



Debates

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Wednesday, 23 October 2013

Environment—Green Square, Kingston	3655
Planning—proposed Calwell swimming pool	3665
Government—policy.....	3676
Questions without notice:	
Alexander Maconochie Centre—capacity.....	3699
Schools—emergency plans.....	3701
Planning—city plan	3703
Emergency services—resignations.....	3706
Disability services—ACT government role	3707
Economy—Gungahlin	3708
Insurance—third party	3711
Health Directorate—staff numbers.....	3713
ACT Ambulance Service—cardiac monitors	3714
Education—curriculum	3715
ACT Emergency Services Agency—stations.....	3718
Supplementary answers to questions without notice:	
Alexander Maconochie Centre—capacity.....	3721
Schools—emergency plans.....	3721
Government—policy.....	3721
Roads—McBryde Crescent	3734
Roads—Hibberson Street and Hinder Street intersection.....	3741
Sport—ground maintenance	3749
Adjournment:	
International White Cane Day	3760
ACT Emergency Services Agency—stations.....	3761
Canberra—centenary events.....	3762
Belconnen High School—navaratri celebration	3763
Duke of Edinburgh’s award.....	3764
ACT women’s plan—report	3765

Wednesday, 23 October 2013

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

**Environment—Green Square, Kingston
Motion and petition**

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (10.02): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) traders within the Green Square Kingston shopping precinct are appreciative of recent improvements to amenities in the Green Square precinct; and
- (b) the upgraded paving and seating provided by the Government is not being used to full advantage because of the lack of grassed spaces for families with children to play on; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

- (a) take note of the petition circulated by the traders, residents and businesses that outlines the impact that the loss of grassed areas is having on the area; and
- (b) work with local Kingston businesses to enhance the space for families in Green Square through the return of grassed areas.

The motion I bring forward today goes to the heart of what the business of the Legislative Assembly should be and what the role and function of us as MLAs should be. It is about listening to the needs and desires of local ratepayers, of Canberra families and of small business owners. It comes as absolutely no surprise to me that as late as this morning the Kingston traders have been advised the government will accede to their request for grassed areas.

It is a victory for common sense. It is a victory for the wishes of Canberra families and Canberra businesses. I hope that that is what pushed the government to change its mind. I hope it was not the fear of negative publicity or the nearly 900 names that are on a petition I wish to table. It is a victory, but I think it is instructive to note what it took, and how long it took, for the government to listen.

This was an issue that has been brought to the attention of government by a group of business owners and their customers. It is an issue that has been pressed for over six months without any real engagement by government and no real explanation as to why their concerns were not considered. The issue is one of amenity and reputation

for Canberra. We pride ourselves on our natural credentials and our leafy suburbs, but we are in danger of losing that reputation and becoming just another glass and steel infill.

Canberra has an enviable reputation as the bush capital. The original Burley Griffin design intended that areas be linked with open space and inner city green areas. While cities around Australia and around the world are facing ever-increasing pressure for space and especially green space, Canberra has, at least until recent times, retained a sense of space and community.

City planners throughout history have never underestimated the importance of open space and parkland. Indeed, the most beautiful cities around the world are known not for their abundance of inner city apartments or just for mega skyscrapers, but for their parks. In London it is Hyde Park and St James's Park; in New York it is Central Park; in Paris it is the Jardin du Luxembourg. There is Stanley Park in Vancouver and the Summer Gardens in St Petersburg.

Here in Australia, we have Centennial and Hyde parks in Sydney. There is Kings Park in Perth and in Canberra we have our own Commonwealth and Glebe parks. In Canberra our early planners showed great vision in ensuring that local communities had small parks nestled amongst houses. In just about all our suburbs we have streets that wrap around a green space and provide a community focal point for Australia Day picnics, for local family celebrations and for neighbourhood get-togethers.

Over the last few decades, suburbs have developed and shopping centres have matured, and with that has come Australia's embrace of a coffee culture. Here in Canberra, we take our coffee seriously and finding places where we can relax over a coffee with friends, business colleagues and family is important. Nowhere is this spending time having a coffee more pronounced than in Manuka and Kingston—whether it is mid-week mornings with mothers and young children, a quick catch-up with a friend or a business contact, or retirees relaxing. Sitting around The Lawns of Manuka is a very popular pastime.

In years gone by, so too was sitting around the lawns at Green Square, Kingston an enjoyable way to relax and a great meeting point for friends and colleagues alike. But then we had the big dry. We can all remember the serious impact that the drought had on eastern Australia from 1997 to 2009. Here in Canberra we have always been known as the green capital and we did not really have experience of such prolonged dry periods. For any tourist arriving in Canberra, the view down Northbourne Avenue was always one of lush grass and trees. With the onset of the drought, water became scarce and watering became an unaffordable and unsustainable luxury.

The government at the time had some tough decisions to make. We either had paddocks of dust or we made alternative arrangements. Many ovals in Canberra were shut down at this time to save water and to prevent injuries from playing on hard surfaces, and to this day some remain closed. We have Canberra junior sporting teams still struggling to get local ovals like they once had for team practice.

One of the areas that suffered from lack of watering was the grass in Green Square. However, the government obviously recognised the social importance of the area and

they simply could not let it just go to dust. In April 2010 the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate undertook landscaping work in the Green Square area. They replaced the irrigated grass, which had not been irrigated for some time, with drought-tolerant plants and shrubs. They installed some new brick and gravel paths and provided a timber play structure for children. In all, the landscaping cost about \$145,000.

Interestingly, this occurred in the middle of what was supposed to be a community consultation process for the Kingston centre master planning project. This consultation process, undertaken by Purdon Associates, extended from August 2009 to September 2010 and was intended to engage stakeholders with an interest in the Kingston centre, to identify key issues important to the community and to identify community attitudes towards the type and form of development that might occur in the area.

The report's key messages from the first stage of consultation were, *inter alia*, that the centre was highly valued for its village character, vibrancy, diversity of activities, amenities and good coffee; that the outdoor spaces were well established and leafy but could be more user friendly; and that Green Square could be greener. The Kingston master plan was published in June 2011. One of the comments quoted in that report was from a resident who said:

Kingston must not lose the Green Square which has always been the best feature of the Kingston Shopping Centre. I have enjoyed the green square as a local resident since birth (55 years) and wish that all future generations could experience the natural feel that it has given the centre.

So the issue of keeping the village atmosphere of Kingston and Green Square were well known to government. In fairness, perhaps they thought that upgrading some seating and putting in paths was enough to keep it that way. But in reality the supposed upgrade had the opposite effect. The loss of grassed areas meant that there was nowhere for families to sit with their children, nowhere for children to run around and play while their parents had breakfast, read the papers and had a coffee.

In April this year a group of 20 business owners wrote to the Chief Minister outlining their concerns about the lack of amenity in Green Square. They pointed out, as many patrons and customers had pointed out to them, that the ever-so-efficient drought-tolerant grasses were not conducive to children playing in the area and had a direct effect on declining retail activity. They noted that now the drought had broken The Lawns in Manuka—the equivalent coffee hub to Green Square—were once again restored, that people felt very much at home there and that they wanted a similar environment in Kingston.

I might add at this point that we have people who were concerned with that particular activity—Socrates Kochinos and a lot of his colleagues from Kingston—here this morning. We welcome them here this morning. We have a number of our friends here: Pawl Cubbin, Gabi Radinger and Omar Muscat. We welcome them here this morning.

In addition, they ask that the area around the big tree—so we are talking about Kingston, Green Square—including a brick wall outside the Durham pub, be looked at, as the brickwork was starting to fall apart. They also added that the provision of cigarette butt containers would be useful, as complaints had been made about the number of butts littering the area. Finally, they sought a meeting with the Chief Minister to discuss all their concerns in person.

The response from the Chief Minister in effect reiterated that the works done in 2010 would stay, with further work planned to replace the old wooden seats with 13 new steel slatted seats and new bin shrouds designed to accommodate cigarette butts. The letter also pointed out that the area was regularly cleaned, toilets inspected and cleaned daily, and that the cleaning schedule was consistent with other group shopping centres across Canberra. Additionally, the Chief Minister advised that the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate was currently developing a draft variation to the territory plan in relation to the Kingston group centre and that there would be an opportunity for further consultation.

The business owners believed that the restoration of the green space to Green Square would be an ideal centenary activity; so when there was no opportunity offered for a face-to-face meeting, they wrote again in August of this year, agreeing that the paving and seating were attractive additions but confirming that patrons continued to ask where the green grass was. In this letter the business owners put a proposition to government. It was as follows:

1. We cover the cost of buying new grass and planting it, adding Hydra cell to the soil to help maintain water retention and cultivate. We would do so with the support of the professional contractor involved in the original re-planting, who has written us to offer his support for free.
2. We cover the cost—by way of a levy among business owners—of maintaining the grass (fertilising and mowing it). We would be prepared to give levy funds to the government, should the government prefer to handle these works.
3. The sprinkler system already in place continue to be used to water the area (as it now does almost every day—therefore, no change is required here).

In that letter they also advised that the repairs promised for May had not yet been addressed and that the tree roots were now lifting the pavers, creating a trip hazard. The promised steel seating had also not yet been delivered.

Their letter concluded with a plea that a response be forthcoming before the end of the first week in September so that the work could be completed before the end of the year. Only late yesterday—in fact, it was received early this morning—were the traders notified that the offer to grass the area would be accepted. The letter had been lost, apparently, within TAMS.

We often bemoan the fact that people want to rely too much on government to do things rather than try and help themselves. But here we have a community that had been proactive. They had consulted with government and the community. They had

responded to consultants' requests and they had devised their own vision for their area. They had offered to do so and pay for the work themselves.

I now seek leave to present a petition on behalf of the Kingston business owners, shoppers and residents with nearly 900 signatures, all supporting the greening of Green Square.

Leave granted.

MR DOSZPOT: I present the following paper:

Petition which does not conform with the standing orders—Green Square, Kingston—Restoration of grassed areas—Mr Doszpot (880 signatures).

This petition strikes at the heart of the matter. The petition draws to the Assembly's attention the recent improvements in amenities but notes the declining patronage and activity due to loss of grassed areas. So the petition has been successful even before it is tabled. Of course, the devil could be in the detail. I know that businesses will be anxious to know the time frame. They will be anxious to know exactly what they will be liable for, but it is a start.

Clearly the government will have no difficulty in supporting this motion. My only regret is that it took a lot of hard work by a lot of Canberra businesses who frankly had enough to worry about in this uncertain economic climate without having to battle their government. All the businesses wanted was to get the shopping precinct invigorated and made more attractive, to get families back to the square where they once shopped and relaxed. As Pawl Cubbin, from First Floor, told the *Canberra CityNews*:

Other traffic shopping areas, including The Lawns in Manuka, are green, without any issues. What can't Green Square become green once more? It doesn't make any sense.

Gabi Radinger, who with her husband Erich owns Radinger Jewellers and who has been a business owner in Kingston for 28 years, knows from firsthand experience that the changes the government made to Green Square have affected its personality and, just as importantly, business volume. She said:

We need to breathe life back into the area for everyone's sake. We're no longer in drought, and the shrubs are now an overgrown mess. The gardens aren't maintained and the raised planter boxes have nothing in them. The space isn't inviting and it can't be used any more. Some businesses have closed as a result. Kingston needs to be revitalised.

Chief Minister, the issue cannot be stated any clearer. Your government's obstinate refusal to engage was bewildering. If there was any reason why The Lawns at Manuka could remain as a lawn but that for Kingston lawns were not possible, then the traders deserve an explanation. As I understand it, Chief Minister, you have given that explanation. I hope you will see fit to support the motion that has been brought here this morning.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for Ageing) (10.16): As the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, I will be taking the lead on this, although the Chief Minister will also speak shortly. I thank Mr Doszpot for putting forward this motion today and I welcome the opportunity to speak about Green Square in Kingston. The motion calls on the government to take note of the impact that the loss of grassed areas is having on the area and for the government to work with the local Kingston businesses to enhance the space for families by returning grass to the area.

Some Kingston traders have proposed returning some grassy areas to Green Square, and this was accompanied by the generous offer by the traders to fund this reinstatement of grass and the associated irrigation infrastructure changes that may be required. I take this opportunity to thank the Kingston traders and other people in the area for their words of support of the recent government investments to continue to improve Green Square by funding upgrades to the paving, new seating and the general redesign of the square in 2010, at a cost of around \$150,000. Community support for capital improvement projects is, of course, always appreciated, as we see with the various shopping centre upgrades going on across the city.

I will take a moment to reflect on the reasons Green Square in Kingston was redesigned away from grass in 2010 and replaced with what was considered to be a more robust design, which included drought-proof plants. Mr Doszpot has elaborated on some of the history, but I will add to that by noting Territory and Municipal Services, which manages Green Square, had significant resourcing issues with maintaining the grass due to the high compaction rates from constant pedestrian traffic and limited ability to irrigate during the drought as the ACT government needed to critically assess which areas could remain irrigated due to water shortages. The grassed areas also needed to be fenced off for extended periods during the grass establishment phase, which was a challenge in itself.

Extensive public consultation was undertaken during the design stage of Green Square, and there were certainly mixed views, with some people wanting to retain the grass whilst others felt the landscape could be changed. In the end it was agreed to redesign Green Square's public realm with a design which retained the green feel of the area through the installation of low-growing, green strappy-leaved plants and which paid particular attention to sustainability and water sensitive design. The design also considered ongoing maintenance costs, improved landscape amenity, the provision for passive recreation, a relaxing atmosphere for visitors and an opportunity for interactive public space through the funding of the landscaping of the raised garden beds and reverting them to grass whilst maintaining the new walls and other landscape features.

That is the history, and that was the basis on which the decision was taken by the then Minister for Territory and Municipal Services. Whilst there obviously were differing views, I think there was some rationale to that decision making. That said, as members may recall, my colleague Ms Le Couteur made a number of comments in this place at the time and I certainly had discussed it with my colleagues in the party

room. It would be fair to say that in 2010 the Greens favoured retention of the grass, and Ms Le Couteur made those comments on a number of occasions. So I find myself in an interesting position.

Since then we have seen what has proved to be a good and successful model—the installation of the raised grassy beds in the city. I think this has demonstrated a practical solution to the situation. The issue at Kingston was that people walking across the grass was one of the key threats to it and it was difficult to maintain. We see it across the city where desire lines form in grass and grass gets trampled and ends up with great big tracks across it, which is pretty unattractive on the whole. The raised beds in the city just across the road from the Assembly—I am sure most members have seen them—perhaps provide us with a good example of how we might proceed in Kingston.

The issue now seems to be that the traders in the area have written to the government with a very generous offer. As the Chief Minister will speak about more, no doubt, she has now responded. She came to see me earlier this week, and there seems to have been some sort of administrative error with that letter. I am sure there will be cynics about that at this point, but the cold, hard reality is that sometimes things get dropped in government and things go to the wrong place. That certainly appears to have been the case here.

Anyway, the Chief Minister came to see me earlier this week and we agreed that working with the traders to reinstall the grass in Kingston in some way was an appropriate way to proceed. So the letter back includes a direct contact point to one of the senior staff in TAMS so we can get that process underway. That goes to your question, Mr Doszpot, about time frames and not just disappearing again. We have given the traders a direct contact in order to ensure that that can be taken up as quickly as possible.

Some design work needs to be done to have a think about the best way to proceed to avoid the earlier problems of tracking across the grass, but there is an in-principle agreement to return to the grassed areas. To that end I have circulated an amendment to Mr Doszpot's motion which seeks to update it since Mr Doszpot first circulated his motion a couple of days ago and before some of these matters came to light. I think it largely reflects Mr Doszpot's original motion.

I have proposed an amendment to paragraph (1)(b), which I think is inconsequential—it is a matter of perspective. I propose to insert paragraph (1)(c), which notes that the government has accepted the offer. That is an update since Mr Doszpot drafted his motion and it is appropriate to reflect in there. Paragraph (2)(a) remains as Mr Doszpot moved it, and paragraph (2)(b) is largely as Mr Doszpot moved it but reflects the fact that the government will now work with the traders and the business owners in the Kingston area on a collaborative process to get this done and to combine the resources of government and the businesses in the area to get this moving along. My amendment simply reflects some of those updates, and I hope we can find agreement on that in the Assembly. Therefore I move:

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

“(1) notes that:

- (a) traders within the Green Square Kingston shopping precinct are appreciative of improvements to amenities in the Green Square precinct undertaken by the Government in 2010 following a program of public consultation;
- (b) the upgraded paving and seating provided by the Government provides further potential for community use; and
- (c) the Government has accepted the offer by some of the Kingston traders to fund the reinstatement of grassed areas and ongoing maintenance costs of the grass in the future; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

- (a) take note of the petition circulated by the traders, residents and businesses that outlines their views on the impact that the loss of grassed areas is having on the area; and
- (b) work with Kingston businesses to determine the best use of the spaces in Green Square, and how to better ensure they are better utilised by the community.”.

Having moved that amendment I propose that we go forward. Despite some delay and obviously some evident frustration—we can see that in the media reports that have come out this morning—I think we have a positive way forward, and I look forward to TAMS working collaboratively with those who have made the offer to get this happening in Kingston.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education) (10.24): I rise to briefly speak to the amendment, which the government will support, and explain the circumstances particularly around the lateness of the reply. The Minister for Territory and Municipal Services has covered the history adequately of what led to the decision to redesign Green Square back in 2010. Some of the decisions were taken mindful of the extreme drought that we were experiencing at that time. Part of our job is to respond to the situation of the time. The time now is that we have secured our water supply. We are not experiencing extreme drought, and the Kingston traders have put a proposal to me that, on the surface looks very reasonable in terms of changing the decision that was taken in 2010 and responding to the concerns of the traders that have been presented to me.

I have written to Gabi overnight after discussing the letter with my ministerial colleague. I apologise for the fact that a letter that was written to me on 29 August was not responded to in a timely fashion. It left my office on 29 August for advice to be provided to me and a response to be drafted. I wanted to understand the proposal outlined to me and what TAMS’s view of that proposal was. It certainly looked to me to be very reasonable. I was only alerted to the fact that we had not replied when the *Chronicle*, or it might have been the *CityNews*, contacted me last week to ask about my response to that letter. That set off a process of going to find the letter. It was

uncovered, and the response back actually recommended that we not agree to the Kingston traders' proposal, and a letter was drafted accordingly. Again, my reading of the Kingston traders' proposal was that it was reasonable, but because I was receiving different advice from the directorate I needed to discuss with the minister responsible his own views on that before I changed the letter of response quite significantly. When it was made clear that Shane Rattenbury was very agreeable to the proposal as it was outlined, I was in a position to respond to the Kingston traders, and that occurred yesterday.

That is just a long-winded explanation of what happened. I apologise; it should not have happened. I try to respond to people within two weeks, but I did not in this circumstance. Nonetheless, it is a debate that is welcome in the parliament, and it is appropriate that we talk about it today.

The government will put in place a process to work with the Kingston traders around a timetable for those changes to occur and what needs to happen. There will be issues of costs and how those are managed. I note that the offer from the Kingston traders is basically to cover the costs of replacing the material and a levy for ongoing maintenance. Obviously that will take time to work through, so we need to work out who is doing what and how to proceed. I do not think that is insurmountable and, as Minister Rattenbury explained, I have asked Fay Steward in the TAMS directorate to be the contact for the traders in that regard.

I look forward to being briefed on how this is progressing. When we go back and have a look at the history of what led to the decision, we were operating in very different times. But part of our job, as I said yesterday during the marriage equality debate, is to look at what is happening today and make sure what is happening today is current with community needs and expectations. That is why I am very happy to support this motion with the amendment today.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.28): It was not my intention to speak today, but now we have seen this welcome backflip from the government I want to rise in this place to congratulate Mr Doszpot on forcing this issue and the traders for their activism on this issue over a period of time. It seems Mr Doszpot has had some success in this place with getting the government to backflip on a number of issues—sports grounds, disability services in schools and, most notably, when he quite literally saved the Shepherd Centre, a very important facility for people with hearing disabilities. I congratulate Mr Doszpot on his quiet achievements that will make a big difference to people's lives and, in this case, to the businesses at Kingston.

This should never have occurred. The businesses were quite vocal in 2010, we were vocal in 2010. I spoke at that stage to a number of the traders who were quite willing to join with the government to make sure that the grass stayed at Green Square. It was evident that this was a very poor decision. It was talked of in this place, as Mr Rattenbury highlighted, by Caroline Le Couteur. She raised this as an issue, but it was ignored by the government and the government steamrolled ahead. Those warnings have proved to be correct and we have a situation where Green Square is going to be essentially restored back to what should have been left there in the first place.

This has been at great expense and will continue to be at great expense to the traders. I do not know what business they have lost. No doubt, business has been lost in that place. I know from personal experience that that was a unique space in Canberra. People would go to the cafes and bars and enjoy the fact that they could go somewhere where there was grass, and the loss of that had a big impact. I used to go there with my kids so they could run around. Once the spiky grass was put down, I no longer went there with my kids because they simply did not want to run around in the spiky grass—they could not.

We know that; we know the traders have fought long and hard. It is a shame the government has been so obstinate that it takes petitions, activity in the media and motions in this place before we see these backflips. It is not because the government is reacting to good policy but to pressure in the media. It is a damn shame, to be honest, Madam Speaker.

Ms Gallagher: Simply not true, Jeremy.

MR HANSON: The facts bear it out. It is the truth, because you can plot what happened in this case. The traders know exactly what happened. They know this was the government policy of 2010. Warnings in this place from the Liberal Party and the Greens and from traders were ignored. It is only the pressure from the media that has resulted in these changes. I will not go into the shambolic response from the government to it.

We welcome the government's action on this. It is just a shame that, as in so many cases—and I have to say, in so many cases led by Mr Doszpot—it takes that sort of pressure for action like this to be instigated. I congratulate Mr Doszpot. I welcome the fact that the government is now going to act, but I am disappointed that the traders of Kingston have had to suffer and work so hard to get this restored. I hope the government now acts swiftly and effectively to make sure the damage they have done is remediated as quickly as possible.

MRS JONES (Molonglo) (10.32): I simply want to add to that. Thanks to Steve for raising this issue and to the traders for actively seeking a resolution. Things can be achieved through this place. I want to thank Shane and Katy for putting their effort into this—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Jones, I ask you to refer to members by their formal names, please.

MRS JONES: Yes, I apologise. I did not write my speech this time! Thanks to Minister Rattenbury and the Chief Minister for their involvement. We will be keeping an eye on the timeliness of this, and I am sure Mr Doszpot will be as well. For traders, every week and every month that fewer people are coming through their doors are difficult for them to live with. I thank all involved. We hope it will be resolved in a timely fashion.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (10.33): I also welcome, in addition to Mr Hanson's words, the response from the Chief Minister and Minister Rattenbury in regard to the

motion. I did not get a chance to see Mr Rattenbury's amendment until I was actually delivering my motion here this morning. That is the first I saw of the amendment, but we have no problem with accepting the amendment to the motion. Chief Minister, I want to highlight one thing to you. I appreciate your comment—

MADAM SPEAKER: Through the chair please, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Madam Speaker, through you, I call on the Chief Minister to meet with the community. I met with 32 traders, I think. The traders are the most enthusiastic residents of the small community of Kingston. They are very enthusiastic and very keen to get on with fixing the issues that have confronted them for a while. I suggest the Chief Minister actually has a look at the community to see why they are so keen and so passionate about their community. Hopefully, with this new direction that has now been initiated by the Chief Minister and Mr Rattenbury, they can now attend to fixing the issues and the time lines—I think that is still critical. I appreciate the amendment to the motion, but one of the things still missing is the will to move it forward a bit quicker. But I am sure we can count on Minister Rattenbury to ensure that happens, and I am sure the Chief Minister will keep an eye on that as well. Madam Speaker, we accept the amendment to the motion and we hope we can vote accordingly.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Planning—proposed Calwell swimming pool

MR WALL (Brindabella) (10.35): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the benefit a \$4.8 million indoor swimming centre built and operated by Kings Swim would bring to residents of Tuggeranong;
- (b) that this project would result in the creation of over 70 jobs for the ACT, in addition to jobs created by the construction of the facility;
- (c) that this project anticipates providing facilities that would cater for 3 500 swimmers per week;
- (d) the good faith and financial investment made so far by Kings Swim in the Calwell swimming centre project;
- (e) the \$118 400 already paid by Kings Swim to the ACT Government in commence and complete fees;
- (f) the ongoing financial impost placed on Kings Swim by ACT Government commence and complete fees; and

- (g) that the Calwell Kings Swim project is shovel ready, pending payment of an additional commence and complete fee in excess of \$300 000; and
- (2) calls on the Treasurer to waive all fees relating to an extension of time to commence construction on Block 33 Section 787 in Calwell, for the purposes of ensuring the Kings Swim Centre proceeds.

Kingswim are a family-owned and operated business. They currently own and operate the Macgregor swim school and manage two other swim schools in the ACT, one at Majura Park and one at Deakin. They also have interests in other centres throughout Victoria and New South Wales. Kingswim centres provide indoor swimming pool facilities for learn to swim classes, aqua aerobics and hydrotherapy, as well as lane space for swim squads and space for the general public to swim.

In 2006 Kingswim, headed up by Mr Phil King, identified a need in Tuggeranong for an additional pool. This presented an opportunity for the King family to expand their business. Subsequently Kings acquired a block of land in Calwell, specifically block 33 section 787, for the sole purpose of building and operating a specialised aquatic facility for the Tuggeranong valley, a facility that would be privately owned and operated yet provide significant benefit to the community through affordable swim facilities, increased employment and a significant financial injection into the ACT economy during the construction phase.

As has been the case for many family-owned businesses across the country over recent years, Kingswim has experienced its fair share of financial hardship and faced some significant financial hurdles. As a result of cost overruns in establishing the swim centre in Macgregor and an unforeseen tightening of finance availability—more commonly known as the GFC—Kings were unable to secure finance to build the Calwell swim centre. As a result of these changes in circumstances, Kings have had to put their plans for the Calwell project on the backburner. In fact, Kings have not built a swim centre since 2007.

Over the ensuing years Kings have explored multiple options to ensure that the block of land in Calwell is developed in line with the territory's planning rules. Given that the Kingswim business did not have the required capital nor could they secure the finance to fund their project, options were explored to sell the block. A sale was almost secured to a local health cooperative but it fell through at the last minute.

Having been unable to sell the land, the Kings family took the difficult decision to try to sell a portion of their business in the hope that that would raise sufficient capital for the project to continue. The Kings brand is based upon a philosophy of delivering quality swimming facilities, and they were most definitely looking for an investor that would be willing to take up that tradition. Unfortunately, as a result of the uncertain economic climate, a sale of the Kings business did fall through. Due to the unintended delays of the project, Kingswim have had to pay the ACT government almost \$118,400 in commence and complete fees.

Recently the King family have secured the sale of their established swim centres and are now in a position to build the Calwell centre. A local builder has been contracted,

plans are approved, pending one thing: payment of yet another commence and complete extension fee. However, this time it is in excess of \$300,000. Having this significant cost imposed significantly impacts the viability of the swim centre and Mr King has expressed that if the fee is to be imposed then his family simply cannot afford to pursue this project.

Commence and complete fees have been the subject of some discussion and comment in recent times. Last year, at an industry event, the Treasurer, Mr Barr, spoke publicly about his plans to abolish the controversial fees. However, this does not seem to have occurred.

More recently, in an answer to a question on notice asked by my colleague Mr Smyth in relation to land banking and the effects fines have on the perceived problem, Mr Corbell said:

Commence and complete fees are having an impact in encouraging developers to develop their land in a timely manner. The government receives many complaints from members of the community who are concerned about undeveloped land ... The existence of commence and complete fees acts as a spur to these property owners to realise that they need to develop their land. It is not fair for everyone else in the community to do the hard work financially and physically of developing land in a new suburb only to have a block opposite sit vacant because the person, for whatever reason, is not willing to develop their site.

In the case of the Kingswim proposal for the Calwell site, it is not that the proponents have been unwilling to proceed with the development; they simply have been unable to. The rationale behind these fines is to prevent land banking by developers. But by taking such a big stick approach, we are preventing investment in the ACT. Many business owners are simply not prepared to take the added risk that these fees present, in this case fees that are simply prohibitive to small business. In a letter from Mr King requesting these fees be waived, he says:

The key driver behind the ACTPLA late commencement fees is the prevention of land banking and to ensure that the community gets access to facilities and resources. I stress that the Calwell land site is the only site we have had on our books since 2007. The King family has not land banked. Fact is we have not been able to fund any development since 2007. Truth is if I had the \$ in 2007 the pool would have been built.

The argument that the King family purchased the land in Calwell simply to land-bank does not add up. The land was purchased in early 2006 for about \$570,000. Add to this interest payments on the loan, rates that have been paid over the past seven years and the late commencement penalty that has already been paid and the cost is now in excess of \$1.5 million. Today the land is valued at approximately \$850,000. But remember that, like any asset, it is only worth what someone is willing to pay for it, and the block has previously been unable to be sold.

It is my understanding that the application of commence and complete fees has at times been ad hoc. There are some sites that simply have not had the fees levied and

there have been a number of fees waived by the Treasurer. It is hard to argue that the enforcing of these fees will bring greater benefit to the community than the ensuing facility that would be built in this case. The Kings' business case shows that, when built, the Calwell facility alone would employ more than 70 staff and in the first instance provide opportunities for numerous Canberra businesses during the construction phase.

The investment made by Kings into the ACT would total in the vicinity of \$4.8 million. Demographic studies undertaken by Kings tell us that through the provision of learn to swim programs, fitness programs, hydrotherapy services and more advanced swimming programs and squad training, the Kingswim centre at Calwell has the potential to provide services to over 3,500 pool users per week. These are Canberra residents on a daily basis utilising a private facility.

This facility would undoubtedly alleviate pressure on limited places available at other pool facilities in Tuggeranong. I have it from first-hand experiences, talking to constituents, that many of the swim squads in Tuggeranong do struggle to acquire lane time at Tuggeranong in peak times, not to mention often a wait list to access learn to swim classes for young children. There is a definite demand for this kind of facility in Tuggeranong.

The original time frame set down for this proposal at Calwell, had it begun construction in the middle of the year as planned, would have seen the centre up and running for the beginning of the 2014 school year. This project remains shovel ready, there is a local builder that has been appointed and construction is expected to take about six months from commencement.

In closing, I urge all members of this Assembly, particularly my Brindabella colleagues opposite, to support this motion and by doing so actively support the construction of a much-needed pool facility in the Tuggeranong valley, a facility that will provide ongoing benefits for the wider community for many years to come.

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) (10.43): I thank Mr Wall for raising the motion. I can confirm to the Assembly that I have received an application for a waiver of fees under section 131 of the Financial Management Act. I received this request earlier this month, I believe on 8 October.

The request will be assessed under the criteria for waiver under the Financial Management Act. It is undergoing active consideration at this point, and for obvious reasons I will not be providing any further comment on that consideration and will make an announcement in due course.

I understand that Mr Rattenbury has a series of amendments that I will foreshadow the government's support for and thank Mr Wall for raising the motion.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (10.44): I thank Mr Wall for bringing forward this motion today. I think that he has identified an important issue and there is no doubt

that there is significant value of the pool project to the community of Calwell and the broader Tuggeranong area. We have certainly had discussions before about the supply or otherwise of pools in Tuggeranong. I do not intend to rehash that, but I think that there is undoubtedly value in this.

Certainly the Calwell Residents Association, whom I have met with, and the Tuggeranong Community Council have been strong advocates for bringing new businesses to the shops at Calwell. I imagine they are quite supportive of this project and I have no doubt there will be a high demand for a swim school. Whilst Tuggeranong perhaps is not so much these days known as the nappy valley, there is no doubt there are still many young families in the Tuggeranong region, and a facility like this will undoubtedly be of value to the community.

I certainly think that there is an issue with the quantum of commence and complete fees. It certainly seems that when you put together the two numbers that Mr Wall has identified in his motion, over \$400,000 in fees would undoubtedly have a considerable impact on what is a nearly \$5 million project. I think the proportion and the quantum are quite evident to anybody who stops and has a look at that. So I certainly agree with that concern.

I think it is one of those cases where the intent of commence and complete fees is correct. The intent is to stop land banking, and that is quite an appropriate policy position to be taking. But clearly there are circumstances—and I have had a couple of people come and see me who have raised concerns about particular cases—where perhaps that broad and good policy intent of the particular circumstances has meant that there is a good reason to remit those fees or the policy has not actually worked.

This goes to some of the points in my amendments, which are coming. I am sorry for the late circulation, colleagues; it has been one of those mornings. But one of the things that I have identified in my amendments is a call for the government to undertake a review of the operation of commence and complete fees, because I have had other constituents approach me about this and express their concern, and I think it would be a timely thing to do to look at whether the system is operating effectively and to consider whether there are improvements that could be made or adjustments to the implementation of the fees.

Of course, there is always the safety valve of the discretion of the Treasurer to waive fees in these circumstances. I do not intend to particularly comment on the merits of this particular one today, whether or not the Treasurer should waive the fees. I think that the case has been set out. I am always mindful—and it is something that I see even more so, operating as the minister—that there are often great complexities to some of these stories. And I do not wish, with the limited knowledge that I have of this individual case, to form an absolute view in this place.

I think it is problematic for the Assembly to come in and make particular calls for particular projects to be given a waiver. I think that is an appropriate discretion for the Treasurer to take. So that is where my amendments go. I broadly have not touched too much of Mr Wall's motion but have simply omitted clause (f) and noted that on 8 October Kingswim made a written application for the remission of outstanding commence and complete fees relating to the block in Calwell.

Then I have omitted the current clause (2). As I say, I do not think it is appropriate for the Assembly to do this. I am certainly not in a position that I feel I can judge the merits of this and be the absolute decision maker here. I can certainly see the case that has been put to us. As I say, without knowing the full history and not having seen the application and the rationale for why it should be waived, I am reluctant to make that assessment.

But I think the Treasurer should make that decision. He needs to do it in a timely manner, and he has indicated he will. There is a deadline on that, before 5 November. So the actual decision-making period is not yet complete, and I think that also goes to whether it is appropriate for the Assembly to form a view today.

As I say, I then also try to think about the broader policy issues. I call on the government to undertake a review of the scheme, to look at the fee structure, whether it meets the purpose for which it was set up and whether it is still getting a good outcome for businesses that are operating in good faith. I think the issue here is that there are some who might land-bank but there are others—and Mr Wall has made a case here about this particular instance—where there have been external factors well beyond those that the individual business can deal with and whether the current system and structure are allowing that level of flexibility.

I commend those amendments to the Assembly. I seek leave to move those two amendments together.

Leave granted.

MR RATTENBURY: I move:

(1) Omit paragraph (1)(f), substitute:

“(f) that, on 8 October 2013, Kings Swim made a written application for the remission of outstanding commence and complete fees relating to Block 33 Section 787 in Calwell;”.

(2) Omit paragraph (2), substitute:

“(2) (a) calls on the Treasurer to consider the application in accordance with Section 131 of the *Financial Management Act 1996* for a fee remission made by Kings Swim and make a decision on the application by 5 November 2013; and

(b) calls on the Government to undertake a review of the commence and complete fee scheme and provide a copy of the review to the Assembly by the last sitting day in June 2014.”.

My apologies, as I said, to colleagues for circulating this late. We were sitting around thinking about this and thinking of both the specific case and the broader question. It was not until this morning, after talking to some of my staff, that we resolved that the right approach was to try to actually get broader policy review. That is the important part of this discussion today. I think that is worth doing in this context.

I commend the amendments to the Assembly, and I thank Mr Wall for raising this issue because it is one of undoubted interest to many residents in Tuggeranong.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (10.51): Madam Speaker, it is a very interesting amendment. I am not sure why you would want to remove all that Mr Wall has put in part (1) of his motion. It tells the story for the official record. I am sorry; it only omits (1)(f). I have misread it; I do apologise. But in part (2), it calls on the Treasurer to consider the application. The Treasurer has already told us he is considering the application. I think what Mr Wall is seeking to achieve here is to send to the Treasurer a very clear message from the Assembly that they would like these fees waived, and we would like this pool to be built as quickly as possible.

Mr Barr: But if it's not in accordance with the law, Brendan, you're not going to ask me to break the law, are you?

MR SMYTH: No, I am asking—well, this is a direction from the Assembly. It is guidance from the Assembly. The Assembly does this all the time.

MADAM SPEAKER: Through the chair, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Isn't it funny? We are now very worried—

Mr Barr: Well, it won't be today, will it?

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Barr!

MR SMYTH: Madam Speaker, this is the man who stood in front of the Property Council in June last year and told them the commence and complete fees were going. There was a round of applause, a huge round of applause, and it has never happened. So given his contrary nature on commence and complete, it is more than within the remit of the Assembly to give him some guidance. It does not direct him to; it calls on the Treasurer to waive. And that is not an unreasonable thing. This place moves motions all the time calling on ministers to do something. Of course, one would call on the minister to do it within the confines of the law at all times. So I think it is a bit sad that he would try to hide behind that defence.

But there is a problem here because there is not a lot of certainty out in the community about commence and complete fees. We have a Treasurer who said they were going. We have a planning minister who said, "Oh no, they're not." We know who won that one, and it was not Mr Barr. There are many in the property community who still scratch their heads about that lunch last year where the Treasurer leapt up and made this announcement. Maybe it was just a brain-snap. Who knows? Maybe a thought bubble appeared and he thought, "Here's something good I can announce." Indeed, I remember Ross Solly, a seasoned political commentator, being quite taken aback on the day. But I guess what none of us have been taken aback by is the fact that nothing actually happened.

Mr Barr: Well, that's not true.

MR SMYTH: As so often happens with this government, they do not keep their promises. You got up and said, “The commence and complete fees are gone.”

Mr Barr: It is a 400 per cent cut in the commence and complete—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Barr!

MR SMYTH: You got up and said, “The commence and complete fees are gone.”

Mr Barr: No, I didn’t.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Barr!

Mr Barr: I know what I said.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Barr!

MR SMYTH: You didn’t do it.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Smyth, can you sit down? Mr Barr, I have called you to order on three or four occasions and you have steadfastly ignored me. I am now warning you. Do not interject.

MR SMYTH: But there we are; we have the Treasurer making announcements—announcements that he could not get through cabinet. He mentions that things have changed. Yes, there have been some changes, and there is a lot of angst about some of the changes as well, and the way that they are affecting people.

The second point is the application of the law. I can remember Mr Seselja and I quizzing the minister about things like commence and complete fees on some very significant sites in Civic where in some cases there has not been activity for many years. In one case there has been virtually no activity, although it has been privately owned. The question for the Treasurer would be about the application of the law, how it is affecting sites and whether or not we have favouritism or whether or not there is a system at work, because it is very unclear to people outside this place as to how the government is applying this law.

It is interesting that we have a community facility that is ready to go, but because of circumstances—and there were circumstances; the family claims that it was not land banking and I have seen no evidence that it has been land banking. We all know what happened in 2007, 2008 and 2009 and the way the financial markets changed. They now find themselves in a position where they can proceed, but one of the impediments now is that, because of the government’s commence and complete system, they find themselves with this enormous bill.

The question for the government is: do they want a \$4.8 million development? Do they want the 70-odd jobs that this will create? More importantly, beyond that, do they actually want the facility itself and what it will create in terms of wellbeing for the people of Tuggeranong?

There is certainly a problem with the lane space available for the swim clubs. There is certainly a problem, particularly as the population gets older—and it will age quite rapidly in Tuggeranong; we have shrugged off “nappy valley” and we are now all getting older down in that part of the world. The need for facilities where people can exercise in comfort and where people can actually get into the pool at appropriate times is a big issue for the valley. We know that there are problems with the amount of space available and this will provide a clear answer to it.

It leads to a third issue in regard to Calwell at large, and it is still the lack of a master plan. Mr Wall had a great win when the Assembly agreed that there would be a master plan, and the government has made indications in that way now. But it is a long time coming. If we are going to get these centres right for the long term, if we are not going to repeat the mistakes of the past, when we know certain facilities are required, particularly around group centres like Calwell, it is important that we get on top of this from the start. The best way to do that, and the best way to ensure that, is, of course, to have an appropriate master plan.

At this stage we are yet to see that. We look forward to it. But there are a number of issues there that again are so symptomatic of this government in the delivering of planning and certainty in the ACT. We have treasurers that make statements that are never followed through, we have application of the law that seems contrary at best, and of course we have the lack of the master plan for the suburb of Calwell.

I will be supporting Mr Wall’s motion. It is a good motion. It is quite appropriate for the Assembly to call on the Treasurer to do something within the confines of the law, and it is appropriate that that happen today. This Assembly is here to tell the government, as a united body, what it is that we think. It is appropriate, in the nature of this motion, that we give that guidance to the Treasurer.

Mr Wall is talking with Mr Rattenbury. Two ministers now have come to join the fray. I understand there is an amendment coming back to the amendment, and I am sure Mr Wall will be in a position to talk about that shortly. I am not sure whether Mr Corbell or Mr Gentleman are going to join the debate and give us an opinion. At this point we will wait and see.

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) (10.58): I rise to speak today on the issues around commence and complete. My colleagues have addressed the issues around the swimming facilities per se, and I will leave those comments with them. But I wanted to address the issue of commence and complete fees more generally.

It is important to remind members that the purpose of commence and complete fees is to ensure that people who purchase land in the territory develop it in a timely manner. Members would recall that there have been repeated questions in this place to me from members of the opposition, notably Mrs Jones but others as well, about the failure of certain property owners to develop land in a timely manner—in particular, sites of land in Amaroo and service station sites in a number of suburbs around the city.

Of course, the commence and complete fee structure is designed to send a clear financial signal, a monetary signal, to those property owners that if they do not get on and develop their land in a timely manner they are going to face some significant financial liabilities. So that is the whole purpose of commence and complete fees. And that is why I have said, as the responsible minister, to the property sector that whilst I understand their concerns about some elements of the commence and complete fees and whilst I am open to looking at adjustments to the structure, the territory must retain the capacity to send a signal to leaseholders that there is a penalty associated with their failure to complete or commence development on their site.

These are issues that do not just have an impact on the owner of the development site. These are issues that have an impact on their neighbours and on their broader neighbourhoods and communities. People do not like the fact that sites sit undeveloped. People get fed up, quite frankly, with blocks of land that are left undeveloped for extended periods of time.

One of the issues that the government will need to address, as part of its response to the conflicting issues that arise, is the fact that some developers and some property owners have chosen to do the right thing and have paid the commence and complete fees and recognised that that is a liability that they have to meet. Others have chosen not to do so for a variety of reasons, and many of them have fairly complex personal circumstances surrounding them. Nevertheless, we are dealing now with two categories of people: those who have chosen to pay their fees and those who have not, for whatever reason. We will need to take all of those factors into account.

My directorate is currently preparing options for the government's consideration on how else we can strengthen our enforcement of undeveloped or derelict sites. These are issues that the government will undertake further steps on in the coming months.

The purpose of rising today, first of all, is to make these observations and, secondly, to indicate to members that I am proposing a slight amendment to Mr Rattenbury's proposed amendment (2)(b) to recognise that the government is already in the process of reviewing the operation of the commence and complete fee structure, and that the government is very happy to provide a report to the Assembly in an appropriate time frame, which I suggest should be the end of the financial year.

The purpose of that, of course, is that it will allow the government to look at these issues in the context of the development of the forthcoming budget, because these are matters that potentially have revenue implications for the government that need to be fully taken into account. With that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I move the following amendment to Mr Rattenbury's proposed amendments:

Omit paragraph (2)(b), substitute:

“(2) (b) notes the Government is currently reviewing the operation of the fee structure, and will provide a report to the Assembly by the end of the financial year.”.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (11.03): It is welcome to hear that the government has finally taken into account the significant burden that these fees do present to development and investment in the territory. We will be supporting Mr Corbell's amendment to Mr Rattenbury's proposed amendments, and we look forward to seeing the result of the review and, hopefully, the reduction in fees that will occur following the inquiry.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (11.04): Just briefly, and for the sake of clarity, I agree with Mr Corbell's amendment. He has clarified the current situation. I think it is quite appropriate, and certainly the time frame seems more than appropriate to get the work done. So I am supportive of Mr Corbell's amendment.

Mr Corbell's amendment to **Mr Rattenbury's** amendments agreed to.

Amendments, as amended, agreed to.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (11.04): I welcome some elements of Mr Rattenbury's amendments, as amended. It certainly does detract slightly from the core intent of the motion that I brought here today, which was to secure a waiver of the fees for this development in Tuggeranong. The proposal will bring significant benefit to residents of the Tuggeranong area. It was a long-held commitment by the Canberra Liberals during the 2012 election campaign, and one we still stand by today, to see the delivery of another swimming pool facility in the Tuggeranong valley area.

Mr Rattenbury: I think it was in the Lanyon valley, though.

MR WALL: It was in the Lanyon valley, but if there is a private investor that is willing, Mr Rattenbury, to take the risk and take on a project of this calibre on their own, I think that should be encouraged and welcomed in every possible manner by this place.

It is concerning that there has been a watering down of the intent to allow the Treasurer some more time in making this deliberation, and it is a deliberation which I hope he is taking favourably, and that the decision is to ensure that there is growth in development, growth in employment and certainly growth in community benefit for the Calwell shopping precinct.

We will not be supporting the motion as it stands, given that it does detract from the core intent, which was to secure a waiver of fees for this project. But we do wait with bated breath to see what the result and the outcome will be of the Treasurer's deliberations over the coming weeks as to whether or not he will grant an exemption for this project.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Government—policy

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (11.07): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the ACT Government is committed to delivering important social reforms and major infrastructure projects to build a stronger ACT economy and create opportunities for all Canberrans;
- (b) the Government's priorities reflect its commitments in the lead-up to the 2012 ACT election and the items included in the 2012 ACT Parliamentary Agreement; and
- (c) in the first year of the current term, the Government has begun delivering on its plans for Canberra—driving economic diversity and continuing to deliver a high quality of life and fairness for all Canberrans;

(2) further notes the Government's long-term plans for Canberra are being delivered in four priority areas, as outlined in the 2013-2014 ACT Budget:

- (a) creating opportunity and a more liveable city;
- (b) being a healthier and smarter community;
- (c) growing a stronger and more diverse economy; and
- (d) focussing on urban renewal as our city grows; and

(3) calls on the Government to continue:

- (a) setting its priorities annually; and
- (b) delivering important reforms that will ensure that Canberra remains a progressive city that fosters opportunity for people to work, study and do business, and ensures that all Canberrans are able to prosper in the long term.

Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you for the chance to highlight the importance of building a strong and liveable city through delivering on our commitments to the people of Canberra. Canberra is a great place to live and work, to enjoy the outdoors and to raise a family. It is the city where both the government and the people have a shared commitment to an even better future.

As we enter the second year of this government's term, it is appropriate to renew the undertakings that we made during the election and again in the budget to creating opportunity and a more liveable city, being a healthier and smarter community, growing a stronger and more diverse economy and focusing on urban renewal as our city grows.

The ACT government has a clear vision for Canberra's future as a city of world-class public services and infrastructure with a thriving community and economy. As we enter our second century, we can take stock of the significant achievements made under the "Canberra plan: towards our second century" and refocus our energy on the future and making Canberra an even more liveable city that offers fairness and opportunity for all.

We will continue to work together to create a liveable city which is fair, safe and equitable, a city that is sustainable and provides excellent services to our residents. We value the contribution that each of our residents makes to the rich fabric of Canberra. We enjoy the contributions from people of many cultures who choose to live in Canberra.

The priorities in the 2013-14 budget include work on the implementation and transition arrangements for the commencement of the NDIS on 1 July 2014. We are also making sure that our families and loved ones work in safe environments, as we prioritise implementing the getting them home safely report recommendations.

We will also implement energy efficiency measures to reduce emissions and energy costs of ACT households and businesses and work on a further rollout of renewable energy generation projects.

We will assist members of the community to reach their full potential through delivering the strengthening families initiative and further implementing the recommendations of the ACT targeted assistance strategy.

We continue to promote the health and wellbeing of all Canberrans. The delivery of the University of Canberra hospital will provide vital services to our growing city, with planning well underway. It is part of a 10-year, \$1 billion-plus health infrastructure plan with improvements to services and capacity for our growing and ageing population.

We have world-class educational institutions, and implementing the national plan for school improvement will ensure we have the best education system for the future.

As part of the ACT government's vision to create Canberra as a learning capital, we announced study Canberra in the 2013-14 budget to promote Canberra as a study destination of choice for local, national and international students. Study Canberra will build on the already substantial economic and social benefits of higher education in the ACT through improved coordination and alignment of efforts by key stakeholders throughout the sector.

Initially, study Canberra will focus on the international student market by raising the awareness of Canberra and the many unique aspects Canberra has on offer for potential students and their families. Study Canberra will also increase community sentiment for Canberra students and look to improve the overall student experience of living and studying in Canberra.

We are a knowledge economy. We have many successful research and development enterprises and knowledge businesses based in Canberra, while many export their services overseas. The successful operation of programs such as the NITCA e-government cluster, CollabIT, the establishment of the INSPIRE platform for education and the successful implementation of the digital hubs program for the NBN are all examples of the current ACT government's commitment to Canberra and the region's digital future.

Investment in our people, technology and innovation will create the right conditions to support business and consumer confidence in the local economy. We want to ensure all Canberrans share in our economic opportunities.

The digital Canberra project is an opportunity for us to diversify our economy, give businesses access to new customers and markets and give citizens greater choice in how they work and use services, and it will connect our seniors and youth in new ways.

Through the 2013-14 financial year, this government has made important progress on tax reform. I am pleased to note that we have reduced the rate of conveyance duty. We have also cut the duty on general insurance premiums from eight per cent to six per cent and the duty on life insurance premiums from four per cent to three per cent. The government will also implement two red tape reduction bills to streamline the economy.

Our community will continue to benefit from vibrant town centres, well-designed open spaces and a sustainable and integrated transport network. We need to balance the transport needs, housing developments and city growth with the aspirations of our residents to build a truly sustainable city. The city plan and capital metro are major elements of developing our city.

But other important urban projects are contributing to the liveability of our city, such as new passenger information display boards at bus stops and digital displays at major bus stations by the end of June 2014, the works that commenced in February 2013 on the creation of the dual carriageway Majura parkway, with completion expected in 2016, new pay parking mechanisms and a new Woden bus interchange.

This government has achieved a lot in our first year. We have achieved much of what we committed to achieve through our election platform and our parliamentary agreement, and work will continue on these.

Two key reforms which this government has committed to are the national disability insurance scheme and the national education reform agreement. The ACT is at the forefront of the national disability insurance scheme, a significant, complex social reform to the way in which disability care and support will be funded in this country—the implementation of the national disability insurance scheme, or NDIS. The NDIS will allow people with significant disabilities more choice in how they live their lives and access to an economically sustainable and viable universal social insurance scheme.

The ACT's task force has already commenced working to prepare people with disability, families and carers and service providers for the introduction of the NDIS from 1 July 2014, including in developing the capacity of people with disabilities and their families to take advantage of the choice and control offered under the NDIS.

This government has the foresight to invest in infrastructure for Canberra's needs for this city with significant developments in this city in the coming year.

The new CIT Tuggeranong's forward design study will provide for the construction of a new 2,000-square-metre facility to accommodate enhanced learning services and expanded course delivery for the Tuggeranong community in a purpose-built facility.

Construction of the new Tuggeranong community health centre commenced in January. It will improve the accessibility of health services, including physiotherapy and dental services, and a walk-in centre will also open in 2014.

The city to the lake project is a transformational project to better utilise the broad southern flank of the city, the ACT's economic centre. The project investigates improvements to Parkes Way to better connect the city and Lake Burley Griffin, identifying and reserving potential sites for a new convention centre, a 30,000-plus-seat rectangular stadium and a regional aquatic centre. And of course there is capital metro.

Walter Burley Griffin designed the major avenues in Canberra, including Northbourne Avenue, to include electric street cars, operating within broad central medians. The capital metro project continues this vision and will be a key to the renewal of north Canberra. The capital metro light rail project is the first stage of a possible Canberra-wide rapid transit network and will be the backbone of Canberra's public transport network, combined with the frequent network of buses. The government will be integrating our transport and land use planning to generate a range of new housing and commercial opportunities along the metro corridor.

In April 2012 the government released "Growth, diversification and jobs: a business development strategy for the ACT". It builds on our strengths to create the basis of a diverse, thriving, knowledge-based economy.

Canberra is a leader in the research, development and use of clean technologies for energy, transport and urban design. This is increasingly opening up new business development opportunities. Development of aviation partnerships in markets including New Zealand, China and South-East Asia is a key priority. Creating a Canberra brand is a critical step to building our profile and further securing the city's long-term future as a key regional business and tourism hub.

Canberra's image from centenary events such as the national sporting capital will be built on through promotion as a sporting, training and recreational tourism destination.

Canberra is an unparalleled location for science, research and discovery, home to over 10 per cent of Australia's public sector research effort. Utilising this capability

through innovation and knowledge-intensive businesses will grow and diversify our economy.

In the 2012-13 budget, the government committed to a 20-year plan to reform the territory's taxation base, reduce its reliance on inefficient taxes and remove economic speed bumps.

Whilst I have time, I will also mention that I am proud the government is honouring our election commitment to modernise the ageing Belconnen High School. This is one of Belconnen's oldest and most central high schools, in Hawker. There is \$2 million in this budget for stage 1 of that upgrade, which will eventually see new buildings and major refurbishments to renew existing buildings, bringing this school into the 21st century.

The University of Canberra hospital will become another major employer and research centre in north Canberra. It will also fit well with the enhanced services, including more beds, being provided by north Canberra's major hospital nearby at Calvary. As a result of this budget, design work is underway for a new multistorey car park at Calvary. The location of the hospital at the University of Canberra provides a significant synergy between the teaching of health sciences which is undertaken by the university and the training of those students within the hospital precinct.

Other government investments at the University of Canberra include a loan facility of \$24 million to provide additional affordable student accommodation. The government is also investing \$13.5 million in the University of Canberra's sports commons project. This will support community sports and provide opportunities for students studying various sports-related careers, including sports administration, and the grant will assist the Brumbies in their relocation to the sports hub.

In conclusion, this government will continue to deliver on our commitments in the coming year, as we have done through the first year of our term. This government will build on our achievements to make sure Canberra keeps growing, learning and improving and, together, we enjoy the brilliant possibilities that Canberra has to offer.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (11.20): The motion here today from the government—probably both motions, but this one in particular—emphasises the difference in approach in the Assembly between the government and the opposition. If you look at this motion here today, you will see that it is an exercise in self-congratulation. The speech by Dr Bourke was simply an exercise in patting the government on the back. The motion from Ms Porter later on today is similar.

It would be wise to compare that to the motions that we see from the opposition today. We saw the successful motion from Mr Doszpot which was aimed at restoring the grass in Green Square so that we could see improvements for the businesses there in Green Square—a lot of engagement with the community and work with the community, collaboration that has resulted in a win for the community.

We then saw Mr Wall's motion, equally arising from engagement with the community and discussions with stakeholders, trying to work in this place to find a resolution that

will be of great benefit for the community in Tuggeranong. Providing a sporting facility—in this case a swimming pool—would be of great benefit to the people of Tuggeranong. Later today we have two more motions, one from Ms Lawder addressing the issue of child safety.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I call your attention to the fact that there is an ongoing conversation occurring. If members wish to speak, perhaps they could take that outside.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Hanson, for your advice.

Members interjecting—

MR HANSON: There are interjections from those opposite, disorderly interjections.

Dr Bourke interjecting—

MR HANSON: Could you stop the clock, please.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Stop the clock. I have noticed a level of conversation on both sides of the house since I have been in the chair. I ask people to keep their conversations as low as possible or go out and have their conversations outside.

MR HANSON: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. The issue that will be raised by Ms Lawder later today is about road safety—looking for a footpath, a crossing, outside a school. This is an important issue for the community; again the motion is based on the engagement that she has had with that community. Then Mrs Jones will move a motion about road safety in Gungahlin at the corner of Hinder and Hibberson streets, again working for the community.

I think you can see the difference. You can see the difference between what the opposition is endeavouring to achieve—good practical measures of benefit to the community—and what the government is doing here. What the government is doing is this. No doubt they will all speak, pat themselves on the back, and say: “Aren’t we wonderful? Look at what we are doing.” What benefit is there to the community in what the government is doing today? What possible benefit is arising from this motion that we have today? I look forward to hearing, from maybe Mr Gentleman, Ms Burch or Mr Barr, what is the single benefit of what is occurring in this place probably over the next while with these members standing up and patting each other on the back.

It is ironic that perhaps the only decision that I can laud this government for that they have made in the last 12 months that has had some benefit to the community would probably be the dismissal of Dr Bourke as a minister, which I think we can all agree has had a benefit.

What I would say, though, is that this is not a government that should be looking at itself in the last 12 months. This should be a government that reviews its performance over the last 12 years. What you can see, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that over the last

12 years, when you look at what this government has done, this is a government that is not delivering to the community. This is a government that increasingly has its priorities out of touch. This motion today, compared to the motions of the Liberal Party, is a clear example of that. And it is a government that is increasingly evasive and loose with the truth.

I have circulated amendments which I will be moving which improve this motion and give a much clearer and more concise explanation of this government's performance. Interestingly, on Monday, I think, Ms Gallagher and I were asked to go onto the Ross Solly ABC program and talk about the year and what had happened. When the Chief Minister was asked, "What are your highlights over the last year," the Chief Minister basically said: "I am not really sure. Probably NDIS and Gonski." Mr Solly rightly then said: "Hang on. Aren't they federal government initiatives?" And yes, they are.

It is illustrative that off the top of her head the Chief Minister could only think of things which were actually driven by the federal government, in particular, in one case, Gonski. When you compare what was in the budget of last year to what is in the budget of this year and you look at what federal funding was promised compared to the promise under Gonski, there is \$30 million less. If that is the government's achievement, negotiating themselves out of \$30 million, that is not something that really is such a highlight.

Let us have a look at some of the projects that are coming to fruition as we see that this government stumbles along. There is the dam, which is now going to be, and I welcome it, the subject of an Auditor-General's review. This is the dam that this government in 2008 said would cost \$145 million. The government went to an election and had ACTEW do a whole bunch of TV advertising costing about \$40,000 to say, "Yes, we are building the dam." Then, when it is delivered, it is extraordinarily over budget and late. The \$409 million price tag, compared to what we were promised, \$145 million, is disgraceful, and I look forward to the Auditor-General's review.

We also have the jail that was the subject of a ministerial statement by Mr Rattenbury yesterday—the jail that was promised to have 374 beds at a cost of \$110 million. We know that it was delivered with 300 beds, at a cost of \$130 million, but it has since been retrofitted at a cost of many millions of dollars and is now the subject of review. How many more tens of millions of dollars are going to need to be spent to build the capacity in this jail that was required? The government was provided with a report, was provided with advice, that said, "You will need a jail that is at least 374." This government cut its cloth so that it could open it before an election, so that it could bring it in only \$20 million over budget. The consequence of that is that that jail is now a very difficult place for the staff who work in there. I would like to highlight to members that even this morning I got an email from someone saying that there has been an assault in that jail and there is a real problem because of overcrowding—just today. And that is of the government's making.

As Dr Bourke and others pat themselves on the back, I suggest they go out to that jail and ask themselves the question "How did we stuff this up so badly?" The truth is that they stuffed it up because they cut the size of the jail and then lied to the community about whether this would have capacity or not—because clearly it does not.

The GDE would be another great example of this government's performance. The ED was the subject of some discussion yesterday. The Chief Minister was very quick to say: "Compare it to this hospital. Compare it to that hospital." What I would say to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, is this: compare the ED waiting times as they are now to what they were when this government first took over. I think that would be a pretty accurate assessment of this government's performance. What you will see is that when this government took over, our ED waiting times were some of the best in the country. What we see now is that they are the worst—and the worst by a long stretch. So there is no argument in saying, "Compare it to other jurisdictions here, there and everywhere," to try and find an excuse for that performance. Compare it to where it was when this dismal Labor government took over.

There is the mess in our courts with the delays. There is the budget, the debt that is approaching \$3.5 billion. There is the \$660 million of structural deficit. There are the rates—the great lie about rates. Again I call on the minister to provide your modelling. You have said you have done it; why won't you provide it?

Mr Barr: I am next Thursday, according to the motion that was passed in the last sitting. You don't pay attention to what goes on in this place.

MR HANSON: And what we are not seeing—

Mr Barr interjecting—

MR HANSON: We will see what this minister comes up with. We have called on him to table that modelling repeatedly, and he has failed to do so.

There are the job cuts and the cuts to services that we have seen from this government in the budget. Light rail—does anybody have confidence that the \$600 million that has been allocated for light rail will deliver what this government promises?

Mr Barr: \$600 million has not been allocated for light rail.

MR HANSON: That this government has promised will be delivered for light rail. Dr Bourke said it is the first phase of a multiphase project that will be the backbone of this transport system.

Mr Barr interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Barr, you will have an opportunity—

MR HANSON: Mr Barr is interjecting because—what, he disagrees that it is going to be the first phase of a project?

Mr Barr: No.

MR HANSON: No. So you do not agree with what I am saying?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Stop the clock, please. Mr Hanson, resume your seat.

MR HANSON: I might remind you that Mr Barr is warned.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, please do not give me advice. I am about to give you some advice—and Mr Barr. Mr Barr, please do not have a conversation with Mr Hanson across the chamber. I know Mr Hanson is responding to you and it is difficult for both of you not to respond to one another, but I would like members to remain silent while Mr Hanson is speaking. And Mr Hanson, address your remarks through the chair, and not to Mr Barr; that will be very helpful.

MR HANSON: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. There are some recent examples of this government and its failings. There is Uriarra Village. There was much celebrating in the chamber yesterday and front-page pictures in the *Canberra Times*, but where were the pictures of the people of Uriarra Village who had come in and equally filled this chamber at the dismal decisions by this government and the failure of this government to listen to them about their concerns? We have seen issues of police safety in Civic. There are the numerous problems with planning laws, some highlighted by Mr Wall today. And there are the issues of housing affordability that we were discussing yesterday.

The priorities of this government are simply wrong. There can be no better example of that than the *Skywhale*. I hope that that is the subject of some discussion by government members today. The *Skywhale* was delivered by this government—the bloated balloon that even Mr Stanhope said was a political mistake. Even Mr Stanhope, the great champion of public art, thought it was a disgrace. I look forward to them patting themselves on the back about the delivery of *Skywhale*, which is probably the most notable thing out of the centenary that has been delivered by this government.

This government wants to be the most green, the most left, in Australia. That is clearly where it is taking us. This is a government that is evasive and this is a government that is not delivering.

In contrast, as I highlighted before, we have the very good motions that have been put here today by the members of the opposition. I commend my members. I take this opportunity to say well done.

What we see here are three new members that have come into this place. We have seen the work done by Mrs Jones, with the motion that she will be running today on road safety in Gungahlin and her approach—more concern about doorstep to the bus stop and action on the ground rather than endless talk about city to the lake and more slideshows about something this government is unlikely ever to deliver. We have Mr Wall and his actions on things like Uriarra, his work on NDIS and his motion today about the Kingswim school. Ms Lawder, again a great community activist, has come into this place as part of the renewal of this team. We have seen the sorts of motions that she is bringing forward, addressing community safety today at Trinity school, making a real impact.

There is the continued good work by Brendan Smyth, the shadow treasurer. There is his dissection of a very poor budget and his continued enthusiasm for ESA, which seems to be just a distraction for the minister. Steve Doszpot had another win today—another backflip from the government through Mr Doszpot, the quiet achiever, a man who goes about his business getting results, a man who has restored Green Square, the man who saved the Shepherd Centre. And there is Mrs Dunne, who is proving to be a very high-quality, independent Speaker. I also commend my deputy, Mr Coe, for his work in his position as the deputy. It is great work he is doing on issues like light rail.

What I see on these benches is a unified, disciplined and effective team that is holding the government to account on issues like the jail, ACTEW, health, planning issues and the raft of local issues that we see as important and those opposite see as a distraction. We are building on the previous term, on the foundations that have been laid. Increasingly, when people look at the two teams, they look at the agendas. What they see is a mob opposite who are busy here today patting themselves on the back. What they see from this side is a team that is focused on the community, not on themselves.

I move:

Omit all words after “notes that:”, substitute:

- “(a) the ACT Government has failed Canberrans across a range of service and infrastructure delivery projects over the last 12 years;
- (b) the Government has been evasive with key reforms including school closures and tax reform; and
- (c) the ACT Government is intent on being the furthest left and most extreme ‘green’ in Australia; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

- (a) release key documents relating to its tax reform;
- (b) apologise to ACT tax payers for multimillion dollar blow outs and delays across key infrastructure projects; and
- (c) apologise for the appalling deterioration in ED waiting times over the last 12 years.”.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Community Services) (11.36): You would almost think that the Leader of the Opposition’s leadership of his party was under some question. Having begun his contribution lecturing people about self-congratulation, he then spent about a quarter of his speech—

Members interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, order!

MR BARR: in an orgy of self-congratulation around each of his members, hoping to shore up their support, Madam Deputy Speaker, because of his gutless and pathetic leadership yesterday in this place.

Ms Burch: But did Alistair get a mention?

MR BARR: He did at the very end. He got to the rival. He got to the rival at the very end. There must be something seriously going on after yesterday's pathetic performance from the Leader of the Opposition. Having started his speech criticising the government for allegedly self-congratulating, he then—

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot!

MR BARR: spends most of his speech self-congratulating, Madam Deputy Speaker. But it is what we have come to expect from the Leader of the Opposition. We will instead focus on issues that matter to Canberrans and that is what we are doing today.

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot!

MR BARR: I thank Dr Bourke for raising this motion. I am really pleased to be able to speak in support of Dr Bourke's motion and to outline a number of areas within my portfolio responsibilities where the government is getting on with delivering real outcomes on the ground for Canberrans on issues that matter, particularly in the area of housing and new development projects to transform Canberra.

We have begun work on a series of major new developments that will have long-term and significant benefits for Canberrans. Earlier in this year the government unveiled the city to the lake project, a very important project for the transformation of the centre of our city. It seeks to link Civic and our greatest asset, Lake Burley Griffin, to provide a world-class entertainment, cultural, sporting and residential precinct. It is a project that will enliven the centre of our city in the same way that the southbank developments have done for Melbourne and for Brisbane.

In addition, we have been able to commence work on a number of major new housing developments. These new developments are in addition to the ongoing urban infill and continuing developments in Gungahlin and the Molonglo valley. In the past six months the government has announced the following new residential developments: Riverview in west Belconnen; Lawson in central Belconnen, and the civil works are underway now in Lawson; Campbell section 5, and the civil works are underway there; and just last week, Mr Gentleman and I were able to launch the Southquay development in the Tuggeranong town centre, and civil works commence there very soon.

These developments will provide thousands of new homes in a variety of locations right across Canberra—in the north, in the centre and in the south. They provide a wide range of dwelling types. They will make it easier for Canberrans to achieve their dream of living in their first home, owning their first home or, for those who wish to, downsizing into more suitable accommodation as they age. There will be increased opportunities right across the city as a result of these developments.

In addition, the government has delivered a real benefit to first homebuyers through an increase in the first home owners grant and a significant increase in eligibility for the homebuyer concession scheme. Together, these two initiatives delivered in the last 12 months give a \$25,000 boost to eligible buyers. That is real, Mr Hanson. That is tangible. That is something delivered by this government for first homebuyers.

We are also actively supporting the growth of our economy and the diversification of the territory economy. The government has continued to support the economy and the private sector in accordance with our fiscal policy settings. This has been particularly important during a period when the commonwealth government, whose contribution is around half of all economic activity in the ACT, is contracting jobs and spending.

In the past year the government has directly targeted support to three key sectors of the territory economy: tourism, construction and education—three of the largest employers in the ACT. This year's budget included \$27.3 million in funding for tourism and events, including \$11.5 million in new funding. This includes funding to boost business and education tourism and continued investment in our very successful major events fund.

This year I have also begun the push, in partnership with the Canberra International Airport and Australian Capital Tourism, for direct international flights into our city, particularly from Singapore and New Zealand. As well as the land release I mentioned earlier, the targeting of the homebuyer concession scheme and the first home owners grant, we have also had a strong infrastructure program of around \$600 million that has continued to stimulate the local construction sector.

Continuing to grow the territory's research and education sector is the key to our future economic growth. Recent budget funding has been invested in the study Canberra initiative. The Chief Minister has already led a delegation of our universities to a major market for the ACT, China.

In addition, we have passed a range of new laws to cut red tape to assist local businesses. We have given local firms a leg up when tendering for ACT government contracts by introducing a positive weighting for local small and medium-size enterprises. We have continued to cut insurance tax and stamp duty, being one of the only jurisdictions in Australia to cut these inefficient, unfair and distortive taxes.

Cutting these taxes has freed up economic activity in the territory and removed a deadweight loss in our economy. It is an important reform and we continue to seek to attract new business and investment to the territory, particularly in our commercial property market. The conveyance duty on properties valued at more than

\$1.65 million was slashed from 7.25 per cent to 5.5 per cent in the last budget. We have already seen a significant boost in international and interstate investment in the territory.

We will continue to pursue that through InvestACT, which has been established to promote business and investment opportunities in the Canberra region, particularly to international investors, but also nationally. This will help encourage firms to set up and expand their operations in the city, thereby boosting our employment and skills base.

We have also commenced a series of structural reforms outlined in the 2013-14 territory budget to make our government operations more efficient. These reforms will continue and we will focus on ensuring that our public service is cost effective and provides value for money for territory taxpayers. This will ensure that the government has funds available to continue to invest in priority projects and to continue to deliver the highest quality services in the country. To this end, we have established a new capital framework and we have begun some detailed work on public-private partnerships in the territory.

The government has this year delivered the biggest program of sporting events in our territory's history. We have hosted the Australian cricket team, the Australian rugby league team, the Australian netball team and our first trans-Tasman netball test. We have held the women's Australian open golf tournament. We saw the Brumbies triumph over the British and Irish Lions. That was one of the few highlights for Australian teams during that tour. We have also hosted the Boomers and the Opals, our men's and women's basketball teams.

Under the new lights at Manuka Oval—a significant achievement for the city, opening up a whole range of opportunities for cricket and AFL—we saw the Australian cricket team play in Canberra for the first time in one of the best matches of the summer against the West Indies. Not only has this been a feast for local sports fans, but it has proved our city's capacity to host high profile sporting events. I think this puts us in a great position as we move forward. We look forward to hosting the Asian Cup in 2015, closely followed by matches in the Cricket World Cup, two of the biggest events for their respective sports.

Madam Deputy Speaker, another clear benefit and delivery in this 12 months is that for the first time in decades Canberra motorists now have a choice in their compulsory third-party insurance. It is already saving residents money and the government's commitment to CTP scheme reform continues. Certainly, the reforms we have delivered to date have provided the opportunity for new players to enter our market.

We are laying the foundations for future growth and prosperity. The city to the lake project is one of the more important ones that I will be working on but I also acknowledge the important social reforms in Gonski school funding and NDIS that are considerable and important financial commitments from the territory government.
(Time expired.)

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella) (11.47): I rise today to support Dr Bourke's motion and to thank him for bringing it forward. This motion allows us to reflect on this last year in government. I flag that I will not be supporting Mr Hanson's amendment. I see no benefit at all for the community in Mr Hanson's amendment. But I do see benefits outlined in Dr Bourke's motion and I will repeat those.

They include creating opportunity and a more liveable city, being a healthier and smarter community, growing a stronger and more diverse economy, focusing on urban renewal as our city grows, and delivering important reforms that will ensure Canberra remains a progressive city that fosters opportunity for people to work, study and do business, and ensure that all Canberrans are able to prosper in the long term. They are very good benefits, I think, for the ACT community.

In the last year Brindabella has seen many new improvements in the area with many more to come in the next three years. Urban renewal has been a key concern in the electorate, with many residents keen to engage in the process of local improvements in the area, with this year showing some transformational changes around iconic Tuggeranong areas.

A new major development was recently announced for Greenway lakefront named Southquay. Southquay follows along the line of the accepted Tuggeranong master plan, delivering 1,000 units as well as room for more vital commercial space. This development will assist in invigorating the Tuggeranong town centre into an even more appealing place to spend time.

In addition to the new commercial areas proposed in Southquay, existing commercial space in Canberra's south will also be improved by the now approved variation 317 to the territory plan, the Kambah town centre master plan. Kambah will also benefit from urban renewal. For those who use Kambah shops frequently, you will understand the frustration shown in the area arising from its needing redevelopment. Variation 317 serves to do just that. The commercial operators are able to look at the growth in demand currently experienced in Tuggeranong. This is especially vital for the current supermarket at the site, which has been unable to grow with Tuggeranong. Its expansion will enable it to continue to keep up with demand.

Another positive variation to the territory plan in Brindabella has been variation 315, which allows for a new fire station to be built in Calwell-Conder. Following on from community consultation, the proposed development that has come from this variation will ensure that as south Tuggeranong continues to grow, essential services will grow with it.

This government, however, does not just stop at urban renewal. It has been planning for Canberra's future but it is also planning for Brindabella's future healthcare needs. As we have heard spoken about on several occasions, the popularity and success of the nurse-led walk-in centre at the Canberra Hospital has allowed us to look at bringing them into the town centres, close to accessible public transport and parking, to ensure they are easy to use. I am proud to be part of a government that is continuing to work on this commitment and that has, as part of the recent budget, funded the

design work behind implementing this policy. This is a policy that is delivering for Canberra, providing free health care where it is most needed. That is what Canberrans are asking for.

Of course, we have also seen the funding and recent opening of a great community health cooperative down south, from the West Belconnen Health Co-Op. Having recently opened the health co-op, we see the membership-based, bulk-bill model that has been so popular in west Belconnen now available down south. With access to bulk-billing services always in demand, and with the ACT investing \$200,000, we have a new clinic to provide this.

This is only one part of what the ACT government is doing in the Health portfolio, with this adding to the \$4.9 million of funding that is included in this year's budget to continue works upgrading the Tuggeranong community health centre. The Tuggeranong community health centre is delivering a comprehensive range of healthcare services to the local Tuggeranong community. The centre offers services aimed at assisting clients to better manage acute and chronic conditions in the community in a facility closer to home, which is in turn ensuring the reduction of the reliance on our hospital system.

Some of these services that are provided here are: community nursing, including ambulatory care clinics; allied health services such as physiotherapy, podiatry and nutrition; diabetes services, including services for those with gestational diabetes; a nurse educator and dietician; women, youth and children services; adult mental health services; alcohol and drug counselling; and pathology collection.

Upgrading these local community health centres has been a strong priority for this government, ensuring that health services are out in the community and widely accessible to those most in need. This multimillion dollar commitment will ensure that these services continue to work and function long into the next hundred years for us as a territory.

In the last year Brindabella has also seen positives in the education sector, with Taylor primary receiving major upgrades to the well loved building, thus ensuring that students will continue to be catered for through the next several decades. With \$13 million invested by the ACT government, we will see state-of-the-art classrooms and an upgraded childcare facility that is due to be available by the start of the 2014 school year.

This government has also taken the opportunity of its first budget to announce \$1.8 million for the establishment of a new introductory English centre at the Wanniasa Hills Primary School. The new facility will give students with limited or no English speaking background, who have recently arrived in Australia and Canberra, the opportunity for intensive language tuition before settling into mainstream schools in the Tuggeranong school network. This is yet another way of government ensuring that care is provided for all Canberrans, whatever their individual needs may be. I am proud that this introductory learning centre will be based in Tuggeranong as it continues to grow and develop.

Vocational education is also something that the current government has committed to continuing to develop and improve. The ACT government is committed to transforming the vocational training sector in Canberra, with 23,900 vocational education students in the capital. This is why this government is delivering \$180,000 to undertake a feasibility study investigating how CIT education can be best provided for the Woden Valley, Weston Creek, Tuggeranong and Molonglo communities. This will ensure that current skill shortages are addressed and students in Canberra can obtain qualifications in the skills that they want to.

The government has also committed \$240,000 in 2013-14 to continue to support the children's services sector to upskill its workforce to meet requirements for the national quality framework. That will bring workers up to the required certificate III level. These are developments that will continue to ensure that the territory is well maintained and a positive place to live well into the future.

Whether it is ensuring urban renewal, a well-maintained, functional and accessible healthcare system, or the education system working to create the best possible learning outcomes for all students, this is a government that is delivering and will continue to deliver the things which are important to Canberra's community throughout the next three 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) (11.55): I do thank Dr Bourke for bringing forward this motion. It is hard for many of us in this chamber, I think, to reflect that it has been a year since the election, and it is a year, for many of us, that has gone incredibly quickly. Looking back on what this government has delivered in this time, I believe we have an impressive list of achievements and a clear agenda of reform that will improve the lives of all Canberrans. I am indeed pleased to stand here, one year on, and say that we have delivered on many of the commitments that we went to the community with, and on others we have commenced the necessary preparation to deliver on our commitments in this term of government.

In my responsibilities for education and training across Disability, Children and Young People and across other areas of community services, we have delivered on many of these commitments. In education, of course, the biggest reform is better schools, formerly known as Gonski. In May this year, the Chief Minister signed the national education reform agreement with the commonwealth, ensuring long-term improvements to our schools and a fairer approach to funding based on the needs of every student.

Building on the already strong investment in the ACT, the agreement will bring the total public investment in ACT schools to around \$5 billion over the next six years. This will see funding to education increase by \$190 million, from current levels of around \$692 million to \$882 million in 2019. These arrangements will mean that all schools in the ACT—the government, the independent and the Catholic schools—will see fair funding growth each year for the next six years.

That is, at least, the position under the agreement signed by the former Labor Prime Minister, Julia Gillard. I am deeply concerned, as are many in our community, at the prospect of an Abbott federal government renegeing on the signed agreement. I do hope we can count on the support of the Canberra Liberals in lobbying the new federal government not to cut the funding to ACT government or non-government schools. It is well known and on record that the Prime Minister and the education minister, Mr Pyne, have only committed to four years of funding. This is causing great uncertainty to the government and to the Catholic and independent schools. I would really beseech Mr Hanson to actually heed the concerns of the non-government sector across Canberra and make direct and vigorous contact with the education minister to make sure that the six years of funding that has been agreed will not be stalled or will not be renegeed on.

Mr Wall: Wasn't the Chief Minister looking for a better deal now that there is a new Prime Minister?

MS BURCH: I am not quite sure what the interjection is, but the clear point is that we have a six-year funding agreement with only a four-year commitment coming from our federal government. So I call on all of you over there to make sure that the six years funding is guaranteed.

Mr Wall: But you're already looking for a better deal now that there is a different government.

MS BURCH: Indeed, if Mr Pyne can make better offers, not worse offers, then I would welcome that discussion. We want to ensure the agreement and the certainties for the government and particularly the non-government sectors. They need certainty in their planning as they move towards 2020.

This year we have also welcomed the opening of two public schools, the Franklin Early Childhood School and the Neville Bonner Primary School, both serving the rapidly growing Gungahlin region, both delivered on time and under budget. The \$30 million Franklin Early Childhood School is the first purpose-built early childhood school in the ACT and follows the successful operation of early childhood schools in Isabella Plains, Lyons, Narrabundah, O'Connor and Scullin, Southern Cross. I had the pleasure of officially opening the school last month, although they have been taking students since term 1 of this year. I am pleased to report that enrolments are strong and the community has embraced the new school.

The Neville Bonner school, named after Australia's first Aboriginal senator, includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artworks. It is going strong and will be officially opened next month by the Chief Minister. Again, it has been taking students from the beginning of this school year.

In education, we continue to plan for the growth of our city. These are just two schools that have opened to serve the growing areas of Gungahlin. We have provided in this year's budget funds to complete designs for the new Coombs primary school to open in the new growth area of Molonglo. This school is anticipated to cater for over

700 students from preschool to year 6 and will include an environment centre, a shared school and community hall. We anticipate a 2016 opening, and this will deliver on our election commitment.

The ACT Labor government is also progressing on a commitment to support public school canteens, with the allocation of \$200,000 in this year's budget to commence this work. Last month I released the recommendations of a task force convened by government last year to examine ways to improve the viability of ACT school canteens and support them in providing healthy food and drink options. We have agreed to all of the task force recommendations and, through the budget allocation, ACT public schools will be supported to introduce online ordering systems to streamline operations and make purchasing easier for families, as part of a suite of initiatives to better support school canteens. This is something the P&C councils had been calling for, and we have delivered.

The benefit of the ACT Labor government's investment in education is reflected in the NAPLAN results, which once again show that ACT students continue to be among the highest performing in the country. The NAPLAN 2013 summary report released last month by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, or ACARA, shows that mean scores of ACT students were top or equal top across 17 of the 20 areas tested, relative to other jurisdictions.

The report also shows that the ACT continues to excel in reading and has been the highest performing jurisdiction in Australia every year since 2008 and significantly ahead of the national mean. It also shows that the ACT has ranked first or equal first for grammar, punctuation and numeracy in NAPLAN testing across all years since 2009. Credit must go, clearly, to principals, teachers and support staff who do an incredible job day in and day out to ensure our children are getting the best education. Through the better schools reform, we will ensure that the ACT continues to excel at a national and international level.

As minister for disability, I have the privilege of overseeing the implementation of another landmark national reform embarked on last year by a progressive federal Labor government. The national disability insurance scheme will transform the lives of thousands of Canberrans living with a disability, and I am pleased to report that this year we have made significant progress in preparing for the rollout of the NDIS. The NDIS will deliver unprecedented levels of funding and support to people with a disability. By 2019-20 we will commit—the government and the ACT—to about \$342 million a year. This will replace existing funding arrangements to the disability sector around the country and represents a significant increase in funding for the ACT and will be available to more people.

This year, the transition year, we have begun the rollout of the enhanced service offer grants program, with \$4.3 million already allocated in round 1 of the program. Second round applications close in a number of weeks, and I encourage all people with an interest to go online and apply if they are eligible. The ESO grants are in preparation for the national disability insurance scheme and are intended to allow people to get used to the idea of having choice of and control over the supports and services they use, a fundamental principle of the national disability insurance scheme.

In arts, we continue to deliver on an ambitious infrastructure agenda in transforming the arts landscape and facilitating new partnerships and opportunities for our arts organisations. The past year has been an exciting and productive period. In August I officially opened the \$3 million transformation of the Street Theatre. The upgrades included a rehearsal venue, new seating, a new box office and cafe. Similarly, the completed upgrade of the Tuggeranong Arts Centre has transformed that centre into a much more vibrant and user-friendly space. *(Time expired.)*

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (12.05): As the newest member of this government, I am pleased to be part of a team that is delivering on its promises and paving the path, sometimes literally, for a brighter future for Canberra. It is important to reflect on these 12 months to see what we have achieved and to consider how we can improve our work in representing Canberrans and delivering good and active government to this territory.

When I ran for the seat of Ginninderra, I was motivated to bring a consultative, inclusive and empowering model of representation to this Assembly. I believe that is what I have done and that is what I will continue to do. Reaching out to residents, community groups, sporting organisations, churches and businesses has opened my eyes and my mind to the tangible benefits that an active government brings to our city.

It has been a fascinating insight to learn about the values and beliefs that are held by the people you represent. You learn the most amazing things from people and you also learn what they expect from government. That is why I had no hesitation yesterday in supporting the passing of Australia's first marriage equality laws. I know that this reform brings together the values, aspirations and beliefs of our community. It might not be the reflection of some of those opposite but that might be one of the reasons why we sit on the government benches and they do not.

It is the small things that this government has delivered that also have a positive impact on our community. For instance, I had an enormous amount of feedback from residents of west Belconnen when I informed them of this government's move to lower the age of eligibility for the seniors gold card. Lowering the age of eligibility from 75 to 70 has improved the cost of living for thousands of elderly Canberrans across the ACT, including approximately 2,000 residents in west Belconnen.

Another worthy achievement of the past 12 months in west Belconnen has been the upgrades to Umbagog Park in Latham and the consultation with the community over the stepping stones there. I raise this particular achievement because I think it highlights the fact that many of us, whilst constantly engaged in our communities, do not always get to hear the views of all residents, and we cannot always guess when residents will turn out in force on a particular issue. I think Minister Rattenbury would agree that no-one could have predicted the passion with which the future of the stepping stones in Latham would be debated by residents, but I am glad that they remain for all of us to enjoy.

Examples like these and many others are why I believe that politics should not be about pushing people away. It should always be about connecting with people and giving them genuine opportunities to engage in the decisions of government.

To further put this sentiment in concrete terms, my office and I have developed ways to involve my local community in the work and decisions of this government. For example, I have recently begun conducting information and learning sessions with community groups on fix my street to show residents that this government has provided a powerful tool to improve their facilities and local infrastructure. This has been a great way to get locals to think positively about their streets, shops and suburbs, and they have certainly helped to speed up responses that they get from government.

Most recently I have turned my attention to involving the community in the discussions about what will go into the 2013-14 budget. The what's next campaign builds on the fix my street sessions by actively involving community members in the 2014 ACT budget consultation process. Through a widely advertised series of community stalls, mail-outs and meetings with neighbourhood groups, my volunteers and I have asked the community to identify positive and realistic improvements that would make a difference to the electorate that we all live in. The most popular ideas will be pulled together into a community budget submission.

This has been a great 12 months and no matter what some of those opposite might be trying to tell us from across the chamber, these achievements form the basis of my work with our united team within the ACT government, and that is building stronger communities and a fairer society.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for Ageing) (12.10): I will be supporting this motion today and not supporting Mr Hanson's amendment. This motion provides an opportunity to reflect not only on what has been achieved over the last year but also to look at how we should go about addressing the range of issues facing the territory into the future. I am pleased to be part of a government that is prepared to deliver important social, environmental and economic reforms and a government looking at how we can provide for all Canberrans and the various scenarios this city faces into the future.

To look back over the first year, I have to say that I think my decision to work with Labor to form a government has been a decision that has delivered effectively for the Canberra community. I think we have managed to establish a government that is effective, stable and getting on with the things that people in Canberra care about. It is important to remember at that point that people in Canberra care about a whole range of things—whether that is reducing red tape, as Minister Barr has spoken about, or legislating for marriage equality, people expect us to do all of these things.

We have seen some criticism in the last few days that the ACT should not be dealing with some of these matters. Actually, our community expects us to deal with all of

them, and I am quite confident the government can deal with the many issues that face us, from the basic delivery of services—which often sit within my portfolio of Territory and Municipal Services, and I refer to the bevy of people out every day getting the grass mowed, picking up the rubbish and those sorts of things to the best of their ability—through to important reforms, such as the one we passed through this place yesterday which brought a great deal of joy to members of our community and which are equally as important as those basic municipal services. As a territory and local government rolled into one, we need to deliver that full spectrum of initiatives.

We have seen, with the partnership we have been able to create between the Labor Party and the Greens, a stable government, and it shows that the two parties have been able to work together even though we remain independent and are not in a formal coalition. There is also substantial, dynamic policy discussion. Not only did this occur in the development of the parliamentary agreement—it would be fair to say there was some vigorous back and forth about what would ultimately be contained in that agreement—but it continues to occur as I discuss policy matters with those in the Labor Party on a whole range of items, whether it is delivering the agreement, the coming budget or the election promises that the ALP made. We continue to have a range of ongoing discussions.

One of the strengths of this approach is that we bring different perspectives to these issues. We work through them and ensure the best possible delivery. That is something I invite the Liberal Party to reflect on. The recent position from Mr Hanson to deal himself out of many of the issues that will come before the Assembly is an unfortunate one. I think it is a waste of opportunity in the sense that, throughout my time in the Assembly where there have been three parties present in this place, members have worked together on a range of issues. Madam Speaker, you and I did a lot of work last term on a range of Attorney-General's issues where we were able to bring to the legislative process the community perspective from the various contacts we had and ultimately improve bills. That is an approach we should always take in this Assembly—to try and bring all perspectives we bring to this place to get the best possible outcomes for the community.

For example, the Greens have taken on responsibility for delivering three pieces of legislation under the parliamentary agreement. I am very pleased so far with the general engagement I have been able to have with the Labor Party on the development of those bills. I invite Mr Hanson and his colleagues to continue to engage on those bills, because we are talking about important matters such as the creation of officers of the parliament, something the Administration and Procedures Committee looked at last term and which is now being brought to fruition in this term.

This is not a piece of party-political legislation; this is about setting up important governance structures for this territory and trying to evolve them in ways that reflect modern thinking and best practice, and it is important that all of us engage in those discussions so we get outcomes that members of this Assembly can feel a sense of ownership of and feel we have delivered the best outcome for the Canberra community.

I also want to say that I have been very pleased in the past 12 months to be able to bring a Greens perspective to a range of discussions, and that remains important. Members will know that one of the criticisms I receive sometimes is that I am only one of 17 in this place, and that is true. But the Greens received over 25,000 votes at the last ACT election. That is a substantial proportion of the Canberra community, and it is quite appropriate that those people who voted for my party are represented in this place and that the ideals and policies they voted for—the fully costed policies, I remind members—are brought to this place on a regular basis.

A series of specific achievements and areas of progress have already been rolled out from the parliamentary agreement. I am particularly pleased with the additional funding to enhance our management of biodiversity in the ACT. This is one of those issues that perhaps is not on the front page of the newspaper every day but one where we have a significant duty of custodianship over our natural environment. Mr Doszpot spoke at some length in his discussion of Kingston this morning about Canberra as the bush capital and all of the parks. He did not actually mention any of the nature parks; he only focused on the man-made European-style parks, but, nonetheless, the natural parks are also an important asset of this city and a critical part of the bush capital heritage we have inherited, and we have a job to look after that. Through the addition of some park ranger positions and additional funding for things like rabbit control, that custodianship, that duty we have to maintain those important natural spaces, will be carried forward in a more effective way.

I am particularly pleased we have seen an enhancement of capacity to support our Parkcare groups. This is a good example of government working in partnership with the community. Those Parkcare co-ordinators significantly amplify the work that government could achieve on its own. Many people around this city are keen to volunteer in the parks and have good expertise and good experience, and I am determined to make sure we have a strong partnership between the Parks and Conservation Service and those Parkcare volunteers so that everybody is working to the same goal and that we are utilising the best strengths of each of those parties—the volunteers who usually are out there on the weekends and can do certain tasks and then the rangers who can bring along heavier equipment and do certain activities. Having enhanced capacity there for Parkcare co-ordination is particularly beneficial for the city.

Dr Bourke, if I recall correctly, mentioned light rail. This is obviously very important to the Greens. We certainly were talking about it extensively last term, and I am very pleased to see that it is now a key commitment of the partnership between the Labor Party and the Greens. This project will make a tremendous difference to the future of this city at a whole lot of levels. It is a transport project—it is about delivering transport alternatives—but it is also an economic project to drive economic growth in this city. We have spoken in this place before about some of those potential opportunities that arise from conglomeration of small businesses around the transport hubs. It is something we are already seeing in a funny way in the light industrial area of Braddon. If you can imagine that actually taking place along a transport corridor, that is the sort of economic diversification and opportunity that light rail has the potential to bring to this city, as well as others.

There will, of course, be an important element of urban renewal, of providing accommodation close to the city and the cost-of-living benefits that come with reduced transport costs as well as the social opportunities that go with that kind of redevelopment. That then avoids the need to push people further and further out from the heart of the city into more far-flung suburbs.

I am particularly pleased with the progress of the Common Ground development. This is a powerful new initiative to help tackle homelessness and provide affordable housing options. I spoke about it yesterday afternoon in the matter of public importance. There has been significant progress on that project; it is moving very quickly. This reflects both a political commitment from the government but also a strong effort from the staff in the directorate. I thank them for that very focussed effort in delivering that project. We have seen, despite the affluence of this city, that many people suffer from homelessness. Last year's figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics on homelessness were, for me, with only a few weeks into having portfolio responsibility for homelessness, a very stark moment to focus the mind on the job that needs to be done. I am pleased the Common Ground project was one part of the parliamentary agreement and one part of tackling that issue.

While I was in the antechamber I heard Minister Burch make some reference to the fact that there are issues of uncertainty about whether the commonwealth will continue to play its part in the national partnership agreement on homelessness and the national partnership agreement on housing. These are both very important agreements, and we have a job to do as the ACT government to make sure we continue to take action in this area. We need to know what that partnership with the commonwealth is going to look like into the future.

As we move forward we also need to take into account our major strategy documents, including the Canberra plan. It is a cornerstone strategy document for the government, and many other plans hinge off it—things such as the social plan, the economic plan, the ACT planning strategy, weathering the change, the infrastructure plan and the transport for Canberra plan. We have this set of strategies that weave together in a very effective way. The key issue is that the government not only creates these plans but then sticks to them. We follow through and we continue to make the decisions that will deliver the goals that have been identified in those plans. The community has an expectation. There are extensive consultation processes. People make submissions, they turn up to public meetings. Not everybody's views, of course, are always reflected because they are divergent, but it is important for the community that we continue to follow through on these plans and focus on the goals. That means, certainly for me as a minister in day-to-day decisions, trying to reflect on how they fit into those bigger picture plans and making sure we continue to remain focused on them. Not necessarily writing new ones all the time, but, as we sit down to form the budget, being mindful of those goals and making sure we are taking decisions that drive us towards them.

Reflecting on the specifics of Dr Bourke's motion, he has identified some of the key issues in my mind. The four priority areas outlined in the ACT budget are ones I think are particularly important: creating opportunity and a more liveable city; being a

healthier and smarter community; growing a stronger and more diverse economy; and focusing on urban renewal as our city grows. These are key themes of the policies the Greens took to the last ACT election. I am pleased that, through the combined work of the Greens and the Labor Party in this government, they continue to be points of focus. They are the issues we need to focus on for the future of this city, and I am very pleased to be a part of helping to deliver some of those outcomes.

As I said at the start, I will not be supporting Mr Hanson's amendment. I simply disagree with some of it. I mean, Mr Hanson cannot seriously expect this to get support. The flinging around of ideological labels, which is a bit old school, is just not going to happen. I am amused by a trend that has emerged this sitting week, and it will be interesting to see if it keeps happening—Mr Hanson, the great interjector, the man who hectors consistently in this chamber, has taken to naming out when somebody from the other side of the chamber dares to interject. This is from a man with a long history of interjecting, but now he has taken a pious stance—I guess he wants to get it on the *Hansard* so that it is recorded for posterity—of saying, “Oh, Mr Barr is interjecting,” like it is a shock and a horror. For as long as I have been in this chamber, this is a man who has been the great, renowned interjector. In fact, he is shown to have the biggest glass jaw in the place. It will be interesting to see whether this trend continues because it is one of the most ironic things I have seen in this place for quite some time.

I thank Dr Bourke for bringing forward this motion today. It has been useful to reflect both on some of the things that have been achieved but also some of the challenges that remain ahead of us. I look forward to continuing to contribute to taking on those challenges.

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 12.25 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Alexander Maconochie Centre—capacity

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Corrections. Minister, in answers to questions about the AMC over the past three years, the government has used a variety of terms to describe the number of prisoners to be accommodated. These terms have included “maximum capacity”, “actual bed numbers”, “prisoner numbers” “operational capacity” and “actual daily numbers”. In your ministerial statement released yesterday, you introduced two new terms—“raw accommodation number”, which is 366, and “actual daily numbers”, 343. Minister, is 366 the “maximum capacity”, is it the “actual bed numbers”, is it “actual daily numbers”, is it the “prisoner numbers”, is it “the operational capacity” or is it something else?

MR RATTENBURY: I am happy to try and assist Mr Hanson with his uncertainty. The figures that I spoke of yesterday—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Coe! Let Mr Rattenbury give an answer.

MR RATTENBURY: The term that I used yesterday, “actual daily numbers”, refers to the actual number of prisoners in the AMC on a given day—so the actual number of human bodies that are detained in the facility and not able to leave at the end of the day. So that was the number of 341 that I gave yesterday. The “raw accommodation number” that I used of 366 refers to the actual number of bed places available in the AMC at the current time.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, is the short-term increase in raw accommodation numbers to 366 permanent and, if not, when will the short-term arrangements be reversed?

MR RATTENBURY: The actual number of beds is 366. I have no intention at this point to reduce those numbers. As I outlined in my statement and as I have said publicly, we are facing significant pressures. The actual number of prisoners today is 341. That got as high as 343 in the last few days. Clearly, at this point there will be no call—and it would be quite unwise—to remove any beds.

In terms of the medium to longer term, I have indicated—and it is in the budget process—the government is intending to build additional accommodation. But at this point, I see no reason to remove those additional beds that have been installed.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: How many prisoners more than the current 343 “actual daily numbers” would mean that the AMC is full?

MR RATTENBURY: This goes to some extent to the answer I gave to Mr Hanson earlier. The actual number of beds we have is 366. I think members have a good understanding of the fact that that does not necessarily mean that all 366 beds can be used. A set number of those beds are in the women’s area, and obviously we are not able to mix male and female detainees. We also have issues from the broader separation discussion which I know members have been briefed on on their visits to the Alexander Maconochie Centre. I think you have a good understanding and appreciation of those issues.

It is a daily proposition. It is one that the staff at the Alexander Maconochie Centre are managing with a high degree of professionalism—

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, I have a point of order on relevance.

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order, Mr Hanson.

Mr Hanson: The question was quite specific. We are dealing with numbers here. You have been very specific about the 341. We have heard previously about what the operational capacity is in very defined numbers. At what point is the jail full? That is the question, in essence, and I would ask the minister to come directly to that answer.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think, in fairness to Mr Rattenbury, he was trying to outline the difficulties. My understanding is that it is not that 341 plus whatever gives you the number, because there are some exigencies at the margins. I think that is what Mr Rattenbury was getting at.

MR RATTENBURY: That is exactly where I was going to go, Madam Speaker.

Mr Hanson: Maybe I'll put my questions to you in the future, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Don't be disorderly, Mr Hanson.

MR RATTENBURY: That is the observation I was trying to make: there is not a definitive number. It depends on the classifications, what sort of detainees we have. I cannot stand here and give a definitive number exactly as to how many detainees we can fit in the AMC at a given date. It depends on the composition of those detainee numbers.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, does the current funding and configuration allow for any further increases in the maximum capacity of the AMC from the current 366 beds?

MR RATTENBURY: I am going to take that one on notice, Mr Wall. I just want to check the exact answer to that as I know I am going to have it quoted back at me at some point in time. I am going to take some advice. I will come back to you at the end of question time on that one.

Schools—emergency plans

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the minister for education. Minister, today all schools in the Blue Mountains are closed due to the risk of bushfires. Given the confused messaging to schools that accompanied the fire in Mitchell last year, what emergency plans are in place for ACT schools if a similar situation were to occur here?

MS BURCH: I thank Mr Doszpot for his question. I think some of the response can come from me but I also think that Mr Corbell can provide some response. Certainly, following Mitchell, all government agencies reviewed how we responded. I think that has been quite clear and I am sure that Simon Corbell spoke to the government's response to the Mitchell fire. I am very clear that schools and also childcare centres as well are involved in this as private entities.

As a government school sector, we have very clear process and policy about at what point do we initiate certain procedures through a community emergency. There are clearly defined ember zones. I think that is the term that is referenced to that. I will leave it there. I am not quite sure where you are going to with this, but it might be that Mr Corbell and I will be responding to further questions.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Corbell, do you want to add anything?

MR CORBELL: Yes, if I could answer, Madam Speaker. The Emergency Services Agency has undertaken detailed planning with a range of government directorates where those directorates are responsible for vulnerable persons. So whether that is the education directorate, which obviously has the direct responsibility for the care of children whilst they are at school or whether it is the Community Services Directorate which has responsibility for the operation of disability homes and so on, the ESA have established an elevated fire danger plan.

On days of elevated fire danger, such as days we are currently seeing, regrettably, in the Blue Mountains today, there are mechanisms in place to ensure that relevant government directorates are contacted and decisions made about whether or not certain facilities continue to operate, are closed, in the event of, for example, schools as the question referred to, or residents are evacuated in advance should it be people in vulnerable circumstances such as disability care group homes, nursing homes or other similar facilities.

So the elevated fire danger planning framework is well established across government and involves engagement between the Emergency Services Agency, which will make a declaration about elevated fire danger status, and then the response from the relevant operational agencies, such as education, community services and so on as to the decisions they will make and the information they will provide to parents or carers or whoever it may be about the decisions around the operation of facilities or the evacuation of residents from certain facilities.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, I will pose this question to you as well; you may want to consult with your colleague. Minister, how often are these plans revised and schools consulted?

MR CORBELL: Madam Speaker, I think this is a question for me. The plans have been developed comprehensively over the last two years in particular and are developed through the normal mechanisms for liaison between government agencies. Government agencies are also advised of revision and are alerted to the need to be familiar with the planning arrangements as we head into each bushfire season.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: To either of the ministers: how often do Canberra public schools practise emergency evacuations?

MS BURCH: It is a routine part of their annual preparation and making sure that it is a safe environment for their students and teachers. I will get some advice about how often that happens in the calendar year, the academic year, but I know it is certainly part and parcel of their preparation for school safety.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, what are the arrangements for non-government schools in this matter?

MS BURCH: I thank Dr Bourke for his interest in this. Whilst we have no direct responsibility for the independent schools or, indeed, the Catholic schools, it is important that they are aware and certainly they are part of the conversation about community preparedness around community safety. It is something that I think, as we, the broader community, look to what is happening in New South Wales, always brings to mind very clear messaging about being prepared and ready for this. And I am quite happy to have a conversation with the Catholic system and the independent schools system to ensure that their school communities are equally prepared.

MR CORBELL: If I could add, again, to that answer, the elevated fire danger planning arrangements include the identification and notification points into the non-government school sector. The non-government school sector have nominated, as I understand it, contact points for emergency services to contact them and advise them of decisions.

Obviously, the approach, with elevated fire danger, is not about evacuation; it is about decisions as to whether or not schools open on particular days. That is what has happened in the Blue Mountains today. The authorities have taken the decision that it would not be wise to have the schools operating on an elevated fire danger day. Therefore, the decision has been taken early and notice given to families that the school will be closed as part of the broader community preparedness that is being put in the Blue Mountains. And it is the same planning framework here.

What we have to do is avoid the need for evacuation. Evacuation in the middle of a fire, as a fire is bearing down on a community, is the worst possible scenario to try to manage. So the elevated fire planning framework is about early evacuation for those people who are resident and avoiding opening if that is appropriate. *(Time expired.)*

Planning—city plan

DR BOURKE: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, what is the government's objective in developing the city plan, which is currently out for public consultation?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Dr Bourke for the question. The ACT government is preparing a plan to ensure the city centre can grow to meet our changing needs and aspirations. We released the draft city plan on Monday. This looks at issues of how the city grows when it reaches a population of 500,000 and beyond. We have to plan for the key infrastructure and, of course, major recreation and cultural facilities that go along with developing our city's heart.

Over many years separate and distinct plans have been made by both the ACT and the Australian governments to establish the future character, growth and development of

parts of the city centre. However, until now there has not been a single overarching strategic framework that sets out a clear plan for the future.

The city plan will do this by setting a vision and a spatial framework for future development of the city centre as an important local, regional and national place. The framework will help illustrate a number of initiatives the government and private sector are proposing and how we can work together to create a vibrant and liveable city centre. The plan looks at how growth and change can happen across the city and identifies ways to achieve this change while keeping its natural settings in line with Griffin's plan 100 years ago.

The plan will help determine development and growth and ensure projects and infrastructure are delivered efficiently and effectively. It aims to unlock the potential of Canberra CBD and better integrate it with public transport, residential buildings, surrounding parklands and educational institutions. Local, national and international interest in the city will be stimulated, attracting business and visitors and boosting the economy, vibrancy and liveability of the city.

The government is focused on increasing the residential population of the city centre to deliver a day and night economy. This requires changes to the way the city operates and moves at all times of the day. By removing the barriers that make it hard for people to access the whole of the city centre, including accessing the lake, we will open up opportunities to develop and revitalise the city centre to make places like City Hill Park people-friendly places.

This draft plan has been jointly funded by the ACT and Australian governments under the liveable cities program and we are providing in-kind resources to the commonwealth's \$500,000 grant. We hope that people do get involved in the consultation and I look forward to releasing the final city plan before the end of this year.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Chief Minister, what are the key elements of the plan?

MS GALLAGHER: There are six main elements, strategic themes, to the plan. The first is growth, one that looks at a vibrant centre that stimulates business, education, living, entertaining and recreation. The second area is land use and development, a prosperous and dynamic mix of uses and activities that build character. The third is transport and movement, looking at how we can connect the city through both transport and people, making sure it is easy to get in and around. With public realm and design, we have seen already, in some of the improvements to public realm that have happened in the city in the last couple of years, what a difference it has made and how it does attract people to those places. Community infrastructure looks at all of the different needs that we have across the city, and also there is strengthening the character of the city, making it a clear presence, an enhanced presence, through the changes outlined in this plan.

We do want to see more people living in the city centre. The plan looks to accommodate 10 per cent of the territory's population growth to 2030 in the city centre. We also want to look at the impact of vehicle traffic and prioritising public transport options in the city centre, as many other capital cities are already doing or have already done.

A change in growth will be delivered across each city centre's identified character areas in different ways, but it will build on the existing strengths of each of those areas. So City Hill and West Basin will see the greatest level of change in growth. They are vital in making east-west and city-lake connections. The plan will also look at ways to connect the city centre with the foreshore, as we have talked about in this place before, including the work that is required around the lowering of Parkes Way and the new boardwalk as part of the city to the lake proposal.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Chief Minister, will the city plan be entrenched in a legislative instrument such as the territory plan?

MS GALLAGHER: It will certainly be used as the overarching strategic framework for planning decisions that are taken around the city centre, the area identified in the city plan, once that plan has been finalised.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Chief Minister, how can the community have their say on the draft city plan?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Ms Porter for the question. We are encouraging people to have a say on the draft plan. We have had so far 15,000 people who have accessed information one way or another, whether it be at the community engagement tent in the city or through the website.

These are often difficult exercises in engagement. Not a lot of people, outside of professional industry associations, like to get too involved in this level of detail. But these are changes that will potentially affect the look of the city, or will definitely affect the look of the city. We are asking people to get involved and think about these issues before decisions are finalised.

There are various ways of getting involved. People can get involved on the website, through time to talk or the city plan website. There is an open house marquee in Garema Place and a display in the Canberra Centre from next Monday to Saturday. So there are various ways that people can get involved. I hope they do. So far the feedback we have had in the early stages is that people want to see some of the changes outlined in the early documents happen and happen as soon as we can make them happen.

Obviously, the developments and improvements that people have been interested in will take time to deliver. But the view is that people would like to see the city used more. They would like more people living in it. They want more vibrancy in the city. And they want to see some of the pieces of key infrastructure delivered over time. Now is the time to have your say before we finalise the plan in agreement with the arrangements that we have undertaken with the commonwealth.

Emergency services—resignations

MR SMYTH: My question is to the minister for emergency services. Minister, can you confirm whether the Deputy Chief Officer of the Rural Fire Service and the Deputy Chief Officer of the State Emergency Service have both resigned?

MR CORBELL: My understanding is that the Deputy Chief Officer ACT Rural Fire Service has retired and the Deputy Chief Officer of the Ambulance Service has resigned and taken up another position.

Mr Smyth: Did you say ambulance or SES?

MR CORBELL: Was your question about SES?

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, will these positions be filled in the near future and, if so, when?

MR CORBELL: First of all, to just clarify my previous answer so there is no confusion, in relation to the resignation to take up a different position, I was referring to the Deputy Chief Officer SES. In relation to the filling of those matters, I will take some advice from the ESA and provide an answer to the member.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, are you aware of your responsibilities, through sections 53 and 58 of the Emergencies Act 2004, regarding the constitution of the Rural Fire Service and the constitution of the SES?

MR CORBELL: Yes, I am aware of my responsibilities under the act.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, can you explain to the Assembly what processes are used to fill these positions?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Gentleman for the question. Obviously arrangements are in place for recruitment on a merit basis for any position that falls vacant in the ACT public service, and that also extends to the Emergency Services Agency.

Disability services—ACT government role

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Disability, Children and Young People. Minister, what role will the ACT government play in the provision of disability services after the transition to the NDIS?

MS BURCH: I thank Mr Wall for his interest in the NDIS. Recently there has been an announcement made around our provision of respite services. We have made a decision and a commitment to put those services out to tender for a non-government provider. In the scheme of the broader services, there has been no final decision made. I am on record here and I am on record in many a public forum that government services—indeed, anyone who is providing services to people with a disability—need to reflect on that in preparation for the NDIS. They need to do their due diligence about what that service provision is and how it connects to the broader service provision of government and non-government agencies. So the short answer is that there has been no clear decision on that.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, will the ACT government actually be delivering front-line services to the disability sector after the NDIS is operational and will there be any other closures or transfers of services?

MS BURCH: In short, I think I said there has been no clear decision. We start NDIS from 1 July next year, but we go to 2019-20 until we are completely through that phase. So not only will government perhaps change but other service provisions will change. I have been very clear: I will come back to this Assembly and give advice on an update on a regular basis. I think it is the right question to ask. Other people in the community have asked me as well. So when we are very clear about what the implementation will be and how we will approach the phase-in of the NDIS, which will start in July next year—all of that work is being considered now. We will come back to the community in the new year about the phase-in and those other key decisions, share them with the community and share them with members here. Rightly so, each one of us has a keen interest in making sure we get this transition over those five years right.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, when will you release detailed plans for the ACT's transition to the NDIS?

MS BURCH: In short, when they are available. Just for your information, this is very—

Mr Doszpot: Can you give us a time frame?

MS BURCH: I was about to go to that, Mr Doszpot. The work that is happening with the expert advisory group and the task force is looking to the services that are actually

captured. This is across Therapy ACT, Disability ACT and Health. And there could be other agencies. So we have to actually look at our services and disconnect what will not be captured by the NDIS and what is captured by the NDIS. That is complicated work. It is across Education and Training as well, just in transport and support services in school. That work is going through.

We are also working with the community sector about those needs. I met last week with the CEO and the chair of NDIS here in the ACT about how we work in partnership with the community providers about their own internal governance, their own internal assessments, so that they too can be very clear about service provisions and what they need to be doing in preparation for July and those years of transition beyond that.

As I have said, as information comes to hand, I will regularly come back and provide an update.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, what improvements are foreshadowed as the NDIS rolls out?

MS BURCH: I thank Mr Gentleman for his question. The fundamental principle of the NDIS is to improve the lives and quality of lives of people with a disability and their families and to increase the control and choice people have. In this transition year we have been very pleased with the success of the enhanced service offer. Round one has finished, and there were around 1,300 applications and I think around 800—I can confirm that figure if there is an interest in the absolute detail—grants have been made. I think over \$4 million has been distributed to members of our community. Round two is open now and closes in the early weeks of November, and that, again, will be assessed and those fundings distributed hopefully by Christmas or, if not, in the New Year.

We have seen as a result of that a significant increase of service provision and access to support services from straight personal care and community flexible hours as well as some fantastic stories around education and training opportunities that young people are picking up so their lives are improved not just for the life of the grant but as they go through their adult lives. It is all about improving quality for people with a disability.

I know Mr Wall is very keen, as are all members here, and that is why, as I have said, as we go through those key decisions we will come back to the Assembly, as all members of the community have an interest in how we roll this out.

Economy—Gungahlin

MS PORTER: My question is to the Minister for Economic Development. Minister, can you please outline the steps the government has taken to provide services, infrastructure and economic growth in Gungahlin.

MR BARR: I thank Ms Porter for the question; she has been a very able representative of a number of suburbs in Gungahlin and I know takes a very strong interest in the area's development.

The government has been involved in delivering a significant range of new infrastructure as Gungahlin has developed, particularly in the last decade or so. We have planned, designed and funded the construction of roads, schools, health facilities, sports facilities and emergency service facilities as well as some outstanding public spaces.

The government understands that building knowledge and ongoing learning are essential to the territory's economy as a whole and to the success of individuals. That is why we have invested so heavily in education facilities across Gungahlin. In the town centre we have opened Gungahlin College, the CIT Learning Centre and the Gungahlin library, facilities that are, it would be fair to say, the best of their kind in this country. All are co-located, and with the development of the adjacent Gungahlin leisure centre, due to open early next year, and the adjacent enclosed oval, we have a magnificent precinct nearly completed. From what was a dusty paddock only a few years back, through the investment of many hundreds of millions of dollars, we have world-class community facilities in the town centre.

We have also constructed an innovative and popular new form of community recreation, the community recreation irrigated park, at Crace, and we are developing another such park at Franklin. In addition, there is a wide array of public walking paths and small and larger playgrounds and a number of nature reserves.

Elsewhere in the town centre, the new Gungahlin Community Health Centre opened in September of last year as part of the government's health infrastructure program which is being rolled out across the territory. This is located in a precinct that also includes the Gungahlin Child and Family Centre and a wide range of community services provided through Communities@Work. A new primary school opened this year in Bonner, which also houses the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural and Learning Centre. At Franklin, a purpose-built early childhood school has been constructed. The school, which opened this school year, has a 120-place childcare centre and can accommodate up to 300 preschool to year 2 students. We have also provided land for the Catholic Education Office to operate a high school at Nicholls and a primary school in Harrison, in addition to their existing schools at Amaroo and Nicholls.

The government recognises the critical role of the private sector in creating jobs and growth in Gungahlin and has put forward a number of targeted land releases to support continuing residential development and commercial construction. We have sold a site for a new mixed-use group centre at Casey and are in the process of releasing land for a group centre at Amaroo. These complement the local centres that are already the hubs of suburbs elsewhere across the district, and we expect land release for new commercial centres in Moncrieff and Kenny in the future.

The government also recognises the benefits of high-speed broadband and has worked closely with NBN Co, telecommunication companies and the Australian government

on future broadband service rollout plans. We have established the digital hub at the Gungahlin library, providing free community workshops and training to improve digital literacy and knowledge of NBN functionality. *(Time expired.)*

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, how will the planned government office block contribute to economic growth in Gungahlin?

MR BARR: The government office block was commissioned by the territory government to address the needs of a larger workforce in Gungahlin. I was very pleased to be able to turn the first sod on this development on Monday of this week. When occupied, it will boost economic activity in the town centre, bring more day time trade to local businesses, notably in retail, hospitality and other service providers.

The project will accommodate around 600 territory public servants in a building of around 8,500 square metres. It will also provide a childcare centre and a Canberra Connect shopfront. The project will boost the Gungahlin economy through the construction phase between now and mid-2015. It is also a very significant investment in the economic and cultural viability of the Gungahlin town centre.

The investment by the KDN Group and its partners is certainly a strong show of faith in the Gungahlin town centre and in Canberra's economic future.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: When can Gungahlin residents expect that Gundaroo Drive will be duplicated?

MR BARR: That is a question outside my portfolio responsibilities but—

Mr Coe: You said infrastructure.

MR BARR: I do not have responsibility for roads but I will look forward to the budget cabinet considerations of all road projects as we go into the next round of the budget.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, what are some other projects that will contribute to the growth and development of Gungahlin?

MR BARR: I am pleased to say that the first stage of the capital metro project along the Gungahlin-to-city corridor will have the potential to unlock a number of economic development opportunities. Not only will it increase the transport capacity along the corridor but also it will encourage economic activity through urban redevelopment.

As a key landowner, and as a land manager under the leasehold system, a unique opportunity exists for the ACT Government to both directly and indirectly advance

urban renewal along the corridor and, indeed, at the key anchor points both in Gungahlin and the city.

Within the town centre a future cinema complex is proposed for release on block 1 section 12. This will be a mixed use development that will also include a retail and residential component. We are very close to announcing the successful tenderer for this project.

The government has also sold block 1 section 227 in the town centre and this has been purchased by the Eastlake Football Club. This development will not only generate employment opportunities for the area. Certainly, it also has considerable social and entertainment benefits.

Gungahlin will also be the site for the territory's first common ground project, an innovative new mixed housing development.

Insurance—third party

MRS JONES: My question is to the Treasurer. The Road Transport (Third-Party Insurance) Act 2008 introduced certain changes to compulsory third-party insurance. Minister, can you confirm that the act has led to a reduction in the number of insurance claims proceeding to court? If so, by how many?

MR BARR: I will obviously need to take the detail of that question on notice. The data will take some time to gather, but I am happy to provide that information to the member in due course. I would say that this is an area where the government believes there is a need for further reform. We certainly recognise the advantages of competition and we are very pleased that, for the first time in more than 25 years, ACT residents have a choice of third-party insurance providers. We are already seeing benefits of competition, both in terms of reduced prices for drivers who have a lower risk threshold and also in terms of a focus on early medical intervention and rehabilitation that the new entrants have brought into the marketplace.

We believe, though, that significant downward pressure on premiums will only come with a change to our system, a move away from a fault-based system. The government is certainly actively exploring further reforms in this area. The Victorian model is one that we are looking at, and I can foreshadow to the Assembly that we will be bringing further legislation. I look forward to the support of Assembly members this time because we know this is one of the more significant cost of living pressures that we are experiencing as residents in this city. There is something we can do about it, and that is to change our system.

We can also all contribute as residents by having fewer accidents, and one of the best ways to do that might be to slow down a little on the roads. Fewer accidents mean fewer payouts and lower premiums. All of our road safety strategies are at play to assist in that task. But everyone can assist by driving to the conditions and driving to the speed limit. Unfortunately, it would appear, from the evidence of anyone who spends any time on the roads in Canberra, that the speed limit seems to be more of an

advisory than a limit to be adhered to. I would hope, and this is the point I respond to every time this issue is raised, that we can all contribute to a safer road network by driving to the conditions and by keeping to speed limits.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, can you confirm that the act has led to a reduction in the time taken to process and resolve such claims and, if so, by how much?

MR BARR: The data that was available for the first few years since those amendments indicated improvements, so the amendments achieved some of their aims, but I do not believe they go far enough. The government believes further reform is necessary, and we would have liked to have seen the proposals that we brought forward in the last Assembly receive the support of the Assembly. That was not to be the case, so we will try again. We will look at alternative ways to reform the system but with a view to ensure that those who are injured get early medical treatment and that it is not a lawyer's picnic. It is not for the lawyers; it is for the people who are injured. I will say this: it was very revealing when the electoral returns came out to see who received money from the plaintiff lawyers.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, what are the benefits to the whole community of reform in this area?

MR BARR: The benefits are lower premiums, a better and faster process for dealing with those who suffer significant injuries as a result of a motor vehicle accident, expediting their medical treatment. A no-fault scheme would appear to resolve most of the difficulties that people going through the system experience at the moment. We are actively exploring that as an option.

Victoria has a very good model. The Transport Accident Commission in Victoria undertake considerable work both in the promotion of road safety and in the promotion of better outcomes for those who are unfortunately injured in motor vehicle accidents. I have had the opportunity to meet with the chief executive of the Transport Accident Commission in Melbourne.

We will continue to focus on reform in this area. As I said in response to Mrs Jones's earlier question, we certainly foreshadow further legislation from the government in this area during this term of the Assembly.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, can you confirm that the act has led to the reduction in claims processing costs, including legal and medical costs, and, if so, by how much?

MR BARR: From data I have seen in recent times I understand there have been some improvements, but nowhere enough. I recognise that the reforms that were made in 2008 have made a positive contribution. People want to see more and the government

wants to see more. We will not give up on reform in this area. I am confident that the work that we are undertaking and the approach that we are adopting and the move to a no-fault scheme will be a better outcome for the ACT.

Health Directorate—staff numbers

MR COE: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, why did the corporate and support division staff in your directorate increase by 11 per cent last year when front-line staff at the Canberra Hospital increased by only four per cent?

MS GALLAGHER: I will have to take that question on notice. I do not know the reason why there would have been an increase. There would have been a good reason for it, though, Mr Coe. I can assure you of that.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe, a supplementary question.

MR COE: Minister, what direction does the government give to the directorate on the proportion of staff increases in the hospital compared to front-line support units?

MS GALLAGHER: The government approves the Health Directorate's budget overall, like it does with all directorates, and we approve additional funds that go into the Health Directorate. We are talking about proportions here, I imagine. We have a workforce of over 5,000 in Health. Where you have small units that might increase by two, I imagine the percentage increase is skewed, for example, against increasing the nursing staff by 70 within a workforce of 3,000 or so.

I can absolutely assure Mr Coe that the biggest components of the increases in employment in the Health Directorate have been nursing staff, health professionals and medical practitioners.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, how important is it to have effective staff in the background supporting the front-line staff?

MS GALLAGHER: It is absolutely essential. We need some staff that provide the services at the coalface, and in the Health Directorate that is the vast majority of staff.

In terms of other areas, though, for example, we have taken on more staff in the capital planning area. That has been to address the contractual changes that we made by not having Thinc Health doing the capital infrastructure project management. We took that back in-house, and that has required additional staff who were already working on the project in some capacity but under a different employment arrangement.

So there are changes. But we do need business support and corporate support and executives to run what is a growing area of government and an important area of government.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, what are the future plans for increasing staff in the corporate and support division of the Health Directorate?

MS GALLAGHER: These are matters that the government relies on the director-general for. We do not sit there and micro manage individual decisions about particular areas in government. I know that, for example, Dr Peggy Brown makes decisions to deploy her resources where those resources are most needed, and at times, if that requires people who sit at a desk and do policy-based work or support the function of front-line workers, then that will be the case. But what we expect from our director-generals is that they make these decisions within the budget available.

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker—

MS GALLAGHER: I have finished my answer, thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Can I remind members that if members want to make a point of order, it is customary to rise and say, “Point of order”, so that we know what we are dealing with from the outset.

ACT Ambulance Service—cardiac monitors

MS LAWDER: Madam Speaker, my question is to the minister for emergency services. Minister, regarding the MRx monitors, have there been any reported incidents resulting from batteries losing power when being used? If yes, how many and what?

MR CORBELL: I would need to seek advice from the ACT Ambulance Service, and I will do so and provide an answer to the member.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, have there been any incidents as a result of the machines giving inaccurate blood pressure readings?

MR CORBELL: I understand that there have been problems, as have been reported in the media and stated, indeed, by officials of the ACT Ambulance Service, with the blood pressure reading mechanism or program on these machines. Whether that has led to inaccurate blood pressure readings, I would again seek the advice of the chief officer, ACT Ambulance Service, and I will provide an answer to the member.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, have there been any incidents as a result of the machine’s ECG transmission failing?

MR CORBELL: My understanding in relation to the ECG transmission capability is that the software problems resulted in the bluetooth transmission capability which is used to transmit the ECG reading being set to a default of off. As a result, officers were, at times, not aware that the bluetooth was off and therefore not transmitting. In relation to any further information around that matter, I will, again, seek the advice of the Chief Officer, ACT Ambulance Service.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, would you agree that the government's purchase of these machines has added further stress and concern to some emergency service staff?

MR CORBELL: No, I would not agree that the government's purchase of these machines has led to that distress. I would agree that the technical difficulties that have been experienced with these new machines have caused concern for paramedical staff. I am also aware, however, that those concerns have rapidly diminished as a result of the action taken by ACT ambulance with the supplier to rectify the software problems, and I am pleased to see that those issues are being comprehensively addressed.

Education—curriculum

MR GENTLEMAN: My question is to the minister for education. Minister, I understand that from this year ACT students from kindergarten to year 10 will begin to be marked according to nationally agreed achievement standards based on the Australian curriculum. Can you outline to the Assembly how this transition to a common reporting standard will help parents understand their child's achievements?

MS BURCH: I thank Mr Gentleman for his interest. The ACT public school system has a tradition of excellence in education and is a national leader in the implementation of the Australian curriculum. We recognise the significance of the Australian curriculum and its capacity to deliver knowledge, understanding and skills that will support all our students.

With the transition to the Australian curriculum it means that, for the first time in the ACT, schools will have the capacity and confidence to ensure that an A or a B or a C or a D or an E in one school is the same as in another.

As I have said before, as minister for education I am absolutely committed to putting children and parents at the centre of our education system. We know parents want a clear picture of where their children are at and for this information to be reliable and simple to understand. That is what the Australian curriculum will deliver, and the new reporting framework will provide that.

The significance of this really cannot be underestimated. Before now the clarity and consistency have had their limitations. The capacity to provide this information is due to the critical role the Australian curriculum achievement standards play in

implementing the nationally agreed benchmarks for assessing and reporting student achievement. It is these standards that will provide the consistency in reporting within and across schools that our community expects from a leading education system such as ours.

The Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority—ACARA—also provides examples of student work with comments indicating to teachers why a grade has been given. The annotated work samples provide a critical tool for teachers in applying the achievement standards to assess and report students' progress to families.

The online nature and accessibility of the Australian curriculum by the community also provides significantly increased levels of accountability and transparency. Families can access the curriculum content and each standard online. They can view examples of the work expected at each stage of their children's schooling. This will strengthen the opportunities for building collaborative relationships with families at their child's school, opening the doors for better communication and outcomes for everyone and allowing parents to stay at the centre of their child's learning. Reporting using the achievement standards will build on the ACT's strong tradition of providing families with detailed information on the progress of their children.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, how will this achievement standard improve the confidence parents and schools have in the quality of their schooling?

MS BURCH: Canberra families already have a high level of confidence in the reporting and feedback provided to parents, and in the quality of schooling delivered in our government schools. The introduction of the Australian curriculum and the use of common achievement standards across ACT education will only serve to increase these high levels of parent confidence. Every ACT parent wants an "A" at their school to mean the same as an "A" at another school. They want confidence that regardless of what school their child attends, they are getting the same high standard of education and are being assessed to the same standard.

As I mentioned earlier, the Australian curriculum and the use of nationally agreed achievement standards provide parents with unprecedented levels of access to and reporting of their students' learning in the ACT. While the grades and marks given by teachers have always been applied rigorously, parents have mentioned to me that they have not always been given the tools to understand those marks or the confidence that those marks are easily comparable to different schools or different jurisdictions.

The move to a nationally consistent achievement standard will provide greater transparency and openness in how grades are applied not just here in the ACT but across the country. I am very pleased to lead the nation in these changes. I know that parents have certainly said to me that they welcome these changes.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, how does the ACT schooling system apply consistent grades across different schools?

MS BURCH: I thank Ms Porter for her interest. The ACT government is committed to ensuring that consistent high-quality education remains the hallmark of our education system. Key to this commitment are school and system-based processes and supports around implementing the Australian curriculum and the consistent and agreed use of the achievement standards in assessing and reporting student achievement.

For the first time in the ACT, all schools are required to report student progress using achievement standards as an agreed reference point for assessing student learning. This work builds on the ACT's longstanding and nationally established record of formal moderation to ensure consistency in the reporting of student achievement within the college sector.

A common core curriculum coupled with nationally-agreed achievement standards provide an explicit defined set of reference points from which schools plan, teach, assess and report on student learning. It is within this framework that the Education and Training Directorate and I continue to have a strong commitment to ensuring consistency in assessing and reporting student learning. As I have mentioned, it is probably one of the key common comments that I hear from parents that we are now able to provide that consistency and confidence to them.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, what support is being provided to schools and teachers to ensure they understand this transition?

MS BURCH: I thank Ms Berry for her interest. The Australian curriculum provides all ACT public schools with a platform from which to build new and innovative education practices and provides increased opportunity for collaboration between schools in advancing ACT educational outcomes. This has included considerable collaboration between the Education and Training Directorate and our Catholic and independent school education partners.

Developing and maintaining a strong dialogue between the directorate and the schools has been a core element in ensuring that schools and teachers have a common understanding and expectation as they transition to the Australian curriculum. This work includes a series of standard system-level reporting templates, changes to reporting practice, and workshops on engaging with the achievement standards and the annotated work samples. Regular school bulletins, school and community newsletters and a parent information pamphlet have supported schools in this transition.

I am pleased to report to the Assembly that the analysis of the ACT grade data indicates a strong agreement with the expected distribution of the A to E grades within and across our schools. This suggests that the ACT is getting it right. This rich data has been provided to school leaders as a key tool in the cycle of continuous improvement and is already forming the basis of deep and productive discussions and conversations on improving outcomes for students.

The spirit and professionalism in which this new information and its application as a critical tool for school improvement has been embraced by ACT schools and teachers are why the ACT will continue to be a national leader in this space.

ACT Emergency Services Agency—stations

MS BERRY: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, can you please outline what the government is doing to enhance emergency services coverage in the ACT?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Berry for her question. In November 2011, I released the government's ESA station upgrade and relocation strategy and its associated implementation plan. The purpose of this strategy and implementation plan was to identify where fire and ambulance, rural fire and state emergency service capabilities needed to be physically located to ensure that we maintained and improved emergency response times across our city. I also announced at that time the commencement of the first community consultation process for phase 1 of the plan, which proposed to develop ESA stations in Charnwood, Aranda, Calwell and Conder.

Since that time the government has been moving ahead with those plans. In 2012-13, the government allocated approximately \$21.318 million for the construction of the new west Belconnen co-located ambulance and fire and rescue station in Charnwood and associated project development capability. The new station is now complete and operational. This is a first key step in our commitment to delivering better fire and ambulance facilities for our community and for our hardworking firefighters and ambulance officers.

In the most recent budget the government allocated approximately \$17½ million for the construction of a new fire and rescue station in south Tuggeranong as the next step in the rollout of the strategy to improve emergency response times for residents in our city and, in particular, in relation to that new station, to improve fire response times for residents in the south Tuggeranong area. The tender process for the new south Tuggeranong station commenced in August this year with a pre-tender briefing, and the open tender for construction has been formally advertised.

The government is also moving ahead with due diligence and forward planning for other stations. We have completed the territory plan variation for the new Aranda co-located fire and ambulance facility and the government will give consideration to budget funding for that project in future budget rounds. We are also doing the pre-feasibility and assessment and site identification process for new facilities in locations such as the Pialligo-Campbell area.

I am pleased to say that we have worked through a range of issues associated with the proposal to develop a new fire and rescue station on a vacant block of land adjacent to the intersection of Pialligo Avenue and Beltana Road in Pialligo as part of phase 2 of the overarching strategy. As a result of that, the proposal to locate a new fire and rescue station in Pialligo is now being incorporated into the Pialligo master plan which is under development in the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate.

The government will continue, through its station relocation project team and relevant personnel in the Justice and Community Safety Directorate, to undertake further work in identifying sites in areas including Fyshwick, for ambulance and fire rescue, plus technical capabilities; Calwell, for a new SES facility; Greenway, for the conversion of the existing fire station to an ambulance facility; Gungahlin, an upgrade and extension of the existing RFS facilities in the joint emergency services centre; the Campbell and Pialligo site that I have mentioned; and a new ambulance station in the city centre.

This prudent preparatory work will further inform stage 2 of the strategy and demonstrates this government's commitment to making sure that our fire, ambulance and emergency service capabilities are where they are needed to help protect our community. *(Time expired.)*

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, how would a new west Belconnen ambulance and fire rescue station enhance community safety in the west Belconnen area?

MR CORBELL: Thank you again, Ms Berry, for the supplementary. I was delighted to formally open the new fire and ambulance facility at west Belconnen, in Charnwood, last week. I note that you were there, Madam Speaker, as were my Assembly colleagues Ms Porter and Ms Berry. It was tremendous to see support across the Assembly for this new, modern, state-of-the-art facility for fire and ambulance.

It will enhance community safety in the west Belconnen area because, for the first time, it puts in place a dedicated ambulance facility to service west Belconnen. Previously, of course, ambulance capabilities for west Belconnen have had to travel from other stations such as the station in the Belconnen town centre. Stationing a new and extra ambulance vehicle and dedicated crew, which have been funded in previous budget rounds, means that we can be in a better position to improve response times for residents who live in the growing west Belconnen area.

In addition, the new facility includes new and modern accommodation, training and technical support areas for ACT Fire and Rescue who will be housing one urban fire and rescue pumper and two bushfire tankers as part of their ongoing capability for the west Belconnen area. And that means that our crews are in facilities built for purpose and that will last for many years into the future and give them the comfort and the support they need to be able to respond promptly.

The final point worth making about the new west Belconnen ambulance and fire rescue station is that it is one of the first times that we have been in a position to locate fire and rescue facilities immediately onto a major trunk road, and that means that we are positioning our stations in locations where they can more promptly get onto those major trunk roads quickly and deploy to where they are needed. And that is a very important planning consideration that we will be following through in relation to a range of fire, rescue and emergency services stations that we roll out as part of the ongoing work of this program.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, what will happen with the current, and at some stage former, emergency services sites on Cohen Street?

MR CORBELL: The existing fire and ambulance stations on Cohen Street in the Belconnen town centre will continue to remain operational for the time being, until the new co-located fire, rescue and ambulance station at Aranda is constructed. At the time that that station is constructed, it is expected that the Cohen Street facility will then be decommissioned. The reason for that is that the modelling that underpins the locations for new fire, ambulance and rescue facilities is predicated on achieving the effective level of response time coverage needed to cover right across the ACT, and in particular respective districts like Belconnen. Improved cover and response times are then in place as a result of Aranda and Charnwood having been built, and therefore we expect Cohen Street to be decommissioned.

At this point in time, as I have previously indicated, there is no budget funding for Aranda to be constructed. That will be considered in future budget rounds. So the Cohen Street fire and ambulance facilities, with the exception of the training centre for fire, will continue to operate.

Mr Coe: What about the police station?

MR CORBELL: I take the interjection in relation to the police station. The police station is obviously currently decommissioned. That is a matter that is being considered as part of the whole-of-government property strategy and future redevelopment strategies.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, how have local residents been able to have the opportunity to engage in the process of the construction of the new west Belconnen ambulance, fire and rescue station?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Gentleman for the supplementary. The government has worked closely with the community in the development of this new facility. This will be the benchmark we set ourselves for ongoing engagement with the community and which we have now seen in relation to the Pialligo site planning and, indeed, with Aranda as well.

Public consultation has been comprehensive in relation to the development of these facilities, including information briefings and question and answer sessions with the Belconnen Community Council and also through engagement with local shopkeepers, traders and property owners in the Charnwood group centre.

There have also been letterbox drops and public information through the print and electronic media, and an opportunity for inclusion also of information in newsletters of seven schools in the area serviced by the new Charnwood facility. The response

from the community has been overwhelmingly positive. They have welcomed the development of a new fire and ambulance facility to help protect and serve their local community.

We also saw issues raised about traffic management in the Charnwood group centre and, in particular, the need to improve the intersection of Lotsky Street and Charnwood Place. As a result of this capital works project, new roundabout arrangements have been put in place at that intersection. I know those new traffic arrangements have been warmly welcomed by residents in addressing a particular hot spot or concern when it comes to traffic movements in that location. Certainly, that is the feedback I have had from my colleagues who represent the west Belconnen area.

A very important part of developing these projects is community engagement. That will continue to be the case with future projects.

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

Supplementary answers to questions without notice

Alexander Maconochie Centre—capacity

MR RATTENBURY: Earlier in question time Mr Wall asked me a question which, roughly, if I paraphrase, was: is there capacity to install more beds in the AMC in its current configuration? I can advise that my advice is that it may be possible to add a small number of beds, but this would be subject to an assessment of operational risk in terms of thinking about factors such as staffing, detainee interaction and support services.

Schools—emergency plans

MS BURCH: There was a question around fire safety. In response to that, principals, under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011, have responsibility to ensure that emergency evacuation, lockdown drills and exercises are conducted at least twice a year.

Government—policy

Debate resumed.

MS PORTER (Ginninderra) (3.39): I rise to speak to this motion, and the amendment today, to support my colleague in highlighting the many important social reforms and major infrastructure projects being delivered in the ACT by this Labor government since its re-election in October 2012. As you know, after the election the government set its priorities to deliver its election commitments and now, one year later, I am pleased to see that over 70 per cent of the commitments taken to the election have been appropriated and are now being delivered.

Madam Speaker, this government has a plan not only to grow a stronger and more diverse economy—because, as you know, without a strong economy it becomes more

difficult for any government to provide high quality services that the community deserves—but also to create greater opportunities for all in a city that is enjoyable and easy to live in, healthier and smarter, while still focusing on urban renewal as our city grows.

Whilst the government is proud of these achievements, it recognises that there is more to be done, and it is committed to continuing to deliver for the Canberra community. The foundations for a strong economy were laid in the previous years. The appropriation bill 2013, which, as I recall, was so vehemently opposed by the Canberra Liberals, was well considered and served to consolidate the gains we have achieved in a very difficult economic time.

I will now proceed to detail the progress on some of the things that are being delivered by the government and how they will impact on the Ginninderra community, which I represent. As I stated earlier, the government wanted to ensure that Canberra remains a fantastic place to live and raise a family. As you are aware, Canberra has Australia's highest standard of living and the government wants to protect that. Diversifying the ACT economy and keeping it strong is one way of securing Canberra's future prosperity.

We have seen in the last year the ACT host the biggest program of sporting events in Canberra's history, as Minister Barr mentioned earlier. This has provided us with the opportunity to showcase the ACT as capable of hosting major events and sets us in a good position to secure more in the future. As you know, such events stimulate economic activity through increased tourism, the beneficiaries of whom, of course, are Canberrans and Canberran businesses.

Further to this the government has embarked on major economic reforms that will see Canberrans and businesses in the ACT benefit and become more competitive. These include greater competition for third-party insurance, cutting red tape for businesses and the community sector, a push for international flights to Singapore, further cuts to stamp duty and weighting for small and medium-size businesses while tendering for ACT government contracts.

As I mentioned earlier, good health and education systems are two of the things that make the ACT an attractive place to live and bring up a family. As such, this government has continually invested in these two areas to allow greater and fairer access to all Canberrans. We know that investment in these sectors places Canberrans, on average, as the healthiest, best paid and best educated people in Australia.

It is particularly pleasing to see the new step-up, step-down supported accommodation service that was opened on 6 March 2013, which realises the government's vision of extending options for integrated mental health treatment and care. Some will recall that this was one of the recommendations that resulted from the inquiry into appropriate housing for people with a mental illness, which I initiated in the Sixth Assembly when I was Deputy Chair of the Standing Committee on Health and Disability.

Other initiatives that will strengthen the gains we have achieved over the last 10 years include: funding for the Calvary birth centre in Ginninderra, which will see an additional 200 births per year at the centre—it is expected that women will be able to use the centre from mid-January 2014; funding for a mobile dental clinic that will see a fully equipped van providing dental services in the community, for those who are unable to travel to centralised dental clinics; Belconnen community health centre becoming operational on 11 November 2013 and being able to provide ambulatory care services normally only accessible from a hospital; funding the centenary chair for cancer research; and the paediatric emergency department.

These initiatives are crucial to many of the people in Ginninderra who frequently talk to me about these issues at my regular mobile offices. These initiatives provide for the needs of our health system into the future and will ensure that Canberrans, and indeed my Ginninderra constituents, get access to the quality healthcare services they need and deserve.

The Labor government recognises the diverse opportunities that a quality education presents to our children and young people and has, over the years, endeavoured to ensure that all ACT children, notwithstanding their circumstances, have access to not only quality education facilities but also quality teaching so as to reach their full potential.

As you are aware, the 2013-14 budget included funding for the national education reform agreement which will focus on further improving students' learning and strengthening teaching, school leadership, transparency and accountability. No doubt many of my Ginninderra constituents will benefit greatly from that. This will serve to advance our already good record which sees the ACT continue to top the country in NAPLAN results, ranking first, or equal first, for grammar, punctuation and numeracy in all levels since 2009.

I will not be commenting on all the initiatives being currently undertaken that are aimed at providing an enhanced learning environment for students because it will probably take me too long. But I must say I am pleased to see that the government, as a result of its election commitment, has appropriated funds for the commencement of the Belconnen High School upgrades, as Dr Bourke mentioned earlier.

As I mentioned earlier, Canberra is a fantastic place to live in. Creating greater opportunities for all through major social reforms is one of the priorities for this government. This was clearly demonstrated yesterday when the Marriage Equality Bill 2013 was passed in this Assembly—removing unreasonable legal discrimination against same-sex couples, who now, as a result of the passage of this bill, have an equal opportunity to marry their spouses.

Signing and implementing the national disability insurance scheme—NDIS—is another initiative that will benefit many Canberrans. It will deliver unprecedented levels of funding for people with a disability in the ACT, which will facilitate greater opportunities not previously available to them.

As members know, I am a strong supporter of the arts in all its forms and I have been involved in the Belconnen Arts Centre from its very beginning. I have continued to advance the need for stage 2 to be completed. That is why I am happy to see that funding for the arts centre has been appropriated and design stage commenced as promised during the last election.

Members will also know of my volunteer activity with Greening Australia and my local Parkcare group, the fotpin. I am pleased to see that the ACT government has continued to appropriate funds in the budget towards restoring the territory's parks and reserves for their ecological values, as well as their health and social benefits.

In the first budget of this re-elected government \$1.3 million was set aside to enhance the biodiversity of Canberra's woodlands, parks and nature reserves. This initiative will allow staff to undertake a range of additional programs, including the restoration of parks and reserves, as well as conservation monitoring, with a focus on Canberra nature park and threatened grasslands. The funding will also provide for improved support for Parkcare groups such as the one I belong to. As you know, they play a valuable role in preserving and maintaining our nature parks.

As you all know—and I do go on about this a little bit—I hold regular mobile offices in my electorate. I find many people raise the issue of bike paths and footpaths. I am sure many people will be pleased to see that there has been increased funding to address these concerns. We have many more kilometres of footpaths and bike paths than any other jurisdiction and, of course, maintaining and growing this network is a continual task.

Before I conclude, I would also like to mention that on Monday, 21st a new enforceable code of practice for the sale of animals came into effect in the ACT. As you are aware, I have had a keen interest in animal welfare matters for a long time. I have, over the years, worked very closely with the TAMS Directorate through Domestic Animal Services, the RSPCA and, more recently, the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee as they consulted on this code which is now in effect. I commend all those who have been involved and thank them.

I would like to state that this government is getting on with the job, and I am very proud to be part of it.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education) (3.49): The government will not be supporting the amendment. I do not imagine that will come as a huge surprise to members here. I will address my comments to both the motion and the amendment.

I am very pleased to stand here as Chief Minister on the first anniversary of the work that has been done since the 2012 election. I do not think, in response to some of the things Mr Hanson said, that reflecting on what we have done in terms of our commitments to the community is not good use of the Assembly's time. In fact, what we are doing today is reporting to the community around the 70 per cent of election commitments that we have started to deliver on and also focus on the areas where we

want to continue to work. They all go to matters that the ACT community find incredibly important. One of those, yesterday, was marriage equality. We might differ across the chamber about whether that was an important matter for members of our community. We argue it was and it was delivering on an election commitment.

We have, in the first year of our government, focused on four key areas to target our limited resources and efforts into progressing a growth agenda across this city. These are: creating opportunity and a more liveable city; growing a stronger and more diverse economy; being a healthier and smarter community; and focusing on urban renewal as the city grows. We are doing this in various ways. One of them is to continue on with the process of tax reform. We will continue on with the implementation of the business development strategy. We will work with the tourism sector to support the work that they do. We will focus on recruiting more police and firefighters, some of whom are in New South Wales as we speak. My thoughts go to them and their New South Wales colleagues as they protect the community from terrible fires which are threatening so many.

There is support for sport and recreation, with commitments that we have made to various sporting programs and facilities. We are making sure that our local shops look good and that there are new drinking fountains. We are looking at our skate parks, barbecue replacement, walking and cycling infrastructure and irrigation of park areas. We are looking at targeting our first home owners grant, our homebuyers concession scheme, and changing land rent—again to focus on making the purchase of a home, the dream of many, within the reach of more. The city plan which I released earlier this week again sets the direction for the discussion about how the city centre develops over time.

These are important commitments that we have made to the ACT community, and it is right that we reflect and report on them. They also demonstrate our commitment to fairness and opportunity, to giving those who suffer disadvantage a helping hand, even when our budget is in a very tight circumstance. These are the type of projects which are making, and will make, direct improvements in the lives of many Canberra residents.

There is funding for programs that make Canberra more safe and secure, for workplace safety, rewards for safe drivers and flexible arrangements to manage motor vehicle infringement notices for Canberrans in financial hardship. There is more support for corrections staff and community legal hubs. In public transport, we are looking at fare discounts and extended off-peak periods, interchange and bus stop upgrades, real-time passenger information, bike-and-ride and park-and-ride facilities and the MyWay system. Really, when you look at how systems like that have been introduced in other public transport systems, it has gone so smoothly. Having CCTV in buses has again protected bus drivers and, I think, provided passengers with more security around using ACTION bus services.

We are continuing to invest in services that support vulnerable Canberrans, including more than \$7 million for disability support and services, more than \$8 million for programs to address housing and homelessness issues, more than \$11 million for services for vulnerable families and \$1.3 million in new funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs.

All of these projects are important to me as Chief Minister, to the government and to the ACT community. They reflect policies developed by the combined expertise and commitment of the community and feed in through things like the community offices. All Labor members out in the community get feedback about what is important to members of the community and feed that back into our policy development process.

In relation to areas within my own portfolio of Health, we have opened the EDICU expansion and we have opened the new step-up, step-down mental health facility with support from the commonwealth. The Belconnen community health centre becomes operational on 11 November. We have funded the mobile dental clinic which will start operations soon. It is well underway. Consultations with residential aged-care providers and the Council on the Ageing will take place next week to look at getting the model of that service right.

Funding for the birth centre on the north side of Canberra, again, is really important for women who want to birth at Calvary hospital, having a less hospital room type delivery suite and more of a home-based service, similar to the birth centre suite that operates at Canberra Hospital. As to the paediatric emergency department, a request that I get from members of the community is that when children present they will in future be able to be treated in an area that is dedicated just for their needs.

Regarding the towards zero growth healthy weight action plan which we released last week, whilst it is the first of its kind in the country, I think more and more you will see governments having to release plans like this as they deal with the impact of the growth in obesity across various jurisdictional populations. We are targeting our health promotion grants into this specific area and trying to focus our effort with the limited funds available.

In higher education, I have launched the study Canberra initiative. I have also led a delegation to China to support the work that the universities do in exporting ACT programs and also encouraging international students to come and learn at our world-class universities. I have also established the vice-chancellor's forum to look at how we can work at a very high level to encourage Canberra to become a study destination of choice in Australia.

In regional development, we have got the Select Committee on Regional Development which Ms Berry is chairing. We have got the MOU on regional collaboration being further worked upon. I have attended SEROC meetings. So there is a lot going on, not just across the Chief Minister's portfolio but in all of the other portfolios that I work on.

I think the important thing to note, though, is that none of these achievements give us any reason for complacency. We have lots of challenges ahead, but we will continue to work hard to deliver on the commitments we have made to the people of the ACT.

To deal with the challenges that are faced by the community in the next couple of years we will constantly look at ways to improve on the way we deliver services and the way we deliver infrastructure. We will continue to work on our relationships with

local business, community groups, neighbouring governments and other stakeholders. There is no reason to sit back and relax. We have a lot of work to do. We have got three more years before we face the people of the ACT again and they cast their judgement, and I do not intend to waste one day of it.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (3.57): Mr Assistant Speaker, I am speaking to Mr Hanson's amendment; I am going to speak to the specifics of Mr Hanson's amendment.

Firstly, talking about schools, this government has a strong track record for delivering high-quality education. It ranks among the best in Australia in a range of educational achievement measures, including the PISA results as well as the NAPLAN results. The government has targeted its investments in school infrastructure to maximise value for money for Canberrans.

The major projects which were completed in the 2012-13 year included the Red Hill school redevelopment, the expansion of Macgregor Primary School, the expansion of Majura Primary School, the Canberra College Performing Arts Centre, expansion works at nine preschools and older school upgrades to Yarralumla and Hughes primary schools. In 2012-13 the government also completed the performing arts centre at Canberra College, expansion of Red Hill school and construction of a new car park. As well, there were the Franklin Early Childhood School; the first greenfield early childhood school in Australia, including a 120-place childcare centre; and the Neville Bonner Primary School, incorporating an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learning and cultural centre. Both schools were delivered on time ready for the 2013 school year and were delivered millions of dollars under budget.

On tax reform, the ACT government committed to undertaking significant reform to the territory's taxation system over a 20-year period as part of the 2012-13 budget. As part of that reform, the government has released significant amounts of information which underpins the decisions taken as part of that reform process. There is currently another motion in the Assembly relating to tabling tax reform documentation; the government will be responding to this motion before the end of the fortnight. This reform will put the territory on a strong footing for the future and provide flexibility to deal with our ageing population and demographic changes into the future. The ACT government was the first government in Australia—the first in Australia, Mr Assistant Speaker—to undertake such a reform. However, it was recognised that reform is a long-term process that will require adjustments over the long term. The 2012-13 budget announced that reform would be undertaken over a 20-year period to provide time for the market to adjust to the changes and to ensure that the reform does not impact significantly on Canberrans.

The ACT is in a unique position to pursue tax reform. It has the roles of both a state and local government. The reforms have been undertaken in a responsible way with a staged approach to allow ACT households and the economy time to adjust. Reforms have been funded through general rates to ensure revenue neutrality overall whilst preserving capacity for government services and ensuring that future generations do not bear the higher economic costs of an unfair and inefficient tax system.

To assist households and cushion the impacts of taxation reform, a number of concession schemes were introduced or provided in the 2012-13 budget—measures including expanding the home buyer concession scheme, extending the pensioner duty concession scheme, increasing the rates rebate scheme and expanding eligibility for the rates deferral scheme.

In respect of infrastructure, the government's delivery of infrastructure over the past 10 years has been outstanding. Over the past 10 years, the government has delivered over \$3.5 billion worth of infrastructure. Since 2005-06, approximately 90 per cent of ACT government capital works projects have been completed within five per cent of the original budget.

Key outcomes include improving the health system, including a women and children's hospital and acute mental health and community health facilities; and an improved transport system, with the Gungahlin Drive extension, public transport infrastructure, renewing the bus fleet and maintaining our roads to the highest standards, with extensive improvements to cycling and pedestrian networks. There is infrastructure to service our unprecedented greenfield land development.

There is an improved justice system through the AMC, Bimberi and the youth detention centre. There are improved services to the disadvantaged, disability housing, renewed public housing and projects delivered under the nation building and jobs plan social housing.

There is improving our education system through building the education revolution, and new schools in new developments and existing communities, such as the Southern Cross School and Namadgi School. There is improved amenity with parks and playgrounds—the Manuka Oval redevelopment, the Gungahlin enclosed oval, Stromlo Forest Park, and upgraded urban sports facilities. And, of course, there are the wonders of our public art. Beyond the \$3.5 billion invested in the projects I have mentioned, the government has delivered major infrastructure for utility services such as the enlarged Cotter Dam.

Fourthly, in health, emergency department performance in terms of national indicators has seen a decrease over recent years. This comes on the back of significant growth in demand for emergency department presentations. ACT public hospitals have changed significantly over the past decade. We are no longer functioning as a rural or medium-sized hospital; we are a hub for trauma and research and we deliver some of the best health services and care to residents in the country. Some of the problems in emergency service performance relate to an overwhelming increase in demand for inpatient services. This government continued to invest in more public hospital beds: our two hospitals will have over 1,000 beds by the end of 2013-14. We have invested in building on a bed base that had been previously stripped bare by the former Liberal government.

In 2012-13, we had the highest number of presentations on record, with over 118,000 people walking through ACT emergency department doors seeking treatment. This demand has continued in 2013-14. In August 2013, almost 11,000 presentations

occurred, the highest volume of presentations for a month on record. Adding to this, our admission rates via the emergency department have remained the same. However, if you have more presentations and the same proportion admitted, that means we have more people needing beds than ever before. Despite these increases in demand in 2013-14, there has already been a three per cent improvement in overall timeliness, and our NEAT performance has improved to 58.4 per cent from 56.7 per cent at the end of 2012. We are starting to see some positives from the hard work, initiatives and investment that have gone on for several years.

The opposition wishes to continuously compare us to other jurisdictions. I do not believe that anyone here could honestly say that the ACT is comparable to any other state or territory in Australia. If you took the time to compare our results with like hospitals in Sydney, you would clearly see that we are doing as well as or better than those hospitals. The quality of care has been proved to be the best around. We continuously receive positive feedback about the high level of service. I think it is the quality of care we should focus on a little more. We would all like to think that people could walk through the emergency department doors and receive treatment straightaway, then be able to go straight to a ward bed if that is needed. But it simply is not possible. We can always do better, and we will always work hard and invest in our health services so that we can improve.

Let me mention just some of the recent things that we can note that we are doing. The 2012-13 budget provides for an additional \$12.7 million over the next four years to meet the growing demand for emergency care, including, at Canberra Hospital, the completion of capital works to expand and change the physical layout of the ED. Four cardiac assessment beds have been established to provide rapid assessment for the care of people who present to the ED with chest pain and associated cardiac issues. The government has also committed additional funding from the 2013-14 budget to provide for the establishment of a rapid assessment care unit at Calvary Public Hospital, in my electorate, with eight beds, and an additional 44 beds overall for the ACT public health system.

In March 2013 the government tabled its emergency access plan for 2013-17, which details actions to be implemented over the next four years to improve waiting and treatment times within our public hospital emergency departments. Some of the initiatives to be undertaken over the next four years include adding an additional 170 beds to the hospital system; employing new doctors and nurses within our emergency departments; improving the focus on improved and coordinated discharges to enable patients to leave the hospital in the most efficient manner with all their discharge needs catered for; and ensuring that both public hospitals continue to plan effectively for seasonal change in demand patterns such as the annual establishment of a winter strategy which provides changes in the way hospitals operate during peak periods and how hospitals and community services can work better in high-demand periods.

I oppose Mr Hanson's amendment.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 9

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

Question so resolved in the negative.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Doszpot): The question now is that Dr Bourke's original motion be agreed to.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations and Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development) (4.11): Mr Assistant Speaker, I am delighted to add my comments in relation to this motion today. This is an important motion that Dr Bourke is proposing to the Assembly. It is important because all governments are judged ultimately by whether or not they deliver on their election commitments, whether or not they do what they said they would do on behalf of the people if they were elected. Today I would like to highlight the steps that the government has taken in my areas of portfolio responsibility when it comes to meeting our election commitments.

I turn first to the Justice and Community Safety portfolio. The most important reform, one of the most important reforms to date this year—indeed, not just this year—was seen this week when we passed the marriage equality same-sex bill. That, of course, was a key election commitment of the Labor government. It was a bill which removes discrimination and segregation of people in same-sex relationships when it comes to the legal recognition of their relationships. We saw yesterday in this public gallery overwhelming community support: in this place here yesterday, there was probably one of the largest audiences ever seen in the history of self-government, to see that law passed.

The only element of disappointment in the debate yesterday was the failure of those opposite to support that law—and, more importantly and more significantly, their failure to even have the courage of their convictions by standing up and saying why they oppose that law.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MR CORBELL: We heard from the opposition leader, and we just heard the interjection from Mr Coe. That is more than he said in the whole debate yesterday. If he feels so strongly about this issue, why wasn't he prepared to stand up and say why his vote was cast against the law that removed discrimination and removed inequality for same-sex couples? That resolution yesterday and the establishment of that law are a key election commitment of this Labor government—a commitment delivered.

I turn to some other areas in the Justice and Community Safety portfolio. The government made other commitments. Most specifically, we committed to putting more police on our roads. The government has delivered on that commitment. Eight additional police—

Opposition members interjecting—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Corbell, could you just resume your seat for one second. Could you stop the clock, please. Mr Hanson and Mr Coe, I have let a fair bit of banter go, but could you please pay a bit of respect to the current speaker.

Mr Hanson: My apologies, Mr Assistant Speaker.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER Mr Corbell.

MR CORBELL: Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. We promised to put more police on our roads, and we have met that commitment in the most recent budget—eight additional police. There are four additional traffic patrol vehicles to tackle dangerous, illegal and hoon driving on our roads, to tackle the ongoing problem of the number of deaths and injuries on our roads and the concerns that come from the community about dangerous, illegal and hoon driving behaviour. That is \$6.8 million over four years to employ the extra police and to provide them with the extra vehicles to tackle road safety in our city.

The government has also moved to support those with a disability when it comes to their ability to get around our city. We implemented the stand-alone wheelchair accessible taxi booking service as of December last year. This is all about improving the quality of life of people who are mobility impaired and who need to rely on services such as wheelchair accessible taxis. The centralised service model established in December last year incorporates strong management and monitoring of booking to achieve improved accessibility and an acceptable 24-hour-a day, seven-day-a-week service. Reporting to date shows that we are getting good results and seeing very few complaints as a result of the improved booking arrangements. That is another reform delivered by this government and committed to by Labor in the lead-up to last year's election.

We are also sending positive signals to people on our roads who do the right thing. Drivers with clean driving records are now receiving a 20 per cent discount on the fees associated with their licence renewals. That is to the value of \$4.4 million in revenue forgone over a four-year period. The discount came into effect on 1 August this year, and eligible licence holders are receiving that discount automatically when they renew their driver's licence. We want to send not just disincentives for people who are doing the wrong thing on our roads but incentives and positive signals for those who do the right thing and keep a good and clean driving record. That is another election commitment delivered by this government.

We continue, too, to focus on the issue of drink-driving. Drink-driving remains a concern in relation to driving behaviour in our city. The government has allocated just over \$5 million over the next four years to put in place the alcohol interlocks initiative. That bill was passed in June this year and will commence in June next year. The new legislation provides for high-risk drink-drivers who wish to return to driving to be subject to an interlock condition on their probationary licence requiring them to demonstrate an alcohol-free breath test before they can start the ignition of their vehicle. This initiative is, again, an election commitment made by Labor and delivered—delivered to improve the road safety circumstances of our city and to make sure that recidivist drink-drivers get a clean driving history re-established and are not presenting a danger to other drivers on our roads.

Turning to my other portfolio, the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate, there are a couple of items to quickly note. Firstly, the energy efficiency improvement scheme commenced in January this year. This scheme is reaching out to approximately 70,000 Canberra households, with free or subsidised services to assist them with managing their energy costs and reducing their electricity bills. We know that this scheme will contribute greenhouse gas reduction savings of approximately 700,000 tonnes over the three years of the scheme and will on average save households around \$300 a year over the course of the scheme. This is an important reform that saves households money and drives down our greenhouse gas emissions. It is important to meet our greenhouse gas reduction targets and to help Canberrans with ongoing concerns about utility costs.

The government has also completed its large-scale solar auction initiative, an initiative that has now delivered feed-in tariff entitlements for a full 40 megawatts of solar power to be delivered across our city to achieve abatement of greenhouse gases over the life of those schemes and to bring jobs and economic investment to our city with large-scale renewables, helping to make our city the solar capital of Australia and an early adopter with the development of renewable energy at a time when we see other governments returning to thinking which could only be characterised as being out of the 1930s or 1940s when it comes to the energy system.

Finally, the government is progressing the development of a key election commitment, the capital metro project, light rail for our city. The Capital Metro Agency has been established; a board chairman and project director have now been appointed to permanent positions; and the development of a network integration study is well underway. We are also funding the development of a network master plan for future potential expansion of the Gungahlin to city line.

All of these initiatives demonstrate how this Labor government is honouring its election commitments, helping to make our city a better place to live for all of its residents and continuing to deliver good government for the people of the ACT.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (4.21): Mr Hanson said yesterday:

The Canberra Liberals have a different view about the role of the ACT Legislative Assembly from that of the Labor Party and the Greens. We do not see

the ACT Assembly as a vehicle to drive national agendas on social issues, whereas the Labor Party and the Greens do.

Mr Hanson's reaction to this motion and his statement yesterday show his small view of government, his view of what Canberrans want. In fact, a small view of government may be too generous a term, as that view implies that Mr Hanson has some vision for our future when he shows none. Yesterday Mr Hanson said the Canberra Liberals believe Canberrans are too small and weak to drive national agendas on social issues. I say we are doing what is right and fair and about time for Canberrans.

Our duty is first to the people of Canberra and the commitments we made to them at the last election in the broad themes of our vision—creating opportunity and a more liveable city, being a healthier and smarter community, growing a stronger and more diverse economy, focusing on urban renewal as our city grows. By contrast, Mr Hanson's party in the last election ran on stopping tax reform and a lie.

I am going to talk a little more about the national disability insurance scheme because that is one of the great visions that we are going to be implementing here in the ACT. The ACT is at the forefront of this significant and complex social reform to the way disability care and support will be funded in this country. The NDIS will provide people with significant disabilities access to an economically sustainable and viable universal social insurance scheme. Implementation will require large-scale reforms to the funding, administration, delivery and evaluation of disability services in the ACT. Disability support will be transformed into a market-based arrangement in which people with disability will have greater choice of and control over the funding and supports they receive.

The ACT will be a launch site from July 2014 and will be the first jurisdiction that will achieve full rollout of the scheme by July 2016. As part of the preparations for the NDIS, the enhanced service offer consists of a package of initiatives to assist the ACT in the transition to an NDIS. The grants provide an opportunity to prepare people with disability in the ACT and providers for the new, individualised funding arrangements of the NDIS.

More than 2,300 applications for grants were received, ranging from aids and equipment, flexible supports and services to quality of life grants. Successful grant applications were diverse, ranging from support to taking part in dancing, swimming or other activities, funding for furniture, water tanks, dental work, equipment purchased for computers, software, companion dogs and hearing aids.

On 1 July 2013, \$7.7 million was invested in the first round of enhanced service offer grants. The first round of grants offers has been made and second round grant applications close on 8 November 2013. Information from the grants will provide valuable information to providers and the government about what people are likely to seek when given greater choice of and control over what they can choose to support them in their lives under an NDIS.

The ACT's task force has already commenced working to prepare people with disability, families and carers and service providers for the introduction of the NDIS from 1 July 2014, including developing the capacity of people with disabilities and their families to take advantage of the choice and control offered under the NDIS. To date, the ACT has made great progress in its commitment to the NDIS and to be the first jurisdiction to have all eligible people transition into the NDIS by June 2016.

Mr Assistant Speaker, if you, like me, had been in the estimates hearing when we heard from the directorate about the revolutionary nature of the NDIS, you would have heard that this is a big dream, a big vision and one that we are going to be delivering. It is not small-scale stuff. This is about enabling people with physical or intellectual disabilities to lead the kinds of full and productive lives that you and I enjoy.

It is going to be revolutionary not just for them but for us, because it will change the way we think about disability and the way we think about people with disabilities. This is vision. In the future, when we encounter people with disabilities working in banks, schools, universities and here in our Assembly, we will look back to the time when this NDIS was introduced and how it got us there. That is vision.

I will now turn to Mr Hanson's backhand at me before when he had a little swipe, a personal attack, a swipe at a backbencher. That really just does tell me I am doing my job properly, especially when it comes from the Leader of the Opposition. But then we heard half of his speech this morning patting his team on the head, each and every one of them, shoring up support for his leadership. Goodness me!

That leadership ought to be under challenge, because just the other day, we saw the last successful leader of the Canberra Liberals to win government, Kate Carnell, come out and support our legislation on marriage equality. Mr Hanson lacks the vision. He can only see a small picture and through a scanner darkly.

Motion agreed to.

Roads—McBryde Crescent

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (4.29): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the location of Trinity Christian School on a bend on McBryde Crescent in Wanniasa;
- (b) that there is no pedestrian crossing at the Trinity Christian School;
- (c) the concerns held by the principal, parents and the wider community for the safety of the children who attend Trinity Christian School;

- (d) the high traffic flow in this area during peak school pick up and drop off times; and
 - (e) the need for better traffic management in this area to ensure the safety of the children at Trinity Christian School; and
- (2) calls on the government to:
- (a) install a pedestrian crossing and other appropriate traffic management measures to improve child safety; and
 - (b) report back to the Assembly by the last sitting day of 2013.

The safety of children is important to all of us. In any situation which impacts children we would always be aiming for an outcome that, first and foremost, ensures their safety. An example of this is the introduction of working with children or vulnerable people checks.

An area where safety should be very visible is when our children are travelling to and from school. Whether they are being dropped off by their parents, walking or catching buses, we want to be assured of their safety from the moment they leave the house in the morning to the moment they get home in the evening. Just as schools must be safe places for students, the roads which surround our schools need to be safe as well. And that is why I bring this motion to the Assembly today.

It is an issue that has been brought to my attention, not just in recent weeks but before my election to this place. It has been an ongoing concern at Trinity Christian School for quite some time. I know this because I live nearby, close to Erindale shopping centre, and drive past the school frequently. I also know quite a number of parents with children at the school and teachers at the school.

McBryde Crescent in Wanniasa is one of the main roads that run through Wanniasa to two other schools and the main shopping area, Erindale. Situated along this road, on a bend, is Trinity Christian School. It is a school with students from kindergarten to grade 12. It is a very busy area during peak school times. There is heavy traffic at school pick-up and drop-off times, a shortage of car parking and, what I believe is most critical, the absence of a pedestrian crossing near the school and appropriate signage to accompany a pedestrian crossing.

I, along with other members of the Canberra Liberals, believe that the lack of traffic and pedestrian management out the front of Trinity Christian School is putting our children at risk. At the moment there is the one standard school zone sign as you approach the school from each direction. However, there is no pedestrian crossing, no school crossing, no safe place for the children to cross the road to get to and from their school.

This does not mean children do not cross here. They need to cross the road to get to and from school. It simply means there is no warning for the motorists that use this road that there are many children crossing in this area. There is no certainty of where

the children will cross and there is no means by which children can cross the road in a safe and protected manner.

People speed. I am not condoning this in any way, simply making an observation. And people do speed through Wanniasa. They can treat roads such as Sternberg and McBryde crescents as main roads and drive faster than they should. The ACT Policing crime statistics show that in the three months ending September this year, 72 traffic infringements were issued in Wanniasa. And there were three road collisions causing injury. I do not have a breakdown of where these incidents occurred or where the infringements were issued, but ultimately we need to be aware that it happens anywhere. And it can happen anywhere. We cannot wait for a child to be hit out the front of this school, for a tragedy to take place, before we decide it is a good idea to rectify the issue.

So today we are calling on the government to fix this, to decrease the risks for pedestrians at Trinity Christian School. We are calling on the government to install a pedestrian crossing at this school and consider what other traffic management options might be available. One such option to accompany a pedestrian crossing would be the use of flashing lights in this school zone. It is vital that we provide a safe crossing option for these children, as well as parents and staff members. By installing a pedestrian crossing and associated signage or traffic management measures at Trinity Christian School, the risk to these students would be significantly reduced.

Research points to this being one of the most essential parts of a school zone if we want to increase safety for children. The audit into improving road safety in school zones, completed in February 2010 by the New South Wales Auditor-General, recommended "improve the visibility of school zones by increasing use of flashing lights". We need to get a crossing at this school first and then we need to act on the best methods of improving visibility in this area. Countless groups and community organisations point to this as a necessity.

The Australian Road Research Board found that flashing lights in school zones were effective in reducing vehicle speed outside schools during the operation of the 40 kilometres per hour school speed zone, because they drew the motorists' attention to the school and the signs more successfully. The NRMA has stated for many years that a motorist's awareness of school zones and the ability to comply with the speed limit had been significantly improved where flashing lights and appropriate signage had been installed. The New South Wales Commissioner for Children and Young People believes that every school in New South Wales should have a flashing light warning system in place so that all children enjoy the same level of protection.

I call on the government today to install a pedestrian crossing with appropriate signage in this area and other appropriate traffic management measures. The Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations in New South Wales said that flashing lights remind drivers of the presence of a school in the area and therefore the presence of students as pedestrians. And only last month the Queensland government announced that every school in Queensland will have flashing lights to slow down motorists. They also announced that penalties will be increased for motorists speeding within these school zones.

In June of this year, the New South Wales government announced that by the end of 2015 every school in New South Wales would have flashing school zone signs. Other states are taking up these policies because the research shows it is the best solution, it draws the motorists' attention to the school zone and, most importantly, the pedestrians in this area.

Trinity Christian School, first and foremost, are seeking a pedestrian crossing, with appropriate signage to draw the motorists' attention to children crossing and the school zone in general. Flashing lights have also been shown to be an appropriate form of signage for this purpose. Roads ACT have confirmed that of the 63 reported crashes involving pedestrians on ACT roads last year, five occurred within school zones. I do not believe the fact that only five pedestrians were hurt in school zones makes this issue any less important. We do not want to sit and wait for another child to be hit before we act. We need to be proactive, not reactive. Nothing is more important than the safety of our children.

I urge the government to support this motion today and act now, not wait for an accident to occur.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for Ageing) (4.37): I thank Ms Lawder for raising this matter, and I appreciate her interest in road safety around schools. To get straight to the heart of the matter, the traffic and safety issues around Trinity college are something I and Roads ACT are aware of, and they are issues Roads ACT is currently working on. It will take some time to do its full assessment. Members will be aware, no doubt, from reading the *Southside Chronicle* this week that this work is underway. The expectation is that any changes will be implemented in Roads ACT's 2014 upgrades program.

As a general policy, all primary schools are provided with a 40-kilometre-an-hour school zone on the direct frontage of the school and a crossing facility. The crossing facility could be an underpass, a children's crossing, a median island or a signalised crossing, depending on the location of the school and the traffic conditions on the surrounding streets. As would seem obvious, traffic activities reach peak levels around schools in the ACT during the morning and afternoon school arrival and departure times as parents are dropping off and picking up children, and such patterns, as you might expect, apply to the vast majority of schools in the ACT. Inquiries relating to road safety and traffic management around schools usually relate to traffic volume levels at such peak times, the speed of vehicle travel and illegal parking activities. It is fair to say that we get concerns, queries and complaints in all of those areas. Each of these inquiries is investigated by Roads ACT and considered as part of their normal day-to-day duties.

Investigations are always undertaken in consultation with the individual school as issues are raised. These investigations can result in improvements in infrastructure, such as signage, line marking or other traffic management facilities. Schools are also made aware about their role in improving safety through driver behaviour and the

behaviour of all road users. Certainly, I know some schools have been very proactive in communicating with parents through school resources and the like about safety issues around their school zones, sometimes with great effect.

A 40-kilometre-an-hour school zone is provided on McBryde Crescent covering the frontage of the school, including the access to the car park and bus zone area. An underpass is also provided west of the school near Laurens Street. To further support the safe crossing of McBryde Crescent, a pedestrian refuge island was provided on McBryde Crescent near Bromley Street in 2008 in consultation with the school. Roads ACT is aware that McBryde Crescent experiences concentrated increases in traffic in the morning and afternoon school times. This is the situation across the ACT for all schools. Roads ACT is also aware of the recent concerns raised by the school community. As a result, and as I said earlier, Roads ACT is currently investigating the traffic conditions on McBryde Crescent in relation to traffic and pedestrian safety. It has engaged a consultant to assist with this.

The investigation has, to date, considered the schools located on McBryde Crescent, being Erindale College, St Mary MacKillop College and Trinity Christian School. I am advised by Roads ACT that a number of options have been identified specifically in relation to Trinity Christian School. One of these is a children's crossing on McBryde Street close to the western end of Bromley Street. Another is changes to parking arrangements in the streets off McBryde Crescent to improve safety and efficiency and prevent illegal parking.

I am aware of the issues around the parking restrictions and the floodway, and these were raised in the *Chronicle* article as well. The issue as I understand it is informal parking being accessed off Taverner Street. There are potential alterations that could be made, such as creating an access from Taverner Street and constructing an exclusive left turning lane on McBryde Crescent to access the car park. These are all options. However, the high capital cost of these has to be considered, and some of them would actually appear to fall more into the major capital upgrade category. Roads ACT is progressing the details of all of these options.

Consultation with the school community and directly affected residents will be undertaken and traffic improvements will be implemented once the consultation is complete. In fact, the consultant that Roads ACT is using to undertake the investigation has already been in contact with Trinity school to understand their concerns and explore the various options.

I note for members that these kinds of issues, as I have touched on earlier, come up frequently for me and for Roads ACT, and they happen right across the territory from north to south. I am always happy to discuss these issues with members. As members appreciate, I am sure there is often both a level of complexity attached to some of these and also a level of prioritisation. There is a constant program of work going on in this regard.

Members might be interested to know more generally about the road safety record of the ACT in comparison to other parts of Australia, particularly in relation to traffic and pedestrian safety at schools. It is certainly a priority of mine to ensure that this

safety record is maintained and that Canberrans have a safe road environment. Currently the government is guided by the ACT road safety strategy 2011-20, which was released at the end of 2011. The strategy provides a framework for addressing road safety issues in the territory. These documents complement work at the national level under the national road safety strategy 2011-20 and provide an integrated approach to improving road safety using a range of education, encouragement, engineering, enforcement, evaluation and support measures.

A strategic goal of the ACT road safety strategy is to have an ACT community that shares the responsibility for road safety. There is little point in having traffic control arrangements on our roads—and this includes around schools—if drivers do not take responsibility for their own behaviour.

The ACT was the first amongst states and territories in Australia to introduce 40-kilometre-an-hour speed zones in the vicinity of primary schools. These speed zones were introduced in 1985. Since then, safety records around schools in the ACT have been positive and considered to be one of the best in the country.

In general, very few crashes involving children within school zones are reported in the ACT. Out of a total of around 10,000 crashes every year in the territory, only five were reported in school zones in 2012. Two of these crashes involved adult pedestrians and two were reported as property-damage-only crashes—that is, they did not involve an injury. None of the crashes were in the vicinity of Trinity or on McBryde Crescent.

Increased traffic and safety can be managed through the provision of reduced speed limits and traffic management such as parking controls and pedestrian facilities. Road safety engineering measures, while part of the picture, are certainly not a panacea for solving all problems. To support the school zone infrastructure that is usually provided by Roads ACT, the Justice and Community Safety Directorate and ACT Policing already have ongoing programs covering road safety awareness and enforcement relating to school zones.

On the issue of flashing lights at school zones—that has been a matter that has had some airing in this place over a number of years now—I recall that it is the Liberal Party's policy to install flashing lights at every school zone. I understand the attraction to this policy on its face because I think we are all interested in improving safety at schools, and that is why people think about these things. But I do not believe the blanket introduction of flashing lights is a prudent approach in the ACT.

Adopting a New South Wales policy and applying it to the ACT does not guarantee any better or safer outcomes. As has been said before in this place, traffic conditions around schools are different in New South Wales. In New South Wales many schools are either on or near major arterial roads, whereas ACT schools are generally located within residential areas clear of major roads but for a few exceptions. ACT school zones operate all day between 8 am and 4 pm school days. This is different to NSW where the zones generally operate between 8.30 and 9.30 in the mornings and then 2.30 and 4 pm in the afternoons. ACT school zones also have an excellent safety record. I am willing to look at targeted locations where installing lights will have merit and TAMS is looking at this for me.

In summary, I am generally happy to support Ms Lawder's motion. As I said, Roads ACT is already looking at McBryde Crescent and considering improvements to make there. It will consult with the school and any affected residents before it makes any traffic improvements. I am happy to report back to the Assembly on the progress of this matter by the end of the year, and my amendment seeks to reflect this. I believe it embodies the spirit of Ms Lawder's motion. It removes the requirement that Roads ACT install a pedestrian crossing.

To be clear, preliminary discussions indicate that the result of Roads ACT's examination could well be the recommendation that there is a pedestrian crossing installed. I just do not think it is appropriate at this point to pass a motion in this place declaring what the most appropriate engineering treatment should be before the agency has finished its assessment. I think it is far more prudent to wait for that assessment because, as I have touched on in my speech today, there are a number of possible engineering responses to this as well as other measures that may be discussed with the school. I do not think it is warranted for the 17 members of the Assembly to stand here today and say, "Oh, it has to be a pedestrian crossing."

My amendment speaks very clearly to the fact—and I have outlined it in my speech in some detail today—that TAMS recognises that this is an issue, that work is being undertaken, that consultation with the school is being undertaken, and that I will report back to the Assembly before the end of the year. Given the sitting calendar, that is just on five weeks from now. I think that is quite a responsive turnaround, and I commend my amendment to the Assembly on that basis. It is certainly not a fobbing off; it is a clear path of action that I have outlined today, and members can have confidence knowing that they will be able to hold me and Roads ACT to account on an answer to this within the five-week time frame that is currently anticipated for the undertaking of this study. I now move the amendment circulated in my name:

Omit paragraphs (2)(a) and (2)(b), substitute:

“(2) (a) update the Assembly by the last sitting day of 2013 on appropriate traffic safety measures to take on McBryde Crescent.”.

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) (4.48): This is an important motion about safety and all of us in this place would recognise the importance of safety around our schools. Mr Rattenbury has spoken about a number of investigations into safety around Trinity and other areas. School communities and local residents at times contact the Education and Training Directorate and, I have no doubt, Roads ACT around local issues. It has always been a partnership approach to solutions. There is also a key element here about a community responsibility to be safe around where children are in our community.

We will support Mr Rattenbury's amendment. It is about a sensible partnership into working with the local schools and local communities around a solution. I think a five-week time frame is reasonable for Roads ACT to undertake the work.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (4.49): I will speak both to the amendment and in closing. I feel I have made my points about a pedestrian crossing and appropriate traffic management measures for Trinity Christian School to ensure the safety of our children. I appreciate Mr Rattenbury and Ms Burch's comments and their obvious concern for the safety of children and Mr Rattenbury touching on the need for a study of the Trinity Christian School road environment. I know they, too, are concerned about road safety.

As Mr Rattenbury alluded to very generally, I am not a road or traffic engineer either. However, the principal of Trinity Christian School, Mr Andrew Clayton, has informed me he has contacted the ACT Planning and Land Authority on numerous occasions over the past 18 months to discuss this issue and try to encourage changes to occur sooner rather than later. He had been informed that there has already been a review and a plan to alleviate the problem but was told that financial constraints meant nothing could occur at this stage. This response from the department seemed to say, "Yes, we understand there is a risk to children, but no, we're not going to fix it as soon as possible. We're not that concerned that children may be injured." But I believe it should be made a priority, along with any other school that may be in the same situation.

Obviously, we would love the government to adopt our 2012 election policy on flashing lights at every school in the ACT. But, notwithstanding that, we can take it one step at a time. Currently, this school, Trinity Christian School, appears to be at high risk and needs assistance now. We will not be supporting Mr Rattenbury's amendment. We already have a study and recommendation. Let us not put off any changes any longer. I urge all members of the Assembly to support my motion today.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

Noes 8

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

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Roads—Hibberson Street and Hinder Street intersection

MRS JONES (Molonglo) (4.55): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes that on the intersection of Hinder and Hibberson Streets in Gungahlin there have been 66 accidents in the last seven years; and
- (2) calls on the Government and the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services to:
 - (a) provide reports that have been undertaken into the safety of this intersection;
 - (b) reassess the intersection and provide a report to the Assembly on the outcome of the assessment; and
 - (c) install traffic lights at this intersection to overcome the visibility issues.

I rise today to speak to the motion that appears on the notice paper in my name. At the east end of the Gungahlin town centre is an intersection that is well known. It is close to Coles and Aldi, close to the doctors and the blood service. It is also where the post office is located and, therefore, a hub of community interactions for the young and old. It is also well known because it is dangerous. It has been the site of more than 66 accidents in the last seven years. On average this means that every six weeks there is an accident at the crossing of Hibberson Street and Hinder Street.

From my many years living in Gungahlin, I have always thought that the intersection I am referring to was an example of how ACT Labor is somewhat out of touch with the people who are the pioneers who invested in homes and built lives in Gungahlin. It seems that too many of their concerns do not seem to make the agenda of this government. I have often wondered why glaring issues like this intersection do not enter into the plans of this government. After much reflection, I think it is because most of the members of this government have barely set foot in Gungahlin and literally have no clue about what daily life there resembles.

I am wrong, actually. Minister Rattenbury has campaigned at the shops a few times. I remember the Chief Minister even turning up for at least two hours just before election day. Mr Corbell, I believe many years ago, lived there for a little while. But other than that—sorry, Minister Barr was there for turning a sod this week. Maybe that is why people do not realise the importance of these issues and how big they are.

Mr Corbell: Where do you live, Giulia?

MRS JONES: I now do not live in Gungahlin, but I did for a long time, and I spend a fair bit of time up there, thank you, Minister Corbell. If any members opposite had been into the Gungahlin post office and asked how frequently accidents occur at this intersection, they would know from the great people who serve the community there all day that accidents are distressing and frequent. They would also know that locals are confused about why nothing has been done. In June this year I asked the minister what plans he had to improve the visibility at this intersection and what plans he had to manage the traffic flow.

Minister Rattenbury advised that this intersection ranks outside the top 100 similar intersections in the ACT. I note that a spokesperson for the minister in the *Canberra Times* on Thursday, 17 October said that this intersection was now ranked number 48. I am really interested that we have seen this intersection shoot up the ratings, and I wonder if it will continue on this trajectory over the coming months.

If my calculations are correct, the intersection moves up the minister's list by one place every 1.7 days. In 83 days, we should then see it make number one—on 8 January 2014. I would hope that by then it will be fixed. If it were a record, it might go platinum by Australia Day. An intersection with a serious two to three-car accident every six weeks clearly needs to be addressed.

I have seen a media article that suggests the minister plans to install stop signs. Let me address this option for a moment. As a mum who has driven across the intersection with my small kids in the car, drivers are already stopping. They stop to try and see what is coming, but the problem is that they cannot see. If one is driving along Hinder Street in either direction and comes to Hibberson Street and looks west down the main road, if there are cars parked on the main road, it is physically impossible to see if there are cars driving towards you. Cars are obscuring the line of sight. Therefore, no number of stop signs will stop accidents, because visibility is the problem here.

Therefore, what this intersection is going to need is lights. For the safety of all those who are forced to play chicken when driving through this intersection, the minister needs to install traffic lights. Those people who have suffered a car accident at this intersection know the inconvenience is not just the cost of repairs or the excess on their insurance. They are often without a car for days or weeks whilst repairs are carried out. There are also ongoing costs to families. They are unable to do basic daily activities like taking the kids to school or dropping them at day care and getting to work, doing the grocery shopping or taking the kids to weekend sport. As we know, it is not possible to do all these things catching the bus.

The dangers at this intersection are not new. I recall in 2008 attending a community forum put on by the Gungahlin Community Council at which a representative from ACTPLA stated, when asked about this crossing, that there was a plan to divert traffic around the perimeter of the Gungahlin town centre. While there may be some merit in something of this nature, it does not resolve the visibility problems at this intersection.

I recall many times driving down Hinder Street towards Hibberson Street. I really could not see if traffic was approaching from the right coming up from the main road. Like many people driving through that intersection, I felt as though I had to play chicken with the crossing traffic. It is particularly frightening when you have young children in the back seat.

Facebook has come alive with a litany of comments from people who have experienced an accident, seen an accident or had a near miss at this intersection. These are the people who live and work in Gungahlin. One person said, "The sheer volume of traffic at certain times of the day suggests it needs either a roundabout or traffic lights." Another person said, "Traffic lights, the only solution." Another person

said, “Definitely needs lights, such a dangerous intersection. I learned the hard way.” Someone else said, “This intersection is a nightmare,” and somebody else said, “Unfortunately, it will take someone to be critically injured, or even worse, die, for the government to take it seriously and make the necessary changes.”

Can I re-emphasise to the minister that the key issue with this intersection is visibility. I am not saying that this is the only traffic issue in greater Gungahlin. There are many traffic issues that the government has not addressed. Let us look at Gundaroo Drive, which is constantly gridlocked. Children going to school at the new Gungahlin College take up to half an hour to cross the road by foot. Wanganeen Avenue in Ngunnawal is used as a chicane by speeding cars, leaving many residents down the street from Ngunnawal Primary School fearing that their homes may be ploughed into by a runaway car.

Katherine Avenue in Amaroo is impossible to exit from at the eastern end onto Horse Park Drive. And while we are on the topic of Horse Park Drive, this would have to be the most heavily used one-lane highway in the ACT—of course, now that the GDE has been duplicated. I am pleased to see that it seems the quite late swimming pool will have more than one lane in each direction. That is a joke we used to have in Gungahlin.

I thank the minister for his detailed letter in response to my question earlier in the year on the matter of the crossing of Hinder and Hibberson Street. I urge the minister to consider the apprehension with which the people of Gungahlin live regarding this crossing. I implore the minister to install traffic lights for the sake of the lives and property of the people of Gungahlin, for whom it is our duty in this place to provide good streets and driving conditions.

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) (5.03): I thank Mrs Jones for her passionate dissertation on Hibberson and Hinder streets in Gungahlin and the intersection there. I am well aware of that intersection and, as Mrs Jones says, I have spoken to her about it before. I have also had concerns raised with me directly by residents of Gungahlin. And I did see the media release that Mrs Jones put out with the headline “Jones demands peace of mind for Gungahlin drivers”.

With that in mind, I think it is important that we give some perspective to this issue. Mrs Jones is correct when she says that 66 crashes have occurred at that particular intersection in the last seven years. Of course that is not a great statistic. Nobody wants crashes to occur, any property to be damaged and, most of all, no-one wants to see people injured in accidents. I think that is a given. And I appreciate that Mrs Jones is concerned about residents in our electorate and their safety. I do not intend to turn this into some sort of contest on who goes to Gungahlin the most often, but I do know the site as one of my favourite food outlets in Canberra is only metres down the road from that intersection. So I am aware of it.

Anyway, there is an unfortunate reality that crashes happen on our roads. As I noted in the last discussion, there are around 10,000 a year in the ACT. In developing

improvement programs, we need to be able to establish priorities and direct available funds to address those locations that are most in need.

The key point—and I would ask Mrs Jones and her colleagues to consider this very carefully—is: how should we prioritise intersection upgrades and safety improvements across the territory? Should we commit our limited time and resources to the intersections that we have identified as being most worthy of upgrades because of safety and traffic issues? Alternatively, we could take the approach where we commit the government's limited funds to projects that MLAs decide to raise in the Assembly, invariably in their own electorates, or on projects that the *Chronicle* may have decided to report on during that previous week.

I believe that would be an irresponsible approach to managing the issue. It is a reality for government that the budget is limited, that we cannot make every upgrade immediately, and it is a sensible approach to try to rank and prioritise road safety improvements.

As an example, while Mrs Jones notes that Hibberson and Hinder streets have experienced 66 crashes in the last seven years, over the same period there have been 241 reported crashes at the intersection of the Barton Highway and William Slim Drive—that is, the big roundabout at the entrance to Gungahlin from the south.

One issue I am not sure MLAs or the public are always fully aware of is the cost of traffic upgrades. They are actually—and it does distress me—surprisingly expensive. Look at the local area traffic management program, for example. I have had all sorts of people lobbying me to get on with various bits of that in recent times or in some cases not get on with it, as the case may be.

But an interesting example is that we are currently looking at four sites around Canberra, making what most people consider are minor improvements—installing measures such as speed humps, chicanes and some traffic circles. To progress those sites will literally cost millions of dollars. I think the estimated cost of all of them is approximately \$4 million. And that is just for those four sites around Canberra. I get, I guarantee, a letter at least once a week asking me for some further traffic calming somewhere else in Canberra. This gives you a sense of the scale of requests and the scale of public perception around safety issues.

TAMS needs to try to manage and prioritise literally thousands of sites across Canberra within the budget that it has. So its prioritising of expenditure must be done very carefully and as professionally as possible on the best basis of evidence we have. And I have a responsibility to ensure that funds we do have available are spent as responsibly as possible.

It is for these reasons that the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate has developed a system for ranking crash locations. It is a system that has been in place for several years and it seeks to identify locations across the ACT most in need of attention.

The intersection of William Slim Drive and the Barton Highway, which I mentioned earlier, is currently the worst crash site in Gungahlin. Of course it is not the matter that is in this week's *Chronicle*. But it is an issue that I have been progressing, and Roads ACT has been progressing, for some time now. As part of the last budget process, design funds of \$150,000 were provided to progress the design of a major intersection upgrade at the William Slim Drive and Barton Highway roundabout, and I will be raising the matter again as a priority for discussion with my colleagues through next year's budget. That is the site that is ranked first on the crash priority upgrade list.

The intersection of Hinder Street and Hibberson Street, which Mrs Jones mentioned in her remarks, is ranked the 48th worst crash site in the ACT over the last seven years. This seven-year time line is the scale that Roads ACT primarily relies on in making its assessment for upgrades. It provides a longer term view and shows longer term patterns.

To highlight this, if you look at the five-year crash history for Hibberson and Hinder, it is actually ranked 103rd. As to Mrs Jones's likening it to some sort of pop chart, it has not actually got a bullet. The five-year crash history actually sees it going backwards. But over the seven-year time frame it was ranked 43rd. The average is why we get that 48 number, just for the sake of clarity. That means there are 47 intersections in the ACT that are ranked ahead of it. And I am sure there are 47 sets of constituents out there, at least, who would be arguing for those other intersections to be done first. A number of these intersections are actually in the Gungahlin town centre. And that is the reality of decision making for the government.

Of course, as I said earlier, I would like to be able to upgrade every intersection in Canberra to be as safe as they can possibly be. In reality, it would not be responsible to downgrade the priority of those 47 higher ranked intersections so that we can instead install traffic lights at the intersection of Hinder and Hibberson streets.

The fact that I am more concerned about the William Slim and Barton Highway roundabout should not come as a surprise to the residents of Gungahlin. Indeed, officers from TAMS regularly attend the local community council meetings in Gungahlin. We have all been there. We have all seen them come to those sessions, and they present and discuss traffic and road safety issues with local residents. TAMS has talked to residents about this roundabout, and my understanding is that the local Gungahlin Community Council is supportive of this priority.

Over the years there have been concerns raised about several intersections in the Gungahlin town centre. Some earlier transport planning work was also undertaken by the former ACT planning authority which identified the need for longer term improvements. Based on this work, TAMS is progressing a study during 2013-14 which will assess the need for and the cost of installing traffic lights at two intersections on Hinder Street, the intersection with Hibberson Street and the intersection with Efkarpidis Street.

Mrs Jones might also be interested in some information I received from ACT Policing about the intersection of Hibberson and Hinder streets. In September this year, ACT Policing identified the intersection as one it would focus attention on. Hopefully this will help improve safety at this location. Members might also be interested to know that ACT Policing identified that one of the collisions that occurred this year related to a construction site on Hibberson Street that was blocking drivers' view from Hinder Street. This issue was dealt with so that there is no longer an obstruction. ACT Policing is continuing to monitor construction sites and traffic in this area.

As Mrs Jones would also know, and as she mentioned in her speech, TAMS and Roads ACT have already agreed to install stop signs at the intersection to replace give way signs. This is to address visibility issues. These stop signs are expected to be implemented by the end of December. And if road drivers are actually following the road rules, that should result in an improvement in safety, because I think most people understand the difference between a stop sign and a give way sign. They do receive that signal that it is a more dangerous intersection and that people should take them more seriously than perhaps they do. With a give way sign, sometimes they think they can pass through more speedily.

The other thing which has not come up in today's discussion but which I should mention is that the intersection sits within a 40-kilometre-an-hour zone. The ACT government has, in partnership—and this was an issue that was in the last parliamentary agreement—implemented 40-kilometre-an-hour speed zones in the town centres to improve safety, recognising that they are areas that have high pedestrian movement, in particular. That is the key reason. But it also recognises that there is a level of traffic movement that also warrants these lower speed limits. I cannot remember whether it was the photo of the intersection in *RiotACT* or in the *Chronicle*, but the photo showed the 40-kilometre-an-hour speed sign as part of the intersection. This, again, demonstrates that a lot of safety measures have already been put in place.

Mrs Jones's motion asks that I table reports on the intersection of Hinder Street and Hibberson Street, and I am happy to make these available. That is no problem. I would ask that I have some time to collate these. I expect that I can present them in the next sitting week, next week. It will not take too long, but it would be worth while rather than rushing in this afternoon and not having all of them.

As I mentioned, the need to install lights at this and another intersection on Hinder Street will be assessed as part of the TAMS 2013-14 feasibility program, and when that is completed I will be happy to provide a copy of that report to the Assembly. I should note that if that report does identify improvements for those intersections, they will then need to be considered through the future capital works program.

To sum it up, I will be presenting an amendment which I think proposes the appropriate way forward. That amendment has been circulated. It retains the elements of the motion that ask for reports to be tabled. As I said, my intention is that that will be done during the next sitting week. I will also table a report on the further study being done on the intersection. It puts a time frame on this of April next year. That is the expected time frame that TAMS will need to complete this work.

The amendment removes the third point of the motion, which calls on the government to install traffic lights at this intersection. As I have said, TAMS is currently assessing the option but I also do not agree that we can let the Assembly simply decide on specific engineering options for intersections. I just do not think that is appropriate. I am starting to feel like a broken record this afternoon, but I think this is the struggle that is out there. Certainly, as the minister in partnership with Roads ACT, we need to take an evidence-based approach to these things.

I have gone through in some detail, both on the previous matter and this one, the evidence around them. There is a necessity to come up with some sort of means to prioritise these issues. I think the traffic warrant system used by TAMS is a good approach. Basically, it feeds a whole lot of data into a database and creates that ranking. But then what Roads ACT does across the top of that is also apply the element of human judgement, common sense, whatever tag you would like to put on it. So there is some flexibility in that list.

I think that, in relation to the specific intersection being addressed this afternoon, the improvements that are being made—the installation of the stop signs and the necessity to focus on the 47 intersections that currently sit ahead of it—mean that I am not able to agree to all of the things that Mrs Jones has asked for. I know that is not going to satisfy all members of the chamber this afternoon, but I would ask members to reflect on the necessity for evidence-based decision making when it comes to these matters.

I will simply conclude my remarks by moving the amendment circulated in my name. I move:

Omit paragraphs (2)(b) and (2)(c), substitute:

“(2) (b) assess the intersection and provide a report to the Assembly on the outcome of the assessment by the end of April 2014.”.

MRS JONES (Molonglo) (5.16): I am happy to speak to the amendment and conclude, if that is appropriate. I thank Minister Rattenbury for his response to this motion, and I would only add a couple of remarks. Firstly, I would be very surprised if within the Gungahlin town centre there was a more dangerous intersection. This intersection is renowned amongst residents, and people living in that area every day, driving to and fro, must also have some understanding of the safety. Given that an assessment has been undertaken into this intersection, which says that visibility is not a problem and yet it is very clear that visibility is the problem, I wonder whether the assessment took place at a time of day when there were not cars parked on the main road, because no stop sign or 40-kilometre-an-hour zone can make cars see-through. And, unfortunately, the problem is that it is impossible to see whether cars are coming down the main road.

You will understand that I will not support the amendment because I am pursuing traffic lights, if possible, for this intersection. But whatever the outcome is today, I will be glad if some more action is taken to see this intersection’s problems resolved. And I think that Gungahlin residents deserve that.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

Noes 8

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

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Sport—ground maintenance

MS PORTER (Ginninderra) (5.21): I move:

That this Assembly notes that:

- (1) the ACT Government, through Sport and Recreation Services, maintains sportsgrounds throughout the ACT;
- (2) a quarterly independent survey of regular users of Canberra's sporting and recreational facilities has confirmed a very high level of satisfaction from users in the July-September quarter;
- (3) the results included:
 - (a) overall quality of the experience provided by public sportsgrounds and neighbourhood ovals received a 100% rating;
 - (b) the overall management of public sportsgrounds and neighbourhood ovals scored 94% positive rating;
 - (c) easy access to grounds also rated 100% positive rating;
 - (d) amount of sportsgrounds was rated at 97% positive rating;
 - (e) maintenance and cleanliness received a 99% positive rating;
 - (f) the absence of litter received a 96% positive rating; and
 - (g) the overall management of public sportsgrounds and neighbourhood ovals scored 94% positive rating; and
- (4) these outstanding results are due to the hard work and dedication of the team at Sport and Recreation Services.

I am pleased to move this motion this afternoon regarding the maintenance of sportsgrounds. It is well known that Canberrans have amongst the highest participation rates in sporting and recreation activities in the nation. An important component of that is the provision of high quality sporting and recreation facilities, which encourage everyone to participate in healthy physical activities. I am pleased to report that the most recent survey of sporting and recreational facilities in the ACT has confirmed that we continue to provide facilities which Canberrans who regularly use them rate particularly highly.

The survey I refer to is the quarterly survey undertaken by the independent market research company Market Attitude Research Services, or MARS. I seek leave to table an overview of the findings relating to sportsgrounds in the MARS research.

Leave granted.

MS PORTER: I table the following paper:

Sport and Recreation Services 2013-2014—Overview of key strategic findings and strategic implications—2013-2014 quarterly report, dated September 2013.

This research has been undertaken quarterly by MARS since 2007 and evaluates open space management usage and satisfaction on behalf of the ACT government land managers: the Parks and Conservation Service and Sport and Recreation Services. This research assists in determining community and visitor awareness, usage and satisfaction with public sportsgrounds, urban and non-urban parks, recreation areas, reserves and open spaces.

As part of the survey, those who regularly use the facilities are asked to rate them in regard to a range of criteria. This information is then used by Sport and Recreation Services to improve the overall experience and subsequently further encourage their use. The most recent survey was completed in September 2013, and I am pleased to report to the Assembly that the results were amongst the best that have ever been achieved.

Included in the many highlights of the report were the findings that satisfaction with overall quality and experience provided by public sportsgrounds and neighbourhood ovals was rated at 100 per cent by the respondents. That is 100 per cent. Other major findings of the survey include: ease of access to grounds, 100 per cent; maintenance and cleanliness, 97 per cent; amount of sporting and recreation facilities provided, 97 per cent; absence of litter, 96 per cent; and overall management of public sporting grounds and neighbourhood ovals, 94 per cent.

Other specific areas included in the survey are our enclosed sportsgrounds, and the latest quarterly survey also found satisfaction levels of the users of these facilities to be very positive: 92 per cent of respondents were satisfied with the experience provided at the enclosed sportsgrounds. This is a particularly pleasing result as it is close to the highest ever achieved, having risen from 82 per cent at the start of the research in 2007. The research also shows a 92 per cent satisfaction rate with the

quality of the management of the enclosed sports grounds. The level of satisfaction for district sportsgrounds and neighbourhood ovals also continues to be high, with satisfaction with the overall experience provided again near a record high of 97 per cent, and the overall satisfaction with the quality of management an equal record rated at 95 per cent.

It is also interesting to analyse the many and varied reasons why Canberrans frequent our public sportsgrounds. Not only are they there to participate in or watch sporting activities but also they undertake individual activities, such as jogging and other forms of exercise, and participate in informal activities, such as ball games or just simply walking their dogs, which my husband and I do on our local oval, meeting many local residents who do the same.

The provision and ongoing maintenance of sportsgrounds across the ACT support a number of strategic programs and initiatives aimed at promoting Canberra as a healthy and active community. So it is no surprise that the ACT continues to lead the nation in participation in sport and recreation, with 80.3 per cent of Canberrans participating in physical activity, well above the national average of 65 per cent. According to the ABS statistics issued last December, young Canberrans continue to be our most active, with well over 90 per cent of 18 to 24-year-olds participating in sport and physical recreation. Older Canberrans are also far more active than elsewhere in Australia.

The launch by the Chief Minister of the towards zero growth healthy weight action plan is a recent example. Towards zero growth focuses on strategies that will make active and healthy lifestyle choices easier for all of us. Access to high quality, well-maintained sportsgrounds encourages physical activity and supports other aspects of a healthy lifestyle.

The active 2020 strategy is an industry-led plan that sets out key priority areas that will enable ongoing development of the sport and recreation industry in the ACT. Strategic priorities within the active 2020 strategy include: maximising sporting infrastructure; the promotion of the health, education and social benefits of sport and recreation; and maximising community engagement.

The ACT government is committed to the provision of high quality, fit-for-purpose sportsgrounds to satisfy the needs of the sport and recreation industry, schools and the broader community. This is in contrast to the policy of the Canberra Liberals. They went to the 2012 election with a policy of cutting spending on community sport. The Liberals oppose the urban improvement fund, a large percentage of which is spent on upgrading local facilities and supporting local sport. Without those funds, sports clubs would have to drastically increase their player registration fees to fully fund facility improvements which could otherwise be offset through government contributions. Under the Canberra Liberals' policy of decreasing the amount available for maintenance of our sports facilities, the user satisfaction research would have looked very different if the Canberra Liberals had won.

Staff of Sport and Recreation Services are to be commended for their outstanding efforts in continuing to provide high quality facilities for all Canberrans to enjoy and

benefit from. The results of this latest survey are a clear testament to their work, and I take this opportunity to congratulate them. Our continued support of and our strong commitment to the maintenance and upkeep of our sporting infrastructure will ensure that the levels of satisfaction enjoyed by users of these facilities continue to remain high and that Canberrans will continue to enjoy their sporting and recreation facilities into the future. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (5.28): I thank Ms Porter for bringing this motion on some positive aspects of the work that sport and recreation does. I think people living in Canberra are well served by a dedicated and professional public service, and the people working in our Sport and Recreation Services are no exception. In the ACT we have a very high level of participation in sport by people of all ages and fitness levels. I think it is the highest of any state or territory. That has been confirmed every time national surveys are taken. We have a wide choice of sports available, from local community level through to the elite national and international competition standard. That high level of participation is assisted by and drives supply of a range of quality facilities. Admittedly, some are a legacy of being the nation's capital.

Given the number of sports played and the number of hours our ovals are used, it is a challenge for TAMS staff to keep these playing areas safe, clean and functional. It is not an easy task. Certainly, during the drought, many ovals were forced to close, increasing pressure on others. I know the Calwell playing fields have something like 33,000 hours usage in one year.

So for Sport and Recreation Services to receive such positive feedback from their quarterly surveys is certainly encouraging for them. Ms Porter quotes such figures as a 94 per cent positive rating for the overall management of public sportsgrounds and neighbourhood ovals, a 100 per cent positive rating for easy access to grounds, a 97 per cent positive rating for the amount of available sportsgrounds, a 99 per cent positive rating for maintenance and cleanliness, a 96 per cent positive rating for the absence of litter, and a 94 per cent positive rating for the overall management of public sportsgrounds and neighbourhood ovals.

These are encouraging figures and ones that Sport and Recreation Services should be justifiably pleased about. However, it is appropriate that I also point out some of the shortcomings in some of the services on offer. As shadow minister for sport and recreation, I meet regularly with representatives of sporting clubs and with families whose children are engaged in sport. Earlier this year I raised the issue of ground hire charges. There are two aspects to this issue, and neither of them goes to the efficiency or professionalism of the sport and recreation staff but they do reflect on their ability to act efficiently and professionally.

The first is the rise in fees for the hire of sportsgrounds or, perhaps more correctly, the attempted hike in ground hire fees. In the last quarter of last year and again earlier this year, junior football clubs—in fact, all sports—were affected. They were advised of an increase in ground hire fees. In some cases, increases were over 50 per cent. The additional complaint they had—obviously these people were not amongst those who were surveyed by sport and rec—was to do with the quality of facilities and, in some cases, lack of facilities.

Every time I raise the issue of ground hire increases or, more recently, swimming pool lane hire fees, the minister for sport dismisses the issue as trifling, suggesting that it is only a matter of a few cents per hour per player. But what he fails to recognise is that if you multiply that per player per hour increase across hundreds of players and hundreds of hours, it adds up to a significant cost burden for some clubs.

Last year and again earlier this year I had many representations from clubs, particularly in the south of Canberra, complaining about this very fact. They pointed out that just across the border in Queanbeyan ground hire fees were much less and, in some cases, the grounds had more and better facilities. Interestingly, however, while the minister defended the 50 per cent increase in fees as of little impact, he then quietly moved to reduce them before they were published on the website.

So we have a difficulty here that, no doubt, impacts on the staff of Sport and Recreation Services, although it is not their fault. Someone obviously made a determination to increase the fees, but then the sports minister decided not to, claiming he was not aware of the hike in fees until we brought this to his attention—a disconnect at the best or just plain obfuscation from Minister Barr.

The second issue is about the process of sportsground bookings. The process is inefficient and, to users, quite unsatisfactory. Clubs are largely run by volunteers who are willing and eager helpers, but so often they are time poor. When club officials use the government sportsground booking system, they are not able to see what grounds are available. They apply and then have to wait and see. Getting in contact directly with anyone is, I am told, almost impossible. This has led to fields being double booked or teams deciding not to play.

Additionally, there is a summer-winter split in the bookings, so summer sports have preference in summer and winter sports have preference in winter. That is logical, but when you have sport like football—soccer—it is designated a winter sport when, in fact, it can almost be called an all-year-round sport as aspects of football are played all year. The ACT booking system does not accommodate that, and staff availability limits any face-to-face contact.

Another issue I have raised relates to the approval measure for the overall management of public sportsgrounds and neighbourhood ovals. The survey suggests that 94 per cent of survey respondents are happy with the management of sportsgrounds. I can only assume that I met with the other six per cent who have strong objections to the condition of the grounds. It is a constant objection. I have raised it before and it has always been dismissed, but it is an issue that has ongoing and long-term consequences for the quality and maintenance of Canberra ovals.

The issue is the use of diesel for line markings. I understand diesel is used because it does not require redoing very often. There is an obvious reason for that—it kills the grass and the grass roots, but, by doing that, it also causes erosion, and many of our ovals and fields are getting deep ruts where, over that time, run-off from water and rain has caused further erosion. As an environmentalist, I would have thought Minister Rattenbury would be concerned, but he is apparently more concerned with a

cost-saving measure than damage to soils. Across the border in New South Wales, ovals use lime wash, which is much more environmentally sound and effective. Admittedly it does not last as long as diesel, but neither do the negative impacts.

The Labor Party went to the last election promising great things for sports. They will want to deliver, because the Canberra sports community will be making sure they are kept to account. We already have doubtful promises and pledges over restoring ovals taken offline during the drought, and the restoration time line is very long. We know how long the Gungahlin grandstand took to get going, as did the swim centre. The Chief Minister has promised a new swimming complex for Weston Creek, but the forward estimates indicate it will not be built until after the next election. On top of that, the government appears to not be able to supervise the contracts the centres have without disenfranchising local swim clubs.

The upgrade for athletics in the south of Canberra has been a political football, and the Woden Football Club faced a nervous wait to find out whether it would have a venue for its winter competition. Other promises—the expansion of Tuggeranong pool, a north side indoor sports centre and irrigation and surface improvements for Kambah and Hawker district playing fields—are also in the distant future. So while Ms Porter's motion is commendable as far as it goes, the reality is that it does not go very far and paints a somewhat inadequate picture.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Community Services) (5.37): I thank Ms Porter for raising this motion today. For the first half of Mr Doszpot's speech, I was going to thank him for bringing a bipartisan approach to this debate in congratulating Sport and Recreation Services for their work, but in a 10-minute speech he could not even bring himself to not have a go at them.

This is an important opportunity to celebrate the success of Sport and Recreation Services and the work that they and the parks and conservation team within TAMS do for Canberra residents. Their satisfaction survey demonstrates that their hard work in recent times, with the extra resources that have been provided in this area, is delivering results on the ground. That is very encouraging, and I think it behoves this place to support the team in Sport and Recreation Services for the good work that they are doing, to acknowledge it in this way through a motion like this, and to have the opportunity to talk a little more about what is coming for sport and recreation.

As part of the government's goal to ensure an active city, we are continuing to devote significant resources to facilities that encourage Canberrans of all ages to become and to stay physically active.

Part of this investment is being made through the facilities improvement program, an annual capital upgrade program which delivers both improvements and enhancements to our local sport and recreational facilities.

Since 2011-12, just under \$4.5 million has been invested in this program. One of the projects from the 2011-12 program was the \$450,000 upgrade and extension of the

Gold Creek School toilet facilities to service the Nicholls synthetic sports field. Projects undertaken in 2012-13 include: construction of a new shed for the Hall Pony Club; the installation of new floodlights at the Charnwood District Playing Fields and the Isabella Plains Neighbourhood Oval; an upgrade of floodlights at the Narrabundah Ball Park, giving it the best broadcast-quality lighting of any ballpark in the country; new toilet facilities and pavilion upgrades at Wanniasa district playing field No 2; and new toilet blocks at Isabella Plains and Duffy neighbourhood ovals.

Work in progress in this financial year includes: a new toilet block and floodlights for the Mint ovals at Deakin; extensions and upgrade works to the Amaroo District Playing Fields pavilion; an athletics throwing facility at the Campbell Neighbourhood Oval; new floodlights at the Mawson Neighbourhood Oval and at Kambah district playing fields; and an upgrade of the Charnwood District Playing Fields pavilion.

In addition, further works that have been undertaken or are underway include a \$1.5 million allocation to the water demand management program to replace ageing irrigation management systems. This project will promote more efficient and effective irrigation of our sportsgrounds. This goes to the quality of the sportsgrounds: having effective and efficient irrigation is critical to the quality of our sportsgrounds.

Minor new works that have been undertaken in recent times include the installation of cricket nets at Rivett and Latham. Major capital works that are underway in this fiscal year include the progression of stage 2 of the Lyneham precinct, some of which was opened in June. This includes new irrigation, cricket wickets and lighting, with turfing of the newly created sportsgrounds to start next month.

The redevelopment of the Kippax enclosed oval was completed and officially opened in March of this year. The ACT government's contribution of \$2.45 million was delivered in partnership with key stakeholders, including the Belconnen Magpies Football Club, the Belconnen Magpies Sports Club, the AFL of New South Wales and the ACT, the Ginninderra Cricket Club and Cricket ACT, who, combined, contributed \$1 million through cash and in-kind contributions.

A contractor has been appointed and work is about to begin on the upgrade of the Narrabundah Velodrome. The Gungahlin leisure centre is nearing completion. I have had the opportunity to tour the facility in the last few weeks. It will comprise 50-metre and 25-metre pools, and a children's water play area. This will allow for a diverse range of aquatic activities. It will also have a gym, childcare facilities and a cafe.

The Gungahlin enclosed oval will be ready for use in March. It will enable a wide range of Gungahlin teams to play their matches in their local area and will bring considerable vitality to that part of the town centre.

There are a series of in-ground tanks and pump systems currently being constructed at Southwell Park, and at Hackett and Downer neighbourhood ovals, as part of the inner north stormwater reticulation scheme.

The \$4.5 million redevelopment of Woden park was an election commitment of the government last year. The design for the redevelopment of the park to convert the

facility to a synthetic athletics track is being progressed, and a construction tender will be announced shortly.

I am sure you are very pleased, Mr Assistant Speaker, that the Bonython oval has been restored this year. Restoration work for Watson and Weetangera ovals will take place during 2014-15.

Turning to the government's support for local sporting clubs, the sports and recreation grants program provides financial support to help local sport and recreation organisations to increase participation and develop their capacity.

The 2013 budget provides more than \$2.3 million towards a wide range of projects, including \$165,000 to Hockey ACT for the resurfacing of the Powell field at the Lyneham hockey centre; \$7,000 to the Canberra pistol club to complete the pistol range restoration; \$56,000 to the Canberra Rifle Club for the installation of an electronic target system; \$24,000 to the O'Connor Tennis Club for upgrading of the clubhouse and environs; and \$27,500 to the Pines Tennis Club at Chisholm for the upgrade of two courts. There is \$2.1 million towards the completion of the new Tuggeranong indoor multi-sport community hall at Greenway; the facility caters for a range of sports, including indoor archery, floorball, fencing, trampolining and table tennis. There is \$19,000 for the Southern Canberra Gymnastics Club for new parallel bars and safety matting; and there is \$20,000 for the Black Mountain Rowing Club to install, in partnership with the National Capital Authority, a new launch pontoon.

Upgrades to ACT government aquatic facilities include \$300,000 towards the separation of the filtration systems for the toddler and main pools at Manuka; \$60,000 towards the repainting of the 50-metre and toddler pools at Civic; and \$200,000 worth of electrical works across Manuka, Dickson, Tuggeranong and Civic pools.

The projects and funding I have mentioned are just a snapshot of the sorts of projects that the government funds each year through this grants program. We remain committed to continuing to provide the best possible sport and recreation facilities for all Canberrans.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Ms Porter again for bringing this motion forward and to congratulate the staff of Sport and Recreation Services for excellent results. It is thanks to their hard work and their commitment to high-quality sports facilities that the satisfaction of participants is so high. I know firsthand, having been minister for seven years, how hard the sport and recreation team work. It is fantastic to see them get the recognition they deserve this afternoon in the Assembly. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (5.46): I would like to congratulate the government on these survey figures. It never ceases to amaze me how this government manages to produce survey after survey of favourable figures when it certainly does not reflect the feedback and the comments that I get from my constituents from the Tuggeranong area on a regular basis.

Let me just put on the record some of the feedback that has recently come back, particularly from a roundtable forum that our shadow spokesman on sport and recreation, Mr Doszpot, and I held recently in Tuggeranong. There were about eight clubs represented. The comments that came from that were generally all the same, mainly focused around the quality of the playing surfaces; the cleanliness and the ill repair of the clubhouse, canteen facilities and changing room facilities that are available; and some of the issues surrounding line marking. I know that Mr Doszpot is very passionate about issues surrounding the use of diesel fuel on our playing surfaces: it causes irreparable damage, and many of the clubs are experiencing injury to some of their top-level players simply because of the uneven nature of the ovals once it has been used for successive seasons.

Let me talk about some of the facilities in particular. Calwell and the Kambah playing fields experience excessive overuse, particularly during the winter months. That is as a result of the closure of a number of facilities down in Tuggeranong that are no longer used for sport and rec on a weekly basis as they used to be. These ovals, particularly Kambah and Calwell, are now being overused; and, come the end of the winter playing season, there are large sections of turf missing—divots—particularly on the soccer pitches. The nature of soccer is that it is fairly aggressive in specific sections of the pitch, particularly the centre and the goal squares; by the end of the winter playing season, there is no grass left there.

Another issue that these clubs identified was the outdated nature of the lighting that is available in some of the suburban fields. They are paying fees to hire the ground of a weeknight. They are paying additional fees for the use of the lights. But the lights only throw light, if they are lucky, over half the field. In some instances, it is about a third of the playing field, which means that much of the playing surface is unusable for weekly training, let alone running evening or night matches.

Let me go to the changing rooms and the toilet facilities. I know that members of the Tuggeranong Knights club came to me and said that it took near on six months to get toilet seats installed on the toilets in the changing room facilities that they use at the Gordon playing fields. Mawson and Calwell have also highlighted issues. I know that one of the clubs mentioned that they have got a persistent leak that comes through the skylight into the canteen area. There is mould that surrounds the skylight directly above where the food preparation area is. In an attempt to meet all the new food-handling guidelines that have been imposed by the current government, they now are very rarely able to use the canteen facilities, simply because of the mould and the asbestos flaking from the ceiling.

Other issues, such as disability access to many of the ovals, leave a lot to be desired, particularly around the Mawson playing field. I know it is not quite in my electorate, but it is bordering, and many of my constituents from the southern Woden suburbs frequent these playing fields.

At the end of the day, the clubs are fairly happy to pay the fees that they pay so long as the services that they are receiving in return are well maintained and are adequate and fit for purpose. But, particularly in the Tuggeranong area, clubs are currently

seeing a lapse in their registrations for each season, particularly in some of the football codes at younger ages. And instead of registering at a local club in Canberra, families are heading off across the border into Queanbeyan, where the registration fees are a fraction of what Tuggeranong clubs are required to charge to meet the ground hire fees, and the facilities that are delivered over the border are far in excess of what most Canberra clubs would be used to.

It is not fair that a motion comes into this place to sing all the praises when it only tells half the story. There is a long way to go in improving the quality and the amenity of our sports and playing facilities within the territory. I would ask that, in future, motions that are brought into the Assembly to sing some of the praises also reflect the true story of areas that still require significant improvement.

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) (5.51): I will add a few brief remarks. Mr Wall's remarks were very interesting, but I know that the Parks and Conservation Service also uses the same open space management usage and satisfaction surveys, and these surveys all have a similar methodology to what TAMS uses. And as Mr Coe will no doubt recount with some glee, when it comes to things like ACTION, they are not all roses. So casting aspersions on the accuracy of the data is an interesting approach; certainly when it comes to ACTION, people are not shy in giving us their views.

Mr Wall: Perhaps the right people aren't being asked.

MR RATTENBURY: But it is the same people. They are random surveys. Do you think the survey agency that works for the government rings around and finds the people that agree with it? Is that what you are suggesting? Fair dinkum! Anyway, I simply wanted to observe that. We can have a debate about these things, but there has got to be a limit to the craziness of the propositions that you can put in this place.

Mr Coe: You are getting 100 per cent scores—100 per cent.

MR RATTENBURY: I know; it is odd. Anyway, we digress. I simply want to observe that I think the results are impressive.

Members interjecting—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Gentleman): Order, members! Mr Rattenbury has the floor.

MR RATTENBURY: My apologies, Mr Assistant Speaker; I suspect I started that. I simply wanted to say that they are impressive results, and I think they do reflect the fact that the staff work very hard to maintain these facilities. There are areas for improvement—undoubtedly so. I am sure they are out there pursuing that every day. But I am happy to support the motion today because I think it simply reflects the fact that Canberrans on the whole really appreciate the services the government provides to them. They get out there and just enjoy the fact that we have got ovals and they are in pretty good shape a lot of the time.

A lot of people in Canberra have travelled, and they realise that actually things are not too bad in Canberra and that in plenty of countries people have never even seen an oval like the kind of ovals we have, let alone had the chance to play on them. We need to be mindful of the fact that we live in a fortunate city; we should have good access to services, but we should also not lose perspective on what we do have access to for so much of the time.

MS PORTER (Ginninderra) (5.53): I thank members for their support in celebrating the success of the Sport and Recreation Service and Parks and Conservation Service in providing these facilities. I note that Mr Doszpot talked about fees and charges. Let me remind him, through you, Mr Assistant Speaker, of the Canberra Liberals policy that went to the 2012 election, with cutting spending on community sport as part of their platform. And they opposed the urban improvement fund, as I said, a large percentage of which is spent on upgrading—

Opposition members interjecting—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order, members! Members, Ms Porter has the floor.

Mr Barr interjecting—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Barr, don't encourage them. Ms Porter has the floor.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER Ms Porter, take your seat for a moment. Mr Coe! I have asked members to come to order several times. Ms Porter is closing the debate. Please let her do so. Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. They opposed the urban improvement fund, as I said, a large percentage of which is spent on upgrading local facilities and supporting local sport. It does not take Einstein to realise that this would mean clubs would increase player registration fees in these circumstances.

The list of improvements to sporting facilities Mr Barr has just mentioned is indeed impressive. And as he has noted, the ACT government is working together with not-for-profit organisations and business to make some of these improvements, which is pleasing to see, with everyone working together to continue to make a difference.

I know that parents who participate in or watch sport in the ACT appreciate these facilities, as is borne out by this survey. Mr Rattenbury makes an excellent point in saying that this survey is a random survey and it is to be relied upon. I am afraid that Mr Wall can get up there as much as he likes and pooh-pooh this survey, but it was done by an independent body. Through you, Mr Assistant Speaker, I would draw Mr Wall's attention to that.

When I look out on the sporting fields that are close to me on a daily basis, I never cease to be amazed by how busy they are. With the softball fields that are very close

to us, we constantly can hear the cheering and clapping that go on on that field when there are games going on and people are so much enjoying themselves. And when we drive past or are walking on the ovals, we notice all the children that are there, particularly on the weekend, with the little toddlers and even very small children playing football, and all the parents, grandmothers and grandfathers there supporting them. The atmosphere is just wonderful. If it was not for the sporting fields and such wonderful facilities, they would be very much poorer.

In addition to again thanking everyone in sport and rec and parks and conservation, I would like to thank all the volunteers who also join with us in supporting this activity that we have. Once again, I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to.

Adjournment

Motion by **Mr Barr** proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

International White Cane Day

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (5.57): I rise this afternoon to speak about International White Cane Day, which is held on 15 October each year. This day is to raise awareness for the importance of the white cane and how it aids mobility and independence for a person with vision loss. I, along with my Assembly colleagues Yvette Berry and Andrew Wall and the Assistant Minister for Social Services, Senator Mitch Fifield, attended the launch of the “watch out, cane about” road safety campaign last week.

The “watch out, cane about” campaign is a pedestrian road safety awareness initiative which was launched by Guide Dogs ACT-New South Wales to try to address the worrying numbers of pedestrians with vision loss reporting near misses and collisions with vehicles when trying to cross the road.

The slogan of the campaign sums it up well: “If you can see my cane, I can’t see you”. One in two blind or vision-impaired guide dog clients have had a near miss while trying to cross the road in recent years. It is very important that we improve this within the community.

This year marks 92 years since the white cane was invented by an Englishman who had lost his sight and decided to paint his black cane white to make it more visible for others. The education campaign focuses on the dos and don’ts when it comes to motorists and vision-impaired pedestrians. For example, they are encouraging motorists to exercise extra caution when approaching a crossing that has a vision-impaired person because, while you can see them, they might not be able to see you at all.

The campaign also encourages motorists to allow a little extra time for a pedestrian with a white cane to make the decision that it is safe to cross the road. Sometimes it takes a pedestrian a little longer to ascertain that it is safe and start crossing. The campaign is also about educating drivers on what not to do. For example, do not flash your lights, honk your horn, shout directions or jump out of your car to help a pedestrian across the road. Do not assume that if they are looking in your direction they can see you, and do not stop too far back or too close or in any unusual position as it will just cause confusion. The overall message of the campaign is to use extra caution and be patient, but generally do not do anything differently to what you would normally do.

Guide Dogs New South Wales-ACT is a very valuable and important organisation for many Australians living with low or no vision. I would like to pay tribute to the staff and volunteers at Guide Dogs New South Wales-ACT as, without their passion and enthusiasm, campaigns such as this would not be possible. There are also a number of sponsors that make the campaign possible.

Finally, I would like to encourage everyone to be more aware of users of white canes when using our roads. You can find out more at www.guidedogs.com.au.

ACT Emergency Services Agency—stations

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (6.00): Madam Speaker, last Friday I was fortunate enough to be able to attend the opening of the new west Belconnen ambulance and fire rescue station, along with my Labor colleague Minister Corbell, yourself and Ms Porter. As Minister Corbell has previously said, the new \$12 million state-of-the-art ambulance and fire station will assist in providing enhanced emergency service coverage now and into the future for Belconnen. This project provides the first dedicated ambulance station for west Belconnen and replaces the former Charnwood fire and rescue station. It will house a paramedic crew and up to two firefighting crews, including an urban fire and rescue pumper and two bushfire tankers.

The project was delivered on time and under budget for the community of west Belconnen. I would like to acknowledge the work of the public servants of the ESA for delivering such a great and vital piece of infrastructure for our community. It was also great to learn that the firefighters and ambulance officers who are to work out of this station were involved in the design and development of the station, ensuring the most effective, practical and best practice station was built.

On Saturday my children and I went down to the new station's open day with several thousand other west Belconnen residents, who were all embraced by the fireies, ambos, RFS workers and volunteers. It was a great sight to see all of these dedicated Canberrans taking the time to talk to the families and answer the questions that were posed to them by many of the children and adults who were in attendance. Everyone who was there had the opportunity to explore the pumpers, climb in and around the ambulance and have a chat to the fabulous RFS volunteers.

I have to say that I do feel a touch of sadness that the old fire station in Charnwood is being decommissioned. I have fond memories of the station from when my father was stationed there. I very much hope that, once these premises have been cleaned up, we can find a way for the space to continue to be utilised by the community. I will be speaking to my colleagues in the weeks ahead about what will become of the old station, as well as with the west Belconnen community about their ideas for its future use.

The new co-located station is a wonderful facility and it will serve our west Belconnen community well into the future.

Canberra—centenary events

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella) (6.03): I had a fantastic weekend with the Centenary of Canberra Rally event and also the Spin event over the weekend. I thought I would provide members with some detail of the centenary rally. We had more than 350 vehicles participate in the event. It began early on Saturday morning at Jervis Bay at the gates to the national park. This celebrated, of course, Canberra's link to Jervis Bay, it being the ACT's port.

We kicked off around 7.30 in the morning with a small ceremony to flag off participants. We then proceeded over to HMAS *Albatross* at Nowra where we were welcomed by the base commander, Captain Gordon Andrew. We had a number of participants and cars gather around whilst we had a lovely breakfast. We were joined by people from Nowra to have a look at the vehicles and the flag off.

We then drove from Nowra on the old Nerriga Road up past Nerriga and we were welcomed at the town of Tarago. Some cars were quite slow, of course. The oldest vehicle was a 1912 Overlander; so it was not very fast. But all cars behaved themselves.

Mr Coe: What were you driving?

MR GENTLEMAN: Yes, I will get to that. All cars and participants behaved themselves, even the Ferraris, and you know the Italians. We were cautious about that. I drove a 1950 Holden, which was purchased for the chief fire officer of the ACT in 1950. There were several Holdens in the event, including Greg Spencer's, who you would have heard on ABC Radio on Saturday mornings. He has purchased an FJ Holden and restored it as well. There were many Holdens and many different types of vehicles all through the event.

We were met at Tarago by the townspeople and presented with a gift—a lovely birthday cake for the ACT, which was shared among participants. As we went through each of the townships—from Jervis to Nowra and then Nowra to Tarago—we were greeted by more participants along the way. We gathered strength as we moved along. Of course, whilst we were at Tarago we were able to speak to the townspeople and get their engagement in the centenary rally.

We went from Tarago to Bungendore, where we were greeted by the townspeople of Bungendore. We did a lap of Bungendore and then stopped at what is called Frog Hollow, which is the parking area on the side of the roundabout. We had a wonderful lunch, did some briefings and continued on to Canberra for the Spin events.

The Spin events were run at the TAMS depot at 255 Canberra Avenue, Fyshwick. There were car displays. There were displays of music and dance all afternoon and well into the night. Mark Seymour from Hunters and Collectors formed a band called the Petrosexuals, which you may have seen on advertising. They got the crews dancing well into the night.

There are a number of people I would like to thank for the event: the organisers, of course, the National Trust and Chris Wain. He did a fantastic job for the event. I have mentioned the HMAS *Albatross* base commander. I mention also Jon Rose, the composer of the *Canberra Pursuit*, and Beth Sometimes, the curator of the Museum of the Long Weekend. The event patron for the rally was Mark Carmody. He did a fantastic job. There was a presentation dinner on the Sunday night. Mark wore what we thought might have been the official floral emblem for the centenary rally, a pinus centorious that was named for the event.

I also want to note some other people that attended the event: Mr Nowak with, as I mentioned, the 1912 Overlander, which was the oldest car in the event. Mr Bill Lewis from the vintage motorcycle club on his BSA Rocket 3; Mr Peter Fitzpatrick, who had the Summernats Holden on display out at the TAMS depot; Julius Goboly who had the FE Holden or Effie, as it is nicknamed, on display at the Spin event as well. And, of course, I mention the organiser of the Spin event at Fyshwick. Congratulations to all of them.

Belconnen High School—navaratri celebration

MR COE (Ginninderra) (6.08): I rise this evening to speak about Gujarati Samaj of the ACT and its recent navaratri celebration. On 12 October I attended the navaratri celebration held at Belconnen High School. Navaratri is a traditional Hindu festival dedicated to the Hindu goddess Durga. The word “navaratri” means nine nights, and the festival runs for nine days and 10 nights. This year the Canberra festival was the only one in Australia to take place over all nine nights. The festival included Garba and Dandia dances and feasts of Indian vegetarian food. The Garba is a traditional folk dance and involves women dressing in elaborate costumes and dancing around the Durga idol accompanied by music and singing. The Dandia is a variation of the Garba, which involves dancing with colourful sticks. I was very pleased to participate in that.

Gujarati Samaj of the ACT brings together Gujarati people in Canberra to celebrate their traditional cultural pursuits, including song and dance and religious celebrations. Gujarati people are involved in many Garba and Dandia performances at religious institutions, multicultural festivals and other public and private concerts. Gujarati people in Canberra come from the Gujarat state in India as well as other parts of India and the rest of the world. There are many Gujarati students who have come to

Canberra to study at the ANU, University of Canberra and other education institutions. Gujaratis are also well represented in Canberra's professional population.

The committee of the Gujarati Samaj of the ACT is the president, Chandresh Kotecha, the vice president, Jigar Gosai, the treasurer, Mehul Dhanesha, the secretary, Kaushal Vora, the cultural activity organisers—Tejal Patel, Neelam Bhatt, and Ritesh Patel—and the committee members—Jay Patel, Jayesh Mehta, Arun Bhatt, Prakash Panchal, Bony Patel, Ankur Patel and Neha Thakkar.

Gujarati Samaj of the ACT receives significant sponsorship to help with staging its many cultural activities. I would like to place on the record my thanks to all the sponsors, including St George Bank, Quantum group, Mighty Asian Grocery, Desi Bazaar, Apna Indian Bazaar, barrett ELTON, Loyal rugs and floors, bE Money, Aussie Home Loans, Shivam Electrical Contractors, Hair Nitesh, Structure Point, Patel Travel and Specsavers.

I would also like to thank Kanti Vipin, Jacob Vadakkedathu, Roy Parekh and others who welcomed me so warmly.

I congratulate all those involved with Gujarati Samaj of the ACT on a very successful navaratri celebration. For more information about Gujarati Samaj of the ACT and its events I recommend members visit their website at www.gujaratisamajcanberra.com.

Duke of Edinburgh's award

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (6.11): Madam Speaker, last night, along with our colleague from the Assembly Brendan Smyth, I was pleased to be a guest at the Duke of Edinburgh's award ACT, and I thank the board of directors: chair, Justine Power; members, Antony Ladomirski, Katharine Pinkerton, Rae-Maree Powell and Matthew Power; and the CEO, Maureen Burdett, for the invitation. I thank the board of directors also for the recognition of some outstanding young people from the community through the gold award presentations 2013 that were made last night.

The CEO and MC for the Duke of Edinburgh awards ACT, Ms Maureen Burdett, mentioned that the 2013 recipients for the Duke of Edinburgh's gold awards were the most diverse and interesting residential she has seen in 18 years. The residential section requires gold participants to spend four nights and five days away from their normal peers contributing to the community in which they find themselves.

Some of the activities included World Vision trek for trafficking, aimed at assisting in preventing child labour; representing Australia at the international olympiad for geography in Kyoto, Japan, and winning a gold medal in the process, three young people put themselves out there to assist, lead and work hard for St Vincent de Paul and other Christian youth camps; a conservation project for the sustainable rebuilding of a coral reef in Bali; two went on a personal training course that covered England and Wales; another assisted at a leadership management course named blazing swords; volunteering as an English teacher took one participant to Warsaw in Poland; a musician travelled to and took part in an extraordinary music camp; a study of the battlefields of Europe included France, Belgium and Germany; travelling with the

Australian Catholic University for a conference to the Red Centre; a project on panda conservation from another Canberran; and a long trip, an epic journey, by the Marist Merici group into the outback past Cobar in New South Wales.

The 16 gold award recipients last night were presented their certificates by Captain Bede Tongs MM, and they were: Michelle Balfour from Merici College and ACT Open Award Centre, Amanda Chiu from the Department of Human Services, Alyce Davern from the Department of Human Services, Alice De Marchi from the Department of Human Services, Alison Fleming from Merici College, Jenna Freeman from the Queensland State Award Office, Stephanie Freeman from the Queensland State Award Office, Sean Gallagher from Army cadets and the ACT Open Award Centre, Elmie Janse van Rensburg from Burgmann Anglican School, Amy Kosa from Radford College and Burgmann Anglican School, Louise Kristensen from the ACT Open Award Centre, Sarah Naco from the Canberra Girls Grammar School, Lucian Stellati from Radford College, Monique Strelnikow from Trinity Christian College, Christine Tesch from the ACT Open Award Centre, and Brittany Woodward from Radford College and Burgmann Anglican School. There were also two gold volunteer citations made to Antony Ladamirski and Rae-Maree Powell.

So once again, my congratulations to the board of the Duke of Edinburgh's award in the ACT. They do a fantastic job in recognising some of the fine achievements of the young people within our community. Once again I would like to underscore the contributions made by the board of directors: chair, Justine Powell; board members, Antony Ladamirski, Katharine Pinkerton, Rae-Maree Powell, Matthew Powell; and their CEO, Maureen Burdett.

ACT women's plan—report

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) (6.15): I will speak briefly on the ACT's first progress report for the 2015 ACT women's plan. I am proud to say that this report shows that much progress has been made in enhancing the status of women and girls in the ACT. The report provides a clearer understanding of the ACT government's contribution towards women's equity and participation in Canberra.

Some of the report highlights include: women in the ACT are generally well educated and well paid, which is reflected in the strong female labour force participation rate; the ACT has greater access to child care for working women, with recent government budgets committing significant investment in the sector; investment in new facilities, upgrades and refurbishments and in the childcare workforce to ensure working families are provided with choice and quality in child care; an increase in women in executive roles in the ACT public service; women comprise 63.6 per cent of members of ACT public school boards; women comprise 50 per cent of public school board chair positions; and of our 86 public schools, 60 principals are women.

The report also details the extensive range of policies, programs and innovations across government directorates which aim to improve the overall status of women

across economic, social and environmental aspects of the lives of women and girls in the area.

Economic initiatives undertaken by this government in order to improve the lives of women and girls have had positive outcomes, and some of these include: the government's women's return to work grant; the ACT government's funding of the multicultural women's advocacy women's employability partnership program; the portable long service leave scheme, which benefits a significant number of women; and the government's women's microcredit program.

The report also highlights social and environmental initiatives such as the ACT honour roll, the ACT women's register and the ACT partners in prevention, which provide mechanisms through which the contributions of local women and girls make to their community are valued.

Social and environmental initiatives provide opportunities to empower women and girls in the community; to elevate more women into leadership and decision-making roles and to empower women to develop strategies to break the cycle of violence against women and their children and instil an anti-violence culture in the community.

The first progress report has been a success in providing a detailed review of women in the ACT. It is the first of two progress reports to be conducted of this plan. I take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women for its shadow report against our progress report. I know the council undertook consultations with many diverse groups of women in the ACT, including emerging vulnerable groups as well as an open forum to inform their report. The development of the MACW report was a significant task, and I thank all members for pulling it together. I was able to meet with MACW yesterday where I reiterated my appreciation to the members. I look forward to working closely with the council in addressing the challenges faced by Canberra women. I understand the MACW report is also available online. Finally, I acknowledge and thank the many women and girls in Canberra who make it a great place in which to live.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.19.