance and enforcement regime. These measures include introducing new powers for work safety inspectors and an increase in the number of inspectors. These are important but not inexpensive measures.

Up until 2013 the government was expending in excess of \$5 million per annum to regulate, administer, review and reform the laws and other arrangements that underpin the territory's work health and safety and workers compensation systems. Together, these systems constitute a work injury management framework that exists for the benefits of employers and workers.

In most Australian states work injury management costs are substantially funded by either employers or workers compensation insurers and self-insurers. The ACT is an exception. Here, until this year, only a fraction of these regulatory costs were passed on to the system's beneficiaries, with the remainder funded from consolidated revenue. By bearing these costs, the general community was subsidising the price of employers' workers compensation insurance.

In February this year the government determined that it would gradually unwind this subsidy by incrementally transferring these costs from the territory's budget to a levy on workers compensation insurers. Insurers are expected to pass on some or all of these costs to employers via workers compensation premium prices. Consequently, once the new funding arrangements have been fully implemented, the price of a workers compensation policy will more accurately reflect the true cost of work injury prevention and management in the territory.

New work injury management system funding arrangements commenced in July this year with the introduction of a levy on insurers to cover workers compensation regulatory costs. This levy will collect around \$2 million per annum and cover infrastructure and services costs, including the workers compensation inspectorate within WorkSafe ACT, actuarial support services, policy and information technology system costs. Existing provisions within the Workers Compensation Act 1951 allow these workers compensation administration costs to be so apportioned to insurers without changes to the legislation. An amendment is required, however, to similarly apportion the cost of regulating work health and safety laws, and that is what this bill does.

Subject to the passage of the bill the government intends to expand the scope of the regulatory levy on workers compensation insurers to include work health and safety costs commencing from July next year. To smooth the transition to the new arrangements and protect employers from unreasonable workers compensation premium increases, the government has put procedures in place to cap the amount of money that can be collected under the new levy. This will mean the new arrangements will come online gradually, over a period of up to five years. Once fully implemented, the work health and safety component of the regulatory levy will cover infrastructure and services, including the cost of work safety inspectors and WorkSafe ACT investigative staff, work health and safety licensing and certification staff, work health and safety hotline staff plus associated information technology and policy support services. The bill also enables all workers compensation levies to be administered in a more efficient and streamlined manner.

The Workers Compensation Act currently provides for default insurance fund costs to be met by a levy on workers compensation insurers. The default insurance fund is the territory's safety net insurer. It provides workers compensation benefits and services to injured workers whose employers do not hold a policy of insurance or if the insurer cannot meet their liabilities. Insurers also make a financial contribution towards Magistrates Court workers compensation arbitration service costs.

To provide for administrative efficiencies and reduce red tape for insurers, the bill also makes changes necessary to align the timing and method for apportioning all new and existing insurer levies between insurers for a particular financial year. These changes are expected to reduce costs for insurers and government and provide further protections against employers being overcharged for workers compensation insurance.

The government is committed to the cost-effective and efficient delivery of a regulatory environment that improves health and safety and supports workers in the

unfortunate event that they are injured. The changes put forward in the bill make an integral contribution to modernising the design and management of the territory's work injury management system and underscore, again, this Labor government's commitment to tackling and improving on the rate of injury and death we see on worksites here in the ACT. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

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

Officers of the Assembly Legislation Amendment Bill 2013

Mr Rattenbury, by leave, presented the bill and its explanatory statement.

Title read by Clerk.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (10.19): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I am very pleased to be able to present the Officers of the Assembly Legislation Amendment Bill 2013. This is the second of the three governance and integrity reforms that the Greens committed to deliver in the lead-up to the election and that have been committed to be delivered in the parliamentary agreement for the Eighth Assembly. As I said when presenting the Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Amendment Bill, each of these three bills, the AD(JR) Bill, the Officers of the Assembly Bill and the soon-to-be-presented freedom of information bill, will all help to ensure that the government exercises in a responsible and lawful way the power given to it on trust by the people it represents.

This bill will make a very important step forward in what is commonly referred to as the integrity arm of government. Recognising the Auditor-General, Ombudsman and Electoral Commission members as officers of the Assembly will fundamentally shift the underpinnings of the operations of these statutory officers and entrench their independence and responsibility to this Assembly rather than to the executive.

Ensuring the accountability of the executive for their actions is a vital role of the Assembly. Given the nature of contemporary executive government, I think all parliaments acknowledge that they cannot fulfil this responsibility alone and that they need statutory officers to assist in delivering on the responsibility for scrutinising the executive and ensuring that the functions and powers given to the executive by the parliament are fulfilled properly, effectively and efficiently. This bill will formally recognise those whom we task with that role fulfil it as an officer of the Assembly.

The history of Westminster government is one of continued centralisation of power within the executive. This bill will help shift the balance back to the parliament and assist the Assembly.

Officers of the parliament were described by the Constitution Unit's Oonagh Gay and Barry Winetrobe in their detailed 2003 analysis of officers of the parliament as "a device to denote a special relationship with Parliament, which is designed to emphasise independence of the executive". They further explained:

... ultimately the key determinant of such Officers is their connection with Parliament, rather than the executive. Parliament has the potential to act as more than simply the arena for party government. Therefore, it is the nature and scope of that relationship between Officers and Parliament which is central to the constitutional uniqueness and importance of being an Officer’.

Robert Buchanan in his examination of Australia and New Zealand officers of the parliament said:

An officer of a parliament performs functions of a parliamentary nature, for parliament’s benefit.

The nature of the functions that the Auditor-General, Ombudsman and Electoral Commission fulfil to help ensure the accountability of the executive and the representative character of the Assembly are more appropriately characterised as a function of the legislature rather than the executive, and as such it is appropriate to recognise the special relationship that each has with the Assembly by making them officers of the Assembly.

Members will recall that during the last Assembly the public accounts committee and the administration and procedure committee both separately recommended that the Auditor-General become an officer of the Assembly. The commonwealth Auditor-General is recognised as an officer of the parliament, as is the Auditor-General in New Zealand.

We all agree that the Auditor-General fulfils a vital role and that that role cannot be properly characterised as part of the executive. Together with the reforms to the Auditor-General Act passed by the Assembly last week, the changes proposed in this bill will guarantee the independence of the Auditor-General and further enhance the integrity of the office of Auditor-General.

The Ombudsman performs a vital role in ensuring the accountability of government agencies, both by responding to complaints from members of the community and by conducting own-motion investigations into issues of concern to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman’s website describes the role of the Ombudsman as:

An ombudsman is an official, usually (but not always) appointed by the government or parliament, who is charged with representing the interests of the public by investigating and addressing complaints reported by individual citizens. The modern meaning arose from its use in Sweden with the Parliamentary Ombudsman instituted in 1809 to safeguard the rights of citizens by establishing a supervisory agency independent of the executive branch.

It continues:

The concept of the ombudsman as an independent person who can investigate and resolve disputes between citizens and government has spread to over 120 countries and is seen to be an essential accountability mechanism in democratic societies.

Western Australia had the first ombudsman in Australia, which it established with the passage of the Parliamentary Commission Act 1971. The Queensland Ombudsman was originally known as the Parliamentary Commissioner until 2001 when the Ombudsman Act was passed. In that 2001 act, the Queensland Ombudsman was officially made an officer of the parliament. Similarly in Victoria, the Ombudsman is also recognised as an independent officer of the parliament.

The ombudsman's role is not that of an advocate for a complainant. Rather it is to independently review administrative action taken by the agency and form their own view about the appropriateness or otherwise of that action.

It is not possible for members of this place to assess whether the people given particular powers and responsibilities by the laws we pass are exercising those powers and responsibilities properly each and every time. This is why we ask the Ombudsman to fulfil the role and report to us when issues are so serious that intervention or greater public accountability is required. This is a vital function and, like the Auditor-General's, one that cannot be properly characterised as being part of the executive itself.

It is important to note that the Ombudsman does have a role to work with agencies to assist them to improve their practices and resolve disputes productively. Under the changes proposed in the bill, this will not change. The Ombudsman will continue to work with agencies just as they always have. What the bill does is recognise that ultimately the Ombudsman reports to the Assembly and acts on behalf of the Assembly.

The Electoral Commission performs a vital role on behalf of all members, and there is no logical reason why the executive should exercise any level of control or that the commission should be responsible to the executive in any way when their function is to ensure that the electoral system is fair for all members and candidates equally and therefore it is more appropriate that an electoral commission sit with the legislature itself rather than the executive.

As I said, the appointment process for each of the officers of the Assembly is modelled on the provisions passed by this place for the appointment of the Clerk. One important point to note about appointments is that the bill proposes that a person who has within the preceding two years been a member of the ACT public service cannot be appointed to the position of Auditor-General or Ombudsman. This limitation does not apply to the Electoral Commission and given the functions the commission fulfils, it is unnecessary. The reason is to limit the potential for the perception of a conflict of interest to occur and ensure that we have a fresh perspective on the matters subject to audits by the Auditor-General and investigations by the Ombudsman.

Having declared each of these officers to be an officer of the Assembly, the bill also sets up a number of important processes for the ongoing relationship between the officer and the Assembly. Each officer will have a relationship with an Assembly committee, much like the current relationship between the Auditor-General and the public accounts committee, which will continue under the bill.

In the case of the Ombudsman, this will be the committee responsible for the examination of matters related to the integrity and accountability of public administration, similar to the arrangement in Victoria where the ombudsman is linked with the accountability and oversight committee of the Victorian parliament. The Electoral Commission will be linked to the committee responsible for electoral matters.

Obviously we currently do not have committees that have these explicit responsibilities, and changes will need to be made to the resolutions of appointment for our current standing committees. The reason that the bill proposes to do it like this is to allow the Assembly to make a decision on where the officers would best sit following the passage of the bill and also to respond to the contemporary circumstances as the new arrangements develop over time.

It is my hope that officers and Assembly committees will work closely together and develop strong collaborative links to better assist us to get the best outcomes for all Canberrans, and the bill tries to leave some flexibility for the Assembly to ensure that this can occur.

The other very important reform that complements the recognition of these positions as officers of the Assembly is the process that the bill proposes for the allocation of funding to the officers. Under the bill, for each financial year, after having consulted with the relevant Assembly committee and the office-holders themselves, the Speaker will be required to make a recommendation to the Treasurer for the amount that should be appropriated for the respective officers of the Assembly, and this recommendation must also be presented to the Assembly. Should the Treasurer present a bill to appropriate a lesser amount to any of the officers of the Assembly, the Treasurer will be required to present a statement of reasons to the Assembly explaining why the recommendation has not been adopted by the appropriation bill being proposed.

This process is essentially the same as what the Assembly adopted for the Office of the Legislative Assembly last year. It appropriately balances the requirements of the self-government act with the acknowledgement that the Assembly has a role to play in determining the resourcing that should be made available to officers of the Assembly.

While a non-executive member cannot propose a bill for an appropriation, it is entirely appropriate that the Assembly give an indication of the amount that it believes should be appropriated for these positions, and the executive should have to publicly explain itself if it does not follow the recommendation of the Assembly.

On this issue I would draw members' attention to the paper given by the Deputy President of the Senate, Senator Parry, to the presiding officers and clerks conference held by the Assembly recently. Senator Parry went to some length to commend the ACT for the approach we have taken to setting the budget of the Assembly. He described our system as being strongly reflective of the ideals of the Latimer House principles, well advanced and something to be aspired to by all parliaments.

Further, on the bill, the bill proposes that an appropriation for the officers of the Assembly must be included in the bill for the appropriation for the Office of the Legislative Assembly. This recognises that these officers sit with the Assembly and are not part of any administrative unit. While the bill will cement the independence of the officers, it must be said that the existing officers who currently occupy these roles all do a completely impartial job and fulfil the functions required of them in the public interest as they see it. Nevertheless, it is important that we continue to improve and it is important to note that each of the office-holders that the bill proposes to make an officer of the Assembly supported being given the role in their respective submissions to the administration and procedure committee inquiry last year.

This bill is another demonstration of the Greens' commitment to accountability and integrity reforms that will make a real difference to the governance of the territory. This bill adopts the model for recognising these three roles as officers of the parliament. However, there are other positions that could be made officers of the Assembly. In Queensland, for example, they also recognise the Integrity Commissioner, the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Commissioner and the Information Commissioner as officers of the parliament.

Over time, I think moves to improve the operation of the integrity arm of government will only increase and we will continue to better recognise the roles that we want a number of our other statutory officers to play. Immediate examples of positions that could be made officers of the parliament are the three commissioners within the Human Rights Commission and the Environment and Sustainability Commissioner. The Greens would certainly support recognising these positions as officers of the Assembly.

In the meantime, this bill is a very important step forward to better reflect the nature of the roles that the Auditor-General, Ombudsman and Electoral Commission play and recognise that it is the legislature on whose behalf these functions are fulfilled. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

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

Education, Training and Youth Affairs—Standing Committee Statement by chair

MS PORTER (Ginninderra): Pursuant to standing order 246A I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs of the Eighth Assembly relating to statutory appointments in accordance with resolution 5A.

Continuing resolution 5A was agreed to by the Legislative Assembly on 23 August 2012. The requirements of the resolution set out a transparency mechanism to promote accountability in the consideration of statutory appointments. The resolution requires relevant standing committees which consider statutory appointments to report on a six-monthly basis and present a schedule listing appointments considered during the applicable period.

The schedule is required to include the statutory appointments considered and, for each appointment, the date the request from the responsible minister for consultation was received and the date the committee's feedback was provided. The committee has advised the minister it had no comment to make on the appointments proposed.

For the applicable reporting period—1 January 2013 to 30 June 2013—the committee considered six statutory appointments. I propose to table a schedule of statutory appointments for the period 1 January 2013 to 30 June 2013 as considered by the education, training and youth affairs committee.

The standing committee notes that, whilst it had no specific comment to make on any proposed appointments during this period, it considers several matters require monitoring by ministers, their advisers and standing committees.

The first involves a careful adherence to the terms of the continuing resolution in providing full details relevant to proposed appointments, including appropriate CV, remuneration, details of legislative requirement and term of appointment. Secondly, in the case where several appointments to one statutory body are anticipated, it is preferable, if possible, for ministers to propose appointments in a group rather than in two, or even three, separate proposals within a short period of time.

A final matter arises in the case of appointees who are suitable for appointment but who reside interstate. The standing committee has no objection to such appointments but considers it desirable for ministers to provide clear reasons for nominating out-of-territory appointments. Pursuant to continuing resolution 5A, I present the following paper:

Education, Training and Youth Affairs—Standing Committee—Schedule of Statutory Appointments—8th Assembly—Period 1 January to 30 June 2013.

Executive business—precedence

Ordered that executive business be called on.

Appropriation Bill 2013-2014

[Cognate bill:

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2013-2014

Cognate papers:

Estimates 2013-2014—Select Committee report

Estimates 2013-2014—Select Committee report—government response]

Detail stage

Schedule 1.

Proposed expenditure—Part 1.12—Capital Metro Agency—\$3,000,000 (net cost of outputs) and \$5,000,000 (capital injection), totalling \$8,000,000.

Debate resumed from 13 August 2013.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.37): The expenditure that is planned for capital metro beyond what is in the budget is in the order of \$600 million. That represents the biggest infrastructure program in the ACT's history. I would note that is simply phase 1 of what the government intends to be a full rollout of trams, light rail—whatever you want to call it—across the ACT, and that has not been costed. It would be very difficult to cost. But what is pretty evident is that it would be in the multiple billions of dollars. With the way the figures have been bouncing around over the last couple of years, it is a little difficult to predict, but putting lines out to Belconnen, perhaps out to Woden and Weston, out to the airport, going over the lake and south, is going to be enormously expensive.

What the government is asking us to do through this budget is to provide funds, the \$5 million or so, that start the ball rolling. So the decision we are being asked to make today is not just a \$5 million decision that goes into this budget; it is a multibillion-dollar decision and it is going to have a massive impact on the ability of this jurisdiction to do a lot of things, because there is a cost benefit to this. If there is a benefit to light rail then the reality is that if we are spending billions of dollars, hundreds of millions of dollars, it means we cannot spend that money on other things.

In a comparison of what the priority is for this community and where the taxpayers' money should be spent, this is a pretty big decision. In fact, it is probably one of the biggest decisions this Assembly has ever been called on to make. The concern that we on this side of the Assembly have is that the case has not been made. Is it the right decision or not? I am convinced that the case has not been made.

I am not the only one that thinks this. Infrastructure Australia agree with that. They are experts when it comes to these matters. When they looked at the government's proposal, they have been dismissive. They have said that the case has not been made. So Infrastructure Australia say that but we are being asked to sign away billions of dollars, potentially, of taxpayers' money on a case that has not been made.

Why are we being asked to do this, because it does seem extraordinary? It is quite clear that the decision on light rail was a political decision. For many years the Labor Party resisted it—and probably rightly, because they looked at the evidence and at the policy and they said, "No, this isn't viable; the way to go is buses." And that was a longstanding position of the Labor Party.

But the politics changed. We had the advent of the Greens and parliamentary agreements and, with the bleeding of votes to the left, there was the Labor Party's desire to fight on the same ground on a range of issues—particularly Minister Corbell—and a political decision was made by the Labor Party.

I do not think that is the right way to do business. There is no great rush for this decision. The analysis needs to be made, the case needs to be put, the evidence needs to be gathered and the community needs to be convinced, and that has not occurred. So it is with great regret that we on this side have been put in a position where decisions are going to need to be made on capital metro that are pre-emptive, driven by the politics, and that is exactly what is happening here.

I do not think, though, that we are the only ones that are sceptics about light rail. I would imagine that there are many within the government, throughout the bureaucracy that are looking at the figures, and perhaps at the ministerial level, who have real concerns. I would imagine that there is less enthusiasm for this project in the Treasurer's office, where he is looking at the numbers and realising the impact that this is going to have on the territory budget for decades to come, than perhaps there is with respect to the ideological drive of his colleague Mr Corbell and their Greens partner, Mr Rattenbury.

We will continue to do this, because I have noted this week that when I have heard the enthusiastic "hear, hears" and cheers for light rail, I have not heard that coming from Mr Barr. That may be because he was distracted, but it appears to me that there is a split on that side and that Mr Barr is wavering. I would love to be behind closed doors in cabinet discussions where Mr Barr is clearly not getting his way, because the Chief Minister needs to keep Mr Rattenbury on board. She wants to keep her government on the tracks, if you will pardon the pun. Mr Barr would probably be coming to the cabinet with some real concerns, and he is getting rolled at every step of the way.

I note that those members opposite are not necessarily disagreeing with my analysis. It would be very interesting to see whether Mr Barr is going to commit to this without the sort of caveats that we would expect, because we have been down this road before. We have been down this road before on the government office building. It is almost the same sort of thing. The government said to us, "This is the magic pudding. This is the only way to do business. We're going to spend"—and I think back then that was the biggest appropriation in territory history. It was hundreds of millions of dollars. They spent \$5 million of taxpayers' money articulating their case, demanding it, saying that this was the best thing in the territory's interest, and then when there was a change of leader the thing went away. There was a backflip.

The question is: will the same thing happen here? What we have is a similar project in terms of its scale, although light rail is actually a few hundred million dollars more. We have a government that is insisting that it is the way to go, without presenting all of the evidence, and we have money being put in the budget to try and justify the case. Probably what will happen is that when we get to such a point that the evidence is compelling against the case, we will see a backflip from the government.

I am not sure who will lead that backflip. I am not sure if it will be led by Mr Barr. I am not sure if it will be necessitated by a change in the leadership. I am not sure if they realise that a backflip would see the splintering of the government, with Mr Rattenbury leaving the government, or whatever consequence might occur. But I think it would be interesting for observers to look at this government and see where they are going to go with light rail and whether they are going to stay committed to it. I think Mr Rattenbury will. He will go all the way to the election with this crusade. And I think Mr Corbell probably would want to as well. I think Mr Corbell would want to go all the way, because it is not about the facts for him and it is not about the evidence; it is about the ideology and it is about his competition with Mr Rattenbury on the left of politics.

It will be interesting to see who wins this fight within the government, whether it is the economic rationalists, whether it is the people looking at the evidence or whether it is the ideologues. We should probably run a bit of a book on it, as to whether we can pick a date when they are going to—

Mr Coe: March 2014.

MR HANSON: Mr Coe picks March 2014; he thinks that is when they will backflip. It is like what happened with the office block; it took them about a year to backflip on that one. I do not know if there are any other people wanting to have a bit of a go at it. I think it might take them a bit longer before they have a backflip and realise that this is bad policy.

Mr Coe: They will blame Abbott.

MR HANSON: They will blame Tony Abbott. They will blame somebody. It will not be their fault; it never is. It is a bit like the government office building—it is never their fault for their bungling. Anyway, I will watch with interest.

We will continue—and I commend Mr Coe for his work on this in particular—to do what we should do as an opposition, and that is to do the analysis, to do the business case that the government refuses to do, and look at the evidence, not just the politics.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations and Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development) (10.47): Madam Speaker, let us be very clear. The Labor Party went to the last election with a specific policy to develop light rail along the transport corridor between Gungahlin and the city. Labor chose this initiative because, after over a decade—a decade, Madam Speaker—of analysis, investigations and reports into rapid transport for our city, it was time to make a decision, to make a decision which was the best long-term choice for our city.

Labor chose light rail for our city. We chose light rail because Canberrans are concerned about congestion. They are frustrated by it. They know that it has a direct impact on their quality of life, their productivity, their time with family and friends. We chose light rail because Canberrans are concerned about costs—the cost of running a two, three or even four-car household, the cost of petrol, the cost of insurance, the cost of registration. We chose light rail because we know Canberrans want better choices, better alternatives that provide convenient, reliable and fast public transport.

We chose light rail because Canberrans are also concerned about housing. Canberrans want more housing choices close to where they work, where they shop, and where they use cultural facilities, social facilities, community services and professional services. They want more affordable housing. And we chose light rail because Canberrans are concerned about their city's impact on our natural environment. They want smarter, greener transport which reduces pollution, noise and greenhouse gas pollutions. They want transport which is sustainable.

Labor understands these concerns. We know we need to take long-term decisions to respond to them. That is why Labor chose light rail as the best choice for our city. It is why we announced and campaigned on the development of the capital metro project. It is why in this budget we are delivering on that election promise, investing in the establishment of the capital metro agency, laying the foundations for the design, procurement and delivery of this project, which can transform the way our city develops into the future.

Development of capital metro will respond to Canberrans' concerns about congestion. Analysis undertaken as part of the Gungahlin to city transit corridor business case demonstrates that currently peak period delays on Northbourne Avenue are 16 minutes from Gungahlin to the city. That is the extra period of delay due to congestion. Put another way, this equates to a morning peak journey time along the corridor of 26 minutes southbound and about 20 minutes northbound.

By 2031, unless we act and deliver rapid transit on that corridor, travel times in the morning peak will be 57 minutes southbound and 27 minutes northbound. That is right: in less than 20 years it will take people living in Gungahlin an hour to get to the city or points south using Northbourne Avenue.

If capital metro is built, the current delay of 16 minutes during peak periods is estimated to reduce by more than half, to approximately six minutes, a greater time saving than can be achieved by buses, a greater time saving than can be achieved by bus rapid transit. And we know also that total journey times will decrease. By 2031, with capital metro operating, southbound journey time in the am peak will be only 41 minutes, instead of the 57 minutes anticipated under the business as usual scenario.

Yet the Liberals say that bus rapid transit is better, despite the inferior travel time savings compared to light rail. And the Liberals have other questions to answer about bus rapid transit. How do they propose it will work? Where will the bus lane go? Down the middle of the Northbourne Avenue median? Is Alistair Coe going to be proposing that the median be bulldozed to build a two-lane road? Does he seriously think that the National Capital Authority would approve such a redevelopment?

Instead, perhaps the Liberals want to turn one of the two traffic lanes along Northbourne Avenue in each direction into a bus lane. Perhaps that is what they want to do, reducing traffic lanes from three to two? Perhaps, given their previous form on also wanting cars to use bus lanes, they are going to allow cars to operate along the same lane that is apparently to be used for bus rapid transit. How is that going to work? How is that going to work in improving travel times for commuters and reducing congestion? How will it work when it comes to offering a fast, convenient and alternative public transport service along the corridor?

The real question is: why should anyone believe the Liberals when they say they support bus rapid transit, given that they opposed bus rapid transit on the Belconnen to city corridor in 2005? They have form, Madam Speaker. They have form, and they have a clear lack of any commitment to giving public transport priority.

The Gungahlin to city corridor already has one of the highest levels of public transport in the city, yet this is very unbalanced. While public transport use is high in north Canberra, it is very low in Gungahlin. Car dependency in Gungahlin is very high. Nine out of every 10 journeys undertaken in Gungahlin is by car. This pattern of car use is consigning residents in Gungahlin—who are often on lower incomes, struggling to raise a family, facing the cost of a mortgage—with the burden of having to pay to maintain a two, three or four-car household. As fuel prices continue to increase in the coming decades, without a viable public transport alternative, we are simply consigning these households to financial and social vulnerability and isolation.

Labor will not let that happen. Development of capital metro will provide a reliable, convenient and frequent mass transit corridor which will give Gungahlin residents choice. It will reduce the number of journeys they need to undertake by car, as well as the number of cars they must—rather than choose to—own.

Canberrans do not want to wait until we have congestion like Sydney, Melbourne or even Newcastle. They want long-term decisions now for a better future for their city, to avoid the congestion nightmare that cities face as they grow. This is why Labor says light rail is the best choice for our city's future.

Northbourne Avenue is the front door to the national capital. Yet right now our front door is suffering from deteriorating amenity. The current high level of car and bus congestion means that the environment for residents who live on the corridor, pedestrians, and cyclists who use it and those who stand there waiting to catch a bus is compromised by high levels of traffic, noise and pollution. It is an environment that discourages walking and cycling and discourages the development of the urban form which is envisaged by both the national capital plan and the territory plan.

This should be an active, lively corridor. It should feel safe. You should be able to feel very safe walking down the avenue at any time of the day and night. Yet right now, all too often, people feel alienated from using that space. It is made inhospitable by the cars, noise, pollution and lack of any genuine street-level activity.

Capital metro will give us the opportunity to drive a transformation of residential and commercial development in this corridor. The business case for capital metro recognises that the level of redevelopment along the corridor will move beyond business as usual levels due to the investment certainty and improved amenity that light rail can provide.

These assumptions are consistent with the experiences of other cities around the world, such as Portland in the United States.

Bus rapid transit simply was not considered to be able to achieve the same level of redevelopment activity or amenity for two important reasons. Firstly the economic analysis concluded that market forces are less likely to promote densification of residential and commercial activity around bus rapid transit. Secondly, government planning strategies in relation to zoning, density and the location of services were considered to be more likely to be influenced and supported by the development of light rail instead of bus rapid transit.

North Canberra and Gungahlin are already seeing much higher rates of growth. North Canberra has grown at a rate of 2.6 per cent per annum over the last decade. Gungahlin has grown at a rate of 6.8 per cent per annum over the last decade. That is much faster than the overall growth rate across the city of only 1.4 per cent.

People often say: “Why that corridor?” This is why. It is where the population growth is—where it is now, and where it will continue to be well into the future. The population of Gungahlin is projected to be 73,000 people by 2021; ultimately, it is projected to grow to 90,000. There will be significant population growth in the city centre as well as more people choosing to live closer to jobs, services and facilities.

Labor knows—those opposite might not know, but Labor knows, this government knows—that we must plan for major growth in our population over the next two decades. It means taking a long-term view on transport—not a short-term, politically expedient view, but a long-term view—because high levels of population growth will continue to increase demand for transport infrastructure and services.

By 2031 there will have been a 28 per cent increase—a 28 per cent increase—in the number of people living in the Gungahlin to city corridor. That is 14,261 more residents. It means another 5,440-odd more people living in the city centre itself. That is more than double the current number of people living in the city centre. The number of people who will have a job which is located in the corridor will also dramatically increase; there will be another 23,250 jobs located in the corridor by 2031—some 23,000 more people working in that corridor between the city and Gungahlin between now and 2031. That is a massive increase in less than 20 years.

These increases cannot be met by buses. Business as usual is not good enough. We need transport infrastructure with the capacity and frequency to meet these big increases in population and jobs. It is another reason why light rail is the best choice for our city’s future.

Light rail will also drive higher levels of development and redevelopment activity in the corridor. Light rail is the most effective means of realising the strategic directions of our planning strategy, which targets increased residential densities along transport corridors and in our major centres, like the city, Dickson and Gungahlin town centre.

Under the higher density scenario developed in the Gungahlin to city business case, it is projected that population growth will be 78 per cent in the corridor and 237 per cent in the city centre itself. That is a projection of another 39,650-odd people living in the corridor, another 7,940-odd living in the city centre. That is 22,000 more dwellings in the corridor, 4,900 more apartments, flats and townhouses in the city centre itself. And that is all in less than 20 years. This is a dramatic transformation of our city. It is based not on some hypothetical scenario about population growth but on the current projected mid-term trend for population growth in our city.

These are the challenges our city has to face. This demonstrates the potential for light rail to dramatically change where people choose to live in our city. It means housing choice, improved affordability and a more sustainable pattern of development which

allows more journeys by walking, cycling and public transport. It means realising the planning strategy objectives that we all say we support: more people living close to the city centre, more people living close to transport corridors, more people living close to town centres, more people living close to group centres. If that is what we want to achieve, we have to make the infrastructure decisions that drive those outcomes. This significant uplift in development potential also has economic benefit. It brings jobs: jobs in construction, jobs in the service and supply industries, and jobs in maintenance, cleaning and municipal services—jobs in a whole range of sectors.

Yet the Liberals still say that bus rapid transit is better and that we have spent too much money on studies. We have heard Mr Coe make this claim again and again over the past few weeks—“wasting all this money on studies”. Why should we believe them? In 2008 they issued an election policy statement. What was it called? It was called *Getting light rail on track*. It contained some very bold and sweeping statements like “Time to take light rail seriously”. After all their criticism of the government for apparently wasting money on studies, what was the Liberals’ proposal? Their proposal was to spend \$8 million on studies. They wanted studies on engineering, integration of bus and light rail connections, planning, zoning and patronage. They criticised the government for doing these studies, for investing in this work, for doing this analysis, but they were going to do exactly the same thing. They were going to do exactly the same thing. When the Liberals now say the government has spent too much on studies, why should we believe them when they proposed a multimillion dollar investigation less than four years ago?

In this budget the government establishes the Capital Metro Agency to drive the realisation of this project. Developing a big infrastructure project is a significant undertaking; it requires robust governance, detailed investigation, due diligence and a team of committed and experienced professionals to make it happen. Labor is making that investment. It will continue to make that investment to deliver a project that has the long-term future—not the short-term politics, but the long-term future—of our city and its citizens front and centre.

Canberrans deserve infrastructure investments that will meet their growing needs for reliable and convenient rapid transit, for sustainable transport and for infrastructure investment which will shape our urban form and the way our city grows consistent with the strategic plans we have laid out for a more sustainable and equitable future. Capital metro is a critical infrastructure project that will meet the aspirations Canberrans have for the future of their city. And it is only this Labor government that has the imagination and determination to realise this objective.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Coe, do you want to take your second 10 minutes?

MR COE (Ginninderra) (11.07): Yes, please, Madam Deputy Speaker. We have heard some pretty fanciful statements from the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development. In fact, it has probably gone further than being fanciful statements. In actual fact, it really has been amateur hour here in the Assembly this morning. If it were not for spending \$614 million of taxpayers’ money, it would be funny. But the fact is that Minister Corbell’s ideological crusade, perhaps not even

backed up by members of his own cabinet, is going to cost every household in the territory \$4,400 for capital construction, whether they use the service or not. Of course, that does not take into account the ongoing costs with running this tram from the city through to Gungahlin.

It is interesting that Minister Corbell would accuse the Liberals of being in favour of bus rapid transit, which he says is simply not as good as light rail. Yet for years he has been a proponent of bus rapid transit. For years and years he has been banging on about the benefits of bus rapid transit. In fact, the government announced REDEX. That was meant to be rapid express, the 200 series going from Gungahlin to the city. Of course, it never was rapid express. By Minister Corbell's own definition, rapid express has to be in a dedicated lane. The 200 service is very good; it is a great bus service. It is probably the best bus route in the entire network, but it is not rapid express. It is not on a dedicated bus lane.

The Canberra Liberals have been very careful about our words over the last month or two talking about the capital metro proposal. We find it interesting that the government's own submission points to the benefits of bus rapid transit. Yet somehow they have made a decision to go ahead with light rail.

At what point, did Minister Corbell go on that tram to Damascus and abandon bus rapid transit in favour of light rail? At what point did he decide that it was worth while to spend \$614 million of taxpayers' money on this project? It certainly was not after he did the engineering study, because it has not been done. It certainly was not after he made a proper business case for this project, because it has not been done. It certainly was not after he went to an election clearly articulating that light rail would be an eventuality should they be returned.

There are so many questions about this project that need to be answered before the opposition will entertain the idea of spending \$614 million of taxpayers' money. There are many questions. I think many of these questions are, in fact, coming from his own cabinet, coming from his own government officials.

It is all very well for Minister Corbell and Minister Rattenbury to have a bit of a battle over light rail, but not at taxpayers' expense. You can try and have this competition about who can out-left the other, but the fact is when you are dealing with taxpayers' money, when you are the custodians of taxpayers' money, you have an obligation to spend it wisely. I do not think we have seen that with regard to the light rail proposal.

The minister also had some pretty serious flaws in his argument. One of them is about this uplift, which is, of course, restricted by the lease variation charge. It is an uplift that has a tax which is contrary to the very intention or the stated intention of their policy. It is interesting that as I speak Minister Rattenbury is there chatting to Minister Corbell. I wonder how impressed Minister Rattenbury is with Minister Corbell's selling of light rail. I imagine that Minister Rattenbury is furious about how the government has gone about selling this project to Canberrans.

Mr Hanson: He would do a better than job, wouldn't he?

MR COE: Maybe he would do a better job.

Mr Hanson: He thinks so. He thinks he would.

MR COE: Maybe he would do a better job. Maybe Minister Rattenbury should, in fact, be the minister responsible for this project.

Mr Hanson: That's what he thinks.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Hanson!

MR COE: However, I would not be surprised if the Treasurer thinks otherwise. In fact, the Treasurer probably quite likes the idea of Minister Corbell doing such a bung job when it comes to selling this project because then it will be easier to get a backflip. A backflip in March next year is my tip. Mr Hanson thinks maybe a little bit later.

Mr Hanson: At the budget.

MR COE: Who knows; who knows.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Sit down for a minute. Stop the clock, please. Mr Coe, will you please address your remarks through the chair? You are not having a conversation with Mr Hanson. Thank you.

MR COE: Sure, Madam Deputy Speaker. I would be curious to know whether Madam Deputy Speaker has a view about the backflip date on light rail. Perhaps Minister Burch has a view. Minister Burch could be waiting at the Tuggeranong tram stop for a while, I think. I am afraid the real-time information for a tram in Tuggeranong is about 13 years away.

There are so many questions about this project that have to be answered if the government is going to go ahead with it with some responsibility. At this stage the opposition has no confidence that the ACT government is spending money properly on this project. We will continue to ask questions and do the job that the opposition is meant to do when scrutinising government expenditure.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo-Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations and Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development) (11.14): We have heard some really interesting commentary from those opposite on this matter. Perhaps it is Jeremy Hanson's political wet dream that somehow the government is going to fall and he is going to slip into the role of Chief Minister—

Mr Smyth: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Corbell, will you resume your seat? Mr Smyth on a point of order.

Mr Smyth: I ask for your guidance on some of the language that Mr Corbell just used.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Corbell, I am not asking you to withdraw. I do not think it is necessarily unparliamentary language but just watch the terminology as we go forward.

MR CORBELL: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Clearly, it is this extraordinary political fantasy that Mr Hanson is developing. I know he realises that he has got another four years, another long four years on the opposition benches. How many is that for you, Mr Smyth? How many more is that for you, Mr Smyth? Are we over a decade yet? I think we are over a decade on the opposition benches, Mr Smyth.

Mr Coe makes a series of assertions and allegations which are simply wrong. He says that the engineering study has not been done. It has been done. Not only has it been done; it has been publicly released. It is called a study by URS Australia. It is on the public record. It analyses, line by line by line, the costs of the different elements of building this project. What a joke from the shadow minister that he is not even aware that on the public record there is a detailed engineering analysis of this project that estimates costs on a line by line by line basis.

It shows that those opposite are not really interested in a genuine debate about the best infrastructure decisions to meet the challenges of a growing city, to achieve a more sustainable city, to achieve a more efficient city, a more productive city, a more equitable city. All they are interested in is the politics, the short-term politics. That is all they are interested in, and we hear it made manifest in their absurd conspiracy fantasy that would give a range of authors a good run for their money in terms of exactly how feasible or believable it is about what this is for the government.

I know what this project is about for the government. It is about setting our city up for the future. I know what my colleagues think about this project. It is about making the big decisions that set our city up for better productivity, better sustainability, higher levels of development activity, more housing choice, all of the things that we should be realising as our city enters its second century.

I know where my colleagues stand on this. They stand right beside this project. This is about the delivery of this project. They back this project. It is not an easy undertaking for a political party to go out before an election and say that this project is our priority, a big multi-million dollar project with all sorts of challenges politically and otherwise. But it is down to the leadership of my colleagues, first and foremost my Chief Minister, who has said that this is the priority for the government. She has worked closely and in a very effective way to build a robust governance and oversight framework for the delivery of what is a critical project for the government.

You can take two roads on projects like this. You can take the high road or you can take the low road. You can have a look at whether or not the project has the capacity to change the way our city develops, change the pattern of development in our city, to give people real transport choices, to drive enhanced levels of investment, to create more sustainable outcomes in the built environment. You can take that perspective or

you can take the perspective that those opposite are taking, which really is the low road politically—the unambitious but easy road; the cheap shot. They ask the questions even when they know that they have got it wrong. They assert that there is no engineering study when there is one. They assert there is no economic analysis when there is. They assert a whole range of things that they know to be untrue.

Their obligation as elected representatives should be to contribute to an informed debate, to a considered debate about big questions that our city faces—about growth, population, sustainability and the development of real public transport for our city. That is their obligation as elected representatives. But instead they are just playing partisan politics.

It is beneath them. It is beneath them to lift themselves up into a debate about how this city should grow and develop into the future, where infrastructure investment decisions should be made, how we create a more sustainable future for our children, their children after them and their children after them.

That is where they fall down. That is where they fail, because they have no imagination. They have no capacity, Madam Deputy Speaker. They have absolutely no capacity to lift themselves up above that base, crass, simplistic, political debate. But that is exactly what we expect of them.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Hanson!

MR CORBELL: That is what we know of them and we will respond to each and every criticism that they make. We will deliver this project. We will deliver this project. Cities face turning points. This is our city's turning point. Do we build for the future? Do we invest in infrastructure for the future? Do we create a more sustainable and just future for our citizens? Or do we just play the politics? This government has an agenda. It has a vision and it is going to get on with the task of implementing it.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (11.22): The lecture from the minister who was sacked as minister for planning because he could not deliver—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Excuse me, Mr Smyth, you are taking your second ten minutes?

MR SMYTH: I am taking my second ten minutes, thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. We got the lecture from the minister who said he would deliver Gungahlin Drive extension on time and on budget and took it from about \$55 million to close to \$200 million and six or seven years late. We got the lecture from the minister who delivered a prison that was going to be good for 20 years—"We have capacity for 20 or 25 years in our prison"—yet in this year's budget there is money to do the design work to extend the prison, which is at capacity. And of course, we got the lecture from the minister responsible for the debacle of the emergency services headquarters where the Auditor-General said the original scope was about \$13 million and it is expected to cross the \$75 million mark. He dares to lecture us. It is preposterous!

This is the man who under-delivers and underwhelms on everything he touches. He brings out our policy from 2008 where he says the Liberal Party said, "Getting light rail on track," and we did. But let us look at how we said we would do it. We said that, "If the case stacks up, we will take a fully costed proposal to the electorate prior to the next election in 2012 to let the Canberra public make a fully informed choice on this very significant undertaking." Do we have a fully costed proposal? No, we do not.

We have a government that made a decision and then said, "We'll work the numbers and do the studies." Indeed, our policy went on to say that the Canberra public should be fully informed on a range of factors such as what light rail would cost—we do not know that—how much it will cut travel time—we have some of that—and decongest roads—if you can believe the minister—and what the contribution would be to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We said we would do the feasibility studies and the forward design and then take it to the electorate instead of having a bright spark idea. You can see the little light bulb above Mr Corbell's head where he said, "Let's build a light rail. Doesn't matter what the cost is." We know the cost does not matter because the Treasurer let the cat out of the bag.

These guys are like explorers in deepest, darkest Africa. Mr Stanhope was the Dr Livingstone of light rail. In 2001, "We'll conduct a feasibility study." In 2008 Jon Stanhope went on to say, "I am extremely pleased to announce that the ACT government is moving ahead with its exploration of light rail." There he is, exploring in the darkness, Dr Livingstone out there. The question now is: who is playing Dr Stanley? Will Mr Corbell find the lost light rail? Or will it be given over to Mr Rattenbury to save the whole project?

That is if the project goes ahead. We know this government has form. We know they put out grand plans and never deliver on them. They just never deliver on them. Where is Mr Hargreaves and his busway that was going to be built over his dead body? Think of the money wasted on that. They never deliver. Never. Where is Mr Quinlan's promise that in 2002 we would have a site for a convention centre? Still not found. And Mr Corbell is the arch offender in this.

The problem is, as Mr Coe points out, that it is about \$4,400 each just for the capital cost, and we do not even know what the ongoing cost is. This is not the way you deliver these projects. Then to hide his embarrassment, he attacks us and puts words in our mouths. He said we have chosen bus rapid. Well, we have not. We want the data on this. We want to know how it will be done.

So what else did we say in our policy back in 2004? We said we would expect the federal government to contribute significantly to making light rail a reality in the ACT. However, we said that in order to attract federal support the ACT government must present a comprehensive and credible case that demonstrates that sustainable capacity and demand exist. If the ACT government is not prepared to show a willingness to invest in serious studies, then it cannot expect the federal government to fund this proposal ahead of other more polished proposals from other states.

And what happened? The more polished proposals from other states got ahead of us because Mr Corbell did not do the job, as so often Mr Corbell does not. Mr Corbell never gets the work done. When projects are sometimes finally finished, it is at a large cost overrun to the people of the ACT.

Look at the initial proposal to Infrastructure Australia. It was to ask for some money to make the decision between buses and trains. But before we even got the answer we chose trains. Why would Infrastructure Australia take this government and this minister in particular seriously when they do not take themselves seriously?

The problem for this government is that they have got the wrong minister trying to deliver this project. We have a minister who cannot make a case. You can have all the rhetoric in the world that you want; you can have your hifalutin speeches and you can talk about it as long as you want, but, at the end of the day, you have to make a solid case, you have to deliver the benefits and you have to be able, if you go ahead with the project—and I think that is a big if at this stage—to deliver it. Mr Corbell does not have the record for an ability to deliver capital works projects.

It will be interesting. I notice he puts words in the Chief Minister's mouth that she is 100 per cent behind this project and that they will deliver it. We will see. I note the Treasurer does not speak a great deal about capital metro. Funny that. When we ask him questions about what input the Treasury had to capital metro we get very, very short answers, very terse answers.

There is a lot of doubt inside the bureaucracy and inside the government about this project. There is a lot of doubt. It will be interesting to see what the excuse is, just like on the great big office building, when it does not go ahead? Top of my list would be, "Tony Abbott ruined it for us. It's all Tony Abbott's fault." That seems to be the excuse at the moment. Mr Barr has been running the Tony Abbott line for about four years now. But I can hear it already, "How do we get out of this mess? Another fine mess you've got us into, Simon. We should have given this portfolio to Shane. He'd have done a much better job." You can hear the murmurings, you can hear the whispers. The question is: when will they make the decision to back away from this? Mr Hanson is right—perhaps we should have a book on it. It will be interesting to see.

This is exactly like the great big office building the government wanted to build. It was going to save us money. But when we asked for the savings we got an A4 piece of paper that was obviously dollied up on the night after perhaps the biggest hearing in the history of the Assembly where there were more people at the table than I have ever seen in a committee. Finally we got some savings, which virtually dissolved overnight because they were not really there.

The case has not been made. All we are saying is: make the case. The case has not been made. You do not go ahead on capital works projects by saying, "We think this is a good idea. Let's do it." You go ahead and you deliver on time, on scope and on budget by saying, "Let's do the investigation. Let's make sure it works. Let's make sure it delivers."

Indeed, as I said earlier in this debate, when we had the opportunity to get the Centre for International Economics to do some more work on this, the Labor members of the committee said, “No. What would we want more analysis for? Why would we want an independent view of how this will go?” That is the problem for the government.

We will see what will happen. It is a lot of money. It is a great deal of money. One thing we all know is that Labor is very, very good at spending. What they are not good at is getting the return from these proposals. What they are not good at is bringing them in on time, on scope and on budget. We have simply said: make the case. Infrastructure Australia said, “Go away. You haven’t made the case.” The government say we are now on a priority list. Well, that probably means Infrastructure Australia opened a folder and put inside the ACT capital metro proposal and it is back in the filing cabinet. Homework not up to standard, Mr Corbell. Please redo.

If they were serious, after more than a decade in government, given that they took it to the 2001 and 2008 elections, they would have done the work properly. They would have been able to go to Infrastructure Australia with a case. They would be able to table all the documents that we have been asking for. They would be prepared, but they are not. But, like Labor and the light on the hill, armed with ideology—that is all Mr Corbell is armed with, ideology—they blunder on. But at the end of the blunder, as with so many of Mr Corbell’s blunders—whether they be the prison, the ESA headquarters or the GDE—the taxpayer will pay. It will be interesting to see how the government backflip on this one.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Proposed expenditure—Part 1.13—Education and Training Directorate—\$589,429,000 (net cost of outputs), \$80,122,000 (capital injection) and \$238,609,000 (payments on behalf of the territory), totalling \$908,160,000 be agreed to.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (11.33): With the net cost of outputs at \$589,429,000, education is a large and essential part of the ACT budget. This allocation includes a wide number of programs across government and non-government school education, vocational and higher education, the ACT building and construction industry fund and CIT Solutions. This year early intervention services were also included under DET.

During the estimates process there was much discussion and many questions asked, but still many issues remain somewhat short on detail. I do not intend to dwell at this stage on the merits or otherwise of the Chief Minister’s signing up for the Gonski reform, which has now come to be known as the national education reform agreement. But there is no question that there was clearly a political desire to support a fading Prime Minister, and it is acknowledged that the ACT education sector as a whole was not likely to have the same pulling power as some of the larger states.

Whether we could have got a better deal is now somewhat academic. It is also academic whether you continue to call these reforms the Gonski reforms when they are so far from the intent and the intention of Gonski. I think the former education minister, Dr Bourke, referred to it as the essence of Gonski. Dr Bourke, you must be sad to see that the essence of Gonski has been somewhat diluted.

What we do know is that the ACT non-government sector appears to have benefited. Non-government schools have got more, but mainly through their own national bodies' direct negotiations with the federal government. I know all schools were seeking certainty and at least they now have that. There is now going to be a continued funding stream starting on 12 January 2014. I note recommendation 10.5:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide the Assembly with more detail as to how the National Education Reforms will be implemented at an individual school level in the ACT.

I am sure individual schools, their boards and principals, would also be interested in that information.

The committee also recommended:

... that ACT Government should lobby to ensure a consistent approach is taken to the ... Agreement across all education sectors in the ACT.

That boat may have already left the jetty. We have to rely on the Chief Minister's assurances that the ACT has done as well as it could reasonably have expected.

The government, of course, skirted around the fact that the higher education sector had been savaged to pay for the national reforms. This robbing Peter to pay Paul approach is a typical Labor strategy but it comes as no surprise.

I think what was a surprise was the impact that such cuts would have on Canberra's universities. The university sector is big business in Canberra. The ANU, the University of Canberra, the Australian Catholic University and the Australian Defence Force Academy have combined budgets of about \$2 billion. This is money mostly spent here in the ACT on infrastructure, staffing, contractors and equipment. And this figure does not include non-university higher education providers, who account for at least 5.4 per cent of all higher education students and generate revenues of at least \$700 million.

It is against this background that one has to wonder just how desperate or just how short-sighted the federal Labor government were when they decided to slash \$2.3 billion from the higher education sector to help fund the implementation of the Gonski reforms. Whether they thought anyone would notice or that states would not care is anyone's guess, but it was not long before the ACT tertiary education sector started to realise what it would mean for the ACT and started to raise serious concerns. And it is a significant impost on the ACT economy.

According to the *Good Universities Guide*, the ACT student population is around 32,000. Of these, around 8,400 come from interstate and a further 8,000 are international students. In fact, this high percentage of overseas and interstate students makes the ACT unique. As I said, we have about 32,000 students in the tertiary education sector, a healthy percentage of which are from interstate and overseas. It needs to be remembered that with a high percentage of interstate and overseas students comes a need for them to pay for accommodation, to buy food and other

essentials, to entertain, to invite their families to Canberra. This generates around \$500 million a year to the ACT economy and supports the retail, tourism, hospitality and construction industries as well as other sectors.

So what happens now? We have already started to see the impact. We have ANU students on strike because their tutorials have been cancelled across a number of subjects to save university funds. Whole subject areas have been scrapped. And let us not talk about the slashing of the ANU School of Music.

Dr Bourke: A point of order.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Dr Bourke, you have a point of order? Sit down, Mr Doszpot. Stop the clock, please.

Dr Bourke: The point of order relates to relevance, Madam Deputy Speaker. Mr Doszpot is talking about higher education and university students, and this is a line item which relates to the Education and Training Directorate.

Mr Wall: Further to the point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Wall?

Mr Wall: I think there is complete relevance. Mr Doszpot is speaking about some of the implications of the original Gonski agreement and therefore it is relevant to the line item.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot, I think that you have made the point about the effect of the former Gonski decision on university funding. I think you have said enough. You have made your point very well. Would you like to go on to the substantive question of the proposed expenditure now, thank you.

MR DOSZPOT: Madam Speaker, may I address that point myself? It has got relevance.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do you want to raise a point of order as well?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes. It has got direct relevance because, overall, the expenditure that is required within the education sector will be impacted by some of the issues that confront the universities. So it has got some relevance. I do not have much more to say on that but I do have a couple more paragraphs.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Doszpot. I would like you to come as quickly as possible to the substantive matter of the proposed expenditure.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. The ANU has estimated it stands to lose \$13 million over the next two years because of the federal government's "robbing Peter to pay Paul" education policy. As Professor Parker described it at the time, "It is just bad policy which pitches one side of the education sector against another." The University of Canberra is facing a \$3 million hole because of this. As I warned the Assembly earlier this year:

So where and how do they absorb these cuts? Well, in less services, cuts to courses, less options and amenities for students and possibly reduced staffing. Students will experience it first hand, because they will lose the much needed start up scholarships.

All of that has come to pass and all of those potential scenarios are now a reality.

In moving to the primary school sector, the minister and officials could not quite decide whether the \$6.2 million in savings listed in the budget papers would be found through staff cuts or other measures.

I have had the pleasure of visiting a number of ACT primary schools in recent weeks, and I intend to visit them all over the next three years. I would have to say that none have suggested to me that they are overstaffed, and none have suggested they could do with less resources. In fact at one school I saw at first hand the impact of less than satisfactory ICT arrangements. Just as we experienced a lack of printer services here in the Assembly a couple of days ago for quite a few hours, spare a thought for a school that I visited that had no ability to print anything at the school for several days. If the minister believes there is fat in the system, I suggest she does not look to services or staff in schools.

The budget had a \$200,000 allocation for the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations to support P&C canteen services in public schools. This was an issue I raised a number of times in this place with this minister. I have to say she did not bother to understand what was happening in school canteens and why so many of them were under staffing and financial pressures. She chose instead to hide behind the process the directorate had in place with a task force.

The money being allocated will now be used, in part, to pay for the services that the defunct Canteens Association—a group that the minister was especially scathing of—was doing. Had she listened to what was happening in public school canteens a little earlier, this money could have been delivered earlier and had a bigger impact.

I note also the Labor Party election promise of \$1 million for primary school libraries—\$1 million over four years. Teacher librarians are an issue that I have consistently taken great interest in. It is a constant and repeated question I ask when I visit a school: do you have a teacher librarian? I am pleased that many schools so far have said that they do, but I know it is sometimes a tough decision for a principal to take in keeping a dedicated position in place.

I do not think the importance of teacher librarians can be overstated. They are key to creating and delivering literacy programs to students from preschool through kindergarten to grade 6. It is here that students learn the wonders of books, if they have not already had the experience at home—and, sadly, many children today do not because of time-poor parents.

Teacher librarians today have to be even better trained than before the digital revolution because not only do they need to know and understand the new

technologies—e-books, online resources such as wikis and blogs and forums—but they also need to have the knowledge and training to access, evaluate, use and reference information from hard copy material. Teacher librarians also provide a very valuable service by providing professional development assistance to all of the teachers within their school area. (*Second speaking period taken.*) As I was saying, teacher librarians perform a very useful service to their colleagues, to fellow teachers in the particular schools that they are in, with the additional support they give to these teachers in assisting with the delivery of information services to teachers so that they can impart better information to their students.

I have been lucky to pop in to classes having their library lessons in some of our schools and the students seem to be genuinely engaged and having fun. At schools like Forrest primary, who offer an International Baccalaureate program for middle school students, they insist they could not possibly offer such a curriculum if it were not for their teacher librarian.

It was somewhat disappointing then to read the *Hansard* transcripts of the discussions that took place when questions were asked about the election commitment and whether it was somewhere in the budget. I trust the directorate's responses, which included a range of things, including a new tracking system for library resources and e-books, did not mean that in fact there is no new money. I look forward to the minister's launch of this initiative, so lauded during the election campaign. In the interim it might be wise to brief the directorate on what she has in mind.

The ongoing issues surrounding behaviour management in schools were also raised through a number of questions. I am sure my office is not unique in the number of calls we get from distressed parents. Bullying in schools is becoming far too common. I would like to have seen more resources put towards additional counselling and behavioural experts, as the Liberal Party had in our education policy at the last election.

I note also the questioning around NAPLAN results. I believe it is important to recognise that our students are doing well against national standards, but I want to see more effort put into the significant numbers of students who are falling below national averages in a number of subjects and at a number of year levels.

I support the several recommendations seeking more information on teacher quality improvements because the key to delivering an upgraded national curriculum will be in the quality of our teachers. Again the Liberal Party went to the last election promising increases in professional development for teachers and it is an area in which continuous investment must be made.

This year the Education and Training Directorate has taken carriage of children's services, previously located in Community Services. I note that the budget includes funding for additional training in child care, specifically a certificate III in children's services.

Under this initiative \$240,000 has been allocated to the children's services sector to upskill its workforce to meet requirements under the national quality framework. The

minister for education expects to provide an additional 20 to 30 training places, which equates to between \$8,000 and \$12,000 per place for a certificate III. I know the inflated view of training costs now prevalent in the CIT for some diploma courses, but at \$8,000 to \$12,000 per placement this does seem a little high. I would hope that the directorate and minister can strive for a better outcome and value for this money.

In preschool education, under the preschool matters initiative, the government is to allocate grants of up to \$500 to support the engagement of parents and carers in activities that promote participation in preschool education. While it is good to see preschools getting attention, and while it is important that they are well integrated into the primary school model, I wonder whether some additional money may be better spent on, or moneys reallocated to, supporting the preschool itself.

Many preschools are doing it tough and funding is sorely needed to upgrade amenities such as ovens, fridges and microwaves, all of which, in most cases, are so old that they would not meet strict OHS requirements today. These items are left for P&Cs and school boards to scrounge and scrape to update, when their efforts could be more productively directed to other things.

During the estimates hearings it was revealed that \$2 million had been allocated to provide up to an additional 40 new childcare spaces. On a simple mathematic equation, this seems a lot of money for a small outcome and does not appear to provide value for money. I suspect it is yet another example of the amount of waste that this government has displayed.

As shadow minister for education, I take my responsibilities in this portfolio seriously. In the last 12 years the education portfolio has had five Labor ministers. I have seen three arrive and two go in my five years in the Assembly. It is interesting to note that in the last 12 years the Labor Party has been served by Mr Corbell, Ms Gallagher, Mr Barr, Dr Bourke and now Ms Burch as ministers for education. At that rate, that leaves only three on the other side of the chamber, and two of them are present here this morning. Ms Porter, Mr Gentleman and Ms Berry, I believe you can look forward to getting a ministerial post in education.

Dr Bourke: Breadth of experience is always to be valued.

MR DOSZPOT: Dr Bourke, coming from you, that is a very good comment. On a serious note—

Ms Burch: The rest wasn't serious?

MR DOSZPOT: The rest was very serious, Ms Burch, but on the matter that I was just referring to about the number of ministers, I would hope that the Labor Party does take the role of ministers for education seriously, rather than rotating them through this revolving door at such a frequent pace, because the experience that you gain in a few years could be used to better effect in bettering our education system, as I am sure you are finding out at the moment.

In the interim I congratulate those in the directorate who remain committed to delivering excellence in education. I congratulate and thank the principals, the teachers and support staff who deliver outstanding service every day, not always under the best of circumstances, in all of our schools, government and non-government. They have the future of our children's education in their hands, and they take their responsibilities seriously and deliver their expertise with dedication. I thank them for that.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (11.51): I will refer briefly to whatever it was that Mr Doszpot just said. He talked about taking his responsibilities seriously. If he really took his responsibilities seriously, he would resolve his ideological conflict between wanting to have school-based management, which is part of his Liberal ideology, and wanting to tell principals that they must employ school librarians. Come on! This is something that really should have been sorted out in all his years as opposition spokesperson for education. You would think that he would have worked that one out by now.

The ACT government's 2013-2014 budget responsibly tracks a path back to surplus, while at the same time delivering good government and visionary projects. In education, the government is delivering a great range of initiatives in this budget for both government and non-government schools. In education in Belconnen, I am especially proud that the government is funding in this budget our election commitments to modernise, renew and build new classrooms to again put the facilities at Belconnen high at the forefront of ACT schools. The \$2 million in this budget is for the first stage of that upgrade.

Canberra High, Macquarie Primary School and Mount Rogers Primary School all benefit from the budget with ongoing capital works. Students from the West Macgregor development and all students at Macgregor Primary School will enjoy the school extensions and new classrooms funded in this budget.

Ginninderra schools continue to benefit from the rollout of upgrades to improve traffic safety and car park programs, glazing, lighting and security systems. At the same time, we are ensuring Canberrans have the best teachers by supporting our teachers' professional development through the Teacher Quality Institute.

The Canberra College cares program, or CC cares program, benefits students across Canberra, including from my electorate of Ginninderra. It will make sure Canberra's pregnant or parenting students have the same educational opportunities as other young people. As a result of the funding in this budget, it will move into a new purpose-built facility we plan to open in 2015 at the Phillip campus of Canberra College. These are just some of the initiatives to ensure Canberra students continue to excel in Australia's best education system.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (11.54): I too want to speak briefly on this appropriation to recognise the \$2 million that has been earmarked for an upgrade to Belconnen High School. Belconnen high has been servicing the Belconnen community for more than 40 years now, providing good-quality public education to thousands of Canberra students.

I am pleased that this government is continuing to invest in Belconnen high, significantly building on the successful building the education revolution investments from the federal government in 2010 to refurbish five classrooms and to implement new training technologies. Of course, this is only stage one of Belconnen high's modernisation; so I am looking forward to seeing the next stages of this development to ensure that Belconnen high can continue to provide great education to the Belconnen community.

Other investments from this appropriation that Dr Bourke has also mentioned that I am pleased to support include the funding to continue the expansion of Macgregor Primary School, a school that I am particularly proud of and the \$200,000 for P&Cs to run canteen programs which will promote healthy food choices for students and promote access to an online ordering system, which I know will be of great help to parents in that early morning rush or early evening rush.

These investments, plus the most significant of all—the commitment to the national education reforms—mean that this government maintains its commitment to good education in Canberra.

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability, Children and Young People, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Women, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Racing and Gaming) (11.56): I am pleased to speak to the budget and to the ACT Labor government's significant investment in education and training. Labor does understand the power of education to change lives for the better. It is the view of this government that regardless of the circumstance of your birth, you should have the same opportunities in life through education. This is why we have invested significantly in the education system here in the ACT, providing around 13 per cent more education funding than the Australian average.

Over the last 12 years, recurrent funding for public education has increased by over \$250 million, or around 90 per cent per capita. Similarly over the same period recurrent funding for non-government schools federally and in the ACT was over \$120 million, or an increase of 88 per cent per capita. This has paid off with students achieving the highest levels of education attainment in Australia. Labor continues this investment in the 2013 budget.

The government is continuing to deliver more for education in this budget, with almost \$900 million invested in education and training. The funding will support government and non-government schools through funding for the national education reforms, more resources for teachers and students, new capital projects and upgrades to school ICT infrastructure.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the most significant event for education in the ACT is the signing of the national education reform agreement or the better schools plan. I was pleased recently to sign the ACT bilateral agreement which specifies the ACT's commitment to improving student outcomes. I note with interest that Steve Doszpot continues with disharmony in a sense, or he question the benefits of ACT signing up

to the better schools reform. He seems to sidestep the fact that just recently the leader of the federal opposition described himself as on a unity ticket on better schools reform and has said that these reforms will be supported.

However, there are some weasel words there, because he has only made a commitment for four years. The agreements, as we all know, are for six years. Mr Doszpot is refusing to accept their ongoing support for this. Federally, they are now on a unity ticket, particularly with Victoria joining New South Wales and other states in signing up to this, understanding that these agreements are for six years.

If the shadow opposition minister for education wants to ensure that all schools have certainty, one of the big things he can do is to say to his federal counterparts, “Cannot we give our ACT schools certainty over a six-year period?” He went to great pains around mentioning the ANU and possible impacts on other universities, but he made no mention of the better schools reform providing a \$28 million investment in the University of Canberra through the Centre for Teaching and Learning.

He also has failed to mention that not only has the ACT government signed up, it considers that we got a fair deal, as every other state has received a fair deal. The independent schools and the Catholic schools here have also embraced the sign-up. There is no-one, other than Mr Doszpot and his colleagues sitting over there, that has a negative word to say about better school reform.

Mr Doszpot: Was it Gonski or better school reform?

MS BURCH: This national reform in education is a once-in-a-generation plan.

Mr Doszpot: The essence of Gonski; it seems to have disappeared, doesn’t it?

MS BURCH: It will position Australia as one of the top—

Mr Doszpot: What has happened to Gonski?

MS BURCH: Madam Deputy Speaker, they always say when they hit the gutter that we are on the wrong plan. They are just hitting the gutter over there. It is well known that Mr Doszpot’s approach to education policy and reform is so dense that even light will bend around it. The national reforms—

Mr Doszpot: I would stake my reform against yours any day.

MS BURCH: He continues to mutter over there. I think I heard you in peace and respect, Mr Doszpot—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Ms Burch!

MS BURCH: The national reforms will position Australia as one of the highest performing countries in the world in numeracy, literacy and science. Building on the ACT’s current reform agenda, the agreement includes five national reform objectives in the areas of quality teaching, quality learning, empowered school leadership,

meeting student demand, and transparency and accountability. In mentioning transparency and accountability, I would draw the attention of Mr Doszpot and others over there with an interest in this to the heads of agreement which are there for all to see online. I encourage you to go in and have a look at the bilateral that I signed with the federal government to make sure that we move through those five areas of reform under the national education reform agreement.

Over the next six years, the national education reform agreement will see government funding to all ACT schools increase by \$190 million—from \$690 million in this year to \$880 million in 2019. Public schools will receive an additional \$100 million, the Catholic system an extra \$60 million and the independent schools an extra \$30 million. This historic agreement will benefit almost 70,000 students across the territory and will drive long-term improvements in ACT schools. The ACT's contribution towards these reforms is more than \$34 million over the coming four years in this budget, with \$21 million for public schools, \$9 million for non-government schools and \$4 million to help the transition of public schools to the new funding formulas.

This government will also continue to ensure that our students and teachers have 21st century buildings and infrastructure. In this budget our investment in new school facilities and refurbishing old schools continues. For example, \$550,000 has been allocated to complete designs for the Coombs Primary School that will provide public preschool and primary school facilities for the growing community in Molonglo.

There is \$14 million to build the facility for the Canberra College cares program at the Canberra College Phillip campus. Dr Bourke made mention of that. That new facility will provide learning spaces and facilities to support pregnant and parenting young students and their children. As Dr Bourke rightly pointed out, the allocation of \$2 million is the beginning of the refurbishment of the Belconnen High School modernisation. There is also \$3.3 million for repair and maintenance and upgrades to ACT public schools.

Speaking of capital upgrades, Mr Doszpot made mention of an allocation for capital upgrades for early education and care. He made a very expected and quite typical comment that that was not value for money. But what he fails to understand is that—

Mr Doszpot: No, I did not say that.

MS BURCH: You did. You did say that it was not value for money.

Mr Doszpot: I did not say that at all.

MS BURCH: You check your words, Mr Doszpot. I will put a Mars Bar on it; all right? You said that is not value for money.

Mr Doszpot: You're on; okay.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members!

MS BURCH: Just recently I visited the YWCA centre at Campbell, which was a beneficiary of a recent capital upgrades program. They were able not only to extend the number of childcare places but completely refurbish the entire centre. It is your lack of understanding to say that a dollar goes straight into additional places and that there is nothing in between. There were improved teaching areas, staff support areas, additional space for children, and a complete renovation and upgrade of that entire centre. They were off site for around 12 months. So it was quite disruptive for the families but every family understood the benefits of that refurbishment. Now they are back on site and there is not one person there—

Mr Doszpot: I complimented you on that.

MS BURCH: Mr Doszpot, I do not think there was a compliment in there but I would encourage you—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members! Mr Doszpot, would you not talk across the chamber. And Ms Burch, would you address the chair.

MS BURCH: Yes. Through you, Madam Chair, I would encourage Mr Doszpot to go to these early childhood and education centres that have had the benefit of those capital upgrades and look the staff in the eye, look the families in the eye, and say, “What you have got isn’t value for money.” I would say that all of them would be very distressed at that negativity.

We will similarly be continuing our investment in the cutting-edge ICT infrastructure. And we are continuing with the sustaining smart schools initiative, which will maintain reliable and contemporary school ICT network funding of more than \$10 million over these three years.

Professional learning is a key element of the great outcomes that we have across our schools. High quality facilities provide a great learning environment, but we also need great teachers. Ensuring that every student has a great teacher is something to which this government is committed. To ensure that we maintain the high standards expected of our teachers, we will be investing \$3½ million to help experienced teachers to increase their professional qualifications and to undertake research during their careers.

The ACT government is committed to providing support for students who need extra assistance. We have allocated \$1.6 million in this year’s budget to help students with disability get to and from ACT public schools. \$1.3 million has been allocated to provide extra support for students with complex learning needs. \$1.8 million over two years will help establish the new Tuggeranong introductory English centre at the Wanniasa Hills Primary School; the new facility will provide students with a limited or no background in speaking English with intensive language tuition before they settle into a mainstream school. In addition, more than \$550,000 over four years will enable the increase of the secondary bursary payment for eligible students from \$500 to \$750 per year, and \$100,000 has been provided for a scholarship for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

This budget takes care of all students in all schools. Aside from the investment in all schools through the better schools reforms, we have allocated over \$11 million to help non-government school students. This funding includes funding for students with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and students with a low level of English language proficiency. There is also \$5 million over four years for non-government schools to establish and upgrade preschool infrastructure and \$2.5 million over four years to support access to ICT by non-government school students.

We recognise that the early years of a child's life are the most important for learning. It is during this time that the foundations for the future are laid. We are committed to ensuring that there are sufficient trained staff in the ACT to care for our children, in line with the requirements of the national quality framework. To this end, the early childhood scholarship program aims to increase the numbers of new workers entering into the education and care sector at the certificate III level, and is funded at \$240,000. Additionally, \$300,000 has been allocated to provide scholarships for early childhood educators to undertake a university degree in early childhood education.

Mr Doszpot made comment about the scholarships. Again, he made a snide remark in referencing the cost of fee services through CIT. This clearly shows that he has not understood the basis of the scholarship. Again I reference a well-known TV series: explaining the concept of scholarships in early education care to Mr Doszpot could be like explaining the concept of Norway to a dog.

The scholarships provide a range of support services to attain tuition and to cover the cost of the tuition. The cost could be about buying additional educational materials. But there is always support in the centre to backfill. If you had been out and about, you would know that one of the big concerns for services is not only the ability to send their workers off to train but the cost of backfilling.

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MS BURCH: It is the arrangement for backfilling. This provides support for employers to backfill. You were either not aware of that, Mr Doszpot, or you failed to accept that as part and parcel of all of our scholarship.

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MS BURCH: I was wondering if you were going to pull Mr Doszpot up for his continued interjection, Madam Speaker, but obviously not.

Funding for preschool matters of more than \$300,000 over four years will assist parents of children entering preschool to engage in the school community and in their child's education.

To continue the government's program of upgrading existing childcare centres, as I said, an additional \$2 million will be provided.

Investing in healthy Canberra kids is a priority for the government. \$200,000 has been provided to the ACT parents and citizens association in this year to help run P&C canteen services to promote healthy food. Mr Doszpot went to great pains to say that I am not aware of what is going on in the canteens. That could not be further from the truth. I have had ongoing conversations with the P&C council around canteen reforms. They were the ones that were taking leadership in this area; this budget reflects that and is providing them with additional money. I have also gone out and worked in canteens to see how the systems work. I have seen firsthand how the canteen managers work through the online system, with the early orders coming through. I have also seen that kids will turn up on the day with their money in hand. There needs to be the ability to accommodate both. It is just not right to say that the matter of canteens has been ignored by this government.

We will also be investing \$500,000 over four years for the installation of water refill stations to provide healthy alternatives to bottled water.

Yesterday in this place, Mr Doszpot made a great to-do about the absence of somebody in this chamber and how that reflected their complete indifference to the portfolio. I would just like to draw to everyone's attention the fact that Mr Doszpot was not available for the estimates when Education and Training was being discussed. On his own measure from yesterday, that if you were not in the room you had complete disregard for that portfolio, Mr Doszpot has no regard or interest in Education and Training because he failed to turn up in estimates.

I also draw Mr Doszpot's attention to the estimates report. The estimates report clearly—

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members! Mr Doszpot can use standing order 46 if he chooses, but do not interject during the debate.

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: No. Sit down, Mr Doszpot. At the moment Minister Burch has the floor. If you wish to use the standing orders, you can do so later in the song, but do not interrupt. Ms Burch.

MS BURCH: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I also would draw colleagues' attention to the estimates report—the estimates committee chair report, as I think it is being referred to. It has a number of recommendations around education, but not one on those areas that are of interest for Mr Doszpot. Even his colleagues have failed to reflect the concern.

I have no doubt that Mr Doszpot will stand under the appropriate standing order and say he has been misrepresented. He will say that he was not there because he was off doing something else. Again I refer him to his own narrative of yesterday. The reason

why someone was not in the room was not in his narrative. It was: “If you are not here, you don’t give a damn.” You were not there, Mr Doszpot, so I can simply say that you do not give a damn.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, let me say that the ACT government continues to maintain and provide a first-class education and training system. All of these measures will help build on that system. It is difficult to believe that anyone would oppose such measures, but I am predicting that this budget and these measures—moneys for students with a disability, money for government and non-government schools, money to help canteens—will not be supported by the Canberra Liberals. I will continue to go out into the community and say that Mr Doszpot does not give a damn; he does not support any investment in our children, in our future.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo): Madam Speaker, under standing order 46, I would like to make a personal explanation. I have been misrepresented by Ms Burch.

MADAM SPEAKER: Do you claim to be misrepresented?

MR DOSZPOT: I do.

MADAM SPEAKER: You have leave to outline how you have been misrepresented.

MR DOSZPOT: Madam Speaker, I find Ms Burch’s comments very offensive. I was in London during the period of the estimates, with full permission from this Assembly to represent it at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Westminster seminar. I was there for that duration only. The criticism that she has—

MADAM SPEAKER: Stop, Mr Doszpot. Order! Mr Doszpot, the standing order allows you to outline how you have been misrepresented, not to debate the subject. You have outlined how you have been misrepresented.

Proposed expenditure—Part 1.14—Community Services Directorate—\$241,428,000 (net cost of outputs), \$14,026,000 (capital injection) and \$42,849,000 (payments on behalf of Territory), totalling \$298,303,000.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (12.17): I am speaking to a component of 1.14, Community Services Directorate, My colleague Andrew Wall will be speaking about disability, youth and Indigenous affairs, and Mrs Jones will be speaking about women, multicultural affairs, community relations, care and protection and ageing. Through estimates hearings it has been emphasised that red tape reduction and working in better partnership with the community services sector are issues that need to be addressed in order to meet accountability indicators and reduce dissatisfaction amongst the sector in general.

It is noted that several community services works in progress are running behind schedule, with the community bearing the brunt of the delays. But the 570 recommendations in the dissenting report presented by Dr Bourke and Mr Gentleman do not appear to have any recommendations with regard to this. The

care and protection of our most vulnerable appears to be finally getting some increased attention from this government, but were these steps taken by a government concerned by the number of issues faced within this sector? No, instead it is again just a reactionary matter in response to the scathing annual report from the Public Advocate of the ACT.

We acknowledge that projects have been instigated to deal with a number of issues and concerns highlighted in the report, and the department is trying to address some of its downfalls. But much more can be done. The milestone review panel was implemented in 2012 as part of the government's response to the Public Advocate's stage 2 report. This panel is responsible for monitoring the progress of the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support against the actions outlined in this government's response to the Public Advocate's review and is to report on a quarterly basis for the next 12 months.

Whilst it should be recognised that this panel is pleased with the progress of projects being undertaken to refresh the service culture of the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support and that the completion rate for projects is over 50 per cent, one project, the legislative review, is running significantly behind schedule. The milestone review panel's third quarter report issued in April this year reveals that it still has concerns about the availability of resources to adequately implement this schedule. As part of the summary of findings, that report indicated:

Given ever-increasing demands on services, continued difficulties in staff attraction and retention, and Budget constraints, the Panel is of the view that the Directorate will find it very difficult to complete its implementation of the PA2 recommendations in a timely manner.

Where does this leave the children and families involved? The Auditor-General's report published in March 2013 also reported as part of its findings:

The Director General, Community Services Directorate, has statutory parental responsibility for children and young people in out-of-home care. There were 573 children and young people in care on the 18 November 2012. The Director General cannot rely on the Directorate's own system to provide accurate information to be able to answer the question for all those in care; Where are they (including during school hours)?

In response to this, as part of the budget, the government has allocated \$250,000 over the next two years for an upgrade and feasibility study for the replacement of the children and young people system. The system that provides information on the whereabouts of those that are vulnerable and have some form of care and protection order on them is only now receiving an upgrade to the system as well as a feasibility study. For this system, which is failing its staff and failing those it is meant to protect, this should have been done long ago.

It should be noted that whilst the directorate and the minister have taken steps to address some of the critical areas of both the Auditor-General's report and the Public Advocate's annual report through the implementation of a milestone review panel, the terms of reference for the panel, in their own words, stated in their second quarter report:

... do not permit the Panel to explore outcomes arising from projects, such as, whether project implementation is having a direct impact on the wellbeing of children and young people at risk.

The Auditor-General's report also concluded:

The Directorate has invested considerable resources since early 2012 into a change agenda, Refreshing the Service Culture, and has been successful in recruiting caseworkers from overseas to address local staff shortages. While having these caseworkers is fundamental for providing 'adequate and immediate support', given the issues identified, the Directorate's ability to provide 'adequate and immediate support' is at risk.

Again I ask: where does this leave the children and families involved?

Between 2010 and 2013, 35 formal applications for adoption have been submitted; yet only seven have resulted in an adoption being finalised. That leaves 80 per cent of families wishing to adopt effectively in limbo.

In relation to adoption, the government members' own dissenting estimates report has produced the following recommendations in relation to adoption, and this is quite interesting. In recommendation 328, Dr Bourke and Mr Gentleman recommend that the ACT government increase its efforts to shorten the timelines for adoption in the ACT. In recommendation 330, on the other hand, Dr Bourke and Mr Gentleman recommend that the government be commended for its support of adoption services across the ACT, including inter-country, local and step-family adoptions. So there is a slight contradiction.

But if that was not enough, in recommendation 331, just to remind the government, having given it a pat on the back, Dr Bourke and Mr Gentleman recommend that the government increase its efforts to shorten the timelines for adoption in the ACT. It is a pity neither of those gentlemen is here to answer the questions that those recommendations pose.

Ms Burch: But you are saying they are mutually exclusive.

MR DOSZPOT: Of course they are. But they are also commending you.

Ms Burch: And rightly so.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay. Take it while you can. Twice they have recommended the government increase efforts to shorten timelines for adoption, on one hand, and, on the other, they would like to take the opportunity to commend the government. So take it while you can, Ms Burch. All the while, these vulnerable children may wait years for final orders to be made. A directorate official in estimates hearings indicated:

The importance of those kids making roots and connecting—issues of attachment and issues of stabilisation—is really fundamental for kids if they are going to have better outcomes as young adults in education, in health, all sorts of indicators like that.

And that is a quote from the estimates hearings. Much can be done to shorten these timelines and support the families involved with this process.

The budget also highlighted the fact that out of home care days are increasing by 4,500 in the ACT. This care is predominantly being met by kinship carers who play a vital role in the support and protection of vulnerable children, and support for kinship carers, both emotional and financial, is crucial in the success of these roles in the community.

Moving on to ageing, the population of those aged 65 to 84 years is projected to increase by 170 per cent, whilst the population of those aged 85 and over is expected to increase by 509 per cent in the next 40 years, according to the populations in the ACT issues and analysis paper. Yet we have a government that focuses very little on ageing. Very little time and consideration was taken during estimates to discuss this growing population, and it would seem even less time is being taken to put in place a platform which will support this growing population into the future.

During estimates, plans for an age-friendly city conference and an older persons assembly were discussed, along with the seniors grant, but little has been done to address the real needs of the ageing community. Where are the plans to address the lack of safety that seniors feel while waiting at bus stations or to address the number of uneven footpaths impeding seniors' mobility, just to name a few?

The Canberra Liberals would have effected real change and put in place real plans for the ageing. We pledged in the last election to task the ICRC to review options available to extend senior concessions, including for residents at retirement villages. We were committed to consulting with older Canberrans in public housing to identify existing multi-unit properties where accommodation can be better dedicated to older residents and where services and social activities can be better focused.

Again, where is the government's plan? If this government was serious about support for the ageing community, it would have real plans and real targets in place, producing outcomes that provide assurance to the ageing community that there is a plan for the future.

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 12.27 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Government—executive contracts

MR HANSON: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, given the level of executive responsibility you demanded of the Chairman of ACTEW concerning misleading Canberra taxpayers about the reporting of the Managing Director of ACTEW's salary, what action will you be taking for your failure or that of your senior executives in tabling over \$42 million of executive contracts on 6 August 2013, as you are required to do so under the Public Sector Management Act?

MS GALLAGHER: The first thing I am doing is fixing up a problem that has existed for many, many years over many different chief ministers. So that is the first thing. The other thing I would point out is that, if this is simply a reporting requirement, it is not errors in relation to people's salary or misleading anyone about people's salary. The contractual arrangements are not entered into by the ACT Legislative Assembly. The process around executive contracts is an important accountability measure, as I have said in recent days, and we are looking very closely at what needs to change to ensure these errors do not occur again. One of those might be amending the Public Sector Management Act, because at the moment—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: No, I think the Assembly needs to consider it and debate the merits of it. But one of the issues is whether or not the reporting requirements as they are outlined now deliver the outcome the Assembly wants. With respect to the reporting of short-term contracts that might be entered into for one week, for example, do those require tabling, or are members of the Assembly more interested in the long-term contracts for the most senior positions?

I have not formed a view on this. I am just putting it out there that the level of reporting, the level of red tape associated with this requirement, I think has contributed to the failure. I am not trying to excuse the failure. I am not saying that it is acceptable. But I think the extent of the requirements have assisted in contributing to it. So the answer is: I am fixing it, and I am being up-front to the Assembly with the failures as they occur. But it is quite different—

Mr Smyth: So there is one rule for him and one rule for—

MS GALLAGHER: No, Mr Smyth. It is not one rule for him and one rule for another. They are quite different to the misleading information that was provided to shareholders and the Assembly, a very significant error, in relation to the ACTEW managing director's salary.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Chief Minister, given that you tabled 34 contracts for senior executives who were being paid before they had legal contracts, who will you now be holding responsible for this mismanagement, in the way the chairman of ACTEW was held responsible for his mismanagement of one executive's pay?

MS GALLAGHER: Again, I think the issues are different. I am not sure in terms of what the Leader of the Opposition is alleging around the responsibility of the chairman of the ACTEW Corporation. Certainly I had robust discussions with the chair of ACTEW.

Mr Hanson: You made some pretty strident public comments.

MS GALLAGHER: Yes, and I have made very strident comments in relation to this, Mr Hanson. The job of a minister, once a failure is identified, is to be up-front about that failure and to fix the failure. That is exactly what I am doing.

Mr Hanson: He lost his job.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question.

MS GALLAGHER: Madam Speaker, I had not quite finished. I know it is disorderly to respond to interjections—

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes, it would be quite disorderly.

MS GALLAGHER: but it is entirely incorrect for Mr Hanson to allege that the chairman of ACTEW lost his job.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Chief Minister, how many more executive contracts have not been tabled by you, as required under the PSM Act, and when will you table them?

MS GALLAGHER: At the end of question time today, I will be presenting 16 long-term contracts, three short-term contracts and six contract variations. I am happy to read the full statement now or at the end of question time, as is normal practice.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, can you provide the Assembly with some history in regard to these contracts and the reporting of those contracts?

MS GALLAGHER: I can. As I outlined yesterday, on looking further at this issue and having advice provided to me, it appears that the failure of complete compliance—I would say that it relates to a small number of contracts relative to the contracts that have been tabled but not an insignificant amount—dates back to the mid-1990s. I think the earliest one is 1996.

Transport—light rail

MR COE: My question is to the Chief Minister regarding light rail. Chief Minister, how many times has the capital metro subcommittee of cabinet met? What were the dates of those meetings? Further, who chairs the sub-committee?

MS GALLAGHER: I chair the committee. It has met several times since the election. I am not sure that we need to disclose necessarily the dates, but we do report cabinet summaries online and that would normally indicate—

Mr Hanson: Open government.

MS GALLAGHER: That is open government. Go and find another government that reports cabinet summaries online.

Mr Hanson: You won't tell us when you met.

MS GALLAGHER: You can have a look right here, thank you, Mr Hanson. I am not your research assistant. If you want to find out when the capital metro met, have a look at the cabinet summaries. It has met several times and I chair the subcommittee.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Chief Minister, how could it be that a member on the subcommittee had not seen the full cost-benefit analysis for capital metro, as of 28 June 2013?

MS GALLAGHER: I think you are speaking of Minister Rattenbury. The issue around the cost-benefit analysis was that that came to cabinet prior to him joining the cabinet in November 2012.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Chief Minister, have you seen the full cost-benefit analysis? If so, when?

MS GALLAGHER: The cost-benefit analysis which was used in the submission to Infrastructure Australia did come to cabinet prior to the election last year; so yes, I did see it as a member of that cabinet.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Chief Minister, could you tell us more about the benefits of the capital metro project to Canberra?

MS GALLAGHER: Thank you, Dr Bourke. Yes, I can. This government is very excited about the capital metro project, despite the scaremongering that Liberal parties are famous for right around the country and one which they have decided to continue with on this project. I was trying to recall the last major project which perhaps got the same response from the Liberals—the naysayers, the can't do, the won't do, their favourite little beef—and the project that sprang to mind was the National Arboretum: "Can't do it, don't build it, it is a waste of money, the forest will never grow, no-one will ever like it," and now they are all up there wining and dining regularly.

Mr Wall: On a point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Chief Minister, like everybody else in this place, when a point of order is called, you have to yield to the person who is making the point of order. And I should not have to raise my voice. Mr Wall, you have a point of order.

Mr Wall: My point of order is on relevance. The Chief Minister does not need to bring back the case of our scrutiny of her government on other infrastructure projects. The question clearly was: what were the benefits of the light rail?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Wall has a point of order. Chief Minister, the standing orders require you to be directly relevant to the question. And the question was: what were the benefits of the light rail project? Could you be directly relevant to the question.

MS GALLAGHER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was just getting to that. The benefit of the light rail project will be to completely transform a corridor, the most congested corridor in Canberra, and change the look of that part of the city and which, I think, in time, while the project is being rolled out, will give us the opportunity to transform the way the city as a whole looks.

There will be economic uplift along that corridor, the most congested corridor in Canberra, where the most population growth is occurring, where we have significant congestion now and where the facts show that by 2030, if nothing is done, the situation will get to what it is like in Sydney now. Anyone who needs to drive to Sydney or spend time in Melbourne and sees what their roads are like—(*Time expired.*)

Visitors

MADAM SPEAKER: Before I call you, Mr Smyth, could I acknowledge the presence in the gallery today of members of the Goodwin men's shed from Monash. I welcome you to your Assembly.

Questions without notice Transport—light rail

MR SMYTH: My question is to the Treasurer regarding light rail. Treasurer, has the Treasury verified the economic credibility of the benefit-cost ratio?

MR BARR: Yes.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: It is good to see the Treasurer brimming with enthusiasm for this project! Treasurer—

MADAM SPEAKER: No preamble, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Has the Treasurer verified the assumptions and predictions that were used as the basis for the benefit-cost ratio?

MR BARR: Yes, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Treasurer, did the Treasury office advise on the economic analysis in the August 2012 Infrastructure Australia submission? Was that advice accepted and incorporated in the submission?

MR BARR: Yes, it was a whole-of-government submission.

MR WALL: Supplementary.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Treasurer, what analysis has Treasury undertaken about the uplift on the transit corridor?

MR BARR: Extensive analysis.

Transport—light rail

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development regarding light rail. When will the ACT government be abandoning their plans to start construction of light rail in this term?

MR CORBELL: I do not know whether you can ask a hypothetical, Madam Speaker. In fact, I take a point of order and suggest that the question is, indeed, hypothetical.

MADAM SPEAKER: Sorry, let me just contemplate that. What was the question again, Ms Lawder?

MS LAWDER: When will the ACT government be abandoning their plans to start construction of light rail in this term?

MADAM SPEAKER: I am sorry, Ms Lawder; I have to rule that out of order on the basis that it is hypothetical. Nice try, but I think it is hypothetical. I am not sure that you get a supplementary on the basis of that.

MS LAWDER: I could ask an alternative question.

MADAM SPEAKER: No, I am sorry. Ms Lawder is new to this place. I will give her the option of trying to rephrase the question—

Mr Corbell: A point—

MADAM SPEAKER: Let me finish the sentence before you take the point of order. I will give Ms Lawder the opportunity to try and rephrase the question. I think there have been precedents for this in the past. I think Ms Berry was given such latitude early in the piece. Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My question is to the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development. Minister, when will the ACT government commence their plans to start construction of light rail in this term?

MR CORBELL: We commenced the day after we were re-elected to government.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, will you rule out abandoning light rail in favour of bus rapid transport?

MR CORBELL: The government has made very clear its absolute commitment to implement this election commitment. We treat it seriously, in the same way that we treat seriously every one of the election commitments we took to the last election.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, what are benefits of light rail to the ACT community?

MADAM SPEAKER: I think—the same question was asked of Ms Gallagher but it is asked of a different minister. Mr Corbell.

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Berry for the supplementary. The benefits are extensive. First of all, we know that light rail delivers a better transport saving time than bus rapid transit. I outlined those details in my speech to the Assembly this morning. It is very, very clear that we face growing congestion along this corridor between now and 2030.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members!

MR CORBELL: We are talking about delays in travel time of approximately an hour for what is a very short—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Corbell, can you sit down for a second and can you stop the clock? Ms Berry asked the question. Every member on the government benches and every member on the opposition benches is speaking. I cannot hear Mr Corbell. Mr Corbell should be heard in reasonable silence. Mr Corbell.

MR CORBELL: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We are talking about a journey of 12 kilometres that is projected to take an hour by 2030 if we do not act. This government is determined to act. It is determined to protect people's amenity, people's time, the productivity of the city and the sustainability of the city. That is why we are going to invest in light rail along this corridor.

Light rail delivers better transport travel savings than bus rapid transit. That is very, very clear. It is also very, very clear that light rail drives a higher level of economic and fiscal redevelopment activity along the corridor than bus rapid transit delivers. So those are two key benefits that derive from a long-term infrastructure decision.

We can take the low road, which we saw from those opposite over the last few weeks and today—the cheap shots, the lack of vision and the lack of forethought—or we can take the long-term view for the future of our city so that our children and their children have a transport system that delivers an effective, efficient, reliable and fast choice for them to get around the city, that delivers them the opportunity to live closer to where they work, where there are schools, where there are services, where there are cultural activities or we can simply keep taking the cheap shots we see from those opposite.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, will you guarantee that following the construction of capital metro there will continue to be three lanes for car usage in each direction along Northbourne Avenue?

MR CORBELL: The government will continue to refine its business case in relation to Northbourne Avenue, and the proposal that is put by the government and which is on the public record is for the development of light rail along the median of Northbourne Avenue.

Mr Hanson: A point of order. I am not sure if he has finished and I am too late, but on a point of order on relevance: the question was very specific. It was about whether he would guarantee three lanes or not. The minister did not address that specifically.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Corbell, have you finished answering the question?

Mr Corbell: Yes.

Schools—capacity

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Minister for Education and Training. Minister, during estimates a question on notice was asked about what the school capacity numbers were currently in ACT public high schools and secondary colleges. Your answer was that school capacity numbers for each public high school and secondary college are not produced. Minister, FOI requests have since shown that, contrary to your answer, the Education and Training Directorate does produce numbers for the capacity for ACT public schools. Minister, why did you mislead the committee and will you now apologise and correct the record?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot, you cannot make an assertion that the minister misled the committee. You may ask whether or not she has misled but you may not make an assertion without a substantive motion.

MR DOSZPOT: My apologies, Madam Speaker. Minister, can you advise: have you misled the committee and will you now apologise if you have and correct the record?

MS BURCH: I thank Mr Doszpot for his question and just remind him that he was not at estimates—

MADAM SPEAKER: Relevance, Minister Burch.

MS BURCH: I am less than 10 seconds into the answer.

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister Burch, you were asked a direct question about whether you misled the committee. Whether or not Mr Doszpot was at the committee is not relevant to your answer. The question was: did you mislead the committee?

MS BURCH: I will seek your guidance. I think you have inferred that I misled the committee in your comment just then, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: No. Mr Doszpot's question was: did you mislead the committee? I said, "The question was: did you mislead the committee?" I did not make any assertion about whether or not you misled the committee. I repeated Mr Doszpot's question, which is in order.

MS BURCH: Thank you, and I will go to respond. Given that Mr Doszpot has not provided the transcript and I do not have it in front of me, I have limited faith in his representation of my response.

MADAM SPEAKER: Do not reflect on Mr Doszpot's character. Answer the question.

MS BURCH: I am answering the question, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: You will not reflect on Mr Doszpot's character in doing so.

MS BURCH: I think I am just making a statement and saying I do not have the *Hansard* in front of me, Madam Speaker. So with that context, I will reflect on it and provide advice. But in regard to capacity of the schools, capacity of schools will change as new suburbs come online, as communities change.

Members interjecting—

MS BURCH: With the sniggers from those over there, they clearly have not recognised the growth in numbers at Duffy school, for example, because of the growth in that area with Molonglo coming on. They have no interest, so I will leave my answer there.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, I ask again: which public high schools in Canberra are fully subscribed and for what years, and will you this time provide an honest and accurate response?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot, please rephrase that question without making personal reflections on Ms Burch's honesty.

MR DOSZPOT: My apologies once again. Minister, I ask again: which public high schools in Canberra are fully subscribed and for what years, and will you this time provide an accurate response?

MS BURCH: I will take that one on notice, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, will you undertake to regularly provide accurate data on school capacity and attendance to the Assembly, to avoid similar errors in the future?

Ms Burch: Can you repeat the front part of that.

MS LAWDER: Minister, will you undertake to regularly provide accurate data on school capacity and attendance to the Assembly, to avoid similar errors in the future?

MS BURCH: I am not quite sure if you are asking me to provide routine and regular reports, but there is information available through the directorate website, through My School and other avenues, about what the numbers of enrolments are.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS BURCH: We do assess this every year. That is publicly available online and that is the most relevant, up-to-date information available.

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

Mr Hanson: I have got a point of order on relevance. The question asked also for capacity. I do not think the minister has come to the issue of capacity.

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Burch, do you have anything to add on the issue of capacity?

MS BURCH: No.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, could you tell us more about the state of enrolments in ACT public schools?

MADAM SPEAKER: The question was about capacity figures, a question on notice in estimates and an FOI report. The questions that led from that were about whether the committee had been misled, and then there were two questions about capacity. I do not think that a question about enrolments is in order.

Dr Bourke: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, capacity is enrolment. It is another word, in the same way that yesterday we had discussions around “cardiac” and “heart”.

MADAM SPEAKER: My understanding of “capacity” is the ability of something to be able to hold a certain amount of something. So the capacity of this glass is 250 mls, but, at the moment, it probably only has 200 mls in it, so that is the difference between capacity and enrolment. I rule the question out of order.

Mr Corbell: On the point of order, Madam Speaker, I invite you to revisit that ruling. Are you seriously suggesting that the capacity of a school cannot be measured by enrolments? That is the whole point of the question, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: I am sorry; I have made my ruling.

Mr Corbell: Madam Speaker, I have to urge you to reconsider your ruling. It is beyond logic.

MADAM SPEAKER: I have made my ruling, and I stand by the ruling.

Speaker's ruling

Dissent from ruling

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations and Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development) (2.53), by leave: I move:

That the Speaker’s ruling be dissented from.

Madam Speaker, your ruling is absurd. It is absolutely absurd. Are you suggesting that a series of questions in relation to enrolments at government high schools cannot be taken into account when a question is asked about the capacity of schools in the ACT government high school sector? Your willingness to intervene in question time and micromanage the extent to which the way questions are phrased in question time is moving beyond that which is normally expected of a Speaker.

In this particular instance, your ruling has gone too far. You are saying that a series of questions about enrolments is okay but a question about the capacity of high schools is not okay, when in fact the only way you can seriously engage in debate about the capacity of high schools is through the question of enrolments. Quite simply, Madam Speaker, this side of the house is becoming increasingly concerned at your willingness to intervene in what are very straightforward and reasonable questions that are appropriately put to responsible ministers.

We saw the same thing yesterday, Madam Speaker, in relation to the ruling you made that I was unable to answer questions about a document which I have responsibility for and which I tabled in this place for the information of members. That ruling also highlights the particular instance that we are now seeking to address today.

I invited you, Madam Speaker, to reconsider your ruling. You refused to do so. You declined to do so. Quite simply, the government is left with no choice but to indicate that we do not support your ruling on this occasion. This level of micromanagement, of willingness to nitpick at the detail of questions asked by one side of the chamber

but not the other, is of grave concern to members on this side of the house. Your particular ruling this afternoon leaves us with no choice but to say to you that that is a step too far.

It is an absurd interpretation of the question of relevance. It is an absurd interpretation of what the enrolment questions are that legitimately can be asked of the minister for education. And in this instance, the only course left open to the government is to indicate that we disagree and we cannot accept such a ruling.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (2.56): I rise to speak against Mr Corbell's motion. I also wish to point out to the chamber that I think having a Speaker that does try to regulate debate here is a good thing. We on this side of the chamber have been called on relevance, have been called on the application of standing orders, in this very session. In fact just 15 minutes ago the opposition was called to account by way of one of the standing orders about an error in a question and it was ruled out of order. The Speaker, wisely, gave the member of the opposition an opportunity to rephrase it, in the same way that the Speaker gave Ms Berry an opportunity to rephrase her supplementary question yesterday or the day before.

I think this kind of guidance, this kind of regulation in the chamber, is reasonable and it is a good way forward. There are always going to be doubts, there are always going to be questions, about the subjectivity of the discretion used. However, to actually move a motion of dissent based on one supplementary question to one question in question time, as to whether that is really the best use of such a motion by Minister Corbell I think is quite debatable. In fact I think he is overstepping the mark.

If you want to, in effect, rule no confidence in the Speaker, this is not the way to do it. We should be doing it on a far more substantial issue than one supplementary question to one question in one question time. I think you run the risk of overstepping the mark here and blowing this out of proportion.

If the administration and procedure committee can give some guidance to the Speaker, if we think the question time format is not working or if the standing orders are not working appropriately—if it is not the will of the Assembly to take question time down the path that the Speaker is going down then let us deal with that in a constructive debate. But doing so through a dissent motion I do not think is the best way forward.

I call upon Minister Corbell to rethink his motion before the chamber today. It is a very serious motion which he has put forward. I call upon him to withdraw his motion and to take this up in the admin and procedure committee. That is the best format and it is the best place to have this discussion, rather than potentially having no confidence in the Speaker over one supplementary question in one question in one question time.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (3.00): Madam Speaker, you do have to question the capacity of those opposite to understand the difference between the word "capacity" and "enrolment". "Capacity" is about how much an object will hold—how many people could go into a hall, how much milk could go into a bottle. "Enrolment" is how many want to enlist.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order members! Can we do this without interjection please.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe.

MR SMYTH: They are entirely different propositions, and your ruling is entirely accurate and the way that you have made it is entirely appropriate. If you simply go to the dictionary and you look up the word “capacity”, it says “the volume”—cubic contents, the volume. So the question was about how many students we can fit into a specific school and what is the capacity of the entire school system. It is something that Mr Doszpot has been looking for for some time.

When you look up “enrolment” it simply says “to enlist”. So enrolment is about the number of students who might want to be somewhere as opposed to the capacity of schools to hold a number of students. In that way you have two entirely different concepts. If the member cannot get his questions right and if the member cannot recall what has been asked, for the government to hide their embarrassment by trying to move dissent from your ruling, when your ruling is entirely accurate, is a disgrace. I think if those opposite think there are problems with the way you are running the house, as Mr Coe has said the entirely appropriate way to do this is to raise the matter in procedures or to go and have a conversation with yourself.

This morning, Madam Speaker, you came back to this place, as is appropriate first thing, and apologised to Mr Corbell for a ruling you made that you thought you might have overstepped the mark on. I do not think in all my time here I have heard a Speaker do that. I am happy to be corrected—Mr Corbell has been here a bit longer than I have—if anyone can remember when a Speaker has come back and said, “Look, I took on board what you said and had a think about it. Yes, maybe I got it wrong.” I think that is the sign of a Speaker who understands the function of the Speaker in this place. I cannot imagine that being Speaker is easy on days like today, let alone weeks like this week.

But it is up to the Speaker to keep all of us in line. Again, earlier in the week, having listened to a debate, you came down here and you said, “Members, you need to lift your game,” and you quoted from *House of Representatives Practice*. You can be a hands-off Speaker; you can be a hands-on Speaker. I think you made it quite clear when you took up the position of Speaker in this place the way that you attempt to run the house to facilitate debate. I think that you have been quite close to the mark and keeping to the standard that you set. I think it is admirable that you set the standard and that you are willing to abide by it.

But it is not your fault if members do not track what has been asked in a question and what has been answered in a question. These questions are about the failure of the minister to understand the capacity of the school system that she is responsible for, her failure to answer accurately in the estimates through either questions live in the

committee or questions taken on notice, and her failure today to understand again the question and to try and deflect the question because she is incapable of answering it. We now note that she has taken on board that she will go on notice to try and get the data that Mr Doszpot has been after.

It behoves the member to be accurate. It behoves the member to be within the standing orders. And it behoves the member when he asks the question to be relevant to the string of questions that have been asked. That did not occur. Had he phrased his question differently, you may well have considered it being in order. But there is no case made here.

It has been a very tense week. I think we would all agree that there have been a lot of words across the chamber. But if you do not like the way the Speaker's rulings are going, I think we need to have a larger conversation. A lot of people are telling me that they are very pleased with the way it is going simply because there is some control, there is structure, there is form and there is consistency. As Mr Coe pointed out, we had a question knocked off not just 15 minutes ago. So I do not think there is any indication that there is partisanship in the way that you are ruling these things.

Indeed, if you look at the warnings handed out, I think it is quite fair to say that it is not partisan. You have stepped above the ruck. You understand the meanderings of the ruck very well from your time here. But I think to move dissent when the member got the supplementary question wrong and you have ruled correctly is taking it too far.

Again, yesterday, on a very fine point on the administrative arrangements, you came back this morning. One you conceded; one you did not concede. But you stuck to your guns because in fact you were right.

I think members need to look at the way this place has been governed by Speakers over time to look at the rise in the standard. Mr Berry was a very fine Speaker, but I think you have taken it to a new level. I can appreciate some of the frustration that Mr Corbell is apparently feeling, but it is not your fault that the member got the question wrong, and this motion should go down.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (3.05): This is an interesting discussion. Mr Smyth has probably hit the nail on the head, even with his implicit backhander. He has highlighted the difficulties of the role of the Speaker. Certainly in question time, with both sides shouting at each other, with the significant levels of interjection that come from those opposite, it can be very difficult to conduct question time. I think that the Speaker often finds themselves in a position of needing to try and reflect on fine judgements of the standing orders in a hotly contested environment and trying to find a fair way through that. That is no easy task. As members know, I have tried it, and members have their views on how that went. Mr Smyth has made his views on that perfectly clear.

Nonetheless, I think that in light of the debate we just saw going on there was some muddle in that question. I think that it was a bit unclear exactly what the situation was. I propose that the best way to proceed would be that the motion of dissent be withdrawn and the Speaker have an opportunity to further reflect on the matter so we

can see if we can find a way through. We saw earlier that Ms Lawder was offered the opportunity to reframe her question. We might be able to find a suitable way through that keeps us within the standing orders at the same time, which is the Speaker's job. I think the Speaker is working hard to implement the standing orders, but we might be able to find a way through that enables the Assembly to proceed effectively. I propose to move that the dissent motion be withdrawn.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Rattenbury, you will need leave to do that.

MR RATTENBURY: Of course I will. I seek leave to move a motion that the dissent motion be withdrawn.

Leave granted.

MR RATTENBURY: I move:

That the dissent motion be withdrawn.

MADAM SPEAKER: The question now is that the motion of dissent be withdrawn. Chief Minister.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education) (3.07): I thank other members for their contribution. The government would be prepared to consider withdrawing the dissent motion if the Speaker was prepared to indicate a willingness to reconsider the ruling. This is the first time dissent in the chair has been moved in this parliament. That shows that we do not do these things lightly. But in order to navigate a way through this, the government would certainly be prepared to do that if we had an indication from you, Madam Speaker, that what Mr Rattenbury outlined was agreeable to you.

MADAM SPEAKER: I will depart from procedure, with members' indulgence, and I will indicate that, as is always the case, the Speaker is in the hands of the parliament. I hear that members are unhappy with the ruling and I am happy to reconsider, as it seems to be the wish of the parliament that I reconsider the ruling. Mr Corbell, the question is that the dissent motion be withdrawn.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations and Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development) (3.09): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for that indication. The government welcomes the indication of your willingness to reconsider. We think that is an effective and appropriate way forward, and the government will not oppose the proposal put by Mr Rattenbury.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (3.09): I welcome the step back from the brink here, because this was a serious motion, and the interjection from Mr Barr indicates that, just as Tuesday was, there has been a bit of an overreach from the government. I think this is a more appropriate way to go forward. In fact, I think it should be noted that Mrs Dunne as the Speaker takes her rulings very seriously. She

considers them on merit and on their weight. As I understand it, she has reflected on a ruling she made yesterday and, on reflection, has come back into this place and said, “I think I might have got it wrong.” I think that shows the due consideration and the seriousness Mrs Dunne as Speaker is applying to rulings.

As Mr Coe indicated, as Speaker she ruled a question from the opposition out of order. I indicate to members there was some debate between me and Mr Coe as to whether it was out of order because the reality is that these are matters that are open to interpretation. They are judgment calls, and in the case of the question that we asked, and perhaps in relation to the supplementary question asked by the government backbencher, there is interpretation on these matters. What I have seen from the Speaker is an equal application in her judgement.

The Speaker granted some latitude to Ms Lawder, just as she did to Ms Berry, to reframe the question, but it is quite clear that she said it was out of order and she has made consistent rulings. Equally, she has, in my view—you can see it from her rulings this question time—consistently maintained order in this place with regard to opposition interjections.

I think this is an appropriate way forward. I think it is a matter that can be looked at in the cold light of day, as Mr Rattenbury has indicated. These are often heated question times where an analysis in detail where the armchair expert in the background can make a considered ruling. We wait to see what that ruling is. But I welcome Mr Rattenbury’s motion. I think it is the right way to behave. The motion of dissent that was moved earlier was not appropriate. It reflected a fit of pique that was going beyond the simple issue of the question and the ruling and reflects the attitude of the government to the Assembly. I indicate the opposition will support Mr Rattenbury’s motion.

Motion that the dissent motion be withdrawn agreed to.

Motion withdrawn.

Questions without notice

Schools—capacity

MADAM SPEAKER: Now we are back to question time. Going back to the question that Dr Bourke asked, I am very mindful of the advice that was given to me by Speaker Polley reminding me that I am always in the hands of the Assembly on these matters. I do not want to be contrary about this but I do cleave to my view that there is a difference between the discussion of capacity and enrolment. Given that the Assembly does not see that same difference, I will ask Dr Bourke whether he can ask his question, mindful of the fact that there may be a distinction between capacity and enrolment.

DR BOURKE: Minister, could you tell us something more about the enrolments in ACT high schools, bearing in mind that the original QoN Mr Doszpot referred to actually did mention enrolment?

MS BURCH: I do thank Dr Bourke for his question. Just before I go to the answer, I will look at the transcript from Mr Doszpot and Ms Lawder's questions because I think there was an inference that there were statements in the committee that were not parallel with a QoN. I have had a brief look—I think it is important, Madam Speaker—at the *Hansard* and I cannot find any reference—

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Burch, can you sit down. Stop the clock. If you think that Mr Doszpot or Ms Lawder misrepresented you, you have standing orders to address that. At the moment you are answering Dr Bourke's question, and I would ask you to be directly relevant to Dr Bourke's question.

MS BURCH: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I will take your advice on that matter. Indeed, on enrolments, I think I came into this place earlier this year, following the February census of ACT schools which showed overall growth in school numbers across the ACT, as reflected in the growth of our city, and referred to that.

But what was very pleasing in the census this year was that it continued a positive trend of enrolments into the public education system, a trend that started in 2009 when this government made a concerted effort and investment in our public education. That has continued. I think there is a close on two per cent growth this year into the public education system. As I said, that is a positive trend.

In response to some of the earlier questions around information on government schools, I encourage all those opposite to have a good read of the ACT school census which goes school by school, in the public and in the non-government arenas, and has absolute numbers per class in the number of schools across there.

Dr Bourke made reference to a QoN, QoN 197, and I am quite relieved that Mr Doszpot only gave me this question once instead of three times like he has done with other questions. His question here was: what are the school capacity numbers for each—(*Time expired.*)

Economy—skilled migration

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Economic Development, who is still able to manage a smile. Minister, in answer to a question taken on notice, the government advised that it has engaged KPMG to review aspects of the territory's skilled migration program due to be finalised in July 2013. Minister, when did the government commission this study, and what is the value of this contract?

MR BARR: That information would be available on the Shared Services Procurement website. I would refer the member to that site.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, what aspects of the ACT's skilled migration program did this review look into, and what were its findings?

MR BARR: It would be an extensive review, and I am happy to provide information to the member on its findings.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, what new initiatives will the government be implementing as a result of this study?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot, I am sorry. That is out of order. It is asking the government to announce new policy. Supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, what value does the skilled migration program bring to the ACT?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Porter for the question. There is quite considerable value across a number of industry areas.

Roads—Kambah Pool Road

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services. Minister, Kambah Pool Road is the only road leading into the northern end of Gleneagles estate, Kambah pool recreation area and the Murrumbidgee golf country club and has been the site of numerous accidents, including at least one fatality in recent times. A number of constituents have contacted your office and mine regarding street lighting along Kambah Pool Road in order to make the road safer. Will you be installing lighting at this location as a matter of urgency; if not, why not?

MR RATTENBURY: I thank Mr Wall for the question. There has been quite a bit of discussion about the Kambah pool and Kambah Pool Road at a number of levels. Just yesterday I was discussing the matter of residents also having raised questions about the closure of the road at a certain point. As members may recall, the road has recently been closed overnight right down at Kambah pool in an endeavour to clamp down on hooligan and antisocial behaviour. Some residents have raised the question of whether it should be closed further up the road—I am coming to the lights in a minute, bear with me—and the answer is that we cannot do that because there are a number of rural lessee gates beyond where the proposed gate would be. So that is the element around antisocial behaviour. I understand there is still some concern there—this goes to the lighting to some extent as well.

I will have to take some advice on the lighting specifically, Mr Wall, as it has been some time since I looked at that information. There were some technical limitations around the lighting, but I just cannot bring them to mind at the moment. I will be happy to take that on notice and give you a more fulsome answer.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, what criteria are used to determine the priority of new lighting capital works projects?

MR RATTENBURY: TAMS does get many requests each year for upgraded lighting in a range of locations, including, members might be interested to know, right through many of the older suburbs, where the older lights are actually far less illuminating than perhaps what you see in the newer suburbs, with the tall orange lights that are more common in newer suburbs. Tuggeranong and Gungahlin in particular I have mentioned.

We get many requests each year. TAMS assesses it on a range of factors, as it does with, I guess, all of the infrastructure requests that come in, including for footpaths. They go to issues such as level of usage, current level of lighting, and whether the current lighting can be upgraded with better bulbs rather than necessarily with completely new infrastructure. They are the sorts of factors that are taken into account in assessing what level of lighting and what resources might be committed to a particular area.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, what was the Gleneagles Neighbourhood Watch group's response to TAMS closing the Kambah Pool Road?

MR RATTENBURY: I think it is fair to say that the response to closing Kambah pool and the road into it at night has been universally welcomed by a range of groups. Tuggeranong police were involved in the discussion with TAMS about the decision to close it. I think they were well aware of the many antisocial acts that were taking place down there. The Parks and Conservation Service, as the ones who had to regularly clean up the vandalism and destruction, found that very frustrating, as did the members of the nearby community who were, frankly, sick and tired of the vehicles hooning up and down the road at night, having their sleep interrupted and also, being residents in the area often using that recreational facility, being equally frustrated by the levels of vandalism and destruction that were taking place.

I have not had a formal update recently but my anecdotal understanding is that it has been very effective. I guess winter perhaps is the time when there is less of that going on. Summer may prove to be the defining test, but at this stage it seems to have been an effective strategy.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, will you provide to the Assembly the current schedule and time line for streetlight installations in the ACT?

MR RATTENBURY: I will take that on notice and I will see what I can provide to the Assembly. I am just not sure what form that information is available in. I will discuss that with the directorate and certainly provide the Assembly with the most appropriate information in response to your question, Ms Lawder. I may also include in that the information around the assessment criteria.

Health—general practitioners

MS PORTER: My question is to the Minister for Health, Minister, on 2 August 2013 the ACT Medicare Local released its GP workforce scoping study. Could you please outline for the Assembly the findings of that study?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Ms Porter for the question. In October 2012 Rural Health Workforce Australia was contracted by the ACT Medicare Local on behalf of the GP workforce working group, with the funding provided by ACT Health, to undertake to research the current GP workforce in the ACT. This research was commissioned after anecdotal advice that the GP shortage was easing and that practices were reopening their books and many new practices had been established.

The main findings from the report were that there were currently 400 GPs practising in the ACT, equating to 305 full-time equivalent GPs, an increase of 35 GPs compared to the 2009 task force report. The 2009 survey did not include registrars in the 35 GPs. The GP to population ratio based on the headcount from this study and the 2011 ABS census data is on par with the national average of one GP for every 893 people. A higher than average number of ACT GPs work part time, which is similar to what was found in 2009. More than 80 per cent of practices hold general practice accreditation, including 95 per cent of group practices. Eighty-eight per cent of GPs are taking new patients from all sectors, with a further six per cent accepting new patients in more limited circumstances—for example, ANU students and staff are eligible to use the ANU health service. Ninety-seven per cent of GP practices provide access or refer to an after-hours service and 67 per cent have at least one GP who visits residential aged-care facilities. Again, that was a big issue of pressure in 2009.

A couple of the issues identified to keep a close eye on are that 26 per cent of GPs state it is likely that they will retire or move outside the ACT in the next five years and that the recruitment time to employ a GP is 68 weeks. So they are the two areas that we will need to continue to focus on.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, how was the scoping study conducted?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Ms Porter again. The study was conducted by surveying GP practice managers to provide the snapshot of the current workforce, assessing the future career intentions of the current workforce through the survey, conducting a literature review of the workforce and modelling analysis to inform future requirements. The survey response was very high with 91 per cent of practices and 56 per cent of GPs responding.

This information will assist. It confirms what we were suspecting and what we were being told by general practitioners—that the worst of the GP shortage for the time being is over and that we have seen some easing of it. But, as I said in my previous answer, there are issues to continue to focus on, including the quality of care provided by GPs.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, in regard to the findings of the scoping study, what initiatives has the ACT government put in place over recent years that have contributed to the increase in GPs in the ACT?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Dr Bourke for the question. We did commit \$12 million over four years to support GPs, to entice new GPs to work in the ACT, to support medical students to consider a career in general practice and to help existing GPs meet the needs of their patients, in particular patients in residential aged care facilities.

We have had a number of programs, including the GP development fund, the GP scholarships, including the Peter Sharp scholarship, the education infrastructure support grant payments which are payments to assist GPs who take on the training responsibility of medical students, the GP aged day care service which, again, was targeted to meet and was focused on trying to reduce some of those presentations by elderly people to the emergency department by ensuring that they had access to GPs in their residential aged care facility before their health declined, and the PGPPP which is encouraging general practice to take on junior doctors. All of these programs have helped, and I would like to thank the Medicare Local and the GP workforce working group for the work they have done in assisting us to meet the needs of the primary healthcare sector.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, did the study conduct any analysis of bulk-billing rates in the ACT and the cost of visiting GPs in the ACT?

MS GALLAGHER: No. The work that was done was commissioned around workforce. It was focused primarily on understanding the exact snapshot now and looking forward about what needs to happen. As I have said in this place a number of times, the GP bulk-billing rates, which are recorded separately through the Department of Health and Ageing, are a matter for individual GPs, as are their billing requirements.

Housing—affordability

MS BERRY: My question is to the Minister for Economic Development. What measures is the government taking to boost housing affordability in the ACT?

Mr Coe: Lease variation charge?

MR BARR: Amongst others, Madam Speaker. Yes, the government is reforming the territory's taxation system. We are abolishing conveyance duty over time. Stamp duty is an unfair and inefficient tax. It makes buying a home less affordable. There would appear not to be universal agreement that stamp duty is an unfair tax, which is disappointing. But the government's tax reforms mean that someone buying a home

valued at half a million dollars—around the average in this city at the moment—is saving \$3,400 today on what they would have paid a little over 18 months ago before the reforms started.

Another initiative the government has put in place to boost housing affordability is the homebuyer concession scheme, which provides discounts on conveyance duty for new homes. This scheme has been expanded for the second year in a row. The eligibility has been widened. The household income threshold increased to \$160,000. The value at which a property can attract the full concession has gone up to \$425,000, an increase of \$45,000, and the partial concession continues right up to \$525,000.

This means that a household with an income of \$160,000 that buys a new home up to \$425,000 will pay just \$20—just \$20—in conveyance duty. If they are able and eligible to be purchasing their first home using the first home owners grant, that increases from \$7,000 to \$12,500 from 1 September. The combined impact of the stamp duty saving and the first home owners grant boost puts around \$25,000 into the pocket of a first homebuyer in this city.

The government is also a very strong supporter of the national rental affordability scheme. The construction of 2,500 affordable rental dwellings in the ACT is being supported by this scheme. We have been one of the most successful jurisdictions in the country in accessing NRAS incentives; 6.6 per cent of all incentives issued nationally have been issued in the territory, more than three times our population entitlement. This is because this government has supported universities, community housing providers and private sector organisations to access this important commonwealth scheme.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, how will these measure also help to boost the construction sector in the ACT?

MR BARR: These measures go to encouraging the construction of new dwellings in the territory. Combined with the land release program, the urban renewal program the government has in place and the transformation of the Northbourne Avenue corridor through the capital metro project, we will see tremendous opportunity for new residential construction in this city. It is a real boost to the construction sector. Those who speak on behalf of the construction industry and, indeed, the real estate industry welcomed these policy changes as “a positive direction by the government that should stimulate activity in the housing market.”

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, in relation to the current level of affordability and housing activity in the ACT—

MADAM SPEAKER: Preamble, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: have there been any reports detailing how we are tracking?

MADAM SPEAKER: Could you repeat the question, please, Mr Gentleman?

MR GENTLEMAN: Madam Speaker, yes.

MADAM SPEAKER: Even the preamble.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, in relation to affordability and housing activity in the ACT, have there been any recent reports detailing how we are tracking?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Barr, the Minister for Economic Development.

MR BARR: Yes, we have seen strong levels of both owner-occupier and investor residential finance data in recent times. We have seen the value of individual investor commitments increase by 8.6 per cent. We have seen an increase in the value of housing finance commitments for individual investors in the period up to June 2013.

The current level of individual investor housing finance commitments is higher than both the five-year monthly average and the level a year ago. I am advised that it is the second highest reported in history. The historically low interest rates, as well as above national average population growth that we are seeing today, and continued strong wage growth, particularly in the private sector, which is very pleasing to see, will support the local housing market into the future and will also help to ensure that our construction sector remains strong.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, will you now table the modelling that you have done to support the tax reform that you spoke about in your original answer?

MR BARR: I would refer the member to the budget papers.

Mr Smyth: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Smyth.

Mr Smyth: Under standing order 213, I ask that the Assembly now order the minister to table the documents that he mentioned in the estimates hearings when he said, “Yes, we have done modelling on the tax reform”—that, according to the process in 213A, they be tabled in this place.

MADAM SPEAKER: The question is that the documents be tabled. Did you actually move a motion?

Mr Smyth: I asked under 213A. I am happy to move a motion.

MADAM SPEAKER: You need to move a motion.

Mr Smyth: I foreshadow that, under standing order 213A, I will move that the Treasurer now table in this place, according to the process outlined in standing order 213A, the government's modelling, which the minister admitted to in estimates, as to the effect of the tax reform package.

Mr Corbell: On the point of order, Madam Speaker—

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Corbell.

Mr Corbell: Given the significance of the motion Mr Smyth is seeking to move, it would first of all be appropriate for him to move such a motion in writing and have it circulated in this place so that members understand the extent of his request fully. Secondly, whilst it is an option available to him under the standing orders, my understanding is that it would be normal practice to put such a motion on the notice paper and have it dealt with in accordance with Assembly business. Alternatively, he would need to seek leave to move such a motion.

MADAM SPEAKER: You are quite correct, Mr Corbell, that Mr Smyth would need leave.

Mr Smyth: On the point of order, I am quite happy to write it down if the minister wants me to write those words down, but there is nothing in the process that says that it has to be on the notice paper. I am using the standing orders to seek information from the minister.

MADAM SPEAKER: The general practice is that motions that are not on the notice paper do require leave, in the same way as the motion of Mr Rattenbury this morning to introduce a bill required leave. Just to defuse this, and I am in the Assembly's hands about this, can I just say that we are still in the middle of question time, which has already been interrupted. Can I suggest to members that a way forward would be to address Mr Corbell's concern about the motion being in writing—that we put a pin in that, though that is not a very technical term, which would allow Mr Smyth some time to put his motion in writing, and at the end of question time we could come back to that issue. Is that a way forward that members would be agreeable to? Okay. Can we do that? We will conclude question time; that gives Mr Smyth an opportunity to write something down. He would still need leave.

Dr Bourke, a question without notice.

Children and young people—care and protection

DR BOURKE: My question is to the minister for children and young people. Minister, I refer to the latest report of the care and protection milestone review panel.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members! I cannot hear Dr Bourke. Can you speak up a bit, Dr Bourke?

DR BOURKE: Absolutely, Madam Speaker. I refer to the latest report of the care and protection milestone review panel. Can you provide the Assembly an overview of the report's findings, please, minister?

MS BURCH: I thank Dr Bourke for his question. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that I have received the fourth and final report of the milestone review panel. The creation of the panel was one of the recommendations of last year's report by the ACT Public Advocate, and the milestone review panel was established to monitor the implementation of the reforms to care and protection over the crucial first year. The panel members were Narelle Hargreaves, Graeme Bashford and Anita Phillips. All three have done a terrific job, and I take this opportunity to thank each of them for their work, which has genuinely strengthened the oversight of these crucial reforms.

In this report the panel advised that 10 of the 19 projects were complete and that a further six are planned for completion by December this year. The panel said it was impressed by the discipline instilled by the project management process which has been embraced throughout the directorate. Furthermore, the panel acknowledged that arrangements are in place to deliver a flagship integrated management system.

The panel also expressed enthusiasm about the technology for the online knowledge portal from the Bimberi integrated management system, or what is referred to as the IMS. When applied to other areas of the office for children, the portal will be the single biggest factor in changing both the practice of service delivery and the ease with which the directorate staff carry out their roles.

Panel member Anita Phillips recently told the public accounts committee that she is:

... very pleased with the progress that the office for children and young people have been making in response to the recommendations that I made.

She went on to say that this is a long-term project that is going to take some time but that she had been made aware of some very positive and impressive improvements.

Of course, the work of protecting our vulnerable children can always be improved on. No-one will ever be able to say we have got it right and it will stay right. Despite the positive report of the milestone review panel, I am not claiming that today. I am more than aware of the ongoing work that systems such as care and protection need, not only in the ACT but across the country.

The panel also noted some areas that need careful monitoring, and I agree with them. They noted, for example, the success of the models and system changes will be reliant on recruitment, retention and training of quality staff. We know this and are certainly putting enhanced effort into this with ongoing training and support and, indeed, for front-line workers retention payments in recognition of the tough, tough work they do.

Overall, however, it is pleasing to see the improvements that have been made, and I thank the panel members for their hard work. I also take this opportunity to recognise the work of the care and protection workers themselves.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, is the panel confident that governance arrangements are now in place to deliver on the issues raised in the reports of the Public Advocate and the Auditor-General?

MS BURCH: It has always been important that, after the milestone review panel has completed its work, governance arrangements are in place to ensure that the work of monitoring and continuous improvement goes on. In this context, the report of the panel states:

The Panel is confident that governance arrangements are in place to deliver the Information Management System which will provide a platform for addressing many of the issues raised by the Public Advocate's report. These issues included accurate recording of information, timely responses, and support for frontline staff.

I think it is a very commendable effort of the directorate to get a response like that from the milestone review panel. The panel noted that these arrangements will be critical in bringing about change and improved service delivery, particularly in the areas of out of home care, early intervention and kinship assessments. The program of projects the panel were reviewing will be reported on and will undergo scrutiny through the CSD board of management, and this process is also supported by a project management officer providing expert input to the operations.

The executive of the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support has commenced a process to govern the more comprehensive refreshing the service agenda of continuous quality improvement. I am pleased that that group continues with very clear direction.

Progress towards a full implementation of all recommendations, as well as the Auditor-General's recommendations, will be a regular item for consideration at the CSD Audit and Review Committee who will advise the Director-General directly. As minister, I of course will receive regular updates on that progress.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, what additional changes have been implemented in the care and protection system that complement the decision review panel report's findings?

MS BURCH: I thank Ms Berry for the supplementary. The program of work to respond to the reports of the Public Advocate and monitored by the quarterly milestone review panel is designed to make a long-term difference and embed improved practice and programs. This has been effective and has been demonstrated through changes such as the kinship care team and the complaints unit. These teams are now well embedded into the office for children and there has been a noticeable decrease in complaints—in particular concerns raised by kinship carers.

Some 665 care and protection case conferences were held last year for children involved in care and protection, bringing together families, friends and professionals to address issues of concern and find a way forward. Funding is provided in this year's budget for a feasibility study for a new electronic system and for improvements. The work that has taken place at Bimberi with the IMS is a testament to the positive outcomes and a reflection of what we can achieve in this place when the program of upgrades is completed.

Care and Protection Services have recently advertised for youth-work staff for a new "youth on orders" team. To improve recruitment to the office, seven social work students have commenced their placements with Care and Protection Services. These placements are an opportunity to improve the likelihood that these students will choose statutory child protection work as a pathway following graduation.

One carer round table has been held this year and another one will be held shortly to make sure that I hear directly the views of carers. And a carers consultative group has also been established.

Care and Protection are also working hard to strengthen staff skills and support their team. A professional development program has been developed and Care and Protection Services continue to respond to a large volume of concern and protection reports and manage over 550 children in care. I for one thank them for the work they do each and every day and also for the great work that the foster and kinship carers do. *(Time expired.)*

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, what measures have you put in place to ensure that the implementation of these reforms continue?

MS BURCH: I thank Ms Porter for her interest. As I have indicated, the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support implemented a comprehensive and achievable governance structure to implement long-term change in a complex client environment. Of particular importance is the integrated management system. The IMS is the key to service delivery reform in CSD.

Considerable work has also been done to develop a strategic plan for out-of-home care, which is on track for finalisation next year. Case conferencing has been implemented in an attempt to achieve alternate outcomes for young people coming into contact with Care and Protection and a case audit tool has been developed and tested. Our dedicated Care and Protection staff do an excellent job in balancing a range of difficult decisions on a daily basis in pursuit of the best interests of the child.

Like all organisations, there will always be aspects of care and protection work that need reflection and improvement, and issues that need to be addressed. While reviews provide an opportunity to reflect and to learn and improve, the constructive and positive approach is always important to support the people who are the subject of the review and who are required to implement change.

I am confident that the office will continue to deliver the changes needed to keep ACT children, young people and their families safe, strong and connected.

ACT Emergency Services Agency—stations

MR GENTLEMAN: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, can you please outline for the Assembly how progress is being achieved in regard to the government's station upgrade and relocation strategy?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Gentleman for the question. On 2 November 2011 I released the government's Emergency Services Agency station upgrade and relocation strategy and its implementation plan. I also announced the commencement of community consultation for phase 1 of that strategy, which was to propose and plan for the development of new ESA stations in Charnwood, Aranda and in south Tuggeranong.

I am very pleased to advise that the government has progressed implementation of the strategy. In last year's budget we provided funding of just over \$21 million for the construction of a new co-located ambulance and fire station in west Belconnen, in the Charnwood group centre. After an open tender process, Manteena Pty Ltd were the successful tenderer and construction commenced in September last year.

Construction is now at a very advanced stage. The builder, Manteena, and the ESA anticipate that the new station will be completed and operational later this year. The project will be delivered within the allocated budget and I am advised that it is also being delivered on time.

The new station project includes the construction of a roundabout at the main intersection of Charnwood Place and Lhotsky Street, which I know has been a concern for residents in west Belconnen for quite some time. My colleagues in Ginninderra have all raised the importance that the community places on that upgrade to the road network in the Charnwood group centre. So not only are we getting good benefits from the development of a new fire and ambulance station for west Belconnen; we are also seeing improvements in local area traffic management at the Charnwood group centre.

The development of the new Charnwood fire and ambulance station will for the first time deliver a dedicated ambulance presence for the west Belconnen community. The government is very proud that it is delivering improved emergency service coverage for the growing area of west Belconnen. We have obviously seen significant growth in suburbs in the west Belconnen district and, as a result, the need for improved ambulance cover in particular has become more and more pressing. So the government is responding to this need, delivering the new ambulance and fire station. Obviously the new fire capability will replace the now old and outdated existing west Belconnen fire station and provide a state-of-the art facility for our hardworking firefighters and ambulance officers, who do such an important job in providing emergency services to our community.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, can you please outline what progress has been made with the south Tuggeranong station?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Gentleman for the supplementary. The government is now proceeding with work to develop further fire capability, a new fire station, for the south Tuggeranong region. This is another important step in our commitment to implementing the emergency services station relocation strategy to make sure our fire and ambulance stations are exactly where they need to be, to maintain or improve fire and ambulance cover across the city and to meet the needs of a growing and developing city.

The new station is proposed to be built to the south-east of the roundabout intersection of Tharwa and Drakeford drives. As I have indicated, just under \$18 million has been allocated in this year's budget for the construction of this new fire and rescue station. The ESA has already held DA pre-application meetings with the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate and is now preparing the necessary documentation for its development application. In addition, work is now underway in relation to Shared Services Procurement arrangements, and it is anticipated that the tender for the construction process should be commenced in early September.

The station's designs have been developed through significant end-user consultation with operational crews and also with the input of their respective union representatives. As a result, I am confident the government is delivering purpose-built facilities that meet the needs of our emergency services and will enhance their capability for the next 40-odd years.

This is a very important program for the government and a very important investment in improving community safety right across the city, but particularly in areas like west Belconnen, south Tuggeranong and the Lanyon Valley it is very important that we improve and maintain emergency services coverage.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, what other work is being undertaken to progress the station upgrade and relocation strategy?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Porter for her supplementary. There is \$1.65 million allocated as a result of last year's budget for due diligence assessments for new or improved ESA facilities in Fyshwick, Calwell, Greenway, Gungahlin, Pialligo and the city centre. This is a mixture of both fire and ambulance, co-located and separate facilities. This preparatory work will allow us to make further decisions about phase 2 of the strategy.

Just to drill down into that in a bit more detail, phase 2 of the strategy is looking at these sites: Fyshwick, ambulance, fire and rescue plus technical operations support facilities on the site of the existing Fyshwick fire station; Calwell, looking at a new

SES base for Calwell—that would be a very important development for the Calwell area should that proceed; Greenway, the conversion of the existing fire station, because that fire crew will move to the south Tuggeranong station when it is completed, to become a new ambulance station; Gungahlin, the upgrade and extension of existing RFS facilities in the JES, the Joint Emergency Services Centre there; looking at a new fire and rescue station for the Campbell-Pialligo area; and in the city centre the need for a dedicated ambulance station right here in the city centre, because of the very significant demand for ambulance call-outs, given the large number of people working in the city centre.

Phase 2 due diligence activities are almost completed by the ESA, and the government will be accessing the outcomes of those due diligence assessments in the coming months.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, what innovations have been included in the construction of the new station at Charnwood that will allow ambulance officers and firefighters to be able to conduct their service to west Belconnen residents safely and comfortably?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Berry for the question. I was delighted to accompany Ms Berry on an inspection of the site earlier this year where we were able to see some of the very important measures that are being put into the new facility at west Belconnen. First of all, there is a very strong focus on the energy efficiency and environmental performance of this new fire and ambulance station.

It needs to be a comfortable place for our fire and ambulance personnel to work in, to be based in. It is a 24-7 building. There will always be someone in the building if they are not being called out to an incident. The efficient space heating systems in the building, the use of solar hot water systems and gas-fired heating systems are a very efficient way of heating and cooling the building. We also have a range of other measures. They include the deployment of photovoltaics on the site to assist with the energy needs of the building and also rainwater capture so that we are able to re-use rainwater captured on site. These are some of the very important sustainability performance measures being put into this new fire and ambulance station.

There are also measures to make sure that it is more comfortable for the crews that are based there. For example, the vehicle bays at the station have in-slab heating, making it more comfortable for crews to service their vehicles, particularly in the winter months. Working on a very cold floor in the middle of winter when some minor maintenance needs to be done or even just restocking of vehicles can be a problem. An effective means of in-slab heating in the vehicles bays at the Charnwood station improves comfort and workability for crews and allows them to do their task regardless of outside weather conditions.

These are the types of innovations that have been built into this project and demonstrate the commitment this government has to delivering state-of-the-art facilities that will meet the needs of our community and our emergency services well into the future.

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

Supplementary answers to questions without notice Canberra Hospital—data centre

MS GALLAGHER: Yesterday I was asked a number of questions about the data centre outage on Monday. I said yesterday that I was waiting for a full brief on the incident, and I still am. But I can inform the Assembly that other areas of ACT government were affected in different ways. The major impact was on the Health Directorate but it impacted to some extent on ESA, ETD, DPP, ESDD and some intranet services. But, again, the major impact was at the Health Directorate. There was some impact at Calvary on particular programs but not all because they have their own server for some of their IT systems. The Commerce and Works Directorate is investigating the circumstances of the incident with a full review, including a post-incident review of the way the issue was responded to. That is all the information I have to date.

Taxation—reform Proposed order to table

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (3.59), by leave: I move:

That, in accordance with standing order 213A, Mr Barr table all modelling that has been conducted into the ACT Government's tax reform.

Madam Speaker, during the estimates committee on 17 June this year there was an exchange between the chair, Mr Hanson, the minister Mr Barr, and me about modelling on tax reform. The chair asked:

THE CHAIR: You have done modelling, surely?

Mr Barr: Yes, there is a variety of modelling.

MR SMYTH: You have just said you know exactly what the effect of your reform package will be.

Mr Barr: That is correct.

This is information that is not in the public realm, and I think it is information that should be in the public realm. There is a lot of disquiet over the government's tax reforms. We have done the numbers and come to the conclusion that it means a tripling of rates. On the government's own admission, if rates continue at 10 per cent a year, as they do this year and into the outyears, rates will triple in just over 11 years. The Chief Minister was forced to put an ad together saying, "Rates won't triple under my government."

There is a way to put this debate to bed—that is, make the documents available. It is interesting that the story has shifted slightly from last year's estimates where we were

simply referred to the Quinlan review and the modelling that was in there. Now we know from what the minister has said that he has done a variety of modelling and, indeed, he has done a variety of modelling with a number of parameters and variables in it. Well, I think it is time the public saw that modelling. It is very simple. The minister can table that here in the Assembly under standing order 213A. It is appropriate the public have that given to them. Indeed, many people think they should.

The Chief Minister, in her opening speech as Chief Minister, said she wanted a more transparent, more participative and more collaborative government. Well, here is a chance to prove it. Here is some transparency. Put the documents on the table that show you know what happens with your rates reform and what effect it will have on the citizens you seek to represent. Then we can have a collaborative debate and we can all participate fully in such debate. But without the transparency, without the documents, we cannot have that debate.

If the minister truly knew his rates would not triple, he would not hesitate to table those documents. So the only conclusion you can draw is that the rates will triple or perhaps even worse. Who knows? But the minister can finish this debate today. The minister can table all of that modelling. The minister can say, "Well, here's the parameters that might affect this." And the minister can say, "You're wrong." But he has not, and I suspect the government will vote against this motion.

So it may come down to Mr Rattenbury and how he feels about transparency. When you go to the Greens website you see the ACT Greens believe:

A healthy democracy requires frank, transparent and accountable practices in all aspects of government.

I hope what we will get when we vote on this is a vote for frank, transparent and accountable practices. Until those documents are tabled, there will be no transparency.

One of the goals of the ACT Greens is:

1. open and transparent access to government documents, including a clear presumption in favour of document disclosure as part of a robust freedom of information system.

Well, let us make this the ultimate robust freedom of information request. This is from the Assembly. So let me read that again:

The ACT Greens want:

1. open and transparent access to government documents, including a clear presumption in favour of document disclosure ...

Could not agree more. Indeed, one of the undertakings in the ACT Greens-Labor agreement is to ensure accountable and transparent government that is responsive to the community. Well, a large number of people in the community have asked for access to this modelling. So let us see whether the Greens, through their agreement with the Labor Party, are willing to deliver open and accountable and transparent

government, and let us see if the Greens, in keeping with their own policy goals on the website, have a clear presumption in favour of document disclosure.

This argument could have been ended a long time ago, but the government simply chooses not to end it. Either they have not done the work and they do not know what the effect of their reforms will be or they have done the work and do not want to tell the full truth to the people of the ACT. This argument can be finished today. The minister can just stand up and say, “I will make all of these documents available. We will do it through the 213A process.”

It is very important that this information becomes available. How do we reconcile the words of the Treasurer where he says, “Yes, I know exactly what the effect of the reform package will be,” without him letting anybody else know about those reforms. The government has an obligation where they are taking money from taxpayers to tell taxpayers the full story behind what they want to do and what the outcome will be, because there is a lot of uncertainty.

We had it yesterday with Mr Doszpot’s self-funded retirees motion. We all know a lot of pensioners and self-funded retirees have very little disposable cash and have great fears about the government fees and charges they are being charged under this government and for the growth of their rates. A large percentage of those self-funded retirees and pensioners live on big blocks, particularly in the inner suburbs, with big land values and big rates. If they are going to see their rates triple over a period of time, even if they double over a period of time—and we have all seen rates double in the last 10 years—I believe they have a right to know the full story.

It is a very simple motion: that, under standing order 213A, the government make these documents available. I ask Mr Rattenbury to honour his parliamentary agreement from the Eighth Assembly that ACT Labor and the Greens, building on the parliamentary agreement for the Seventh Assembly, undertake to ensure accountable and transparent government that is responsive to the community. I remind Mr Rattenbury of his own website where one of the principles the Greens believe in is that “a healthy democracy requires frank, transparent and accountable practices in all aspects of government.” Well, here is an opportunity for some frank disclosure, some transparency in releasing the documents and accountability in terms of good practice. I refer Mr Rattenbury again to one of the goals of the Greens: “open and transparent access to government documents, including a clear presumption in favour of document disclosure as part of a robust freedom of information system.” Well, consider this a very robust freedom of information request. I move that the motion be agreed to.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Community Services) (4.07): The government has made available through budget papers and to the estimates committee extensive information in relation to our tax reforms. The principles on which the tax reforms have been undertaken are contained within both the Henry tax review and the Quinlan tax review. The government has been very clear on the timetables associated with changes within our taxation system. The bulk of the reforms that are undertaken in our tax reform

package released last year are modelled to their conclusion and are available to the shadow treasurer and, indeed, to anyone within last year's budget papers and this year's budget papers, most particularly the abolition of insurance duties, the changes to land tax and the changes to a number of other taxation lines.

Of course, over the duration of the taxation reform it will be for the government of the day to make determinations from one budget to the next about the pace of that reform. That, of course, brings into question in relation to the request from Mr Smyth matters that are clearly executive documents and are budget and cabinet in confidence. The government is certainly not in a position this afternoon to release budget and cabinet-in-confidence information. I do not think that is appropriate; I do not think any reasonable person would anticipate or expect that.

The government has indicated on numerous occasions that we will update five years in advance our intentions in relation to tax reform. That extends beyond the forward estimates period of the budget papers. That was made available last year, and I have indicated it will be a rolling five-year program whilst ever I am the Treasurer. I will update further this year the government's expectations of changes in the taxation system looking five years ahead. I think that is a reasonable level of disclosure and takes it beyond the next territory election where, if the Liberal Party wishes to litigate these again by way of the election campaign, they certainly can. It will be open to the opposition, indeed, to any candidate for public office to seek election in that 2016 election on the basis of either opposing any further tax reform or seeking to unwind the reforms that will have been undertaken to that point.

The government certainly is of the view that our intentions in relation to tax reform are clear. The range of policy options the government considered last year and will continue to consider in the context of future budgets are outlined in both the Henry tax review and the Quinlan tax review. They will also be subject to further considerations by the federal council on financial relations. I note that, if there is a change of government next month, it is the intention of the Liberal and National parties at a federal level to undertake a further review of taxation in this country, and that that review, I understand, will extend to taxes levied by state and territory governments.

This, of course, will be an ongoing national debate in relation to taxation reform. There will be a number of variables within that debate, and the government will respond to the variables from year to year and budget to budget. But we have indicated our desire to provide notice of our intentions both in terms of the broad philosophical approach to taxation reform and then in detail in rolling five-year updates and in extreme detail in the budget papers each year and projecting forward into the forward estimates.

The government is of the view that there is sufficient information available at this time and that we will make further information releases on our tax reform intent annually as part of the budget process and annually as part of our taxation reform. This motion is unnecessary in our view. Should the Assembly wish to support this motion, the government will, of course, claim executive privilege in relation to the documents as they inform cabinet deliberations in terms of the budget and in terms of broader government policy. That is entirely reasonable and available to us under standing order 213A.

The government does not believe it would be appropriate to proceed to a vote on this matter today given that Mr Smyth has given no notice of this particular motion. The manager of government business will seek to adjourn debate shortly to ensure that all members have the time to consider the issues before them. But, to be very clear, the government has made an extremely large amount of information available and has been very clear in relation to our intent on taxation reform. I reiterate that, in addition to the information available in the budget, it is the government's intention to update our rolling five-year tax reforms later this year.

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

That the debate be adjourned.

Question put:

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

Noes 8

Mr Barr
Ms Berry
Dr Bourke
Ms Burch
Mr Corbell

Ms Gallagher
Mr Gentleman
Ms Porter
Mr Rattenbury

Mr Coe
Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne
Mr Hanson
Mrs Jones

Ms Lawder
Mr Smyth
Mr Wall

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Debate adjourned to the next sitting.

Executive contracts

Papers and statement by minister

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

Public Sector Management Act, pursuant to sections 31A and 79—Copies of executive contracts or instruments—

Long-term contracts:

Adrian Marron, dated 2 March 2010.

David Collett, dated 8 August 2011.

David Hughes, dated 4 June 2013.

Gary Byles, undated.

Graham Hambleton, dated 7 August 2013.

Harriet Elvin, dated 12 August 2013.

Ian Thompson, dated 6 November 2012.

Janet-Lee Hibberd, dated 9 August 2013.

Jillian Paull, dated 7 August 2013.

John Woollard, dated 2 August 2013.

Judith Redmond, dated 5 August 2013.

Linda Kohlhagen, dated 19 October 2012.

Lorna Sullivan, dated 6 August 2013.

Maureen Sheehan, dated 5 August 2013.

Peggy Brown, undated.

Robyn Forester, dated 8 August 2013.

Short-term contracts:

Austin Kenney, dated 5 August 2013.

Ian Thompson, dated 23 August 2012.

Stephen Goggs, dated 22 August 2012.

Contract variations:

Helen Pappas, dated 31 May 2012.

Ian Thompson, dated 12 and 17 November 2012.

Linda Halliday, dated 11 December 2012 and 6 August 2013.

Stephen Goggs, dated 12 and 16 November 2012.

Stephen Goggs, dated 21 and 27 March 2013.

Steven Wright, 13 August 2013.

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

Leave granted.

MS GALLAGHER: I present another set of executive contracts. These documents are tabled in accordance with sections 31A and 79 of the Public Sector Management Act 1994, which require the tabling of all director-general and executive contracts and contract variations. Contracts were previously tabled on 6 August 2013. Today I present 16 long-term contracts, three short-term contracts and six contract variations.

The Assembly knows that during the winter recess I became aware that a number of contracts were overdue for tabling. The tabling of these contracts today now means that all outstanding current executive contracts have been tabled. The details of the contracts will be circulated to members.

I note that, of the contracts being tabled today, three are unsigned by one party. There is also one contract for which, despite thorough searches in the directorate concerned and Shared Services, only the schedule C performance agreement is available for tabling. I am assured that there is sufficient evidence on the personnel file of the executive concerned that an otherwise proper recruitment and appointment occurred and this failing is only in relation to maintenance of the paper record. I am advised

that the executive concerned has a clear recollection of a contract being signed—which was in the standard form of all executive contracts—but a copy cannot be located. I also note there is one contract for which no schedule C is available.

I have made it clear to the public service that I consider the failure to comply with the legislative requirements of the Public Sector Management Act in relation to tabling of contracts is not acceptable. I have directed the Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate to put in place arrangements to ensure this failure in accountability to the Assembly is not repeated into the future.

During question time last week members of the opposition asked a number of questions in relation to the impact of late tabling and omissions of dates in executive contracts, which I will answer now.

The requirement to table executive contracts is set out in sections 31A and 79 of the Public Sector Management Act. These sections specify a time frame of six sitting days after the contract is made for tabling to occur.

Contracts are tabled for the information of the Assembly. While the ACT public service's failure to table a number of executive contracts is unacceptable, and steps are being taken to ensure compliance in the future, the requirement for tabling has no legal effect on the contract.

I am also advised that while it is desirable that contracts are signed before an executive commences work, the signing of a contract after it has commenced will generally bind the parties to its terms from the stated commencement date. Furthermore, the fact that a contract is not signed by one of the parties does not of itself invalidate the underlying employment relationship. The employment relationship is also evidenced by the agreement of the parties following a selection process, by the performance of duties, and by payment of salary by the ACT public service.

It is also the case that the fact that a contract is either not dated, or dated after its commencement, does not change the operative term of the contract which is specified in the contract itself. I recognise that the dating of a contract is used to determine the period within which it should be tabled and I have reminded the Head of Service and Commissioner for Public Administration of the importance of this requirement of the Public Sector Management Act.

Sections 32 and 80 of the Public Sector Management Act provide that an appointment of a director-general or an executive is not invalid and shall not be called into question by reason of a defect or irregularity in the appointment.

Mr Hanson asked me last week if I could confirm what the employment status is if the contract is both undated and overdue. As outlined earlier in my statement, there is no impact on the employment relationship or on the validity of the appointment or any decisions made by the executive by virtue of the fact that a contract is undated. Similarly, the act of tabling of itself has no impact on the validity of the appointment. It is an important accountability mechanism but of no legal effect on the contract itself.

Mr Doszpot asked me last week what retrospective effect, if any, an unsigned, undated and overdue contract has on the termination entitlements of an executive. The entitlements on termination of an executive contract are governed by the terms of the contract and the relevant provisions of the Public Sector Management Act and the Public Sector Management Standards. In the absence of a signed or otherwise incomplete executive contract, the employment relationship is also evidenced by the performance of duties and payments by the employer in accordance with the contract, even if it is not signed. There is, therefore, no impact on any termination entitlements.

Ms Lawder asked me last week about advice I had sought as to whether those contracts comply with the Financial Management Act 1996 and the Public Sector Management Act. As I have already indicated, the time lines for tabling executive contracts set out in the Public Sector Management Act have not been complied with. The Financial Management Act has no bearing on executive contracts. The operation of sections 32 and 80 of the Public Sector Management Act means there is no question as to the validity of decisions made by directors-general or executives under that act by virtue of irregularities in their appointment.

Ms Lawder also asked me whether contracts comply with federal workplace laws and requirements. The statutory regime for the engagement of executives in the public service is compliant with federal workplace relations legislation.

I indicated to the Assembly last week that all outstanding current contracts would be tabled by the end of this sitting period. That is the case with the tabling of the package today.

As part of the audit processes undertaken by the Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate to ensure compliance, I have been informed that there is a number of expired or superseded executive contracts which records held by the Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate indicate have not been tabled. The oldest of these contracts dates back to 9 August 1996. Of those contracts, the majority are short-term contracts and the remainder are long term. I will update the Assembly further once the audit is complete, including on any recommendations that arise from it.

The government will not accept failures by the public service to comply with legislated accountability requirements. I have made it clear that I will not tolerate future failings in this regard. The public service must understand the importance the Assembly places on transparency and accountability and the extent to which failings in this most basic of administrative tasks reflects very poorly on the service as a whole.

I will provide an update to the Assembly when I am next tabling contracts on the changes that have been put in place to ensure this is the last time the government has to report its officials have failed to comply with the Public Sector Management Act.

Administrative arrangements

Paper and statement by minister

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

Administrative Arrangements—Administrative Arrangements 2013 (No 1)—
Notifiable Instrument NI2013-244 (Special Gazette No. S1, Friday 28 June,
2013).

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

Leave granted.

MS GALLAGHER: I am pleased to table the Administrative Arrangements 2013 (No 1). To oversee the construction and management of light rail in the ACT, the government has agreed to the establishment of the Capital Metro Agency, effective from 1 July 2013.

The administrative arrangements that I table today formalise the establishment of the Capital Metro Agency as a separate administrative unit within the portfolio responsibility of the Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development. The arrangements also make some corrections to the schedule of enactments, as advised by the parliamentary counsel. I commend the Administrative Arrangements 2013 (No 1) to the Assembly.

Paper

Ms Burch presented the following paper:

Education and Care Services National Law—Education and Care Services
National Regulations 2013, dated 30 July 2013.

Appropriation Bill 2013-2014

[Cognate bill:

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2013-2014

Cognate papers:

Estimates 2013-2014—Select Committee report

Estimates 2013-2014—Select Committee report—government response]

Detail stage

Schedule 1.

Proposed expenditure—Part 1.14—Community Services Directorate—\$241,428,000 (net cost of outputs), \$14,026,000 (capital injection) and \$42,849,000 (payments on behalf of Territory), totalling \$298,303,000.

Debate resumed.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (4.24): I rise to speak to this budget line item relating to the areas of disability, youth and Indigenous affairs, which lie within the Community Services Directorate. This is a very important budget for each of these portfolio areas and I would like to go into some further detail for each.

With regard to the disability portfolio, the ACT is on the brink of massive change when it comes to the provision of funding of services in the disability sector. From 1 July 2014, only 10 months from now, the national disability insurance scheme will commence operation in the ACT. Whilst this is an exciting time for both individuals with a disability and service providers alike, there is also a great deal of uncertainty.

As we are on the eve of the biggest change the community services sector has seen, the estimates process is a good opportunity to review how well prepared we are as a jurisdiction for this enormous shift to not only the way in which funding is provided but also how services will be accessed.

From the outset, I would like to stress that there is consensus across the political spectrum with regard to this reform. The change to the funding model is a welcomed reform, as is the empowerment that it will provide to the individuals involved in this space and their families.

The new reforms will, for the first time, empower people with a disability or their families to have a choice. They will have a choice with regard to the types of services that they access and a choice of who provides the services, allowing them to take control of the decisions made about their wellbeing and care and hopefully providing some greater certainty not seen before.

The question is: how robust and effective is the process by which we transition to this reform and the management of unintended consequences that may crop up?

I wish to flag here some of the feedback that I have received from the sector with regard to the pending transition. It is disappointing that there is still a lack of clarity and detail, in the budget papers or in the public arena, with regard to the transition. Locally we are still to learn how the transition will occur. Will it be on an age basis, by disability type or by service?

Service providers have expressed great concern about how much the NDIS will pay for the different types of services on offer and whether specific competitive challenges that face all employers in the ACT will be reflected in the pricing schedule. There are also some complexities around how group housing will be managed under the new scheme. A number of organisations that currently receive block funding from the directorate for work in the disability space primarily deal with people aged over 65. They are yet to be informed how their funding will be provided given that the majority of their clients will not qualify for payments and supports under the NDIS.

Although it has been funded solely by the federal government, it is appropriate to raise the advertising campaign promoting DisabilityCare. That, I might add, came at a significant cost of \$22 million. These advertisements are short on detail and go a long way to building the expectations of individuals with a disability and the wider community that DisabilityCare Australia is the silver bullet that will solve all their woes. A number of organisations that rely heavily on donations and fundraising have already reported that the perception in some parts of the community is that the disability sector is now cashed up as a result of the scheme coming into action and

that there is no longer a need to make a donation. As all members in this Assembly know, that simply is not the case. It is incumbent on the minister and her directorate to manage the expectations of the local community as this scheme goes live locally.

The enhanced service offer, part of this year's budget, is another piece of the puzzle that is DisabilityCare. The feedback I have received about the first round of grants has been that in some cases people are finding it difficult to navigate their way through the application process, and there has been quite some misunderstanding around the types of services and assistance or aids that can be applied for.

Just a couple of weeks ago, I met with members of the Canberra Blind Society. They told me that they were spending a great deal of time assisting their members and people that they assist to apply for the grants as the paperwork is too difficult to understand. I think that it would be reasonable to conclude that there are many within the community that have not applied for these grants simply because the process is too hard or complex. I only hope that this process is improved and properly reviewed and revised in the lead-up to July 2014.

The new reforms will impact the sector in a significant way, and much of that impact will be felt by the service providers themselves. This means a new way of doing business for them and the sector. Readiness is crucial to the success of the rollout of the scheme in the ACT. We cannot allow smaller service providers to be lost as an unintended consequence of this reform.

Another issue that has become obvious to me throughout the budget process is this government's failure to stick to its strategy to improve the employment prospects of people with a disability, particularly within the ACT public service. In 2011 the then Chief Minister, Jon Stanhope, outlined a strategy that would seek to increase the number of people identifying as having a disability employed in the ACT public service from 327 employees, or 1.6 per cent of the total public service, to a total of 655 people, or 3.4 per cent, by 2015. Where are we at currently? We are far short of the target set down for 2013. We are currently at 375.

Whilst the government are quick to tell the Assembly that they are doing all they can, I feel that it is incumbent upon governments to lead by example in this space. If the public sector is proactive in creating a workplace where individuals with a disability can make a positive contribution, the private sector will surely be quick to follow. If the government is not going to regularly review and refresh its approach to meeting its targets, there is little point to setting them in the first place. In my opinion, the government have dropped the ball in this area.

I would like to turn now to the Indigenous affairs portfolio. I start by noting that funding for Indigenous initiatives is spread throughout the entire budget. Therefore it is often a difficult, if not impossible, exercise to ascertain the exact amount of funding directed at programs and initiatives as a whole. I note that this issue has again been highlighted by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body on a number of occasions.

Funding levels for Indigenous programs are at an all-time high. The important work lies in understanding why, despite this level of funding, Indigenous members of our community are still over-represented in the justice system and trail behind in health and education outcomes. In an answer to a question taken on notice during the estimates hearings, Minister Rattenbury stated that in the ACT in 2010-11, according to the *2012 Indigenous expenditure report*:

... the Australian Government accounted for \$100 million (43 per cent) of direct Indigenous expenditure, with the remaining \$131 million (57 per cent) provided by the ACT Government ...

That is \$231 million targeted at improving the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, or just over \$40,000 per person currently identifying as an Indigenous person within the territory. Whilst I am not suggesting that there is over-funding in this space, I do feel that it is appropriate at this time that these programs are properly scrutinised to ensure that they are improving the outcomes for Indigenous members in our community and also that these programs are being delivered in a culturally appropriate manner.

I would like to add further comments relating to an issue that does not technically fall within this line item of Community Services but is within the Health budget. I am sure that members will allow me to digress in this instance, as the delays relate to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander drug and alcohol facility, commonly referred to as the bush healing farm. The delays here are of a significant concern. I am somewhat taken aback by the lack of clarity in relation to capital works projects in general. However, I note in particular the blowout in cost, the downgrading of scope and the repeated push back of the delivery time for this facility. This is a project that shows yet again that the government has got an inability to manage capital works projects. This project has now been delayed by five years, the cost has blown out by almost \$2½ million, and the scope has changed to now only having accommodation for eight individuals.

Finally, I would like to turn my focus to youth and youth services. The provision of youth services is yet another portfolio area that crosses over a number of portfolio areas. Again, as I navigated the budget papers for the first time in this place I was struck by how difficult it often is to ascertain the detail of where funding is directed. In an answer to a question on notice where I asked the minister to provide some detail on what exactly was being funded by the \$5 million over the next four years for youth engagement and family support services, I was informed:

The initiative under this budget funding is the expansion of the Youth Engagement Services delivered under the Child, Youth and Family Services Program to help vulnerable young people to engage and re-connect with support services, with a focus on early intervention and providing wrap-around services

...

I interpret that statement as “I am not entirely sure”. Is it that this funding forms part of the Labor-Greens agreement to “Provide an extra \$1.2 million per annum in funding for community based youth services”? The lack of detail surrounding these

initiatives is quite astounding. (*Second speaking period taken.*) Individuals that work within youth services have indicated to me that the directorate wants the sector to come to a consensus about where this funding should be targeted and which organisations should deliver the initiatives. There is a lack of leadership and vision from the government in this space, and it is unreasonable to expect organisations that compete against each other for funding to rationally make the decisions on behalf of the government as to where this should be spent.

In closing, let me say that this budget line item, like most, has the devil in the detail. It is full of promises and aspirations. However, we know that the track record of this government means that there is a high likelihood that many of the initiatives will be poorly executed, delayed or over budget. The budget fails to outline just how prepared we actually are for the biggest change to the way government funds the disability sector, the biggest change to social policy in generations. And it fails as it falls short on so many levels to provide support and assistance to some of the most vulnerable within our community.

MRS JONES (Molonglo) (4.36): I rise to speak today regarding the line items of this budget relating to the women and multicultural affairs portfolio, in particular a couple of areas.

Regarding the microcredit program, the minister will remember that I asked specific questions regarding the target groups that this initiative intends to assist. I would like it to be recorded that there is an emerging group of people displaying disconnection from the workforce: fathers who take time out of the workplace to care for children at home or to care for the elderly are also in need of access to these grants and in need of this assistance. Lighthouse, which administers some of the grants in this general space, is being approached by men who do not fit into any of the current categories but who would genuinely benefit from this assistance. I ask the minister to consider including this group in the target groups to which this microcredit program applies.

In relation to the National Multicultural Festival, the biggest event for the multi-ethnic community in the ACT, it is worth giving some consideration to operations of the festival and the outcomes achieved. Given that it seems that the additional \$100,000 now allocated to each and every National Multicultural Festival has become a regular part of the funding package required for this event, and given that this additional funding has not been included in the outyears of the forward estimates, I would like to record that I will be vigilant in watching to see that this funding is included in the outyears. It is interesting that the minister has been left in the position where she will now have to go cap in hand to the Treasurer to seek this funding unless she devises a completely different model of delivering the event. I look forward to seeing how good her negotiating skills are, assuming that this is not just a trick intended to make the bottom line of the budget look better.

Given that in previous years there have been issues around food hygiene, it is good that the issues of food hygiene and safety are being taken seriously. However, I have walked the entire Multicultural Festival and spoken to almost every food stallholder, and the consistent feedback was that in some instances they were monitored up to 15 times in one day. Food safety is obviously a very important matter, and I commend the minister for ensuring that the food at the festival was consumable. However,

stallholders must be able to carry on with the business of preparing food and serving customers, and if the balance between government observation and commercial activity is not at the optimum level, presumably the risk is that some stallholders may not return. I am sure that the minister will assess over time if the balance is right, and I appreciate the very serious nature of these health concerns.

My other grave concern in the area of multicultural affairs is the ability of migrant women in particular to become fluent in English so that they can have access to the full benefits of the society which they have entered. Canberrans welcome new immigrants and refugees with open arms, but if they do not have the opportunity to interact in English they can become isolated from opportunities. I am aware that there are English programs delivered through CIT, and several other programs, but I would like to see more activity focused on the women who are falling through the cracks, who I have met on many occasions whilst out in the community.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (4.39): I want to touch on the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre. Recently, through the education, training and youth affairs committee, I had the opportunity to visit the centre. Meeting with these young people who were working hard to get their lives back on track, I was proud to be part of the government that this year continued its commitment to help young people at Bimberi Youth Justice Centre.

This budget shows the government's understanding of the transformative potential of education. It continues this government's financial commitment to the Murrumbidgee education and training centre at Bimberi, in particular the staffing of this centre with great literacy and trades educators, and a commitment to providing the individual attention that young people in stressful environments need to make gains in the classroom. It also continues its commitment to the Bendora transition unit, which seeks to ensure that young people who have been incarcerated transition effectively back into their communities. Beyond the ongoing education projects that are undertaken, it focuses on skills training and supported planned leave from Bimberi in order to prepare them for life outside the centre.

Finally, this budget continues the strong interest of the ACT government in ensuring that they, as employers, provide the kinds of good working conditions that translate to commitment from our government employees and great results for the community. Bimberi has, through a dedicated recruitment strategy, increased staffing numbers to allow existing staff in this stressful environment to lower their leave owing and to allow all staff to know there is capacity to take the breaks and leave that are important in doing their jobs to their full capacity in this sometimes quite stressful environment.

Good budgets invest in the potential of our community. I am proud to be part of a government who sees potential in the young people at Bimberi.

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) (4.41): The portfolio of Community Services is overseeing a series of substantial changes in how the government supports the community sector and community facilities and assists Canberrans experiencing financial hardship.

Our overarching goal is to continue building a connected community that allows all Canberrans to participate in our city's economic and social life. Perhaps the most important piece of work in this area is community sector reform, which we are undertaking in partnership with the sector. The government is leading the way in working with the commonwealth to provide increased wages for the community sector whilst overseeing structural reforms within both government and the sector that will reap dividends for years to come. We are continuing to meet our commitment to provide support for the impact of the equal remuneration case. This year we will provide \$1.51 million in additional support.

Red tape reform is also high on my agenda for this sector. This year we will see changes to ensure that we avoid dual regulation of the sector by aligning the ACT's regulatory requirements with the commonwealth's new body, the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. We are also working with the sector to reduce red tape in our procurement, contracting and reporting arrangements. I have already implemented a series of reforms here, including providing now for 12-monthly financial reporting, halving the reporting requirements for community sector organisations.

Canberra is known for providing a very high quality of life—in fact second to none in this country, with services that residents of other cities certainly envy. But we should not forget that some Canberrans need assistance in managing their everyday expenses. Our approach in this area is guided by the targeted assistance strategy. This strategy has seen a number of recommendations implemented and the tangible results of this work are clear in the 2013-14 budget, chiefly through the provision of \$3.6 million through the strategy to provide more flexible arrangements to manage motor vehicle infringement notices for Canberrans most in need.

The budget provides—and we have discussed this at some length—a 10 per cent increase to the energy rebate and a 2½ per cent increase in the utility rebate, which means more than 25,000 households in the territory benefit from these increases. The energy rebate has risen to \$322.10 and the utility rebate to \$84.05. The combined total is \$406.15.

But supporting the community is more than just about providing financial assistance. It is about giving people the tools to bring about change in their lives. One such proven strategy to do this is through the microcredit program. The budget provides funding of more than \$400,000 over four years to support a wide variety of target groups.

It is fair to say that the government continues to recognise the value that community facilities provide for community organisations and the general community, both for places that they can meet and gather and for the delivery of services. So there is more than half a million dollars invested in this year's budget on top of the usual program to accelerate the repair and maintenance of a number of ageing facilities.

The budget also builds on initiatives of previous years to help expand community service and community facility provision—particularly in this budget looking at the

feasibility of a new community hub for Woden and Weston Creek and building more men's sheds in Canberra. The sheds provide an opportunity to address a range of issues for men as they get older, such as health and physical and emotional wellbeing. Gungahlin and Woden appear to be areas where men's sheds could be established.

In a broader sense, we are looking at the arrangements under which community organisations occupy government-owned buildings. These buildings provide accommodation to a broad range of organisations and are a critical part of enabling our valuable community sector organisations to minimise the cost of rent.

As with the community sector reform, we are also looking at what improvements can be made to enhance the capacity of community organisations to deliver services to the community whilst recognising the need to appropriately maintain the buildings they occupy. That need, of course, requires a revenue stream. I commend my part of the Community Services appropriation to the Assembly.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for Ageing) (4.46): I will make a few remarks relating to the parts of the portfolio for which I have responsibility. I would particularly like to speak about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Ageing, because for each of these areas the budget supports new directions and some ongoing good work.

When it comes to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, one priority area of service delivery of the government is in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans. We continue to seek out new ways to recognise the unique role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans and to address areas of disadvantage. The investment contained in this budget is mirrored by structural changes that have seen the creation of an Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs that aims to provide a better, more joined-up approach to service delivery.

The input of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body has helped guide not only the office but also budget investment in this area. By receiving valuable advice from the elected body, the ACT government has been able to put in place additional services and programs under the 2013 ACT budget. This has included the community helping Aboriginal Australians to negotiate choices leading to employment and success, or more conveniently, the CHANCES program, that was originally piloted in 2012 and in this year's budget has been allocated \$880,000 over the next four years.

CHANCES provides nationally accredited training to members of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, particularly those who are deemed to be at risk of homelessness, reoffending or facing long-term unemployment. For those in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community who want to continue their studies but find the costs involved prohibitive, the government is providing a scholarship program. This will assist them with support that may include transport, child care, materials, equipment, meals allowance, textbooks and other learning aids.

The scholarships are aimed at overcoming some of the identified barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people completing tertiary study as well as encouraging more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into such areas as the childcare or health sector to enhance delivery of culturally appropriate services.

To supplement this, an extra \$400,000 will be provided over four years to expand on the existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education scholarship for ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students who wish to pursue a career in health.

In addition the budget contains significant funding for several other initiatives under other ministers which will have a direct and positive impact on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people residing in the ACT. These include the expansion of the appointment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander official visitors scheme, and the implementation of a microcredit program and advice service which will provide interest and fee-free loans to eligible low income earners who want to start or expand small business activities. The ACT government remains committed to helping the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to achieve their goals, both individually and collectively.

Briefly on ageing, Canberra's ageing population is seeing governments rethink our funding for related services, including health, accommodation and transport. In order to advance our thinking and approaches on making our community more age-friendly, the ACT will host the inaugural Australian age-friendly cities and communities conference on 9 October this year. This is an opportunity to further engage with older Canberrans in the lead-up to the older persons assemblies that will be held in 2014-15 and 2016-17, to share information and learn from other Australian age-friendly communities, and gain an insight into international initiatives.

The government acknowledges the importance of providing older Canberrans with adequate transport options, especially when they have lost the ability to drive or the financial resources to maintain a private vehicle. The budget will provide \$620,000 over four years to allow for the qualifying age for an ACTION gold card to be reduced from 75 to 70. To put this in real terms, this will provide free bus travel to an additional 9,000 older Canberrans, lowering their cost of living and increasing their likelihood of staying mobile and socially active and connected.

Providing ACT seniors with access to appropriate and affordable housing is a key priority for the government. This year \$290,000 was allocated for design options for 20 new aged-specific units for older public housing tenants that want to downsize from larger public housing properties and relocate to more appropriate and suitable housing that better suits their needs and age. This will free up the larger homes for housing families on the priority and high needs social housing register.

They are the specific issues in this budget that I believe are making a key difference in these important areas of policy.

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) (4.51): The ACT government is in the unique position to be able to assist, support and engage all Canberrans to reach their potential in whatever walk of life. Our aim is to build on a connected community where people of all backgrounds feel included, cared for and able to determine their futures. This is fundamentally what the Community Services Directorate strives to achieve every day and ACT Labor's 2013-14 budget continues this direction.

Our budget investment is coupled with structural and service reforms that, in combination, aim to make it easier for people to benefit from the support, opportunities and the services we provide. Arguably, one of the biggest of focuses of our government in recent years has been on children and young people, particularly in out-of-home care and the justice system. In a responsible, measured approach in the 2013-14 budget, the government has maintained focus on providing the highest standards of support and services to the territory's children and young people. We have continued our work on refreshing the service culture quality program. Considerable resources have been invested to ensure continuous and sustainable improvement.

This year's budget has both augmented existing successful programs and funded new initiatives. New initiatives include a commitment of \$3 million over four years to establish a trauma recovery and research centre, which will provide invaluable support to children recovering from abuse and neglect. The government has also committed \$5 million over four years for youth engagement and family support with a focus on helping our young people and their families during transition points in their lives.

Of these funds, \$4.5 million will go towards employing specialist outreach workers to engage with young people and their families. In addition, \$500,000 will go to Diversity ACT over four years to help them provide quality support to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex young people. I notice that Mr Wall made a comment about being unclear where that funding will go because we have got a conversation within the DPU sector about some level of that funding. Indeed, Mr Wall, we are doing that because the peak bodies of the youth sector wanted to work in a co-design method with us on some of those unallocated funds within that program. It is not a lack of leadership. I think it is absolutely leadership. In fact, we have listened and responded to the community's request by saying that there is a level of funding there that you have not attributed directly to a program, such as youth workers and diversity, and we want to be part of that discussion. I think that is fair and reasonable.

A commitment of \$250,000 over two years has been made to address issues with the client information system used by Care and Protection. \$150,000 of this will go towards a feasibility study for upgrading or replacing the existing system, with the remaining \$100,000 to be spent on immediate improvements to the existing system. To expand existing programs, \$1.2 million will be dedicated to the expansion of the

already successful parents as teachers program. This program provides parents with the knowledge and skills to deal with complex and challenging parenting. It is an early intervention approach that aims to reduce the need for more intense support in later years.

An amount of \$1.9 million has been committed over two years to continue funding the Bendora transition unit at Bimberi. This unit provides intensive programs targeted at the young people involved to aid in managing the transition from custody back to the community. There has been a noticeable improvement in outcomes for the young people transitioning through Bendora. This funding will allow this good work to develop. Right across Australia and the world, the out-of-home care sector is under stress. The government will be providing \$200,000 to further develop a five-year out-of-home care strategy. The result will be a streamlined, efficient, quality service for children in care.

I turn to disability and therapy. The budget for 2013-14 will prepare people with a disability, their families and service providers to get ready for DisabilityCare Australia. It is well recognised that DisabilityCare is the biggest shake up in the provision of human services in a generation. The ACT Labor government is making the necessary investments to ensure that the objectives of DisabilityCare are realised, that the views of people with a disability and their families are heard and that all people have the support and information they require. There has been a significant increase in funding from \$41 million in 2002-03 to \$96 million in 2013-14, an increase of approximately 132 per cent in ACT government funding for disability services.

The ACT Labor government is investing \$5.5 million to prepare eligible Canberrans for choice and control under DisabilityCare. This funding will be combined with \$10.6 million of commonwealth government funding over three years for a total investment of \$16.15 million. Of this, \$7.7 million will be provided as one-off grants to eligible people in the ACT, including our commitment to young people leaving school to access supports which will improve their quality of life and independence while also providing a break for their families.

An amount of \$360,000 will be made available to establish a mobile attendant care and evening service and \$245,000 will be allocated in 2013 to continue to support young people to engage in meaningful work and community engagement as they leave school. The balance of this investment will go to support families and people with a disability to plan and manage their grants and programs to support people with disability, their families and providers to prepare for DisabilityCare.

I know that Mr Wall has raised the enhanced service offer here. I think that with over 1,300 applications in the first round, and there is a second round opening up on 30 September, there has been a very, very good response. There was comment about completion of applications. I would draw everyone's attention to the number of workshops and information sessions that went along with that and also the employment of individual planners that were there to work with individuals and families. There were also assistants, particularly at sites such as Nature Conservation House, to assist applicants go through the forms. With all the rounds of applications

we will certainly take heed of the feedback. This is a significant transition and it is right and proper that we work with the providers in our community as we move through it.

What has been noted here before—I remind all members of this—is that there is an investment of \$12 million over the coming years to support that transition through to care. We will start the transition in July of next year and go to absolute full implementation from 2016 to 2019, Mr Wall. We will work with our providers but it is absolutely realistic to chisel in stone an approach now when we are looking at such a long time frame with so many unknowns about what is the readiness and preparedness of the providers that are existing in our community to continue on with that. Providers have expressed to me, as they have expressed to you, the opportunities that they see. But also it does not come without a level of apprehension as well as we move through such significant change.

This year Disability ACT will undertake to design a best practice refit of the exiting respite properties operated by it, beginning with Kase in Kaleen and the adult respite in Hughes. The aim is to provide a better environment for people with disability when they visit respite centres. The demand for therapy services continues to grow. Therapy ACT is addressing that demand by implementing innovative programs to meet the needs of people with developmental delay and disability.

Therapy ACT continues to partner with the Education and Training Directorate to implement services in schools through the therapy assistants program following the successful pilot. The program has this year assisted many children to achieve their articulation, language, and fine and gross motor goals.

I will take the opportunity to address community services because there has been a level of negativity in some of the comments from those opposite. I refer to the Carers ACT 2012 election campaign, which was titled “What carers want”. Those who know Carers ACT will know that they are very thorough and meticulous in seeking community comment about the needs of carers. They sought comment from the three parties at the time, pre-election 2012. Less than 12 months ago, the Canberra Liberals, under the penmanship of Mrs Vicki Dunne, stated:

We have been working hard over many years to talk with carers and the community sector to understand their needs, and where services to them can be improved. We will release details of our community services policy soon.

Whilst it may be less than 12 months ago, I think everyone in the community sector and the disability sector is still waiting. I would encourage you, Mr Wall, with your interest in disability to engage with the providers and engage with the directorate about really delivering rather than putting forward quite literally empty words from that side of the chamber.

A good example of structural reform being delivered alongside financial investment is the new community partnerships group made up of the Office of Ageing, Multicultural Affairs, and the Office for Women. This year’s budget echoes the new structure in the form of the ACT micro-credit program. This has successfully

supported women in recent years. I am happy that \$100,000 has been allocated from the 2013-14 budget to extend the program to services for other community groups such as multicultural Canberrans and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

I note Mrs Jones's comment. It is not the first time she has raised that. She has picked up that there are other groups such as stay-at-home dads that may also have an interest in that type of opportunity. There is further support through the additional funding of \$12,000 a year over four years for the interpreter scholarship. This will allow us to train interpreters to meet the language service needs of refugees and asylum seekers that make up our new and emerging communities and represent often our most vulnerable clients.

It is pleasing to see the impact that funding groups such as our community language school has on the wider community. The additional funding of \$25,000 in the budget will help those communities generate larger participation and build on their networks.

There was also a comment about the multicultural festival. There is some additional budget for this. Whilst the festival has been going for many years, it remains an evolving concept. Certainly I think that this year, as we celebrate our centenary, it had the largest footprint ever. We will continue to work with the community participants. It is a local community organisation. There has often been a little commentary: is this an arts group, is it for commercial providers? My absolute commitment is that it is for local community organisations. They see it as the largest fundraiser opportunity. That is a presence that I want to see across half a dozen or so stages. It is what draws our community in, because it is indeed absolutely our community.

In conclusion, I refer briefly to the estimates report. It is very pleasing to see that there are no recommendations in there across some of these most vulnerable areas, such as youth, such as care and protection, such as out-of-home care. I think that shows the fantastic work that the directorate is doing. I want to offer my regards to all of those that work across the Community Service Directorate. They do hold our community together. They do provide support to our most vulnerable. I take my hat off to them for the work they do each and every day.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (5.05): I am going to speak very briefly about the CHANCES program. Last year I had the opportunity to visit a session of the CHANCES program. It was a joy to see. Children were learning with homework, doing their homework and being minded whilst their parents were undertaking further training that was going to lead to employment. These were people who had not been employed ever in their lives for reasons of child-rearing, incarceration or disengagement from society due to drug and alcohol issues.

Then I got to go to a couple of the graduation ceremonies and see the pride of the individuals, their families, and the children who saw that these people had achieved a particular target, a particular goal in life. It has been successful. We are seeing some results with these people who are going on to take up employment. I commend this program to the Assembly and I congratulate the government for funding it for the next four years.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Proposed expenditure—Part 1.15—Housing ACT—\$43,075,000 (net cost of outputs) and \$22,501,000 (capital injection), totalling \$65,576,000.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (5.06): The Housing portfolio, I am the first to admit, is a particularly tricky one for both the directorate and the housing minister. It is a very diverse area of government whereby you have people who are property managers, people who are counsellors and people who are in effect community nursing. They really are the front line for many people that are often vulnerable and are often in need of assistance, whether it be from the government or from other community groups. So it is a tricky area of government, but it is of course vital that the policy settings are correct, such that the money that is spent in this space is spent appropriately.

We had an interesting discussion during the estimates debate about tenure, and the government's position on tenure. For quite a few years the Labor government had maintained their position that tenants of Housing ACT did in fact have a house for life. However, last year, when Ms Burch had the portfolio, the government seemed to change their approach. Letters were sent to some tenants who were earning a large sum of money. Initially it was a letter requesting that they consider moving out, but relatively recently we have actually seen eviction notices issued for tenants who are earning well in excess of the entry-level amounts that are accepted for new housing applications.

Those eviction notices were for six months, and I think that many of those will be coming up shortly. It is going to be interesting to see whether the government does in fact go through with those eviction notices or whether the government does back down from this.

I do not think there is any doubt whatsoever that public housing should be for the most vulnerable in the community, and the opposition is by no means going to get in the way of the government exercising their will to ensure that the most vulnerable people are in public housing. However, it still has to be managed properly, and we have to make sure that it is handled correctly in terms of the notifications.

Also it would be interesting to know what the government's ongoing intentions are. If it is simply one round of evictions, that will be totally inconsistent with past and future policies. What is the government's actual policy in this space? They really need to invest some time in nutting that out and making it very clear to public housing tenants at the time of applying for public housing as well as to those tenants that have been there for some time. So there is still work to be done there and we would like to see the rationale for it.

The minister, Mr Rattenbury, is, of course, walking a policy tightrope on this issue because his party has traditionally favoured tenure; so it is going to be somewhat fascinating, from a shadow minister's point of view, to see how the minister carries out what was initiated by the previous housing minister.

We have seen the average cost per dwelling in social housing reach \$11,314 a year. It really is a huge amount of money—a huge, huge amount of money. I call upon

Mr Rattenbury to look at whether there are other models that can be implemented that can bring that average down. There are, of course, a lot of models that are being discussed for people with fairly high needs, but what models are being discussed for people who do not have high needs, that are relatively low maintenance tenants? And are there any options that can return a better portion of funds to the taxpayer or a better portion of funds to the government, such that they can then reinvest those savings in other areas of housing—perhaps in homelessness, in other Common Ground projects or many other community service programs which the ACT government support?

The government has numerous challenges in the Housing ACT space. The opposition will continue to scrutinise this area of government, as we do for all portfolios. I look forward to hearing Mr Rattenbury's response to the issue of tenure and also as to whether there are any models which he is considering for low maintenance public housing tenants.

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) (5.12): When it comes to Housing and Community Services, the government's guiding principle is to provide people with the opportunity to maximise their potential and live in a connected community. And nothing is more fundamental to this aim than secure housing.

I think Mr Coe's comments about this being a tricky portfolio and the subsequent remarks he made about why that is the case were actually quite a good summary of the situation that Housing ACT finds itself in, having regard to some of the challenges that are there. It is certainly no secret that the commonwealth government has reduced funding in this area in recent years, and we are working through the ramifications of that with homelessness organisations in particular. I would like to take this opportunity to formally acknowledge their professionalism and their commitment to their clients during what is a difficult transition.

Recent years have seen Housing ACT add quality and quantity to the social housing stock and, while there are pressures, I believe we have some great examples of innovation and effective programs. We are also developing public housing that meets the needs of particular people, whether they are older tenants, tenants with a disability or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans.

One of the key items in the budget this year for long-term housing solutions is through the investment of \$7.6 million to assist with the construction of a Common Ground housing model in the ACT. This is based on the housing-first philosophy and will provide long-term housing for a mixed community of residents consisting of 20 properties for people who have experienced homelessness and 20 properties for people with low incomes in affordable housing units.

In addition to this, the government was successful in securing a \$4 million contribution to the development of Common Ground in the ACT from the commonwealth through the national partnership agreement development fund bid. Common Ground Canberra is going to be an important asset as we think of new ways to address homelessness.

The national partnership agreement on homelessness has been transitionally extended for a further 12 months, resulting in the ACT receiving \$1.48 million. Whilst future funding for homelessness programs and initiatives is uncertain, the ACT government has allocated \$580,000 to continue funding existing services under the agreement until 2014.

I am hopeful that once the federal election has been held we will be able to get some greater certainty, whatever the outcome is, about what the situation will be in relation to these national partnership agreements. I know that many of the services around town are very nervous. They were concerned to see only a 12-month extension of the program. There does seem to be a bit of a black hole generally on what will be the policies of whatever incoming federal government there will be in this area. I am hopeful that we can get some clarity on that pretty quickly once the election is over.

Turning to the issue of tenure, Mr Coe made some remarks about the program the government has embarked on to move those tenants with sustained high incomes out of the program. He made some references to the cases being handled correctly. Certainly there has been a very thorough process. People who have been assessed as having a sustained level of income that would enable them to move into their own private sector, stable accommodation have been assessed carefully. They have gone through an assessment panel. There has been an opportunity for appeal and an opportunity to provide additional information.

I believe that this process has been entered into with a good level of safeguards, but if there are specific examples of where that appears to have fallen down—I hope that there are not—I would certainly welcome members bringing those matters to my attention, if there are specific problems or specific examples.

In terms of the continuity of this program, this is a standing policy of the government. There has been one group identified at the moment and the department is proceeding through that. Clearly the intent of the policy is about those people who are capable of providing within their own means because their circumstances have improved. Given the demand for public housing and a desire to get the best use out of the stock and help those most in need, I think it is appropriate to continue with that.

That brings me to the issue that was raised in the estimates committee around my personal position and that of the Greens. I think that the issue that was raised in the estimates report was inappropriate. I do not think that is the place to explore an individual member's views. I think the estimates report should be about matters of policy as opposed to seeking to find those inconsistencies.

Nonetheless, as the ACT Greens member for Molonglo and also the Minister for Housing, I am happy to say that I support, and continue to support, the ACT Greens 2012 election policy platform that recognised that “security of tenure enhances quality of life and economic wellbeing and was integral to the effective provision of social housing”. This policy platform also recognised the need to improve the utilisation of the existing housing stock.

The policy position is consistent with the implementation of the current policy position of the government regarding security of tenure, which identifies people with financial capacity to access other tenure options and supports them to access other tenure. A key exit point has been shared equity, which contributes to the improved housing outcomes for people exiting from social housing.

It really comes down to understanding what the words are—"security of tenure". It does not mean "no change". It means that people should have a level of security, and that security remains. If people's income does not go up then they will have the security to remain in publicly provided housing. It is also about the tenure. Tenure is about somebody having somewhere stable to live, essentially. I guess the whole phrase sums that up. But if somebody does have the means to, for example, purchase their property from Housing ACT through the shared equity scheme, they still have security of tenure. The ownership model is different. In fact, it can be argued that the tenant is better off because they are building themselves an asset through their increased income.

So I do not think these policies are in any way inconsistent. With the implementation of them, the detail of that is very important, to ensure that people do have security of tenure. There is certainly no intent in this policy to simply turf people out onto the street or put them in a situation where in 12 or 18 months time they will be back on the public housing list. It is designed to identify people whose means have improved because, through the provision of social housing, they have been able to perhaps get better opportunities in life and have been able to enhance their own capabilities.

I think it is quite appropriate that people who are given that hand up, once they have managed to take the step up, should then make way for others to come into the system who perhaps more urgently need the assistance. I am comfortable with that. That is my view and it is one that I think is consistent with the way the policy is being applied at the moment.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (5:20): I was inspired in July to see the great work that the federal and ACT Labor governments are doing with the non-profit ACT development with CHC Affordable Housing. Together they are delivering high quality affordable housing in a mixture of rental properties and properties for sale. Over 130 rental units are available in the Eclipse affordable housing development in Braybrooke Street in Bruce, in my electorate, at only 80 per cent of the market rate. It means these great units are within the reach of people on low or moderate incomes who meet the CHC criteria, and they are in the very cosmopolitan Bruce neighbourhood.

Canberrans enjoy a great quality of life, a beautiful environment and one of the highest standards of living in Australia. But we also know some Canberrans are doing it tough. They are not on high salaries but face high costs. That is why this government has measures such as the targeted assistance strategy and affordable housing schemes to create fairness and opportunity for all.

The Eclipse housing development in Bruce is one of the largest affordable housing projects delivered in Australia under Labor's national rental affordability scheme—

NRAS. The ACT government invested \$2 million in the Eclipse complex and the federal government over \$5 million. There is a mix of accommodation with five studio flats, 45 one-bedroom, 20 two-bedroom and three three-bedroom apartments. As CHC points out, the Eclipse units are just 500 metres from the Australian Institute of Sport, a kilometre from the University of Canberra and CIT Bruce, a kilometre and a half from Calvary hospital, three kilometres from Westfield Belconnen mall and 7½ kilometres from the city. Mr Barr said at the opening of the latest stages of Eclipse:

Tenants renting an NRAS property in Eclipse will pay around \$3800 a year less than they would for a similar property being rented on the open market.

CHC Affordable Housing has been a major provider of NRAS properties in the ACT and is the first locally based developer to offer individual investors an opportunity to participate in the scheme. Some of CHC's other affordable housing projects are: the 20-unit development "Grace" at Forde; the Freestyle apartments in Holt—24 units on the old service station site; in Gungahlin, the 19 units at Mirella and the Village Vue development of 28 apartments; units in Crace; the Edge apartments in Franklin, including 104 units; as well as the City Edge apartments in O'Connor.

CHC Affordable Housing began in 1997 and says it prides itself on the quality of its developments and that "it is dedicated to delivering well-located, functional and flexible housing options for both our purchasers and renters alike". It aims to be the best affordable housing provider in the country.

CHC will deliver 500 affordable rental homes and 500 affordable sales by 2018 under an agreement with the ACT government to ease housing pressures on Canberrans on low to moderate incomes.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Proposed expenditure—Part 1.16—Territory and Municipal Services Directorate—\$315,968,000 (net cost of outputs) and \$218,117,000 (capital injection), totalling \$534,085,000.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (5.25): The provision of urban services should be a core business for the ACT government. Of course, as a unique authority in Australia whereby it is a merger of both council and state services, the ACT government has a special role and a special ability to be able to implement policy from some of the territory-wide initiatives through to very local suburban levels. That coordination should, in fact, be an advantage. We do not have, necessarily, economies of scale in the ACT but we do have economies of distance. We do not have roads to nowhere. We do not have roads going way out into bush. We do not have rural or regional hospitals that we have to support. We do not have much by way of rural and regional infrastructure. So, really, we can derive many efficiencies as a result of, in effect, being a city state with a few villages as well.

TAMS provides by way of their municipal services what would otherwise be provided by a council. As such, it is often the delivery of TAMS services which contributes much to quality of life for Canberrans, whether it be driving on the roads, whether it

be parking, whether it be cleaning graffiti, whether it be cutting grass or whether it be all the basic things we often take for granted when they are going well but which come to our attention when they are not going well.

Yet again, Roads ACT has failed to reach its target for the percentage of roads resurfaced in the past year. Like so many years, this shortfall has been blamed on wet weather. It is interesting that whilst, once again, they have fallen short by 25 per cent, this time blamed on wet weather, in the years of drought they also fell short by 25 per cent. That was not blamed on wet weather; it was just blamed on a very complex program. The time may well come for the ACT government through the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services to revisit that target of four per cent of territory roads to be resurfaced. In my five years here and in the annual reports of the then urban services and now TAMS that I have looked back through as well as the budgets I do not think I have seen a single year where that target has been met. So I ask the minister to look at whether that four per cent target is reasonable.

A huge portion of TAMS is, of course, ACTION buses. The subsidy for ACTION buses has gone up to \$111 million for 2013-14, or \$3,500 for every bus user. So much work needs to be done in this space, and I hope the focus we are currently seeing on capital metro does not detract from the focus that should be on ACTION buses. Some of Canberra's most vulnerable people depend on ACTION buses. Of course, some people choose to ride ACTION buses. I think there are relatively few people who choose to ride ACTION buses, but there are certainly a lot of people who are forced to ride ACTION buses. That is reflected in the fact that only eight per cent of Canberrans ride ACTION buses on a regular basis. It is for that reason we are seeing the cost per passenger now at \$7.04, which is a huge sum. The opposition is not advocating cutting that budget; we are advocating working on strategies to get more people on to buses which will, of course, bring that figure down as the numerator changes—that is, the ratio of passengers to the population.

At 16 per cent, the proportion of revenue which comes from ticket sales is just too low. It is all very well for the Greens and the Labor Party to talk about sustainability in public transport, but sustainability also extends to economic sustainability. With a subsidy of 84 per cent, you wonder how sustainable ACTION buses really are.

Patronage on ACTION buses was lower than expected. It is not surprising that Canberrans are choosing not to catch ACTION buses as they continue to fall short on their targets for running on time. Last year only 70 per cent of bus services operated on the scheduled time, according to the budget.

The MyWay system, which was delivered years later than promised, is not proving as helpful as the government promised. During the estimates hearing I asked the minister for information about the average passenger journey distance. After agreeing to take this question on notice, the minister responded:

Passenger travel distances are not easily available from the MyWay system and given the resource cost involved in collecting the data, and the limited usefulness of this data to ACTION, I am not prepared to answer this particular request at this point.

I find it amazing that this great system, which uses GPS, cannot calculate the average distance of a passenger's journey. I would think that information would be very useful for ACTION in their planning of future networks. When I put to them that surely a query could be put into the database that would extract that information, they said it could not be done. That is disappointing given that it was promised before implementation of the system that it could be done. This is just the latest revelation in the saga of the MyWay ticketing system, which cost around \$7 million and came in years late. I find it very hard to believe that, if all the buses have GPS devices, if all the bus stops have GPS coordinates in the database, they cannot run a query to calculate what the average journey distance would be.

It is interesting that the minister would say that that kind of data would not be useful. I think it would be fascinating to know whether, in fact, people are using ACTION buses for long journeys or whether they are just using ACTION buses for short journeys and whether there is a disproportionate weighting towards longer or shorter journeys. That would, in part, give ACTION some understanding of what parts of the network are popular and what parts could be improved upon.

Something I would like the government to expand upon is the role of ACTION buses with the implementation of capital metro. This work should start to be done very soon because the modelling for capital metro will largely depend on the feeder services which ACTION are able to deliver into the various hubs which are supposedly going to be built along the way at Dickson, EPIC and Gungahlin. Are we going to see a new interchange built at Gungahlin? Or are we going to continue with the four-interchange model?

Something else the government should articulate is the future of the 200 bus which goes down Flemington and Northbourne avenues and then on to Defence, Wentworth Avenue and through to Fyshwick. That is one of the best buses in the network in that it is very well patronised. However, I imagine that that bus will go by the wayside when capital metro comes into play. That could well mean that somebody who works at Defence and wants to get public transport from Gungahlin, rather than being able to get a bus from Gungahlin through to Defence as they do now, may have to go on a feeder bus to Gungahlin, hop on a tram to the city and then hop on another bus to go down Constitution Avenue. (*Second speaking period taken.*) That is yet another question with regard to capital metro the government is yet to answer.

The other key issue the government is yet to answer is the impact on employment at ACTION. The ACT government has long accused the Liberal Party of being a threat to employment at ACTION. However, what will be the impact on ACTION as a result of the government's decision to spend \$614 million building a tram from Gungahlin to the city? Some projections I have seen—I think, from the 2004 KBR study—suggested that employment at ACTION would go down as a result of a light rail system in the ACT. It will be interesting to see whether the minister is able to shed any light on the issue of employment at ACTION.

I will conclude my remarks there. There are, of course, so many areas of TAMS we could discuss and so many issues the government need to confront, many of which

were raised yesterday in the discussion on roadworks in the territory and traffic issues and how the government respond to those. However, time does not permit me to canvass all of the issues in TAMS. Certainly, with regard to the ones I have raised, I hope the minister will be able to give an adequate response in the chamber shortly.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (5.36): The Territory and Municipal Services appropriation serves Canberrans in so many ways, delivering the benefits of good government from our mountain-top nature parks down to our gutters and sewers. Rather than cover all of the budget items provided by the TAMS appropriation, I will just mention a few local budget initiatives Ginninderra residents will be able to appreciate.

The local shopping centres at Evatt and Florey in this budget, and others in Ginninderra in budgets to come, will enjoy major upgrades. An audit of skate parks across Canberra will make sure they are safe for our children. A range of upgrades to public parks at Emu Bank, Lake Ginninderra district park, Umbagog district park and elsewhere will include new barbeques and drinking fountains. Thirty new drinking fountains across Canberra, including at town centres, parks, sporting facilities and near schools, are provided for in this budget. Over \$200,000 is allocated for the maintenance of existing drinking fountains, providing refill stations and 10,000 free, reusable water bottles over the next two financial years.

Territory and Municipal Services also plays a role in the government's visionary projects planned for Canberra within this budget, which, at the same time sets out a path back to surplus.

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) (5.38): I appreciate the chance to speak on the 2013-14 budget as it relates to Territory and Municipal Services. This agency is a core part of the ACT government and has contact with the Canberra community every day and in so many parts of their lives through things like paths or roads, the trees and landscape around them, Canberra's libraries, the buses, Domestic Animal Services, the collection of rubbish and a variety of other essential services.

This budget provides \$534 million in funding for the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate to continue to deliver services and for new infrastructure. The budget allocates \$5½ million to help manage national parks and reserves, maintain urban parks, trees and community spaces as well as undertake regulatory activities associated with animal welfare and community safety. A further \$300,000 has been provided to undertake a review to define the best way to provide these essential municipal services in the future. And I think this is an important opportunity to look at what services are being provided, what services the community expects and what level of resourcing the community is both willing to pay for and willing to accept when it comes to the provision of municipal services.

ACTION is an area that is of particular interest in this budget and is also an area subject to a similar review. Importantly, this budget allocates an additional \$24 million to place ACTION on a sustainable financial footing over the next two

years. This will help it plan its future network. As I have said before, ACTION has previously had to deal with year-to-year funding, which can make it difficult to forward-plan its network and business.

At the same time, ACTION will undergo a comprehensive review of all aspects of its business. The intention here is to find ways that ACTION can perform better in the services it provides to the community and better in the way it runs its own business. The framework around this review is that we want ACTION to provide better services in the future, its patronage to grow in a way that will meet the government's sustainable transport targets and will also adapt to future challenges, for example, the introduction of paid parking in the parliamentary triangle by the federal government.

I will also mention that, with the knowledge of its future funding, ACTION is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of the network, and this certainty of funding really helps them to do that planning in a more sophisticated way. I note that the estimate committee's report recommended that ACTION undertake a comprehensive review of the network. The government's response notes that recommendation. The new network will be released for consultation in the coming months, and I think that members and the community will see that this is a comprehensive review.

Mr Coe did ask a number of questions about ACTION, and I will seek to touch on a few of those. I think it is quite clear that the development of light rail will not detract from the focus on getting as much improvement as we can out of ACTION in coming years.

Certainly I have the primary responsibility for ACTION, whereas Mr Corbell has the primary responsibility for light rail. Put simply, in that split of responsibilities, I certainly say that quite a priority area for me is to ensure that ACTION is running as efficiently as possible but at the same time meeting the community service obligations that the government has as the provider of public transport. This is sometimes a challenging combination of objectives but I think it is one where improvements can be made. I know that right across the organisation there is the desire to make those improvements.

Mr Coe reflected on the fact that I had indicated that I was not willing to spend resources on extracting some of the data that he had asked for. It potentially could be extracted but the advice I have is that data will not assist ACTION in any way with its planning of the network. ACTION is currently going through an exercise of reviewing the network and looking at the data available to it, and that specific data set has not been necessary, is my advice, to help understand what needs to be done with the network.

Therefore, whilst it may be of some interest to some people, it is not the information that is necessary. In trying to provide an efficient organisation, I have asked ACTION to focus on the core things that they need to do, and I have formed the view that this is not one of them. That is, I guess, the elaboration of the government response to the estimates report.

Let me turn to some of the other areas of Territory and Municipal Services. When it comes to parks and the environment, I am very pleased that the budget provides \$1.3 million to enhance the biodiversity of Canberra's woodland parks and nature reserves. This is additional funding to restore the territory's parks and reserves for their ecological values, as well as for the health and social benefit of Canberrans.

It is quite clear that in some ways we are in danger of loving our nature parks to death, with the frequent use of them. There are challenges that come with that, from overuse, from erosion, from the potential introduction of pest species. So these are all pieces of work that need to be done, and the budget has provided considerable resources for pest animal management, including rabbit control on nature reserves, improved support for park care groups and for management of invasive weeds, as well as for the development of specific operational plans for units of Canberra nature park.

The budget also provides for five new park ranger positions for the ACT over the next four financial years, and I think that this is a great outcome. The rangers have a big job to do. The community loves meeting them in the nature parks, and I think if we can lift their capacity, they can do a better job of caring for these very precious areas.

When it comes to Canberra's urban treescape, the budget provides \$1 million to help preserve Canberra's well-respected urban treescape by ensuring that our urban trees are replaced as required. And this funding will help protect the value and amenity of our much-loved street trees by supporting planting and maintenance programs. This helps implement a clear recommendation from the Commissioner for Sustainability and Environment.

In city services, the government has an ongoing program of upgrades for local shops. Shopping centres in Evatt, Kambah, Rivett, Fisher, and Hughes will all be upgraded, with \$360,000 allocated for design work.

There is provision for new drinking fountains, with \$240,000 for the installation of 30 drinking fountains across Canberra, including at town centres, parks, sporting facilities and near schools. There are currently only just over 80 operational drinking fountains in our public places, which means residents have to purchase bottled water far too often. It is costly and it leads to waste, and I think the provision of drinking fountains is a real benefit for the community there.

\$200,000 has been provided in the 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 Edison skate park at Woden town centre.

There are also other provisions in the budget for those basic services that really lift our community and provide some of the facilities people really enjoy, including money 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 for design and feasibility studies for new walking and cycling infrastructure; money to improve irrigation at Black Mountain Peninsula, Bowen park and Telopea Park; and money for the installation of bollards and improved access at Emu Bank, which will build on the government's investment in this popular precinct in recent years.

When it comes to recycling and waste, the trial of the ACT's bulky waste collection service will continue for another year, with further funds allocated in the budget. And this free service helps pensioners and concession cardholders who have limited capacity or financial ability to dispose of large items.

When it comes to building upgrades, there are a range of upgrades and refurbishments to ACT government buildings funded in the budget, including for Yarralumla nursery ahead of its centenary celebrations next year. There is also money for four additional counters and other improvements at Woden shopfront to cater for increased demand, including from the expansion of Molonglo; money for roof and paving repairs at the Canberra Convention Centre; and improvements to a range of other buildings across the city.

The budget also provides money to develop and implement a remediation action plan to manage asbestos which comes to the surface from the old suburban dump site at Red Hill nature reserve. This continues work funded in the previous year's budget. The budget also provides money towards removing contaminated soil buried in a quarry at the Yarralumla brickworks site in order to make the area safe for future users of the site and money for the installation of security fencing at the brickworks to prevent people accessing the area and causing damage such as graffiti.

The budget provides a \$344,000 boost over the next two years to maintain an enhanced level of funding to the RSPCA to help enable it to continue its work with the ACT government to provide essential services, including the provision of an animal shelter for stray and injured animals including native wildlife, as well as animal welfare inspector services.

The budget contains numerous initiatives to improve traffic and pedestrian safety, as well as to improve the energy efficiency of the transport network, and funding for road and infrastructure upgrades. Rather than go through them all now, because they are detailed in the budget papers, I simply observe that one of the critiques of the budget has been that there is no actual money for funding for the actual construction. I highlight the quite clear intent that all of this design work is being done to prepare projects for funding in future years. This is simply about the government being timely with its works and seeking the money when it actually needs it, as opposed to leading out with it in advance and having money then needing to be rolled over.

There are important initiatives here that we have all been approached about by the communities that we represent, including work on Ashley Drive, work for new car parking spaces at Cooleman Court, where we are seeing considerable pressure being applied as a result of the Molonglo development. There are a range of safety improvements across the city, including upgrades to Melrose Drive and Eggleston Crescent in Chifley to improve safety. And that was one that received some community attention, with its previous solution under the black spot program. TAMS heard the community feedback on that issue and has now come up with an alternative approach, which has been funded in this budget.

There is also, in terms of general infrastructure upgrades, money for bus stop upgrades. This will improve access, particularly for seniors and people with

disabilities, and ensures Canberra remains on track to meet national disability compliance targets.

I am pleased to say that the budget includes several million dollars for the design of walking and cycling projects which will be implemented through coming budgets. There have, of course, recently been the announcements about the rollout of real-time passenger information. The budget continues to support that project, and there are a range of other matters relating to support for ACTION.

There is much I could say about TAMS. What I can say in summary, perhaps, is that this is an agency that is very passionate about providing the best possible services to the Canberra community. But they do it with a tight budget. There is always more that can be done. And certainly, there are some hard choices there around prioritisation. As members will see, through the many requests that they receive—and it seems to me—TAMS does its best to be responsive to the community. Certainly the customer satisfaction ratings with Canberra Connect about both the contact they receive and the timeliness of many of the responses certainly speaks to the dedication of the staff performing a wide variety of roles in Territory and Municipal Services, and I thank them for their ongoing efforts to maintain the look and feel of the city and provide the services that Canberrans expect.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (5.51): I rise to speak to the budget line item relating to Territory and Municipal Services. I will pay particular attention to the delivery by the directorate of municipal services and programs to the electorate of Brindabella. A number of issues warrant a mention here, and I am prompted to do so in light of numerous representations made to my office about these issues by residents in Tuggeranong and south Woden.

One of the most common issues raised with me is the general amenity of our suburbs, especially in relation to state of our parks, playgrounds, footpaths and roads. The footpaths in the vicinity of Bramston Street in Fadden is one such issue, and I note that progress on work has stalled after first commencing in March this year following my letters to the minister. The footpath has been lifted but not removed. There is now a fence around the area and pedestrians are forced onto the road to get around, and this makes it more dangerous than it was in its original state while the residents continue to wait for this issue to be rectified.

There has been for many years a loose commitment to address another issue in Fadden—to prevent illegal vehicle access to the easement between Free Place, Bugden Avenue and Appel Crescent. This has been a long-running issue and still needs to be addressed by this government.

Road safety at the intersections of Eggleston Crescent at both ends between Hindmarsh Drive and Melrose Drive, not to mention the lack of parking and signage in the suburb, are issues that have been raised with me by residents given their proximity to the Woden town centre. Residents of Chifley battle illegal parking in their suburban streets, and I have lobbied the minister on a number of occasions to ensure signage is adequate and reflects the needs of residents as well as acting as a deterrent for illegal parking.

Road safety measures in Fadden, Macarthur and Gowrie are being considered currently after residents persistently called for action to be taken to address speeding along Coyne Street and Bugden Avenue. But, again, we see that time has been taken between residents raising concerns and the government actually considering these problems as part of their budget process and having the problem fixed. This issue has just taken too long.

Shopping centres in Tuggeranong also continue to be ignored in upgrade programs for the 2013-14 budget. It is no different to previous years with Kambah village still in desperate need of upgrading, and this seems to yet again have dropped off the radar and been put on the back burner.

The park and ride facility at Calwell has been a long time coming, and the ACT Labor-Greens government promised this much-needed facility for commuters to be completed and operational in March 2012. Understanding that there were issues around the contractor that was successful at that tender, construction at this site is stalled yet again and residents are still waiting for completion of this project.

Another project that has been promised over successive budgets but yet to be completed is the upgrade of Ashley Drive. Countless money has gone into feasibility studies and design work; however, actual work is yet to be done. In fact, if we look at the big shiny map on the back of budget paper 2, the biggest expenditure devoted to Tuggeranong residents and south Woden is expansion of the Mugga Lane landfill. Whilst it is an important expenditure, it does not do much to improve the local facilities and amenities for residents that reside in Tuggeranong and the south Woden area.

I must also mention today the dangerous lack of attention paid to the state of our rural roads and rural villages in this budget and budgets before it. I have had a lot of contact and discussion with residents who reside in our rural areas since being elected to this place, particularly with residents of both Uriarra and Tharwa villages. While the issue is somewhat similar to the state of our roads, general amenity, graffiti, vandalism and antisocial driving, the feeling is definitely the same. The residents of these unique areas of Canberra feel neglected by successive Labor-Greens governments.

One particular issue faced by residents of these villages is antisocial behaviour in and around the rural recreation areas and roads. Whilst this is a law and order issue, there are some simple fixes in the purview of TAMS that would make a big difference. One example is the instalment of gates and fences on the approach to the river near Tharwa. This would make a big difference and go a long way in deterring the illegal and antisocial behaviour currently occurring in this proximity. It is just a simple matter of reinstalling a gate that was previously in existence prior to the bridge upgrades. But this has been simply placed in the too-hard basket.

Very little attention has been paid to the maintenance of rural roads in this budget and in previous ACT budgets. Many of these roads are well used by ACT residents to access our national parks, the snowfields and other wonderful natural resources we have on our doorstep. These roads include Boboyan Road, Smiths Road, Angle

Crossing and the Brindabella Road, to name but a few. Little if any work has been undertaken on these roads and absolutely no progress has made with the sealing of these roads, which are still dirt.

It is also no secret that our local sports clubs are paying a substantial amount of money for the privilege to use sports and recreational ovals around town. However, often few or poor quality facilities are provided when compared to other jurisdictions. It is reasonable, however, to expect that change rooms have functioning facilities and that a reasonable level of seating is provided for spectators at the grounds. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. It also worth mentioning that there is often quite a large amount of confusion within the community as to who is exactly responsible for the maintenance and the upkeep of sports and recreational grounds—whether it falls within the purview of TAMS or whether it is a sports and recreation issue. That misunderstanding and uncertainty continues today.

In conclusion, I will send a quick message to the minister that I will continue to lobby him and his Labor colleagues for better municipal services for residents in Tuggeranong and the south Woden area over the coming financial years.

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) (5.57): I will speak very briefly before the hour of 6 o'clock. I thank Mr Wall, in particular, for bringing to our attention the local look and feel and amenity of the city. I ask Mr Wall to perhaps go to the party room and ask the Canberra Liberals to finally remove the Audrey Ray signs that are stuck on signage across the electorate of Brindabella. You can see them as you move in and out of Chisholm shops. I defy you to say you do not know that they are there—they have been there since 2008. I am not quite sure if the signage is in breach of any code or law—and I will check with the relevant minister—but it is a shame that TAMS will have to put effort in to tidy up after the Canberra Liberals. Perhaps, Mr Wall, in your effort to keep our city clean, you may get to it and have the party do that themselves.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Proposed expenditure—Part 1.17—ACT Gambling and Racing Commission—\$4,451,000 (net cost of outputs), totalling \$4,451,000.

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.

Sitting suspended from 6 to 7.30 pm.

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): Madam Speaker, can I make a statement under standing order 46, please?

MADAM SPEAKER: Do you claim to have been misrepresented?

MS BURCH: Yes.

MADAM SPEAKER: If you claim to have been misrepresented, you can explain simply how you have been misrepresented.

MS BURCH: During question time, Mr Doszpot claimed that my answer to a question that he had placed on notice was not accurate. In doing so, I believe he selectively quoted from my answer in a way that gave an inaccurate impression of what I said. He claimed that my response was:

... school capacity numbers for each public high school and secondary college are not produced.

What I did say was:

School capacity numbers for each level of schooling for each public high school and secondary college are not produced.

That, I believe, does make a world of difference. Those words, “for each level of schooling”, were included in both the question on notice and in my answer to that question. They were taken out of Mr Doszpot’s question today—indeed, twice. At best, it is a nuance of interpretation; at worst, it could itself be misleading. Since question time, however, I have made—

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister Burch, you cannot make—

MS BURCH: Could provide a different response—

MADAM SPEAKER: You need to be very careful about how you use the word “mislead”.

MS BURCH: Yes. Since question time I have made inquiries of the Education and Training Directorate and have received the following response:

The minister’s statement that school capacity numbers for each level of schooling for public high school and secondary colleges were not produced is correct. The directorate does not have prescribed school capacity numbers at each level of schooling. In providing advice to the minister on the ability of schools to enrol more students, broad statements describe whether in approximate terms the school has capacity to accept further enrolments. This does not mean that there is a defined upper limit for enrolment at each school level, as it is ETD’s policy that each public school must accept enrolments from within its defined priority area.

I table the following paper.

Public high school student numbers—Select Committee on Estimates 2013-2014—Copy of answer to question on notice No. E13-197, dated 10 July 2013.

I also note that during that exchange I took a question on notice, which I will reply to in due course.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Burch. In relation to the appropriation bill, we are up to part 1.17, ACT Gambling and Racing Commission. The question is that the proposed expenditure of \$4,451,000 net costs of outputs totalling \$4,451,000 be agreed to.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (7.33): The ACT Gambling and Racing Commission performs a very important function in the way that we control gaming and racing in the ACT. I think we are all aware that there are a number of issues facing gaming and racing over the next couple of years.

One of the issues we discussed in the estimates committee was the offer of Casino Canberra to the government to surrender a block of land—it is part of their lease—that exists between their current building and the National Convention Centre and whether or not that was being progressed. The minister told us that yes, it was—that the government was looking at the purchase of that block of land with a view to extending the Convention Centre.

I will just remind members that in 2007 we upgraded the Convention Centre in a temporary manner. It was more to become compliant with OH&S and give the outside a bit of freshening up; it really did not add to the capacity. I would just like to put on record a concern that any minor extension to the exhibition hall in no way negates the need for a new convention centre in this city. If that is the government's holding strategy while we continue to procrastinate on the provision of new business infrastructure in this city, I would be very concerned.

Some of the other issues that we looked at were research into gambling commissioned by the commission; the collapse of Sports Alive in the ACT and whether there was any liability or negligence on behalf of the commission. The commission spoke about how they conducted their audits and the fact that they were misled by the owners of Sports Alive. They said that really, without being inside the organisation continually, it would be impossible to detect the way the fraud was being perpetrated. That will play itself out in the courts in Victoria, I understand.

There were a number of other issues that were discussed. There was the change from Lifeline to the services now provided by Mission Australia. We had some questions on the review of the gaming act in relation to newsagencies selling lottery tickets. Currently, under the act, if you work in a newsagency or own a newsagency or a gaming outlet that sells lottery tickets, you cannot buy them off yourself. So if you want to send dad a \$5 lottery ticket for his birthday, you have got to go to the next suburb and purchase it there. A number of people have been asking me about the outcome of that; it would be nice if the minister could give us an update on where that is.

With that, let me say that we welcome the line.

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) (7.37): The ACT Gambling and Racing Commission is a statutory authority that has the function of regulating and monitoring gambling activities in the ACT. This covers gaming machines, the casino, racing and sports, bookmakers, interactive gambling and minor gaming such as lotteries. The commission has an essential role as a regulator, ensuring that all gaming taxes and fees are paid in a correct and timely manner and ensuring that licences comply with the various statutory provisions so that gaming activity is conducted fairly and is free from criminal influence.

Importantly, the commission must also promote the public interest by protecting consumers and reducing the risks and costs of problem gambling to individuals in the community. In order to achieve this and to keep itself informed, the commission conducts research on the social effects of gambling and has developed excellent results and partnerships with the work through the ANU. The commission's role in this area involves community education and providing a counselling service, as has been mentioned by Mr Smyth, through Mission Australia.

While not technically in gaming and racing, I would like to refer to some elements of interest through the Gaming and Racing Commission. The ACT government is working closely with the three racing codes in Canberra to advance the outstanding recommendations made by the ICRC in a report to the racing industry and exploring opportunities for establishing a single administrative body for these three codes and co-locating the racing venues as a key priority.

Through this budget, we have delivered \$250,000 to investigate co-location opportunities for harness, thoroughbred and greyhound racing at a single site. Given the proximity to Thoroughbred Park, this investigation will also consider Exhibition Park in Canberra and the Canberra Riding Club in the context of capital metro.

The co-location could provide an opportunity to optimise the use of capital infrastructure and future capital expenditure in the racing and exhibition sectors, as well as freeing up some parcels of land for future residential and mixed use development. This work is being progressed in close consultation with the Canberra racing clubs themselves.

There is another budget line that I refer to as "Horsefest". This is \$100,000 for the development of Horsefest next year, an equine event proposed to be held at Canberra Exhibition Park. We are working very closely with the Canberra Harness Racing Club, and I have to say that there was significant public interest when that election commitment was announced. We all know that Canberra has got probably the highest horse ownership of most communities. I expect that will be quite a successful event for all the people who love their horses.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Proposed expenditure—Part 1.18—ACT Public Cemeteries Authority—\$294,000 (capital injection), totalling \$294,000.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (7.39): I will start by saying that I will not be needing my second 10 for this line item. In fact, I will go as far as saying that I have got nothing further to add to the questions I put in the estimates committee.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Proposed expenditure—Part 1.19—ACTEW Corporation—\$10,615,000 (net cost of outputs), totalling \$10,615,000.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (7.41): The issues of ACTEW have been canvassed well over the course of the year, but on behalf of the opposition I think there are still concerns there. We seem to get conflicting numbers; we never seem to get to the bottom of the hole, as it were, at the base of the dam. We, as an opposition, are still convinced that a full audit of ACTEW, probably by someone like the Auditor-General, is worth having.

Page 36 of the estimates report contains recommendation 22. The recommendation asks for detail about the various elements of the dam and the cost. It is the cost of the dam and where it is going that concern us. The minister said that the difference between the \$363 million number and the over \$400 million number was a result of the flood. I do not think it is clear at all that that is the case. If the minister can detail what the \$42-odd million difference is, and if he wants to attribute it all to the flood events, I would be very interested in his explanation of that.

What we have seen throughout the course of the last 12 or so months is a number of events that do raise some concern. First and foremost, we had the issue of the incorrect amounts of the CEO's pay tabled in an official document given to the ministers, the shareholders, and then sent on to this Assembly. Of course the chairman of the board lost his position over that.

We had the whole of the ICRC affair—the inquiry into the water and sewerage rates and what they would be. Initially, the determination said that there would be a large increase, \$235-odd a year. That was wound back significantly when ACTEW presented evidence to the ICRC, and the ICRC had to change their draft determination. When you have the head of the ICRC using the word “insolvent” in regard to a huge asset that the people of the ACT own, the alarm bells should be ringing.

We have serious concerns about the numbers when it comes to the dam. The initial cost was touted at some \$145 million. But I think it is quite clear that the government knew before the election that that was not the case, that it was in fact going to cost more. People have a right to ask: why is a dam that started at \$145 million ending up at more than \$400 million? Again, I do not think those questions have been answered adequately, particularly in regard to when the government knew and what the government did. Indeed, when did the shareholders know and what did the shareholders do?

We have been calling for some time for a full audit, a full inquiry, by the Auditor-General. There is a partial audit underway at this stage. The ministers—who initially,

of course, denied that there was any need for an audit—have now brought in an individual to do an audit under their auspicing. I am not casting any aspersion on the individual; he seems to have the experience to do such an audit, but I think the independence and power of the Auditor-General are required to be brought to bear on this issue.

It is a very serious issue when you hear somebody of the stature of the commissioner saying, “If I hadn’t changed my determination then of course the spectre of insolvency was raised.” We still need to get to the bottom of it. Indeed, the minister was quite cautious on Tuesday when he tabled the final result for the 2012-13 financial year, saying that the figures were still subject to the final determinations of the Auditor-General and the auditors of ACTEW as to what the impairment may or may not be of assets.

We have this lingering doubt hanging over the situation. We raised the point quite seriously on Tuesday that we should not be having this debate today. We should not have had this debate at all. It would not have hurt to put it off for a month and done it in the September sitting.

I will read in full again from the statement of corporate intent. On page 19, in a big red box in big red letters, it says:

These forecasts are based upon assumptions made by ACTEW prior to the ICRC’s release of its final report for regulated water and sewerage services in the ACT on 26 June 2013. The likely impact of that report has not yet been fully determined. The key financial measures set forth in the following sections are subject to material change once the impact of the ICRC report has been determined. It is anticipated that ACTEW will provide revised financial forecasts in late August 2013.

The interesting word is that ACTEW itself believes that these will be subject to “material” change. I think the minister said, “They aren’t material. They aren’t material in the context of the budget.” But when you are talking about tens of millions of dollars, most people would think that was quite material. If it comes out in a negative stance for the Treasurer, it will be interesting to see how they make up those funds.

We all know there are ins and outs, and the ins and outs come all the time. We have had the pre-election update, we have had the end-of-year financials and we now have the ICRC determination. But in the context of the budget for the coming year, for the full financial year we find ourselves in now, it is important that when we finish the budget debate we sign off as an Assembly that that is the starting point. Unfortunately, it will not be in this case. We are going to get some data in August and we will get a mid-year update probably in February next year. So we really will not know what the starting point for the year was until February next year, two-thirds of the way through the year.

I think that is unfortunate, and it is unfortunate because it is unnecessary. The government have supply; the government have the ability to get on with their works. We hear all the time how they are moving to fulfil their election commitments and

their budget commitments. I think that, despite the Chief Minister's protestations yesterday that none of the work has started on the new initiatives, I would be very surprised if that was the case. I would be very surprised if some of the staff have not done some work on some of the new initiatives.

Mr Barr: You can't procure things without an authorisation.

MR SMYTH: Well, I would be very, very surprised. So that is the dilemma that we face. I suspect we will not get too many answers from the Treasurer, when he stands, as to what the cost of floods and various things have truly been. He said in his statements in the estimates committee that all of that increase was due to the flood. How would one know?

That is the problem with this budget; that is the problem with what we are doing this week; that is the problem with what we are doing tonight. As the Chief Minister said, transparent, collaborative and participative; those three words certainly are not words that you would associate with this budget and certainly not with this line.

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) (7.49): The appropriation for ACTEW relates to concessions for Canberra households. The government provides this funding to ACTEW to finance the concessions program. That is actually what we are appropriating.

On some of the matters that Mr Smyth has raised, in relation to the price differential between the pre-flood and floods, plural, dam costing and the final budget, obviously ACTEW and the Bulk Water Alliance will provide that information in due course. Just to ensure there is no misunderstanding with those opposite, floods, plural—weather events—certainly have contributed to the increase in the budget for that project. Mr Sullivan and those associated with the project more directly have indicated that in some detail.

When Mr Coe, I believe it was, put a series of questions on notice—quite a detailed series of questions on notice—ACTEW and the Bulk Water Alliance, I understand, took a number of engineers off-line for a number of weeks to answer Mr Coe's questions. There will of course be more information provided when it becomes available.

In relation to the ICRC determination and these suggestions that have been bandied about that ACTEW is at some risk of insolvency, that could only occur if the ICRC chose it to, as they are the regulator; they determine, authorise and assess the regulated asset base and make all the—

Mr Smyth: So it's all the ICRC's fault.

MR BARR: They make all the determinations. They set the price, they say what ACTEW can and cannot spend in terms of capital that is included or not included in the regulated asset base. If they change their position then, yes, they could send the

organisation insolvent. If they say tomorrow that ACTEW cannot charge for water anymore, that would send the organisation broke. There is no doubting that. That would be theoretically within the power of the ICRC.

I do not think they will do that because part of their requirements in terms of setting prices for the organisation is to ensure that it does not become insolvent. But to suggest that in any way the government or the shareholders have some magic power to turn the organisation insolvent is just ridiculous, given that all of the policy levers—the pricing, the capital expenditure, everything—are regulated by the ICRC. It is simply a ridiculous proposition. So that needs to be put to bed tonight.

In relation to the timing of the completion of the audit process and the determination as to whether there will be or will not be an impairment of assets, that may not be concluded by the end of this calendar month. It will depend, of course, on independent authorities outside my control. I will await the outcome and, when I have the information, the Assembly and the public will be updated accordingly.

In relation to what we are actually discussing this evening, the appropriation to ACTEW, that actually relates to concessions. It is a worthy appropriation because it goes to assist low income households with their utility bills, and it should be commended.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (7.53): The Treasurer has raised a number of issues in relation to ACTEW and I would like to do likewise. There has been much said about ACTEW over the course of this year, and Mr Smyth canvassed that well—the issues with the general manager’s salary, the ongoing litigation about the costs and the overrun in the dam, the issues with the ICRC and the series of reviews that are now occurring into ACTEW, its structure and other issues.

We repeat our call for a full performance audit of ACTEW, because what we are seeing from the government is an ad hoc approach to looking at ACTEW. It seems that they want to look at everything but the dam.

Let us be very clear about what happened with the dam, Madam Speaker; indeed you would be aware of many of these issues yourself. In 2007-08, in the lead-up to the territory election, the Chief Minister at the time, Jon Stanhope, and the Labor Party went out publicly on numerous occasions—and this was at the height of the drought—and said to the Canberra public, “We’re going to build you a dam and it will cost you \$145 million.” It became a hot election issue. There is no doubt that this was a significant issue for our community at the time. There was much debate in this place and in the community. Jon Stanhope said, “The Labor Party’s solution is that we’re going to build you a dam for \$145 million.”

ACTEW then went out; I do not recall how many tens of thousands of dollars were spent on the advertising campaign, but many tens of thousands of dollars were spent on the campaign, advertising what Jon Stanhope had been saying: “There’s going to be a dam here.” So in the lead-up to an election ACTEW was essentially advertising something that the Labor Party was pushing.

However, it is pretty clear, based on the evidence that we have, that it became apparent that the price of the dam was not going to be \$145 million. We now know that it is about \$409 million, but it became apparent because we know that ACTEW wrote to the government, to the shareholders at the time, and said, “Hey, it ain’t going to be \$145 million. It’s going to be a lot more. It’s going to be many, many tens of millions more. It’s an order of magnitude more that it’s going to cost.” But did that change anything? No, it did not. We know that the government was out there pushing a line.

What then happened was that the dam price went up inexplicably from \$145 million to \$363 million and it then went up again from \$363 million to the current cost, which is in the order of \$409 million.

I think that the community has every right to have somebody with the authority, with the resources, with the experience, to look at what has gone so badly wrong with that project. In the context of this government that is also in this budget pushing a light rail project which is going to cost \$600 million, lessons need to be learned about the management of big projects.

When you look at this government’s record on these big projects, there was the jail—and I think we all understand in this place what went wrong there, or we know some of what went wrong there. There was the great, big government office building, which I think Ms Burch was calling the “government death star”—the \$432 million project that then fell over. The dam went from \$145 million to \$409 million. There are some pretty serious lessons that need to be learned to make sure that the errors that have been made with the dam, with the announcement about prices that then tripled, do not occur with light rail. How is the community to know that, just as we saw with the dam tripling or just as we saw with the great, big government office building that fell over because it did not stack up, we are not going to have the same misadventure with light rail?

The community have a right to know whether their \$409 million was spent prudently. When people in Canberra—in Tuggeranong, Belconnen, Weston Creek, Woden, wherever they are—are getting their utility bills, I think they have a right to know whether the bills that they are paying have been as a result of money spent prudently by this government. The reality is that this government are doing everything they can to avoid scrutiny on that project. And you know why, don’t you, Madam Speaker? It is because if the Auditor-General were to do an audit into the dam and into other aspects of ACTEW, it would demonstrate that the government, that the shareholders, have been abrogating their responsibilities. They have not been doing a good job as shareholders on behalf of the people to whom they have a responsibility, that being the taxpayers of the ACT.

We reiterate our call for a proper review of what has been going on. It is a little bit like Andrew Barr refusing to table his tax review, his modelling that he has done. In this place today he said he has done it; it is just that he is not going to release it and he will fight tooth and nail not to release it. It is a bit like that. They do not want to release that because they know that it is bad news for them. It is the same when they

say they do not want a review into ACTEW, because they know exactly what it will uncover—the failure of the shareholders, of Andrew Barr, Katy Gallagher and, no doubt, others before them from the Labor government.

We will continue to litigate the case. We will continue to fight on this issue. We will continue to dig into the issues surrounding the dam. It is difficult, with the limited resources and the obfuscation we see from the government and the deliberate attempts to muddy the waters, but we will continue to dig and we will continue to advocate for that proper audit of ACTEW.

I commend the work that my colleagues have done in digging into some of the problems that we have seen here. I think that it would be a prudent thing for the government to do, on behalf of their shareholders, on behalf of the people that they hold the shares for, to say, “Yes, this hasn’t gone well; we’ll cop it and we’ll have a review so that the same mistakes we made in the office building, the same mistakes we made in the jail, the same mistakes that we made on the dam, don’t get simply repeated in the light rail project.”

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Proposed expenditure—Part 1.20—Canberra Institute of Technology—\$66,054,000 (net cost of outputs) and \$3,757,000 (capital injection), totalling \$69,811,000.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (8.02): The Canberra Institute of Technology enjoys a unique place in Canberra’s education sector. Unlike other states, CIT is the only publicly-owned technical and further education provider of vocational education to the ACT and region. It has in recent times, and by its own admission, experienced some turbulence over a short period of time. It had to stare down the prospect of a merger with the University of Canberra. It has watched changes to TAFE in adjoining states following the national partnership agreement on skills reform driven by the commonwealth government. It has experienced some difficulties in maintaining international student numbers in light of the adverse experiences of some international students interstate and some, frankly, dodgy RTOs in other states delivering less than acceptable training.

CIT has managed to come through all those issues reasonably well. International student levels have remained reasonably consistent and it has achieved a cash surplus, something that the Bradley review warned it would need to improve. However, on other fronts there are still issues to contend with. I speak as someone who has enormous respect for the work that has been done by the CIT, by its teachers, by its management and for the students that have come through the CIT. As a former member of the CIT Advisory Council for a number of years, I have a very long and deep respect for the CIT.

But there is an issue that just will not go away and I was hoping it would have come to fruition by now. That issue is bullying. Bullying is becoming an endemic cancer in our society. It is disappointing to realise that it is present not just in some of our schools but it continues through the tertiary education levels. This is quite soul destroying to a lot of people. I do not intend to dwell on this appalling chapter in the

CIT's history that has destroyed the health and careers of a number of CIT staff. There are serious questions that we put to Minister Barr way back—I think probably two or three years ago now. But both the minister and the then senior management failed to recognise the issues that we were raising and continued to deny that anything was amiss.

I think around 12 or 14 months ago there was an inquiry started into this. I am still not aware when it is going to be submitted to the Assembly or, indeed, wherever that report has got to be submitted to. I have recently received an email that was a copy of an email that was sent to the acting head of CIT. I will read verbatim from the email:

I have recently viewed a copy of a Message from the CIT Chief Executive dated 19th June 2013 and entitled Update on Worksafe and the complaints of 2012 and was circulated to all CIT staff.

In this message it states, "In light of the Worksafe ACT Report the Chief Executive asked the Commissioner for Public Administration to investigate individual complaints and review ...

It is my understanding that following the publication of the Worksafe report on CIT and the complaints from myself and a number of other former and existing staff, the Commissioner for Public Administration instigated an investigation into the complaints received from numerous people on the actions of the CIT.

It is distressing to me as a former committed staff member whose health and career was destroyed by the actions of staff from CIT that even now it is not possible for you, as the acting head of this organisation, to portray the genesis of this investigation accurately.

I believe that the statement in the Staff notice of 19 June 2013 is an inaccurate statement bordering on an attempt to rewrite the history of this sorry saga. Whilst I accept your stated aims of commencing a process outlined in your notice to staff, if you are really committed at righting the wrongs that have been done within CIT over past years it must start with an honest statement as to the basis of the investigation that has taken place.

I note that Mr Barr is studiously trying to avoid listening to any of this. I will continue with the rest of the email:

A process can only continue as it commences; if you start with the truth, then truth will continue, but if you start with an untruth the following will also be untruthful.

In order to put this matter in the proper perspective, I believe that staff should be advised of how this investigation commenced, even if a formal request may have been required to satisfy the legality of the situation.

One thing I must say is that I do applaud the work of the former minister for education, Dr Bourke, for finally stepping in to deliver a serious warning to the executive team some year and a half ago. I am advised that the administration finally do understand what they need to do to protect staff and students from inappropriate behaviours and that is an ongoing work in progress.

However, these matters were first raised over two years ago. I know there has been much work done, many interviews conducted and reports made. But today there is still no public and detailed apology to the several dozen staff and students who made submissions to the Commissioner for Public Administration and whose lives—and careers in some cases—were irreparably damaged.

That was CIT's horrible year and this year there are still some other issues that I would like to bring to this Assembly—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members! Mr Corbell and Mr Barr, could you keep the conversation a little bit softer please or go outside?

MR DOSZPOT: Madam Speaker, thank you for bringing the attention of Mr Barr and Mr Corbell to this issue. This is a very serious issue that reflects quite badly on Mr Barr as an education minister. The least he could do is pay some respect to the people whose lives have been so damaged instead of laughing and joking as he has been for the last five minutes.

The other issue that I would just like to bring up briefly about the CIT is that there seems to be a very, very large increase in CIT fees across, depending on whose evidence you wish to believe, one or more courses for one or more reasons for one or more periods of permanence. But I will focus on the graphic design course because it is this course that appears to have the most number of unanswered questions.

Reading through the evidence taken during the hearings, one has to wonder what it is that CIT is trying to achieve or perhaps trying to hide from public scrutiny or who it is that they are trying to protect. The facts are these: the graphic design course at CIT is a diploma course with an advanced diploma also offered, similar to and of equal reputation to courses offered at TAFEs in other states around Australia. It is no better and no worse. A similar course, but at a degree level, is offered just up the road at the University of Canberra. The course is also a reputable one, following appropriate education standards and delivering quality outcomes.

If you enrolled in the CIT graphic design course in 2012, it would have cost you around \$700 per semester over three semesters, with an option of an additional semester for an advanced diploma. In 2013 the same course costs \$12,540 for three semesters, with an additional \$9,900 for the advanced diploma one semester addition. There are no discounts for students on youth allowance.

By comparison, a bachelor of graphic design at the University of Canberra costs a total of \$17,604 for a three-year degree. New South Wales TAFE offer a diploma of graphic design for an annual fee of \$1,432, but students on youth allowance pay only \$100 a year. By comparison, the advanced diploma in hotel and resort management at CIT runs over four semesters with a total tuition fee of \$12,500.

When challenged on costs, CIT had a number of varying comments and rationales. Various throughout questions on notice, estimates hearings and elsewhere, CIT has claimed that the increase is due to government cutbacks and to the advanced diplomas

in hotel management and graphic design being comparative. That is quite wrong, Minister Burch. Hotel management is in fact almost half the cost. Another comment was that the graphic design course is not the first course offered under a cost recovery model. Which is it?

We were told that the course was losing student numbers because of the cost of the course, but that now it has tripled in cost, enrolments are up. So these are all the rationales and the reasons given. It was claimed that it is a trial and that it is not a trial. It was claimed that it is or it is not the first course to be subject to higher fees. Minister Burch, I think there are a number of questions that we would like answered and clarified.

Throughout estimates the evidence is conflicted and responses are varied. The minister's answer to at least one question is misleading and on the others, her responses are evasive.

Ms Burch: Madam Speaker, I am being accused of misleading the committee and I ask that he withdraw that.

MADAM SPEAKER: Sorry, I did not hear it, Mr Doszpot. If you accused Ms Burch of misleading the committee I have to ask you to withdraw it. You can only do that in a substantive motion.

MR DOSZPOT: Madam Speaker, I will withdraw.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR DOSZPOT: The minister's answer to at least one question is questionable and on others, her responses are—(*Second speaking period taken.*)

I will repeat that last sentence. Throughout the estimates the evidence is conflicted and responses are varied. The minister's answer to at least one question is questionable and on the others her responses are evasive. I think the reality is that CIT need to improve the bottom line. They looked around for a popular course that could take a fee hike hit and they landed on graphic design.

It was popular and their strategy was right, if their enrolment figures are to be believed. The course enrolments did not suffer this year, but they may next year when students are fully informed as to what the full course will cost them, because students who undertake the advanced diploma in graphic design at CIT will be charged \$22,000. If they need to utilise VET FEE-HELP, the TAFE equivalent of HECS, it will add an additional 20 per cent surcharge, referred to as a "loan fee". So graphic design diploma students face \$26,928 for two years of study. This is by any measure excessive.

Evidence given during estimates and through questions taken on notice has failed to explain how and why the CIT arrived at this decision for this course. The recommendation in the estimates report asks CIT to provide the Assembly with an outline of modelling done to determine the costs of the CIT graphic design course and also which courses are likely to move to full fee recovery.

I trust that the CIT responds to these recommendations, because this is not an issue that will go away. There are angry parents and students who are facing difficult financial decisions in deciding what career path they should follow. They have come to see us. I am sure they have come to see you as well, Ms Burch, but I am not sure what advice you have given them to date.

If CIT has not worked out their communications strategy and financial modelling accurately, they may face difficult years and declining enrolments. Then it may become harder for the Liberal opposition to defend CIT's continued existence as an entity separate from the University of Canberra, as we did previously. We need a strong and viable TAFE entity in Canberra, but it must be one that is clearly focused on achieving high quality, affordable educational outcomes for Canberra students at its core.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella) (8.15): I rise tonight to reiterate another one of our 575 recommendations from the dissenting report, that being recommendation No 372. Madam Speaker, on 24 June the committee heard from CIT. In particular, I would like to talk about electric vehicle training that CIT is doing and refer to the transcript and the witness statements that we received. CIT here in the ACT has taken up the work for the whole of Nissan Australia. All of the training for Nissan Australia on their electric vehicles is now being done in the ACT. We see technicians coming from right across Australia being flown into the ACT for electric vehicle training. They go back to their workshops after receiving that training.

We heard from Minister Burch, of course, and from Ms Dodd from CIT. Ms Dodd spoke about a recent visit to China. They have worked with the Chinese government on the opportunity to pick up electric vehicle training for China right here in the ACT. She also talked about working with Toyota. Of course, the Japanese firm Toyota has companies worldwide. She spoke about the work that CIT have been doing with Toyota in the Philippines. They are hoping to pick up work that will operate either in the Philippines or here in the ACT, but no doubt it will be related to the work at CIT.

Also, we heard about the work that CIT has been doing to assist businesses in the ACT with regard to the national workforce development fund and securing funding from the federal government for those businesses to bring their technicians at certificate level III level up to certificate IV level. This allows technicians to reach a competency that gives them the opportunity to supervise new trainees in their workshops. Once again, well done to CIT automotive.

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) (8.17): I am pleased to stand to speak on the budget allocation to the Canberra Institute of Technology. CIT is the largest RTO and public provider of vocational education and training in the ACT and region. It offers over 400 courses ranging from certificates, traineeships and apprenticeships through to diplomas and degrees. In 2012, CIT trained over 21,000 students and delivered 6.5 million training hours.

The staff at CIT do a great job in preparing their students for work in the ACT, and the figures published by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research show that 92 per cent of CIT graduates are employed or in further study after training, compared to 87 per cent nationally. CIT graduates contribute each and every day to the fabric of our city, and it is for this reason that the ACT government is committed to the public provision of vocational education through the CIT.

The budget also provides CIT with \$180,000 to conduct a feasibility study on the provision of vocational education in the south of Canberra. This study will ensure that all people of the ACT continue to gain the best access to CIT programs.

While CIT is the key public-supported training provider, some 40 per cent of its revenue comes from commercial sources, which is likely to grow, in line with other public providers across the country. Over the coming years, CIT will be working closely with ETD to implement the range of measures of the national partnership agreement on schools reform, including new implementation of the unique student identifier and the introduction of entitlement to training up to certificate III level.

It is disappointing that Mr Doszpot continues to paint CIT as an unhealthy workplace. The ACT public service commissioner has done—

Mr Doszpot: That is a load of garbage. I am trying to make you aware of what is going on there.

MS BURCH: He is nattering on in the background. The ACT public service commissioner undertook a very comprehensive review, and that report sits with him. The CIT continues to improve its practice and continues to provide quality education for those in the region.

Mr Doszpot: When is the report coming out?

MS BURCH: Take it up with the commissioner.

Mr Doszpot: That is right, you are just the minister.

MS BURCH: The report does sit with him. I should not respond to the nattering across the chamber. I do apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Porter): Ms Burch, address the chair. Mr Doszpot, stop interjecting.

MS BURCH: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Again, Mr Doszpot spoke on fees around the graphic design course. He stood there and alleged that CIT is hiding from public scrutiny. I think it is an appalling allegation to stand here in this place and say our main public provider is, indeed, hiding from public scrutiny. And for one that claims to be a proud ex-member of the council, all I can say is that with friends like Mr Doszpot I do not know who needs their public enemies. But despite all of the negativity of Mr Doszpot, CIT remains a core part of this government and its education agenda for all our ACT community and for those in the region.

Mr Smyth and Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Smyth, I do not want to warn you at this time of the night on a long sitting night; so please do not push the boundaries. And Mr Doszpot will stop talking across the chamber.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Proposed expenditure—Part 1.21—Cultural Facilities Corporation—\$7,958,000 (net cost of outputs) and \$2,490,000 (capital injection), totalling \$10,448,000.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (8.23): There is some overlap between the Cultural Facilities Corporation and, clearly, the arts portfolio; so I will address a few issues on both. Indeed, of all the groups that appeared, the view of the Childers Group was very interesting. They came and spoke about the arts sector in the ACT, facilities, pay and some very serious issues. And I refer members to pages 168 and 169 of the report.

The Childers Group were very concerned about the future of the arts sector in the ACT. They welcomed some of the initiatives in the centenary year but they then went on to say, firstly, that what they thought was truly lacking was that the government got rid of the Cultural Council without revealing what its successor might be or what it might look at and that, secondly, there was a lack of a long-term vision from the government in regards to the arts. They were talking of a 25-year vision. They saw that that was important and had hoped that something significant might come out of the centenary year with regards to that.

Recommendation 145 asks that the government detail what the successor for the Cultural Council might be, and I am not sure we have got the detail for that. Then recommendations 146 through 151 are a selection of recommendations. The first one is:

The Committee recommends that post-Loxton Review and the Centenary year that the ACT Government develop a vision, a strategy to deliver the vision and an action plan for the Arts in the ACT for the next 25 years ...

This is what the sector is saying. If you are serious about developing the arts in the ACT, it is not a stop/start thing. It is not something you foresee over a year or two. It is about developing that sort of infrastructure that allows the propagation of the arts and you actually have that whole arts community seep into the fabric of the city.

They raised the issue of payments inside the arts sector and recommended that we look at benchmarking the ACT against the other arts sector across the country, and that is recommendation 48. Recommendation 49 links into the conversation about the people who appeared representing the Childers Group and suggested that those staff who work in the arts sector, and who, for instance, are not in the Cultural Facilities Corporation or Arts ACT, have wages lower than the community sector.

When we asked the minister about this, she said that they should just get a Fair Work determination and everything would be hunky-dory. But it is about leadership from the minister. The minister could do these things. The minister could facilitate this. The minister could help the community do that instead of being sort of dismissive and offhand, as she is so often when people ask her to do something or make constructive suggestions.

Recommendations 50 and 51 are about peer assessment on arts projects, and the committee felt it was important that we investigate peer assessment. Recommendation 151 looks at the idea of better linking the private sector with the ACT arts sector.

The Childers Group, again, raised the issue of philanthropy and the arts in the ACT. While there are some notable philanthropists who have put a lot of money into the sector, the problem is there is probably not a lot of philanthropists. There is not a huge pie of either private sector or corporate sector. The couple of largest corporate customers in the ACT or businesses in the ACT are, of course, ACTEW and ACTTAB who do a bit. But it really is about that ability of the private sector. I think you get more out of the private sector. We just need a bigger private sector. There were a whole range of matters raised by the Childers Group.

When we got to the Cultural Facilities Corporation, there were a number of issues that we asked about, including some of those I just mentioned. And we had a range of discussions on CFC's involvement in the centenary celebrations. But beyond that, there was the importance of preserving and continuing that positive contribution so that it does not finish at the end of this year.

I think there were concerns expressed that, yes, maybe it had been a great year. We have had lots of arts events. That is good. But what is the legacy out of it and how do we capitalise on that? And I have raised issues about this before, about how we will measure the true success of the centenary year, and I will continue to do so.

Then we had discussions about CFC and the work that they are doing to incorporate cultural facilities in the city to the lake project and in the city plan. There is some work being done on the new theatre but I note that in the city to the lake plan there is also a site for a future cultural institution. What might that be? Who will fund it? Will it be a federal initiative? Will it be an ACT one? Will it be donated by philanthropists?

We looked at a number of capital works projects, including upgrades to the Canberra Theatre, the Lanyon heritage precinct. We got a breakdown on the funding received and how they make their money. We looked at staffing and we looked at the issue of promoting the Canberra Museum and Gallery and the increase in visitor numbers there.

It is important that the arts sector in this city be fostered, and I think the arts sector of this city is great in a number of areas. You only have to look at the success of the Glassworks at Kingston. I was quite pleased at its success. It was Kate Carnell's idea. She did the initial work and I was the arts minister at the time when the initial funding

came through for that. The Canberra Liberals are very proud of the Glassworks. And last night, the runner-up in the glass awards was there. If you want to see some spectacular contemporary glass, it is something that the ACT arts sector does lead in this county.

Contemporary dance is another area that we are interested in, and there is some money in the budget for Gorman House, which is a good thing. Gorman House is home to many fantastic arts organisations, in particular Quantum Leap. Quantum Leap really has fostered a huge number of the nation's modern contemporary arts dancers and done some amazing work. This year's project was no exception to that. And the incorporation of, particularly, Indigenous dancers from all around the country and, indeed, a dancer from Thailand was quite spectacular. The Playhouse was put to good use. I think Gary Humphries can take the credit for building the Playhouse. That is another Liberal initiative that really has given us a venue where young performers can do their thing. And they do it oh so well.

So it is important. Often the arts community is the difference between a city having an identity and not having an identity. We certainly have a very strong arts community here.

I think the issues raised by the Childers Group are real. I trust that over time, after the cursory answers that have been given in the government's response to the report, the minister gives very serious consideration to the issues raised. These are people who have put their hearts, their souls, their lives and often their personal funds into promoting arts in the ACT and building up the community. And it would be a genuine shame to not reap the value, the potential, the contribution to the economy, the personal development, the health and wellbeing that arts brings to all communities, and make it work very well in the ACT.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella) (8.30): I rise tonight, again, to reiterate a number of our 575 recommendations, those being recommendations 43 through to 54. But in particular, I just want to talk to our recommendation 50, which discusses the linkage of wage levels in the arts sector with those of the community sector. The committee was in agreement on this particular recommendation. But I do want to reiterate that the work that the Tuggeranong Arts Centre has done in linking their wage structure with the new SACS award in the community sector was done in-house from the budget provided by the ACT and the diversification that occurs at the Tuggeranong—

Mr Hanson: Your No 50 is the same as 42.

MR GENTLEMAN: It is No 50. Just to reiterate, it was funded in-house by the management of the Tuggeranong Arts Centre and by its diversification of income, especially with the messengers program and the fresh funk program which have been operating so well for so many years.

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) (8.32): This budget delivers a number of initiatives that will improve services and amenities to

some of our most important cultural art facilities. The improvements are important in ensuring that members of our community and visitors to our city can access a wide range of high-quality cultural experiences. More generally, they support Canberra's role as a creative capital, that it is an exciting place to live and an attractive destination for business and tourism.

The ACT budget includes new funding for a major upgrade of roads in the Lanyon heritage precinct. \$400,000 will be provided to improve the road condition resulting from major storm events in recent years, and the project will facilitate community access to the precinct and maintain public safety.

We continue with upgrades to the Canberra Theatre that will see improvements to meet the high audience and community requirements as the region's main performing arts centre so that it can continue to attract world-class attractions. And while carrying out these important works to keep the centre up to standard, we are also looking to the future provision of a new facility in Canberra.

In 2013, the Cultural Facilities Corporation will work with other agencies on initiatives to plan for the future direction of the city centre and the future provision of cultural facilities, including theatres in Civic. This work will be undertaken within the framework of the city plan and through participation in the city to the lake project.

Reference has been made to the Childers Group. They did raise a number of points, and I will work through them as I have met with the Childers Group until now—certainly over this year and last. But I did want to thank Mr Smyth for bringing the matter of the Childers Group up because it did remind me that at one of their forums the then arts spokesperson showed her regard for arts organisation. I am told, in reference to the debate on the Fitters Workshop, she described Megalo as “the elephant in the room that needed to be roughed up and sent on its way”. If that is the regard that you over there have for community organisations, it is something that I will not be following as an example.

It is evident that many Canberrans already appreciate the benefits of arts and culture in our community. A priority is the establishment of arts hubs for fostering and showcasing the work of arts communities that support artistic excellence and contribute to social and economic outcomes.

This budget will see \$300,000 allocated to progress the development of the Kingston arts precinct, and funding will allow for the completion of a feasibility study to develop a visual arts hub and transform the precinct into a hive of creativity. This budget will also commit \$1 million over two years for capital upgrades at Gorman House, in addition to \$1.5 million for the Ainslie Arts Centre as a music hub.

We are seeing the results of our investment in arts and arts infrastructure. As has been mentioned, upgrades to the Tuggeranong Arts Centre are due to be completed shortly, and upgrades to the Street Theatre are indeed completed. While the procurement design for the second stage of the Belconnen Arts Centre has been completed, you will be pleased to recognise, Madam Deputy Speaker, work will commence in the near future. Of course, in addition, significant works at the Strathnairn and Watson art centres have been completed.

It is without question that our arts community in Canberra is healthy. Certainly there is a high level of participation and, across all forms and disciplines, I think we do punch above our weight and we should be pleased and proud to have such national institutions amongst us.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (8.36): I will be brief and speak to the point Ms Burch made about Megalo to set the record straight. If we were to review *Hansard*, what we would see from Ms Burch's speeches, be it on education or the arts or any matter, is that she spends more than 50 per cent of her speech attacking the shadow minister. She is either attacking Mr Doszpot, attacking Mrs Dunne, attacking whoever she can.

Mr Barr: Lower ratio than your speeches attacking us!

MR HANSON: I hear the interjection from Mr Barr, and I advise him that the government is here to talk about its budget. The government is here to articulate the reason why we should vote for it. It is here to promote its budget and explain its budget. The role of the opposition—maybe it needs some explanation—is to scrutinise the budget and examine it. That seems to be a point lost on the government. It seems we are seeing this trend from those opposite that they pay more regard to us than they do to their own budget. We hear more smear and negativity and attacks and cheap shots from those opposite than we hear about their own budget. That might just be because they have not got much to say or they are a little bit embarrassed by it. I do not know.

The only people who seem to have anything positive to say are, of course, Mr Gentleman and Dr Bourke. I admit they have a lot of positive things to say about the budget. When you refer, as Mr Gentleman did, to the recommendations in their dissenting about the arts section—I think recommendations 40 to about 52—it is very encouraging to see that they have so much nice stuff to say that they said it twice. Maybe Dr Bourke said it and then Mr Gentleman said it, because each one of those recommendations is repeated.

But the reason I stood up is to make very clear what the government's position was and what we said about Megalo. There was a committee inquiry, and up until the 11th hour there was a tripartisan view about what should happen. Madam Deputy Speaker will remember it well. We heard the clear evidence that Megalo should have a purpose-built facility with money appropriated for that in the order of \$4 million and the Fitters Workshop should be used as a multi-purpose facility. We heard the evidence, we wrote a report, and it was unanimous.

Then a mysterious figure arrived at this building in the form of Jon Stanhope. He turned up to this building at the 11th hour, and the very next day Ms Porter came back to the committee with her tail between her legs and went, "I've had a change of heart. It just came to me last night." It was a remarkable coincidence that it came to her the same night that Jon Stanhope had visited the building. Mary Porter changed her mind.

So let us be very clear: the evidence that came from that committee inquiry and that we all agreed on was that Megalo should go in a purpose-built facility at the Kingston arts precinct. I hope they will get a good facility there because there is a lot of money appropriated for that. Fitters Workshop will be left as the great heritage building it is for multi-purpose use, but particularly for music.

Mrs Dunne was an advocate of that; Mrs Dunne was strong in her argument. She advocated that position, and it is now the government's position. So the government has adopted Mrs Dunne's policy. So as much as Joy Burch might like to come in here and spread fear and smear and ridicule with her nasty little jibes, let the truth be on the record—as she smears Mrs Dunne in her absence—Joy Burch adopted Mrs Dunne's policy when it came to Megalo. And that must sting.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Proposed expenditure—Part 1.22—Exhibition Park Corporation—\$425,000 (net cost of outputs) and \$1,159,000 (capital injection), totalling \$1,584,000.

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) (8.41): Exhibition Park is a leading event draw card in the territory and, indeed, for the surrounding region. It is one of our most popular venues. It hosts a wide variety of activities that are popular with locals and tourists alike, ranging from the farmers market to Summernats to the folk festival to the Canberra Show. A series of very popular events occur at Exhibition Park every year.

I am very pleased the 2013-14 budget delivers \$420,000 in capital funding for the construction of a new camping area and for an upgrade to improve the accessibility of the existing car park. Additionally, \$539,000 has been allocated for a variety of capital upgrade projects throughout Exhibition Park to further improve amenity. These works will significantly upgrade existing facilities and help Exhibition Park to attract more events and exhibitions.

The new camping site and the upgrade to the northern car park will allow for greater accessibility to the facility and help EPIC continue its role as a significant Canberra institution. I am very pleased to commend this appropriation to the Assembly.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (8.43): I join the minister in his praise of EPIC. I get emails from a group called the EEAA—the Exhibition and Event Association of Australasia—and on 29 July one of their newsletters announced that Canberra's largest conference centre unveils completed refurbishment. I thought, "Canberra's largest conference centre? I wonder where that could be?" I thought that was the National Convention Centre, but apparently it is not. Imagine my surprise when I clicked onto the story and it was not the National Convention Centre at all; it was EPIC, which is now billing itself as the largest. The gist of the story is that Minister Andrew Barr was going to EPIC to open what they are now branding as the largest

convention centre in the ACT. It is a very a good read, and it culminates with the fact that Minister Barr will be there on the evening for drinks. The story is headed “Canberra’s largest conference centre refurbishment unveiled”, and it states:

Exhibition Park in Canberra (EPIC) has unveiled modern, elegant spaces to provide a welcoming atmosphere for industry and social events available to the local community and interstate business.

The newly refurbished Conference centre provides event planners with an extraordinary opportunity for hosting remarkable business and social gatherings ... The new interior design creates a contemporary and stylish space that includes operable walls, allowing event planners to create enclosed rooms for conference sessions, or broad open spaces for exhibitions and breakout sessions ... Boosting a welcoming new foyer featuring purpose built registration area and conference secretariat, guests will be made to feel comfortable in the main room which accommodates up to 540 people ...

It goes on and talks about various aspects, and it is a very valid place for conventions in the ACT. But it is lovely because it finishes with:

On Monday afternoon—

which was 29 July—

Minister for Tourism and Events, Andrew Barr, MLA officially revealed the new look facility at a ribbon cutting ceremony.

It is interesting that EPIC has now grown to be the largest conference centre in the ACT. I wonder if the management of the National Convention Centre might have something to say about that.

But EPIC is an important part of our economy and fills a number of purposes. The minister ran through some of them, everything from the farmers markets to the Summernats. At last we have some money in there to see the low cost tourist accommodation project move ahead. Certainly the grey nomads and the campervans and the camping grounds would be welcome.

But, again, it highlights that we actually do not have an accommodation strategy for the tourism industry in the ACT. For years I have asked for this and for years the minister says, “But I have got blocks to sell.” He does not understand a sales program versus a strategy to make sure we cover all the bases. Whilst we welcome the work that will be done at EPIC, it highlights that there is still much to be done to facilitate the support required to make sure we as a city get the full benefits from our tourism sector. I look forward to seeing such a strategy detailed by the government in the future.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Proposed expenditure—Part 1.23—Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission—\$526,000 (net cost of outputs), totalling \$526,000.

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) (8.47): The ICRC plays a vital role in the efficient operation of the territory economy. The commission provides advice to government about non-discriminatory access to monopoly or near-monopoly infrastructure, and also advises about price-regulated industries.

Through its work, the commission helps to ensure access to utilities through the application of reasonable pricing. As its name suggests, the commission provides a mechanism for prices to be determined in an independent manner, at arm's length from government, and with the best interests of consumers in mind. This mechanism for providing independent pricing is a vital function performed by the commission.

An efficiently operating market benefits consumers through lower prices and better products and through competition. That is why the ICRC plays such an important role in our local economy. I commend this appropriation to the Assembly.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (8.48): At last, perhaps something we can agree wholeheartedly with the Treasurer on. The ICRC are a very important commission for the ACT, and I think the importance of what they do has been borne out by the draft determination in February and the things that happened subsequently.

Without labouring the point, recommendation 7 on page 17 of the estimates committee report deals with the section on the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission. Recommendation 7, which we have already had a number of discussions and debates about this week, simply said:

The Committee recommends that the Appropriation Bill debate not be brought on until such time as the Treasurer has presented an amended bill and relevant budget documents detailing the effect of the ICRC determination on the ACTEW Water dividend and balance sheet.

Of course, the government has chosen to ignore that, so we are having this debate with documents that are not accurate, that are not up to date, and probably in defiance of the Financial Management Act of the ACT.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Proposed expenditure—Part 1.24—Legal Aid Commission (ACT)—\$10,246,000 (net cost of outputs), totalling \$10,246,000.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (8.50): The Legal Aid Commission is an arm of government set up to ensure that vulnerable people in our community are not disadvantaged when it comes to the need for them to have legal representation.

Notwithstanding the good work of the commission, this government's funding continues to spiral downwards, meaning that less and less people in our community—

those who are least able to afford legal representation and often those most in need of it—are able to access it.

The budget for legal aid services delivered to commission clients by private legal practitioners in 2013-14 is \$240,000 less than the estimated outcome for 2012-13. This represents a fall of 4.3 per cent. The fall in the budget funding also applies to services provided directly to clients by commission staff, with the commission losing more than \$320,000 in funding. Indeed the commission will lose one FTE employee in 2013-14 in order to meet those budget savings. That means only one thing—a lower capacity for service delivery for clients.

The opposition is disappointed. It reflects the government's priorities but we do support the good work of the Legal Aid Commission.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Proposed expenditure—Part 1.25—Public Trustee for the ACT—\$706,000 (net cost of outputs), totalling \$706,000.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (8.51): The Public Trustee for the ACT is one of the ACT's quiet achievers. Its business plan is to work towards becoming financially independent, not reliant upon government funding. Amongst other strategies, it aims to achieve this by growing its client base, taking a proactive approach to marketing and promoting new products and services, and being active in the community through the Greater Good Foundation.

Obviously, issues inevitably will come along to thwart the goals of an agency like the Public Trustee. Usually those are bureaucratic processes, red tape and regulation. They all take up time and money.

For the Public Trustee, as well as for many other charities and community-based not-for-profit organisations across Australia, the distracting issue is the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission recently established by the commonwealth Labor government. That is causing significant issues for the Public Trustee and the organisations that it supports. There are improvements that need to be made when it comes to that organisation, and it is hampering the goal of the Public Trustee and its endeavours to become financially independent.

The Public Trustee is a valued agency that goes about its business in an efficient and effective manner. It is one that we should all be proud of. I commend it for its work.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Proposed expenditure—total appropriated to agencies—\$2,589,298,000 (net cost of outputs), \$1,059,848,000 (capital injection) and \$538,179,000 (payments on behalf of the territory), totalling \$4,187,325,000.

Question put:

That the proposed expenditure 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.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Proposed expenditure—Part 1.26—Treasurer's Advance—\$28,100,000.

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) (8.57): The Treasurer's advance provision for the 2013-14 fiscal year is \$28.1 million. This is slightly below last year's provision of \$31.3 million due to the government's decision in the 2012-13 budget review to lower the Treasurer's advance to 0.67 per cent of total appropriations, not 0.5 per cent of total appropriations.

The Treasurer's advance provision provides the government with flexibility to meet short-term expenditure challenges during the year that are urgent, unforeseen and which inevitably arise. Providing the provisional allocation of Treasurer's advance appropriation in the budget enables agencies to access the fund once certain criteria are met, and without the need for the reallocation of resources.

Information that I tabled in the Assembly earlier will confirm that for the 2012-13 fiscal year the Treasurer's advance was underspent by about \$10.3 million. The provision of \$28.1 million in this budget and tying it to 0.67 of a per cent of total appropriations enables the government to manage those variety of urgent and unforeseen expenditures that do occur, and I think everyone acknowledges they do occur. This is a sensible level to set the Treasurer's advance at, and I commend this appropriation to the Assembly.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (9.00): Of course the important words are "urgent and unforeseen". It is somewhat of a tradition, particularly, as Mr Coe points out, for ACTION to have urgent and unforeseen payments made in every last week of the financial year because they so consistently blow their budgets.

For those members who were not here in 2008, this was a Liberal party initiative to save funds. The government at the time pooh-poohed it, saying, "It's not a saving. You can't halve the Treasurer's advance and call it a saving. That's just not fair. It's not according to Hoyle. It's not kosher." That is why the Treasurer is reluctant to go to half of one per cent.

We are getting there, because it came from one per cent down to 0.75. Now it is 0.67. I see a progression here, and maybe next year he will realise it. It is quite reasonable to say 0.5 of one per cent, because, as he said, they have returned \$10 million this year. So it is a reasonable thing to do, and our decision to put it on the table some five years ago has been vindicated.

Let us get to the urgent and unforeseen. With respect to some of the spending, the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate got \$6.2 million on 17 June, and it is the same old line—to address a range of costs associated with the delivery of ACTION services and the TAMS Comcare premium. Again, ACTION is a big winner in the Treasurer's advance. If the government were to fund it properly—but I suspect, given Mr Coe's relentless pursuit of costs in ACTION, they do not want to actually put the full costs of running ACTION in every year, because they know the subsidy is higher than they like to admit.

The Economic Development Directorate came in on the 24th of the 6th for another \$2.1 million, in this case for sportsground irrigation. Again, how the need to irrigate sportsground is urgent and unforeseen is beyond me. If we are going to take care of—

Mr Barr: It depends on the level of rainfall in the year, doesn't it, amazingly?

MR SMYTH: If you are going to take care of those assets, you need to do it properly. JACS was a big winner again—\$1.7 million on the 24th to provide costs relating to Corrective Services, additional judicial resources for the Supreme Court and the Remuneration Tribunal determinations. Oddly enough, Emergency Services did not come with the begging cup this year, so perhaps a tick there for the first time in a long time because ESA did not come looking for it.

Ms Gallagher: What about Health?

MR SMYTH: Health gets growth funds built in—another wonderful Liberal addition which, when we started it, your party said was a slush fund. I can remember your father, Ms Berry, standing here and saying, "It's a Liberal Party slush fund." There it was, but it has been incorporated into the government.

Justice and Community Safety, not happy with having the begging cup out once, came back for a second bite. On the 24th of the 6th they came back—an additional \$873,000. Rattle that tin at the Treasurer's door. There was Mr Corbell saying, "Please Andrew, I'd like some more." This related to territory legal expenses and compensation payments. Katy is trying not to smile at that vision of Simon Corbell as the Oliver Twist of the ACT Assembly. There he is, cap in hand: "Please sir, I'd like some more." And on it goes.

Of course, not to be outdone, TAMS were a bit cunning this year. Instead of asking for only one hit, they came back for a second bite. So we now have a separate Treasurer's advance for ACTION and then we have another \$1.6 million to address a range of additional costs in 2012-13. They could not even nominate what the additional costs at \$1.686 million were, but there was Shane, in for his chop. He

actually saw Simon going up and asking for more, and said, “If he can have some, it must be in the agreement somewhere. I agree that I get some more money.” And when Shane agrees with himself, he gets what he wants, because he has got the government by the begging cup.

When you have got the begging cup and your name is Shane, you can have everything from a train set—and he will get the train set in the end. The kids will be fighting. You will have to watch out, Katy. The kids will be fighting under the Christmas tree at the end of the year for their cut. Of course Education only came in at \$300,000 this year.

Mr Coe: Is the artful dodger in here somewhere?

MR SMYTH: I looked for the artful dodger, but if you start looking, where do you stop? The Treasurer’s advance is, of course, useful. It is there for urgent and unforeseen—

Ms Gallagher: One night with Brendan Smyth!

MR SMYTH: You will have to speak up and interject louder if you want a comeback. It will have to be much funnier than that.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Doszpot): Mr Smyth, could you please resume your seat for a second. Can we stop the clock? Members, we are reaching the end of a fairly hectic number of sitting days. Let us try and get a bit of decorum into the final few minutes of this. Mr Smyth, please resume.

MR SMYTH: Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. The Treasurer’s advance is important. It is for urgent and unforeseen matters. But what we see are payments that the government comes back regularly for, almost year on year. Perhaps as we progress down to the 0.5 of one per cent, which I am sure will happen—next year it will probably just be down to 0.6, when they are desperate for a few more bob, and Andrew shuts the door on all the begging and blocks his ears and goes, “Blah, blah, blah.” With that, we will support the Treasurer’s advance.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Proposed expenditure—total appropriations—\$2,589,298,000 (net cost of outputs), \$1,059,848,000 (capital injection) and \$538,179,000 (payments on behalf of Territory), totalling \$4,187,325,000.

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) (9.07): I think we can say at this point that the government has accepted Dr Bourke and Mr Gentleman’s recommendation 7—that the Appropriation Bill 2013-14 be passed.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (9.07): Of course, Mr Assistant Speaker, that was not Mr Gentleman’s position in the estimates committee. Mr Gentleman had his chance to

stand up for the government. He had his chance to say, “This estimates report should not go ahead,” but, of course, he rolled—and then rolled and rolled and kept on rolling. He rolled 597 times! He was rolling so fast he rolled backwards a couple of times to roll over again. He said, “I’ll roll over on the arts 20-odd times. Geez, that felt so good, I think I’ll roll again.” And so it continued.

The problem when you keep rolling over like this is that the disorientation cuts in, and suddenly you do not know where you are. So Mr Gentleman moved motions in the estimates committee that, because he was rolling around so much, he abstained from. “I think this is such a good idea that I’ll move a motion. Oh, hang on, no, what did Katy say? No, don’t vote for that. I abstain.”

We had the ridiculous scene in the estimates committee deliberation of a man who knew his own mind—twice! It is interesting that Mr Barr would raise recommendation 7 from the dissenting report.

Question put:

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

Noes 8

Mr Barr
Ms Berry
Dr Bourke
Ms Burch
Mr Corbell

Ms Gallagher
Mr Gentleman
Ms Porter
Mr Rattenbury

Mr Coe
Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne
Mr Hanson
Mrs Jones

Ms Lawder
Mr Smyth
Mr Wall

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Clauses 1 to 11, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Schedule 2 agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill agreed to.

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2013-2014

Debate resumed from 4 July 2013, on motion by **Mr Barr**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (9.11): The opposition will support this bill, and we will support it because, unlike the appropriation bill that we have just voted—

Mr Barr: It pays your salaries!

MR HANSON: I did not get very far, did I, before the sneer the smear, the rancour, the negativity. The new way did not last long, did it? We see the negativity from those opposite. That is to be expected, I suppose.

Anyway, back to where I was. The Office of the Legislative Assembly provides a wide range of services to the Assembly, its members, staff and the broader Canberra community. Amongst other things, it provides independent confidential advice to members, it ensures the proceedings of the Assembly and its committee run smoothly and are reported faithfully, it provides an education program for citizens of all ages as well as for public servants, it ensures citizens have access the meeting and exhibition and reception facilities of the Assembly, it manages an art collection—I noticed a few new pieces up recently—it provides library information, technology and business support services and it provides a number of other functions.

Mr Assistant Speaker, I do not need to tell people who work at the Assembly how much members and our staff appreciate what they do for us. They are dedicated people. They have had to endure the speeches over the last couple of days, probably some better than others. The staff are quiet achievers. We say it every Christmas, but this is another opportunity as well to thank all the staff of the Legislative Assembly for the fine work they do.

A number of works have been done over the last period of time. I note we have a new roof and that that came in under budget and on time. Perhaps there is something that can be learnt by the ACT government.

Ms Porter interjecting—

The relentless interjection from Ms Porter, the relentless negativity, it is tiring. I think it is probably too much for me. In all seriousness, this is a bill we support.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (9.15): I thank the Treasurer for letting me get in a quick word before we finish debate on this bill. The Greens will support the bill. Nonetheless, there are issues with the first home owner grant, and I think that policy requires some further consideration.

Mr Hanson: Mr Assistant Speaker, on a point of order on relevance, the Greens executive member-cum-part-time Speaker appears to have nodded off at some stage and missed a series of votes we had in this place.

Mr Smyth: On the point of order, it is actually in appendix Z that the Greens member can speak on anything at any time.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Doszpot): Thank you, Mr Smyth. I call Mr Barr.

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) (9.16), in reply: Yes, there is some confusion; we are, in fact, debating the Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill. I indicate the government's support for the passage of this legislation. We look forward to the ongoing scrutiny that the passage of this legislation will provide to the activities of the executive. I commend this bill to the Assembly, and we will move on to debate the First Home Owner Grant Amendment Bill.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Estimates 2013-2014—Select Committee Government response

Debate resumed from 13 August 2013, on motion by **Mr Barr**:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

First Home Owner Grant Amendment Bill 2013

Debate resumed from 6 June 2013, on motion by **Mr Barr**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (9.18): Members cannot dispute my enthusiasm to discuss this topic this evening. The observation I simply want to make on the first home owner grant is that, whilst I will be supporting the bill, I think there is work to be done on this policy. It is a situation where the intent of the scheme has perhaps not delivered in all cases the outcome that was intended. I think it warrants some further research.

In what the bill proposes, I think there are some positive elements where it does propose to wind back the scheme so that it is not provided to established houses and instead focuses on new or largely renovated houses. Of course, there is the concern that this scheme has done nothing more than increase the cost of housing—that it has been, to some extent, a waste of public money and has not achieved the objective intended. This is an area that warrants further consideration; I will be continuing to look at this policy area in some detail.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (9.19): I thank Mr Rattenbury for perhaps the lightest moment of the entire week. If you actually merged the debate on the Legislative Assembly bill with this bill, you could see that this building has been substantially renovated and, if we could find someone to buy it, they would now get \$12,500, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: And stamp duty.

MR SMYTH: And stamp duty. Yes, exactly.

On the serious side, we will not oppose the bill. We note the lift of the grant from \$7,000 to \$12,500 and the movement towards including the words “substantially renovated”. But that still excludes probably two-thirds of first homebuyers. The majority of first homebuyers purchase an existing home. What you are saying with this bill is that if you want the grant you have got to move away from your family: “If you are in Tuggeranong or Woden and you want the first home owner grant, you will go to where we say.” That is Molonglo, Gungahlin or outer Belconnen. We think that is a shame. The bill itself really says this to young families. Let’s face it: young families setting out, setting themselves up, normally want to be near the family resources—mums and dads, grandmas and grandpas—so that, as they set out, they remain in their community.

The support that is given through this bill is to the building community, and let’s face it: that is what the minister is on about. The minister said in the *Canberra Times* on 1 June 2013:

So what we’re trying to do here is to have that money assist first home owners, but chase new housing so that it provides a boost to the construction sector.

That also is a worthy thing. But if we are serious about helping first home owners, I think there is a case that simply says we need to leave them to choose where they want to be. What we should do is make sure that we are doing it for the right reason, that we actually assist people with their choice, that we allow them to remain in their community and that we allow them to make their decisions and not have a government telling them where they should live.

With that, let me say that we will not oppose the bill.

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) (9.22), in reply: I thank Mr Rattenbury and Mr Smyth for their support, however reluctant, for this amendment. The government is committed to assisting first homebuyers in the territory, and the delivery of this change to the first home owner grant has allowed us to accelerate the phasing out of conveyance duty, because the money that is saved through the retargeting of the grant has been allocated towards further stamp duty concessions and cuts to stamp duty on all properties.

The homebuyer concession scheme, the rates deferral and pensioner duty concession schemes, together with this amendment, all contribute to improving housing affordability, encouraging the supply of new housing in the city. Ultimately, the only way to put downward pressure on prices and rents is to increase the supply of housing in the city. We simply need to build more houses, and targeting our incentives in this way ensures that there is a real fiscal incentive for new housing to be constructed, and to be constructed all over the city.

There will be new housing in Tuggeranong that will be eligible for both the homebuyer concession and this grant. There will be new housing in the inner areas of the city, in the inner south, in the inner north, in Belconnen, in Gungahlin, in Weston Creek. In all of the areas of this city there will be properties that will be eligible for both the first home owner grant and the homebuyer concession scheme extension. That opportunity will be available right across the city and, importantly, will be delivering new, more environmentally efficient housing across this city as a result of this amendment.

I thank members for their support.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Catholic primary schools choir festival Legislative Assembly—1,000 sittings

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (9.24): I am pleased to bring to the notice of this Assembly yet another worthy education-related community event, the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn Catholic primary schools choir festival. Yesterday, 14 August 2013, the second Catholic primary schools choir festival was held at Merici College, with 250 students and parents and teachers in attendance. The festival is gaining in profile from year to year.

This year, seven schools were in attendance: St Edmund's Junior School, Griffith, ACT; Marist College Junior School, Pearce, ACT; St Mary's Primary School, Moruya, New South Wales; St Bernard's Primary School, Batehaven, New South Wales; St Patrick's Primary School, Gundagai, New South Wales; St Patrick's Parish School, Cooma, New South Wales; and St Francis Xavier School, Lake Cargelligo, New South Wales.

The festival aims to give school choirs a chance to perform publicly to help children enjoy music and singing and gain confidence. Choirs ranged in size from 12 to 42 members, with students as young as six years of age participating in the festival.

The Canberra branch of the Knights of the Southern Cross and the Catholic Education Office have worked over the past nine months to create and organise the event which was hosted by Merici College. Mary Dorrian, representing the Catholic Education Office, performed the duties of master of ceremonies for the event. Jaki Kane, Jenny McCarthy and Marjorie Lindenmayer, three professional judges with many years of involvement with choirs, volunteered their services for the festival and judged each of the performances.

Participants and organisers were very privileged to welcome the Apostolic Nuncio to Australia, His Excellency Most Reverend Paul Gallagher, to the festival, who, together with Loretta Wholley, Principal of Merici College, presented trophies for the first three places plus an encouragement award.

A combined choir comprising students from the participating schools sang two songs to His Excellency, *One Voice, One Song*, and *Evening Prayer*. His Excellency congratulated the students on their involvement in such an uplifting spiritual festival and welcomed the opportunity to spend time with the students and parents.

As shadow minister for education, I offer my congratulations to St Francis Xavier School, Lake Cargelligo, on receiving the encouragement award. St Edmund's junior choir, Griffith, ACT were awarded first prize. St Patrick's Parish School, Cooma received second prize. And third prize went to St Bernard's Primary School, Batehaven.

I would also like to congratulate all the participants, the children who sang in the choirs, the teachers who provided the usual dedication in training the choirs, the parents who encouraged and allowed their children to take part, and the Catholic Education Office and the schools for their support.

Congratulations also go to the Canberra branch of the Knights of the Southern Cross Committee on their dedication and energy, and for bringing this great concept to fruition. The committee comprised Richard Lucas, branch chairman; Mike Cassidy, ACT district chairman; Stephen Blair, branch secretary; and Bob Perkins, event coordinator.

Madam Speaker, this is quite an auspicious occasion today. I think you mentioned earlier that this was the 1,000th sitting day of this Assembly. I have a few points that I would like to share with our colleagues. The First Assembly sat for 145 days, the Second Assembly for 134 days, the Third Assembly for 118 days, the Fourth Assembly for 140 days, the Fifth Assembly for 118 days, the Sixth Assembly for 157 days, the Seventh Assembly for 157 days, and so far the Eighth Assembly has sat for 31 days.

The longest serving staff member of the Legislative Assembly is Roger Malot from Hansard, who has been here for 23 years, while the longest serving MLA was Wayne Berry, for 19 years, five months and 10 days. No Assembly has finished with the same members who were elected at the beginning, although I must say our Liberal Party was quite happy to finish with all of our members in the last election in 2012, with no losses from our membership.

The first MLA was Rosemary Follett and the last MLA sworn in, in this current Eighth Assembly, is our colleague Ms Lawder, who is the 65th member. There have been six Speakers—David Prowse, Roberta McRae, Greg Cornwell, Wayne Berry, Shane Rattenbury and Vicki Dunne, and two Clerks—Mark McRae, who served for 13 years, six months and 29 days, and Tom Duncan, who will be celebrating his 10th year on 25 September 2013. So happy 1,000th birthday to the ACT Legislative Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 9.30 pm until Tuesday, 17 September, 2013 at 10 am.

Answers to questions

Gungahlin—town centre (Question No 137)

Mrs Jones asked the Minister for Economic Development, upon notice, on 8 August 2013:

- (1) What, if any, plans are in place to ensure the economic viability of the Gungahlin town centre.
- (2) What, if any, plans are in place to develop work opportunity within the Gungahlin town centre.

Mr Barr: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) The Gungahlin Town Centre is located in the centre of Canberra's fastest growing district. In addition to the current 47,300 residents, the Government's current Land Release Program will see an increase in the population through the release of the suburbs of Moncrieff and Throsby this financial year, and Kenny and Jacka in later years. The town centre is also set to benefit significantly from the proposed Capital Metro light rail network. This increase in population and transport links will serve to strengthen the viability of the retail, community and office precincts within the town centre into the future.
- (2) Work opportunities in the town centre will be greatly enhanced by the completion of the ACT Government's Office Building, housing over 500 employees, that is due for occupation in the first quarter 2015. In addition, expressions of interest have been sought for a cinema complex and licensed club and hotel, which when constructed will provide considerable employment benefits for the town centre.

Children and young people—neighbourhood playgrounds (Question No 140)

Mrs Jones asked the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, upon notice, on 8 August 2013 (*redirected to the Acting Minister for Territory and Municipal Services*):

- (1) What are the plans for fencing of the children's playground at the southern end of Gungahlin Place.
- (2) When will the playground be fenced.
- (3) What are the plans to install additional play equipment at the playground.
- (4) When will additional equipment be installed.

Ms Gallagher: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) There are no plans for fencing the children's playground at the southern end of Gungahlin Place.

- (2) The playground will not be fenced.
 - (3) There are no plans to install additional play equipment at the playground.
 - (4) Additional equipment will not be installed.
-

Questions without notice taken on notice

Planning—Amaroo

Mr Corbell (*in reply to a question and a supplementary question by Mrs Jones on Thursday, 8 August 2013*): In response to the question taken on notice from Mrs Jones on 9 May 2013 you may recall that at that time I indicated that these properties were the subject of controlled activity orders issued by the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate (ESDD) under the *Planning and Development Act 2007*. Additionally, the lessee's representatives were in the process of seeking a review of ESDD's decisions in the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT).

The Government is committed to acting in the best interests of the local Amaroo community when seeking an appropriate resolution to this long standing issue. Since the making of formal orders in July 2012 my Directorate has been in contact with a number of concerned residents with formally registered complaints, in an effort to address their ongoing concerns and keep them informed of progress in this matter within privacy constraints.

Since 15 May this year I can advise you that the matters in the ACAT have been brought to a successful conclusion that will result in the commencement of development across all eight Amaroo sites in the immediate future and includes two further sites in Gungahlin.

I am pleased to say that the lessee is proactively working with ESDD to complete a range of preliminary tasks necessary to prepare and progress the activities on each site and this includes weekly status updates on these matters to ESDD. It is anticipated that all properties will be completed by mid February 2014 and become available for their intended use.

Roads—safety

Mr Corbell (*in reply to a question by Mr Coe on Thursday, 8 August 2013*): The ACT Road Safety Report Card was intended to provide an overview of the more significant ACT Road Safety Strategy action items that were either completed or substantially progressed in 2012 as well as performance data and road safety issues relating to vulnerable road users and young and novice drivers. The relevance of 2012 is that it was the first complete calendar year under the current ACT Road Safety Strategy.

The action items you have identified are being managed by the Territory and Municipal Services (TAMS) Directorate. I am advised that Action item 14 is an ongoing risk assessment and road safety audit program. Audits have been completed for two arterial roads (Hindmarsh Drive and Erindale Drive) and measures for these locations are being progressed.

Action item 15 involves the implementation of a mass treatment program to address right angle crashes. I am advised that a study has been completed and a works program is currently being developed.

While these actions items are both important, and are both being progressed, it was considered that they did not warrant specific discussion in the 2012 report card.

Transport—light rail

Mr Corbell (*in reply to a supplementary question by Mr Coe on Tuesday, 13 August 2013*): The firms currently engaged by the ACT Government to undertake research on the Light Rail Project are:

1. AECOM Australia Pty Ltd, who are engaged to prepare the Northbourne Avenue Infrastructure Capacity Study; and
2. SMEC Australia Pty Ltd, who are engaged to prepare the Capital Metro Light Rail Integration Study . As part of this study, SMEC have engaged the services of sub-consultant firms MRCagney, architectus, ATKINS, and Taskforce Media.

Transport—light rail

Mr Corbell (*in reply to a supplementary question by Mr Hanson on Tuesday, 13 August 2013*): As set out on page 67 of the Territory's submission to Infrastructure Australia, transit modes and land use options were modelled in the Canberra Strategic Transport Model, which estimates travel demand for different scenarios based on changes to population, employment, retail, road speeds and capacities, and vehicle characteristics.

Traffic operational performance of the options was further assessed using 'Paramics' simulation software, demonstrating transit mode speeds and reliability that arise from the options and impacts on general traffic travel times .