



# Debates

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**Wednesday, 30 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.

## **University of Canberra—proposed autism centre**

**MR DOSZPOT** (Molonglo) (10.01): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

(a) the University of Canberra (UC) is considering the establishment of an Autism Centre modelled on the AEIOU Foundation framework; and

(b) the AEIOU Foundation has recently written to ACT Assembly MLAs pointing out inaccuracies in claims about the cost of establishing such a centre, demonstrating how the centre would be an affordable option for all families needing such services and confirming their willingness to establish a centre in Canberra;

(2) affirms its bipartisan support for these additional early intervention services to families in the ACT; and

(3) calls on the ACT government to support the AEIOU Foundation in their endeavours to establish this centre so that Canberra families can benefit from this quality early intervention program and future UC students can benefit from exposure to world class early intervention therapies for children with autism.

The trauma of discovering your child has a developmental or learning difficulty is not one that I can pretend to have first-hand experience of but I know from my time here in the Assembly, dealing with both education and disability issues over the past five years, that it is a difficult and challenging time for parents and one that so often is life changing. While our task in opposition is to find the gaps in service delivery, to highlight where governments might have over-promised and under-delivered, in the disability sector it is a little harder, because there are no limits to the needs of families but equally there is no endless bucket of money that governments are able to provide. In this space, enough is never enough in the face of ever-increasing need.

It is fair to say that there are a range of quality services available for parents who find themselves needing to access diagnostic services, therapy, intervention, special schooling, modified equipment and new skills. In the last 20 years there has been extraordinary progress in therapy treatments for children with learning and developmental difficulties. Such progress has not come easily, and I recognise that it is not an inexpensive exercise for governments or for families themselves.

In Canberra, families do have access to a range of services delivered through disability and therapy services and also the Education and Training Directorate. The early intervention program is available to children from two to five years who have been diagnosed with delayed development, disability or other risk factors. It works with parents, staff and therapists through play sessions and provides individual learning plans for each child. There are also early intervention playgroups for two to three-year-olds, and the program caters for children with social and communication difficulties, physical disabilities or a multiplicity of disabilities, and provides therapies.

There are also early childhood intervention units for three years to school entry children with difficulties. There are language intervention units for children who have difficulties vocalising and communicating. This service provides speech therapy, albeit at a capped amount per week, for children who require it.

There is also a discrete autism intervention unit for children with a confirmed diagnosis of ASD. Through this program, children can attend two 4½-hour sessions a week in an intensive setting and additionally attend preschool for a further four hours per week.

There are other services for ASD children—an early childhood centre accommodating eight children in each group for children aged three to school age—for both mild to moderate developmental delays and children with an autism diagnosis. These are available for eight hours a week, whilst early childhood units operate at Cranleigh and Malkara for six children in each group also for eight hours a week. For older children with ASD, there are learning support units in primary and high schools. And of course we have outstanding special schools at Malkara, Cranleigh for young children and Woden and Black Mountain for older children.

In other states of Australia there are various specialist settings and programs for children who have a range of disabilities. No one disability is any more important than another. It is the disability, or in many cases the range of disabilities, that a child has that is of most concern to a parent, and it is the range of programs that cater for your child that a parent will advocate for.

While parents of children with ASD in Canberra are grateful for what is available, they know that other states have other programs, and some Canberra families have relocated to Queensland to access them. We know because they have told us. Parents want what is best for their children and there are better services available and better ways of making it happen. They tell us they would like a more streamlined process for early diagnosis, and we know that they want access to more intensive therapies because, by comparison, parents of children with an ASD diagnosis living in Queensland are particularly well served.

There is a state-run autism centre that delivers similar programs to what is available in the ACT. But in addition, there are nine unique, specific learning centres for ASD children delivered through the AEIOU Foundation. For anyone who has visited one of the centres—and I did, along with my colleague Mr Andrew Wall; we visited a centre in Queensland—you quickly see how truly inspirational these centres are. And for

those who do not know about the AEIOU philosophy, it is one based very strongly around early and intensive intervention.

The centre believe, and their work is backed up by research, that intervention should start as soon as possible after a child is diagnosed with ASD. They have proven that early intervention can prevent a decline in intellectual development and can also lead to measurable intellectual and capability improvement.

What is the AEIOU Foundation? For a start, AEIOU actually stands for Autism Early Intervention Outcomes Unit. It is a not-for-profit organisation providing full-time early education for children with autism who are aged between 2½ and six years. Each centre is staffed with full, specialist early childhood teachers and skilled learning facilitators, with support from speech pathologists and occupational and music therapists. The foundation was established in 2005 and currently operates nine centres across Queensland. It enrolls around 200 children.

In addition to providing early education and therapy support, AEIOU Foundation chairs a research advisory group and is a founding partner of Griffith University's Autism Centre of Excellence. It has also funded research through the Australian Catholic University ARC linkage project.

Because we had such faith in this program and felt it was a perfect addition to the range of services offered in Canberra, we advocated for the foundation to set up a centre here in Canberra. It is now history, and regrettable, that the initiative was not taken up, although we know that former Greens MLAs with a strong interest in education have subsequently looked at the AEIOU model and now understand and appreciate its value for Canberra.

It is no secret that the University of Canberra is seriously looking at establishing such a centre on campus. This would have similar duplicate benefits that the Griffith centre does, where students studying teaching and special learning modules have an on-site laboratory and practical opportunities to observe and learn how children with autism can be taught.

Since the AEIOU model was first discussed, there has been criticism by people who probably have not fully appreciated its value. Concerns have been expressed that introducing such a centre in Canberra would, or could, reduce the number of services already available and programs that many families are very happy with. Why? The reality is that the number of children being diagnosed with autism is increasing. It is estimated that one in every 100 in the population has an ASD; so as public policymakers, we should be seeking as many new and extended therapy programs as are available.

This centre is designed to complement what is already available and would provide another option for families seeking the best for their children. Early intervention services need to be expanded. And when one is offered to us, surely we should take the opportunity with both hands, especially when it has the results that the AEIOU program has. Up to 75 per cent of AEIOU graduates are able to transition into

mainstream schools, and those that still require a special schools setting have had the benefit of the intensive early intervention that is essential for a child to reach their maximum learning potential.

Other criticisms have evolved around cost. This program is not and need not be just for the rich, as it has been accused of in this place. I will leave it for others to outline possible costing models but as the AEIOU Foundation has highlighted in recent letters to MLAs, it is an affordable program. And the AEIOU Foundation works closely with several not-for-profit funds to provide additional funds.

We believe the Assembly today has a unique opportunity to demonstrate its united commitment to the delivery of quality early intervention. What it requires is the necessary approvals from government. It can only come from government, and on this side of the chamber we would publicly commend you, Ms Burch, for showing such leadership. The foundation is looking to expand its operation, and it would be negligent of us to lose this opportunity.

The motion that is before the Assembly today states that we note the fact that the University of Canberra is considering the establishment of an autism centre modelled on the AEIOU Foundation framework and that the AEIOU Foundation has recently written to ACT MLAs pointing out inaccuracies in claims about the cost of establishing a centre, demonstrating how the centre would be an affordable option for all families needing such services and confirming their willingness to establish the centre in Canberra.

We call on the Assembly to affirm bipartisan support for these additional early intervention services to families in the ACT. And we are calling on the government to support the AEIOU Foundation in their endeavours to establish this centre so that Canberra families can benefit from this quality, early intervention program and future University of Canberra students can benefit from exposure to world-class early intervention therapies for children with autism.

The call is there to our colleagues in the Assembly, to Mr Rattenbury, who basically is in the government but also has a separate role as a Greens' representative—

**Mr Rattenbury:** Not according to your leader.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Parliamentary leader, thank you. I went to see Ms Burch this morning at 9.30. I called on your office. I left a message. I have not heard back—sorry, Madam Speaker, through you. The fact is, there is an opportunity for us to work together on this, Ms Burch, and I cannot make it plainer than I have in this motion so far but, unfortunately, I still have not heard from you. So I look forward to your response. But I certainly urge our colleagues in the Assembly to support this motion.

**MS BURCH** (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability, Children and Young People, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Women, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Racing and Gaming) (10.13): I thank Mr Doszpot for providing the opportunity to discuss support for children in our community who have an autism spectrum disorder. Mr Doszpot put this motion on the

notice paper yesterday afternoon. He turned up at my office at 9.30. We were in caucus right until the bells rang, Mr Doszpot. So you had ample time to approach me in my office before this.

I do know that this is an area of great interest to Mr Doszpot. Indeed I believe it was in April that Mr Doszpot moved a very similar motion, and in the last sitting Mr Doszpot spoke on a very similar MPI proposed by Ms Lawder.

These are indeed important matters for this place to consider. I have always welcomed the opportunity to discuss the full range of services and support provided by both the Community Services Directorate and the Education and Training Directorate. I also welcome the ability and opportunity to discuss the full range of options that may be on the table following the implementation of the national disability insurance scheme. I have every confidence that the NDIS will deliver its aim of greater flexibility and support to people with a disability in the community.

I do not believe that Mr Doszpot's motion, as it is presently worded, captures the level of change taking place in this area, which is why I move the following amendment that has been circulated in my name:

Omit paragraphs (1), (2) and (3), substitute:

“(1) notes:

- (a) the University of Canberra has had preliminary discussions with the AEIOU Foundation about the possible establishment of an Autism Centre, but no formal proposal has yet been received by the University;
- (b) the AEIOU Foundation recently wrote to ACT MLAs seeking to clarify the cost of its service model;
- (c) on 16 May, as a result of a motion on 10 April, the Minister for Disability provided a report to the Assembly on the support provided for autism diagnosis and services and the potential for further reforms resulting from the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the National Plan for School Improvement; and
- (d) representatives of the Ricky Stuart Foundation recently sought a meeting with the Minister for Education and Disability, and a meeting has been scheduled to discuss AEIOU's proposal; and

(2) calls on the Assembly to recognise:

- (a) the importance of providing early intervention services for children with autism spectrum disorders, and the significant support already provided by the ACT Government to people with autism; and
- (b) the ACT Government's willingness to explore new and innovative ways of supporting people with a disability, and to engage with non-government providers to explore such opportunities.

It does concern me that after five years in this Assembly, and for most of those as shadow minister for disability, Mr Doszpot clearly has one disability policy, and we find ourselves here today discussing an autism school, for all its merit, for the third time this year.

I have stated in this place the government's willingness to discuss the AEIOU's proposal further, and we remain open to considering how the government could support their expansion in the ACT. Indeed my office has been in contact with representatives of the Ricky Stuart Foundation in recent weeks, and a meeting has been scheduled within the next week or so to discuss the details of their proposal. The government is always interested in investigating new and innovative ways to deliver services to residents of the ACT.

But rest assured, Madam Speaker, that I will be mindful of how any new proposal in the education and disability landscape fits in with the major reforms that we are implementing and the suite of initiatives we took to last year's election in our comprehensive disability policy.

I would also like to touch briefly on the question of costings that Mr Doszpot raised in his motion and which the AEIOU has raised with members of the Assembly. Let us not forget that the Canberra Liberals' policy to build and operate an autism school was submitted to Treasury for costing, and Treasury found that the Liberals had grossly underestimated the capital cost and that they had submitted costings for a school for 20 children, not the 40 that they had promised. So we do need to be very careful about understanding the full scope of new proposals, and that is why I am happy to discuss the proposal further with the AEIOU and the Ricky Stuart Foundation.

The correspondence that I think Mr Doszpot was referring to clearly states that a family cost for this program per placement is over \$20,000 per child, and the government also makes a contribution of over \$20,000 per year per child.

I also think it is important to address another matter canvassed in Mr Doszpot's motion concerning the proposed centre at the University of Canberra. I am concerned that the approach taken here by the Canberra Liberals in this matter over the last few months may be prejudicing conversations being had between the University of Canberra and the AEIOU Foundation. I think this motion and the ones before it are assuming a level of progress that, from our conversations with UC, does not exist.

I am not aware of any proposal from the AEIOU and UC that has reached the level where government assistance or support are being sought for establishment. The only recent correspondence that I am aware of in this matter was sent on 22 October from AEIOU stressing their interest in pursuing this issue in a bipartisan manner and to seek a meeting with the Chief Minister or me to discuss this further, and I am certainly prepared to do that.

Given this lack of, I guess, official request, and as a result of this motion, my office made contact with the University of Canberra yesterday to seek an understanding of what level this proposal is at. We were told by the University of Canberra:

The University has a good relationship with AEIOU and we have had discussions with them. We have not received a formal proposal. To comment further at this stage would be inappropriate.

That is a comment from the University of Canberra to my office yesterday in response to your motion, Mr Doszpot. This is indeed very different from what Mr Doszpot said in a media release last month, where he said that UC “is in the final planning stages of establishing such a centre for children with autism”.

I note that Mr Doszpot’s motion today does not put it so strongly, perhaps because Mr Doszpot may be considering that he has misrepresented the situation. However, it is clear that in putting this motion forward today Mr Doszpot has once again not had the courtesy to talk with UC about where things are up to and whether they are comfortable with having such early discussions with AEIOU aired in the Assembly.

I will take the opportunity again to outline the range of supports for children with a disability that the government provides. We are always looking for new ways to give families choice and flexibility. That is why we signed up early to the NDIS and will be the only jurisdiction that will go through the NDIS as a full jurisdiction. It is because we understand the opportunity that exists not just in delivering greater control to service users but also in building on quality and in building on the range and type of services that are available to Canberrans with a disability and their families.

In the ACT children and young people with autism and their families are able to access support through therapy intervention services, education settings, family support and respite services. Therapy ACT’s autism service provides multidisciplinary assessment and intervention services to children under the age of eight. Twelve professional staff provide services to approximately 240 clients across speech pathology, occupational therapy, psychology and social work. The Therapy ACT autism team intervention is based on collaboration, capacity building and evidence-informed practices applied across settings relevant to the child with autism, including education settings, the person’s home and their community.

For children over the age of eight, Therapy ACT is able to provide various models of assessment and intervention through their regional teams, which often involves working closely with the education setting.

As well as the work carried out by Therapy ACT, the Education and Training Directorate caters for the needs of children and young people with autism through a range of specialist education settings. These provide options for students to access support within the school setting, either through autism specific classes or within mainstream settings with support. This includes programs such as the communication and social awareness playgroup, autism intervention unit preschools, learning support units in primary and high schools and support for post-school options.

This range of options enables parents to choose an educational setting that best meets the needs of their children. For example, preschool children with autism may access an early intervention setting such as the autism intervention unit, in addition to mainstream preschool, providing up to 24 hours of educational input a week.

In collaboration with the Education and Training Directorate, Therapy ACT provides a range of professional learning to educators in Canberra. These programs assist teachers to support children with autism in the classroom and employ best practice strategies. ETD have developed a range of interactive online modules which can be accessed by teachers to increase their understanding of autism interventions in the classroom, and that is something that I think needs to be applied. I would encourage all teachers in the mainstream settings to be aware of the needs of autism students within their class.

Staff of Therapy ACT's autism service have partnered with ETD staff and a non-government consortium to provide parent and teacher training through the federal government positive partnership initiative. Young children with autism in the ACT are also able to access specialised playgroups. Play connect playgroups help families with children with an ASD, or with ASD-like symptoms. Children up to six years of age can attend, siblings are welcome and groups are free. The government contributed to the placement of a play therapist in child and family centres to facilitate these groups.

The government also allocated \$400,000 in the 2011 budget for after-school and vacation care programs for children and young people with complex needs associated with disability, including autism. These programs commenced in February last year. Also we have provided funding for four years to Autism Asperger to fund a family support worker position to support families who have members with autism.

With reference to the amendment that has been circulated, we are stating we recognise that the University of Canberra had preliminary discussions but that no formal proposal has yet been received. We note that the AEIOU has written to a number of MLAs talking about its model. The amendment also notes that representatives of the Ricky Stewart Foundation have recently sought a meeting with the minister for education and disability—that would be me—and that we will meet with them.

It calls on the Assembly to recognise the importance of providing early intervention services for children with autism spectrum disorders and the significant support already provided by the ACT government to people with autism. It also calls on the Assembly to recognise the government's willingness to explore new and innovative ways of supporting people with a disability and to engage with non-government providers to explore such opportunities.

Whilst there is clearly an amendment to your motion, Mr Doszpot, I think that last point, which says, "Let's explore new and innovative ways of supporting people with a disability, including non-government providers," should indeed capture the essence of what you are aiming to do. Again I say to those families with children with autism that whilst we have good programs on offer I have no doubt that at a personal level they would be seeking more as parents, as all parents do. They would be seeking more opportunity for their children. As parents, it is right and proper that they do so.

I say to them that we will continue to improve and expand our range of services, but the challenges and opportunities ahead of us with the NDIS and the changes that will

bring to our community cannot be understated. I hope that, with the honest intent of providing collaboration and an approach of exploring opportunities for all people in our community regarding the best way of delivering services, this amendment is endorsed and agreed to by all in this place.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Before I call the next speaker, Minister Burch, about halfway through your comments you said words to the effect that Mr Doszpot had misrepresented the situation. There is lots of precedent for ruling that “misrepresented” is unparliamentary, going back to 2004, and I would ask you to withdraw.

**Ms Burch:** I will withdraw.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you. The problem is that by saying someone misrepresents the situation there is an implication that they are not being truthful. That is the basis on which it is unparliamentary.

**MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (10.27):** It is with some mixed feelings that I speak to this motion this morning; not because of the merits of the issue, which are indeed worthy, but because of the way Mr Doszpot is pursuing this cause. This is the second motion Mr Doszpot has debated this year on the issue of an autism-specific school and the third time we have risen to debate this issue. The reason for my slight disappointment and mixed feelings is that Mr Doszpot has done nothing between these two motions to advance the cause that he is supporting, despite my personal comments last time that I am generally interested in the model being proposed and would welcome further discussion.

So I am slightly anxious that this proposal may find it difficult to proceed unless there is some effort to have meaningful conversations outside the Assembly debates. But my understanding is that so far these have not progressed. I assume that Mr Doszpot would be keen to see those conversations happen and would be advocating on behalf of the proponents and the parents of children with autism spectrum disorder not only inside this chamber but outside the chamber. But to date that has not happened. Indeed, the correspondence I received from AEIOU is the first that I have received for quite some time, and I shall return to some of the issues it raises shortly.

Aside from the politics of the issue, the merits of the issue are interesting. The nature of autism spectrum disorder is such that children respond well to early intervention environments that provide a consistent, routine-based and visually supported environment for them. Such environments can assist with reducing anxiety and associated behaviours such as rituals, obsession and sensory issues and thereby assist with improving communication skills and other educational outcomes.

These children often have challenging behaviours for parents to manage: poor play skills, poor social skills, obsession with objects or routines and aversions to particular textures or tastes of food that make meal times difficult—observations I noted last time we had this discussion. Their anxiety about these things and their responses to things they see and hear in the world around them can be difficult for parents to manage: screaming, distress, shutting down or more self-comforting behaviour such

as rocking or chanting. It is little wonder parents and carers need support and guidance.

ASD is generally identified in children as young as two and, therefore, the years between two and five are incredibly important as such a great deal of development occurs in those years. A clear pathway for assessment and then support and therapeutic input is something that is highly valued by parents of children with ASD. While the finer details of intervention are not the same for every child, there is a broad suite of strategies that I consider to be a good place to start when commencing intervention. It is those things that mean that specific autism facilities can be established specifically geared to meet the communication needs of children with ASD.

I have said in this place before that the notion of an autism-specific school is not without merit. Indeed, there is clearly an argument to be put for it. Some of the benefits could include a single curriculum that was developed and tweaked to suit children with ASD over time. A school focused on a single disability that is characterised by very specific communications and social difficulties would have the opportunity to tailor the learning environment to suit the learning style of the children they are working with. In the case of children on the autism spectrum, this could be about creating a very structured and routine-based environment with a high level of visual supports in place, the kind of things that reduce anxiety for children on the spectrum and improve their aptitude for learning language and other skills, an environment where routines are important and when changes to routine are planned and escalated and do not just happen on a whim.

An autism-specific school could also become a hub of excellence in regard to the development of teacher and therapist skills which could then better inform others within the ACT community. However, I stress that much of this expertise already exists within the ACT. The Therapy ACT autism assessment team are a group of professionals focused on this particular group of clients who must have surely already become a go-to place for support and clinical advice in regard to these children. The assessment team undertake their assessments across home and school environments and follow up with specific programs and support for children who are diagnosed.

Turning to the specifics of today's motion, having made those general observations about the issue we are discussing, the first clause speaks to the University of Canberra's role. My understanding is that preliminary discussions have taken place with UC but that there are no firm commitments about progressing the project. I am glad Mr Doszpot seems to have moved away from his initial claim in his press release last time that the University of Canberra is in the final planning stages of establishing such a centre for children with autism.

The way this has been framed now is probably more realistic at least, but the amendment put forward by Ms Burch, I think, provides even further clarity about the state of play, which is that no formal proposal has yet been received by the university. Ms Burch spoke about that in her remarks with the detailed information she put forward from University of Canberra.

The next thing I would like to refer to is that I received a letter from the AEIOU Foundation last week. It sought to outline the financial model they are proposing, at least in regard to the annual funding model by parents and how this could be supported through the pooling of childcare benefits, childcare rebates and carers allowances.

While we are on the topic of the funding model, I would like to make a few points. Firstly, the funding model presumably only operates for children who are eligible for federal childcare subsidies; so there remains a question about how it works for school-age children. I appreciate that the therapeutic and educational goals for the school are that children are then integrated into mainstream primary school settings, but this perhaps would not be at the same age or stage for all children.

Secondly, the funding model assumes that parents would be happy to pool all their allowances into one bucket to subsidise the school fees. This, of course, may suit many parents if they are receiving the full package of services—education, therapy services and respite. However, it does not leave any funding for other things. Given that education, therapy services and respite are probably the most pronounced needs for children on the autism spectrum, in a practical sense this may not be an issue, but it is worth being aware of. Some families may end up being more out of pocket than outlined in the proposal.

Thirdly, I want to touch on the allocation of ACT government funding currently spent providing some of these services to families in the ACT. The letter I received from AEIOU implied that some of the money invested by the ACT government could be diverted to their service to provide the additional \$22,000 that would be required to co-fund the annual placement costs. This would require careful discussion and thinking through, especially in the context of the NDIS being implemented shortly and the significant changes that that will bring about. NDIS funding is intended to facilitate better choice for people with a disability about the services they wish to access. At this stage I think it is unclear what services the ACT government will continue to provide once the NDIS is in place.

I will be supporting the amendment tabled by Ms Burch today. I think it adds some further detail to the situation in regard to the services provided for children on the autism spectrum and also the debates we have had in this chamber this year. I am pleased the Ricky Stuart Foundation is meeting with the minister and that conversations with the University of Canberra are proceeding. I think it is important that we recognise the services that are already provided to children with autism spectrum disorder in the ACT, remembering that this service option is not going to be what all parents want for their children and that supporting the assessments and service delivery that are provided by Therapy ACT is important.

While some parents would prefer to see their children in an autism-specific school, others are passionate about their children being integrated with support into a mainstream environment. It is obviously also going to be important for the government to be clear that the AEIOU service provides best-practice therapeutic services for children on the spectrum. I am not saying this because I am under any

impression that they would not do so but, rather, because there should not be a blind assumption that any new service provider should not have to meet service standards and deliver a service based on best practice in the sector.

In closing, I note that I support the amendment proposed to this motion. As amended, I would be pleased to support the motion. I look forward to hearing about the progress of this project proposal, acknowledging the complexities of the funding model and the changes we are expecting under the NDIS. I hope we can actually start to work on this issue in a slightly different way. It is quite challenging for me to find that the only times this comes up for me is when the next motion comes on the table. I received the letter last week, and I think the letter in itself is a little bit telling. It simply starts out:

Dear Member of Parliament, there have been a number of inaccurate and publicly damaging statements which we feel obligated to address.

It is a real shame that that is how the AEIOU Foundation are feeling. If that is how they are feeling, that is a problem. I appreciate their taking the time to write and seek to clarify some of those issues, but I think there are better ways to go about trying to move this issue forward than constantly putting up a motion in the Assembly trying to force some sort of public discussion.

There are really serious questions to be asked and good discussions to be had, no doubt. There are issues around the University of Canberra. Based on the information I have been able to garner, people are seriously looking at this. But to have press releases and motions speculating in the public space about what UC are doing does not assist the process.

I am keen to support the intent of Mr Doszpot's motion. As I said, I will be supporting the amendment because I think it clarifies a few matters. I hope that we can have some further discussion. I suspect I am going to get a spray in a minute when Mr Doszpot stands up, but I really urge that we find a slightly different way to continue this discussion. I would be more than happy to meet with representatives of the foundation if they are in Canberra. Mr Doszpot suggests I should go to Brisbane and sort it out. That may not be possible. There are only so many things one can humanly fit in a week, but I am happy to have some discussions outside the chamber about how we might proceed from here.

**MR WALL** (Brindabella) (10.38): I must begin by thanking Mr Doszpot for bringing this motion to the Assembly again today. The Canberra Liberals are unwavering in their support for the establishment of an autism-specific school in the ACT. The benefits are many and the risks are few. These facts have been outlined in this place often by the Canberra Liberals. Whilst this is not the first time this issue of early intervention support services for autism has been raised in this Assembly, the need for such options in the ACT has not changed.

About five per cent of children continue to be diagnosed with autism. There is still little known about its causes, and effective treatment options are very limited. Much has been said in this place and in the wider community by Mr Doszpot and my other Canberra Liberal colleagues on this side of the chamber about the success being

achieved through the early intervention programs provided in Queensland by the AEIOU Foundation. This model of early intervention has shown with proven results what children aged between 2½ and six years of age can achieve.

The service provided by AEIOU in Queensland can, over the life of a child with autism, return in excess of \$1 million of benefit back to the community in savings from related expenditure on services such as ongoing educational support, supported accommodation needs and government support payments. This program has the proven ability to improve the lives of these children into the future. Every year children from AEIOU centres transition successfully into mainstream schooling environments, and these numbers are growing.

In stark contrast, the ACT Labor-Greens government here have labelled the AEIOU model as an elitist school that will only be able to be accessed by those in the community who are wealthy enough to afford it and implied that the program would be out of reach for most families. It is shameful that this has been the attitude. Frankly, Madam Speaker, I find this cheap politics.

All MLAs recently received a letter from the chair and founder of the AEIOU Foundation, Dr James Morton. In his letter Dr Morton outlines the facts about the costs of both the initial construction and the cost for Canberra families of providing the ongoing services at the centre. I would like to focus on one particular point made by Dr Morton:

Currently 37 per cent of families attending AEIOU services are on an income less than \$40,000 per annum. Comments comparing affordability to private school fees are misleading and damaging to AEIOU and the people who have given their energy and reputations to delivering this service.

To elaborate, a family that earns less than \$40,000 can access government funding in the forms of childcare benefit, childcare rebates, carers allowances and funding for helping children with autism. Combining all these funding sources would cover all out-of-pocket expenses. In fact, there would be close to an additional \$3,000 in the family budget to access other supports or equipment as they choose.

The funding that is available through the childcare benefit is up to \$9,000 per year per family. The childcare rebate provides an additional \$7,476. There is also the availability of funding for helping children with autism, a maximum of \$12,000 over the upbringing of a child. It is \$6,000 maximum a year. Over a two-year program, that goes a substantial way to covering the cost of the fees. If that were combined also with a carer's allowance, which is in the vicinity of \$4½ thousand, those fees are well covered and would still allow the family the flexibility of accessing other services.

To relate it to a bit more of a typical Canberra family—one earning in the vicinity of perhaps \$100,000 if both parents were working in the public service—the out-of-pocket expenses would be close to \$2½ thousand per year. For the return on the investment, I think that is a very small investment that most families would be willing to make for their children.

As we progress to the introduction of the NDIS in the ACT, this case gets stronger. There is going to be additional support that families will be able to do. The adaptation of the AEIOU model will also be able to attract other grants and other funding that will make this a more affordable option for families. Putting this simply, this is not an elite school or option only available to high income families of children with autism but, instead, is a program most accessible for all families regardless of their circumstances.

On the wider case as to whether or not this is a good initiative we should look at some of the benefits this could bring to the ACT. Co-locating an autism centre at the UC campus would give the University of Canberra an opportunity to increase its research and study capability into autism, an area that has got a lot still to be learnt about it. We could become a centre of excellence. We could look at expanding the courses that are offered here and also look at attracting professionals from across the globe into the ACT to do their study and further doctoral research here in the territory.

A common debating point in this Assembly are the Treasury costings of the Liberal policy in the 2012 election through to what AEIOU claim that the cost of the centre will be. I believe now that the Treasury costings are a moot point. The government will not fund the building of this facility. I think that is becoming clear and evident these days. But if there is a private operator such as AEIOU willing to put \$1.5 million of their funding into the establishment of a centre, as they have done in other locations such as the Gold Coast, it is clear and evident that it can be achieved for substantially less than what Treasury is predicting.

I think it is also evident that if organisations operated on budgeting models such as this government's, when we look at examples such as the Cotter Dam, the GDE and even the more recent re-profiling of the prison, they would be out of business and they would not be able to operate. I think private industry and private organisations have led the way in efficiencies and economies of scale when delivering infrastructure projects.

There is a continued lack of options for families in the ACT. We as members of this Assembly should do all we can to progress and ensure that there is a proper and reasonable choice for all families. Potentially the AEIOU model may not suit all families in Canberra, but certainly it goes a long way to delivering an improvement on the current services—20 hours of intensive intervention care and an opportunity for up to 50 hours of respite. It is full-time care for these families. I think that is something we should all be endorsing.

Madam Speaker, the amendment Ms Burch has moved is fairly bland. It does not go anywhere near as far as Mr Doszpot's original motion did to achieve the outcome of seeing a centre such as this established in the ACT. Paragraph (2)(b) refers to "a willingness to explore new and innovative ways". It is, again, using some weasel words and trying to get out of it—"We'll have a chat, but I'm not going to promise that we're going to do anything."

Minister, I think it is probably time. You have had almost 12 years in government over on that side as a party and there has been very little action in progressing this issue. I think it is time that the Canberra community demanded more from you. Supporting this motion today as Mr Doszpot originally wrote it would ensure that Canberra families have a choice when it comes to the services they can access. It would assist their autistic children in progressing and having a higher quality of life. The motion should be supported in its original form to ensure that Canberra's families with autistic children have the best possible options available to them locally without the need to travel or consider moving interstate to access alternative services.

**MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (10.47):** Minister Burch, to say that I am—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Through the chair, Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Madam Speaker, through you, to say that I am disappointed about Ms Burch's amendment is an understatement. We have brought this motion into this Assembly with the very clearly defined intention of making this a bipartisan exercise to support discussions that are going on between two entities. It is not to interfere with what is going on, but, as is noted by both my colleagues on the other side, everyone is aware that the discussions are going on. In fact, Ms Burch's comments and her amendment are contradictory. She is telling me that there is no known proposal that AEIOU has with the University of Canberra, yet in paragraph (1)(d) of her amendment she states there will be a meeting with the Ricky Stuart Foundation and that a meeting has been scheduled to discuss AEIOU's proposal. So I am not sure if she is saying that the AEIOU's proposal is being presented to her through the Ricky Stuart Foundation or whether they are looking at the AEIOU proposal that has been presented to the University of Canberra.

I was accused of not even talking to the University of Canberra. Well, for goodness sake, what would Ms Burch have said had I talked to the University of Canberra? "Why am I interfering in the work that one entity is doing negotiating with another?" We have been very careful, dignified but enthusiastic, Ms Burch. And well may you shake your head at your own amendment. We have been trying to get this government for months to recognise the fact that discussions are going on. We are not privy to those discussions, but, like a lot of people in Canberra, we are aware of the discussions. For you to tell us you are not aware of those discussions is quite interesting, to say the least.

The government have had ample opportunity to have a look at what is going on since my last motion when these issues were alluded to. But, no, that has not happened. Ms Burch tells us they are meeting with the Ricky Stuart Foundation. Well, we met with the Ricky Stuart Foundation 12 months ago—12 months ago, minister. Why is it taking you 12 months to do this? This is an important issue and, as I understand it, progress is going along well. But there is some concern that the government have not given any indication of support. In fact, in the last motions you addressed before us, Ms Burch, you stated all the reasons—financial and other reasons—that would prohibit you from even approaching anyone at the moment about this initiative that is before the University of Canberra and AEIOU.

It was your response to the financial implications that you were putting before this Assembly that prompted the AEIOU to put the correct details on the table. Mr Rattenbury says, “Well, this is the first I have heard of it.” Mr Rattenbury, I am very disappointed with your comment on that, because you have had—

**Mr Corbell:** On a point of order—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Through the chair, Mr Rattenbury has had contact through his advisers with AEIOU on at least one if not on a number of occasions. So for him to say this is the first he has heard of it is disingenuous and rather duplicitous.

**Mr Corbell:** On a point of order—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Yes, I am across it, Mr Corbell. To accuse someone of being duplicitous is to accuse them of being untruthful, and I ask you to withdraw, Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Madam Speaker, I withdraw, and I apologise to Mr Rattenbury on that point. This is a very emotive issue, and it is one that has been percolating in this Assembly for quite some time. I apologise for that comment. But I do not apologise for bringing the facts to the table. Things are in progress, and everyone is aware of that except, apparently, our minister for disability and our leader of the Greens or minister or whatever way we want to describe our colleague Mr Rattenbury. But the opportunities are here for us. Ms Burch, I welcome one aspect of your motion in that apart from the fact that you left out AEIOU—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Doszpot, can you please address the chair.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Once again, Madam Speaker, through you, I am quite disappointed at paragraph (3) of the minister’s amendment where she calls on the Assembly to recognise the ACT government’s willingness to explore new and innovative ways of supporting people with disability. What we are saying is almost identical except for the deletion by Ms Burch of the AEIOU. You know this is going on. Why does it hurt—through the chair, Madam Speaker—what is the problem for the minister to recognise the fact that this discussion is going on and that the ACT government is willing to look at the AEIOU proposal? We are not asking for an absolute endorsement; we are asking for an opportunity for the Assembly, united on a bipartisan note, to examine together something that is of benefit to our community. That is what we are asking for.

I will close the debate on the motion in my name. I just ask Minister Burch and Minister Rattenbury to face the facts as they are before us. These entities are in discussion. I am not trying to create an issue, and that is the reason I have not spoken to the University of Canberra. Whether the minister can speak or should have spoken to the University of Canberra, of course, is a different matter, and whether she should have, in fact, spoken to AEIOU is also open to debate. I do not understand why she finds it appropriate to talk to the Ricky Stuart Foundation but not to AEIOU. They complement each other, and the Ricky Stuart Foundation has given a lot of support to

AEIOU, and I commend Ricky Stuart's passion and his ability to raise funds that have been given to autism-related issues. Obviously, we would welcome any input from the Ricky Stuart Foundation into this exercise as well.

On that point, minister, I am glad you are meeting with the Ricky Stuart Foundation. I hope that you would meet with the AEIOU Foundation as well and with the University of Canberra. But I am simply calling on our Assembly to affirm our bipartisan support for these additional early intervention services to families in the ACT. Yes, we have debated this motion a number of times and we have progressed it to a certain point. To the extent that we are now both almost on the same line, I hope that we can, as an Assembly, work together to recognise and support the AEIOU Foundation in their endeavours to establish this centre so that Canberra families can benefit from this quality early intervention program and future UC students, should they come to this arrangement, can also benefit from exposure to world-class intervention therapies for children with autism.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

## **Planning—draft city plan**

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra) (10.57): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that the Government's draft City Plan, which was released for public comment on 21 October 2013, is an important document as it sets a vision for the development of the city centre, including improved public spaces, transport choices and opportunities for growth;
- (b) the importance of the focus of the draft plan on increasing the residential population of the city centre to deliver a day and night economy, which requires changes to the way the city operates and moves at all times of the day;
- (c) that the draft plan also looks at ways to connect the city centre to the foreshore as part of the City to the Lake proposal; and
- (d) that the community has the opportunity to provide comments on the draft plan until 17 November 2013; and

(2) supports the development of a City Plan and notes its importance for growth and future development of the city centre.

Canberra's city centre is important for three very good reasons. First, it is the local capital of the territory. Its role as the centre of the ACT makes it a place that Canberrans go to in large numbers for business and work, for leisure and recreation and for our joint community and civic functions. It is also the capital of a successful

and growing region that services communities as far away as the Snowy Mountains in the south, Goulburn in the north, Yass valley to the west and coastal areas around Batemans Bay in the east. It has to provide for the needs of this diverse population and to ensure that the territory can capitalise on that service role for its ongoing relevance. And, third but by no means last, it has a strong functional and symbolic role as the capital of our nation.

That threefold function has been part of the vision for Canberra since its inception and design by Walter Griffin and Marion Mahoney Griffin in the early part of the 20th century. All plans for this city centre—and there have been quite a few—have included the concept of a grand municipal centre befitting the status of the national capital while serving local needs. Over time, the city centre has been reshaped from the original Griffin plan, by Sulman in the 1920s, by Gibson and Holford in the 1950s and by the National Capital Development Commission up until the late 1980s.

With self-government in the 1990s, planning for our city was split across two levels of government. Now we have strategic and statutory planning functions shared between the National Capital Authority and the ACT government. Those shared responsibilities continue the local, regional and national themes of historical planning, but they do present challenges for the ACT government in achieving unified outcomes for the city centre.

Since the establishment of joint commonwealth-territory responsibilities for the planning of the city centre, there have been common goals and aspirations shared by both the NCA and the ACT government around key themes like reinforcing the role of the city as the national capital, respecting the key elements of Griffin's legacy for the city, reinforcing the main avenues of the city centre, and making better links between the city centre and the lake.

But I think it is fair to say that despite these shared goals, the sharing of responsibilities over the most recent period has meant that no clear city plan provides a guide for the shape, the feel and the future of the city centre as a whole.

I think it is also fair to say that, instead, the city centre reflects infrastructure priorities that have changed over the decades. It is true that Griffin's garden city design is reflected in the city centre's tree-lined pedestrian ways and its low-rise development that gives us views to the surrounding hills. But its roads and built form reflect the fundamentally different Y plan of the 1960s and 1970s that made the car the dominant feature of Canberra life, linking our town centres to the city centre by arterial roads. The Griffin plan was relatively dense in built form, with a comprehensive public transport network featuring trains.

Those widely different approaches have arguably resulted in a city centre without a recognisable core, with limited vitality and identity, and with a city centre that is dominated and dissected by arterial and through traffic.

I know there are real strong community views about the role, form and function of the city centre. People from all over the territory and the country want it to have a stronger identity, a recognisable core, a city heart that they can relate to, gather in and

celebrate. People also want the city centre to develop a vitality, a liveliness that will draw them to it at all times of the day and night. They want the city centre to be the focus of civic, cultural and recreational life for the wider ACT and region. There is a clear call from the community for the city centre to be less about cars and more about people and about more walkable connections to all parts of the city centre and to Lake Burley Griffin.

The former Australian government recognised the importance of our regional and capital cities and, through its liveable cities program, supported governments in meeting the challenges of improving the quality of life for people in our capital cities. It has established partnerships between governments to promote high quality urban design, improve the quality of open spaces and public places, address high levels of car dependency and traffic congestion and support cities in tackling the challenges of climate change.

This ACT government has worked with the Australian government to successfully invest in the future of our city through the draft city plan. Jointly funded by the ACT and Australian governments under the liveable cities program, the ACT government's draft city plan is a single, overarching strategic framework that sets a clear plan and direction for the city centre into the future.

The draft city plan places the city centre at the heart of the ACT as the predominant town centre, while recognising its local, regional and national goals. Importantly, the draft city plan also provides the urban planning framework for the city centre and establishes directions that can inform public and private investment and decision-making, to support the cohesive and long-term viability, vibrancy and relevance of the city centre.

One hundred years on, the city centre has grown from a village to a modern centre that sits at the heart of the nation, our region and our local area. The city centre is growing and evolving, and the draft city plan provides strategic direction while remembering the planning heritage that started with the Griffins.

The whole of the ACT and region will benefit from having a world-class CBD. Residents from throughout Canberra will benefit from city to the lake through access to the proposed facilities such as a new stadium, convention centre and superior aquatic centre. They will contribute to community pride, social cohesiveness and regional liveability.

This project will provide a shot in the arm to the construction industry, creating several thousand jobs and injecting over a billion dollars in economic activity. This impact will be felt territory wide. Key local and regional community benefits from the completed project include access to superior and unique facilities; a substantial increase in the range, quality and type of cultural, sport and recreational opportunities; social infrastructure that improves the overall mental and physical health of the community through active lifestyle, participation and social inclusion; opportunities to promote diverse activities for socially disadvantaged groups; broad economic benefits, business opportunities and jobs in the tourism and hospitality industries; and an increased housing supply to offer greater choice of homes for Canberrans.

We know that a city's lifestyle plays an ever-increasing role in creating a place where people want to live and work and want to visit. While people move to new cities for employment, they decide to stay because of lifestyle. We want people to stay in the city centre, to live, invest, work and recreate. The draft city plan provides a real opportunity to position the city centre as that kind of place—to make it a destination of choice for people, business and investment.

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella) (11.05): I rise with my colleagues to support the city plan and commend the government on the work that it is currently doing through its high-level and effective community consultation.

The city plan is about looking at the past 100 years of growth in Canberra and using this process to plan for our next century of growth. Like other capital cities around Australia, we want our city centre to be a destination where people live, work and play. It is planned that the city centre will house 10 per cent of the territory's population growth over the next 20 years. To accommodate this growth, the ACT government needs to investigate the needed growth of housing, community and recreational facilities, together with retail, lifestyle and other services, while maintaining its core business and commercial focus, which are what many Canberrans currently use this area for now and will continue to want to use it for in the future.

The city plan provides a framework for the functional expansion of the city centre as a place to live, work and play. The plan will help inform both government and private stakeholders in their respective decision-making to support the city centre through realising its full potential as a vibrant, lively and attractive place to live, work and play. The city will be able to continue to respond to people's desires for inner city living by providing an attractive lifestyle that is well connected to public transport, jobs, recreation, community facilities and services while maintaining open space, views and vistas.

The city centre has an opportunity to create real capacity to meet anticipated future needs. This means that there are real opportunities to revitalise and rejuvenate character areas as well as being able to provide new areas for growth and development that will shape the future of our city centre. Most of the land suitable for the new development in the city centre is focused around City Hill in Vernon Circle and near the lake. This presents real opportunities to enliven what has always been part of the city that the community have wanted to see grow and develop.

The city to the lake project provides for an urban extension of the city centre towards the lake. A vibrant public urban waterfront will be created, uniting Commonwealth Park and City Hill as integral parts of the city centre. This will better connect the lake and major national education and cultural institutions, such as the Australian National University and the National Museum of Australia, with the city.

Lake Burley Griffin is a local and national icon that defines our city. This plan, along with the city to the lake plan, highlights the need to build on the opportunity it presents to be a lifestyle and recreation focus and to make the best of the lake as an asset as well as a national treasure.

The public waterfront and links to the city centre will be the centrepiece of this new mixed use precinct, along with improved public amenity, infrastructure and cultural attractions for the capital region. Investment in the capital metro light rail transit system has clear economic benefits for Canberra and will be transformational in changing the way people move in, as well as to and from, the city centre. This will be an important first step in a city-wide rapid transit system. Capital metro will ease congestion on the main route to and through the city centre and provide real opportunities for locating more people and employment around the city transit corridor.

The redirecting of traffic from the city centre that will be created by light rail, as well as our current bus development, will allow the city to operate more easily as a destination. Not only is walking the dominant mode of movement within the city centre but also pedestrian traffic is critical to business, retailing, social and recreational opportunities. The city plan looks towards a pedestrian-friendly city that facilitates the movement of people and their access to services and employment and that connects the city centre to the lake.

It has been great to see most consultation comments reflect the community's pride in Canberra as well as their optimism for a city centre offering a more urban lifestyle as we enter our second century. Community infrastructure such as schools and childcare was noted as an important consideration when encouraging more people to live in the city. While supporting growth in the city, most people want to improve architectural design and avoid possible increases in traffic congestion while retaining views that create places to enjoy the open landscape and lakeside beauty. It was great to see that there is in-principle support for the city to the lake project from owners of neighbouring commercial properties, subject to ongoing stakeholder consultation on detailed planning and design for individual projects. The community's eagerness can be seen by the common statement "Just get on with it," as the majority of participants support growth and renewal for the city centre.

I would like to take a moment to congratulate the ACT government, along with Elton Consulting and Tania Parkes Consulting, for this high quality, full scope of consultation that has occurred, and continues to occur, in its second round, which is happening as we speak.

The plan has gone under detailed consultation within the community, with over 15,000 people participating in the first round of consultation that occurred from 26 March to 21 May this year. Many people chose to participate in face-to-face community engagement, with the marquee placed in Garema square an example of this, with over 7,000 responders. This form of consultation, also known as "open house", was by far the most successful way of bringing community consultation out into the community. A marquee was erected in Garema Place as an exhibition space for open house information displays. The exhibition material was supported by laptops for online feedback and audiovisual equipment so people could view a video explaining the city to the lake development proposal. The public were provided with various methods to submit feedback, consisting of writing a comment on the flag and placing it on the wall chart plan of the city, adding comment to the graffiti wall, filling in a survey or speaking directly to an ACT government representative.

Public consultations also included using online methods, with the use of two websites, a YouTube fly through and electronic surveys where a total of over 9,000 hits and submissions were recorded. Using YouTube, the community was able to see what was possible for the city plan and put what was being discussed into perspective. Again, I would like to commend the ACT government on their work in this arena, using new consultation forms to their full potential.

In addition to the full public consultation, the city plan conducted targeted consultations within the community through targeting 60 stakeholder groups, including businesses and resident groups. This included two seminars targeting purely new Acton residents. A presentation was made to the board of the National Capital Authority and there were meetings with interest groups such as individual members of the Walter Burley Griffin Society and key stakeholders such as the current business owners and leaseholders operating in West Basin.

As part of these key consultations, 92 submissions were received. The length of submissions ranged from a few sentences to over 60 pages. They covered a wide range of issues from general comment to specific elements of the project and all aspects of the proposal. The majority of individuals and organisations that made submissions were well informed, having visited an information display, attended seminars or viewed the website information. Overall, the submissions were well considered, thoughtful and added significant value to the consultation outcomes.

All of these consultations were widely publicised through the use of social media as well as print in the *Canberra Times*, the *Chronicle* and other free print media and radio announcements. I would like to take this moment to highlight that the second round of consultations, which are using all three techniques, is currently occurring and will be open until 17 November.

Through the coming years we will start to see this positive and transformational change to the city centre, which we all think we will continue to enjoy long into our city's second century.

**MR CORBELL** (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations and Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development) (11.15): I thank Ms Berry for bringing this motion to the Assembly for debate today. The establishment of the process to create the city plan is an important initiative of this government designed to set in place the strategic planning framework we need to guide the growth of our city into its second century. The city plan has seen a very strong level of response from the Canberra community, with over 15,000 Canberrans having their say on the development of the initial proposals that have led to the draft city plan which the Chief Minister and I released for public comment earlier this month. The work of the draft city plan now really does underpin the government's broader strategic planning objective. It is worth taking the time to put the city plan in its broader context, which is the government's overall strategic planning framework.

The city faces significant growth over the next 15 to 20 years and the government needs to plan now for meeting, providing for and accommodating that growth. The ACT planning strategy sets out how growth will be accommodated over the next 25 to 30 years. The focus is very much on accommodating growth in our city centre, in our town centres and along key public transport corridors. There are good public policy reasons for encouraging more people to and facilitating more development in these locations. First of all, it makes better use of existing infrastructure, but, more importantly, it prevents the urban footprint of the city from continuing to expand in a manner which is simply becoming unsustainable.

It is unsustainable because we know, first and foremost, that the impact of urban development on native biodiversity is significant and severe. The territory faces increasingly restricted choices when it comes to the development of greenfields land sites. While some greenfields land development will always be part of the overall land supply mix, the consolidation and intensification of development in existing already developed areas is a critical part of meeting growth for the future.

Secondly, sustainability outcomes dictate that we should see more people living close to where they have better transport choices and are able to undertake a broader range of their journeys, for work, recreation or other purposes, by modes other than the private motor vehicle. We see challenges right now in places like Gungahlin where nine out of every 10 journeys undertaken by people who live in the district of Gungahlin are made by the private motor vehicle. We know that, without changes to the way transport and development occurs in our city, those households will continue to face real cost pressures associated with having to spend more and more of their money on rising fuel costs, insurance, registration and, of course, the day-to-day consequences of purchasing and owning a motor vehicle.

We also know that there are real health benefits associated with encouraging more people to undertake more of their journeys by walking and cycling. This, of course, is determined by the nature of their physical environment. If more people live in an environment where it is easier and convenient to undertake at least some of their journeys walking, cycling or on public transport they are more likely to do so.

That really underpins why the government has taken the decision that at a strategic planning level we must make sure that more people live close to good public transport corridors, live close to where they work, live close to where there are cultural or recreational facilities and commercial facilities that meet their needs and live in an environment that still is affordable and still provides a high quality of urban amenity.

Setting in place the overarching planning objectives for the city, we then come to how we actually translate those long-term and strategic objectives into activity on the ground. We need to drill down and do the next level of planning for our centres around how we accommodate that growth. The government is doing this through master planning work in places like Tuggeranong, Erindale and Cooleman Court. We are doing it in Belconnen, Dickson and Kingston.

The city plan is about doing it for the city centre itself, making sure that we are able to accommodate many more people living in the city centre, making sure we are facilitating those development opportunities to create housing for those people, making sure that public transport is better connected into those locations and making sure that other elements of the city, in terms of its commercial viability, its range of commercial services, its urban amenity and that very intangible term “vibrancy” are appropriately addressed.

The draft city plan brings all of those issues together. The draft city plan sets out five separate precincts for the city as areas of focus for further government activity. The draft city plan sets out and makes allocations of land use for particular and important institutions or activities. The draft city plan, in particular, also looks at how the city becomes a city more engaging for people at street level rather than dominated solely by motor vehicle use.

It is worth reflecting on what the draft city plan says about housing. The plan looks to accommodate about 10 per cent of the territory’s population growth over the next 15 years in the city centre. That equates to around an extra 8,000 residents, or approximately a further 5,000 dwellings. That is more than double the number of dwellings that currently exist in the city centre.

This really highlights the ambitious program the government has to see more people living in the city centre close to where there is work and close to where there are recreational, cultural and commercial services for them to enjoy. It also highlights the real potential that we believe can be realised through our investment in the capital metro project and also through city to the lake.

In relation to capital metro, we know that providing high-quality, permanent, dedicated transit is key to encouraging more people to see the city centre as a destination, not just for their journey to work but as a place to live in and a place to enjoy in a 24/7 economy. Therefore, the work that the government is currently doing in relation to capital metro will focus very strongly on how it integrates into the city centre, in particular how it relates to the area in the vicinity of Alinga Street down to London Circuit, and how it could potentially be used as a catalyst to revitalise elements of the Sydney and Melbourne buildings, particularly those buildings as they front onto Northbourne Avenue. These are beautiful heritage buildings and they are, in every respect, the beginning of the commercial city centre for the nation’s capital. Yet the presentation of the Sydney and Melbourne buildings, particularly as they face onto Northbourne Avenue, is not of a standard you would expect for such significant heritage buildings.

There is an opportunity, I believe, for the capital metro project and the terminus of the light rail at some point between Alinga Street and London Circuit to serve as a catalyst for greater rejuvenation of those two buildings. So instead of some of the uses we see in those buildings today and instead of the rundown and neglected look of those buildings, there is a potential to leverage higher value uses because of their proximity to a light rail station and, therefore, an incentive for the building owners to make an investment in upgrading and improving the look and presentation of those

buildings, similar to what we have seen to the western half of the Melbourne Building, which is an outstanding demonstration of what can be achieved for these beautiful heritage buildings.

That is one aspiration I would be very keen to see realised from the city plan. There will be many others, but all Canberrans are encouraged to have their say. I have been delighted by the response to date and I look forward to the completion of the public consultation process.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (11.25): I thank Ms Berry for raising this issue today. I will be supporting Ms Berry's motion. The Greens have consistently advocated for a long-term vision for our city—an environmentally sustainable vision that maps out our future as a city that is liveable, well connected and well prepared for future challenges of climate change, population growth and peak oil.

The city plan is an important piece of the planning picture. It was encouraging to see the response from the community to the first round of consultation, with more than 15,000 people having their say on the future of our city centre. The Greens welcome the opportunity for the community to further engage in the second stage of the consultation. I will be interested to know how the community responds to the draft plan—now that it has got to the next stage of detail, the next iteration—given the very significant level of interest that was demonstrated in the first round. It was certainly clear from that initial feedback that Canberrans want the city centre to be the cultural and economic focus of life for our city. They want a stronger connection between the city and the lake and they want a city centre that is vibrant and full of life.

In terms of specifics, the idea of a lakeside leisure centre has been well supported by the community. The aquatic centre has been retained in the draft plan. I think that is essential given the desire to redevelop the existing Civic pool site into a stadium under the current thinking. Retaining a health and fitness facility somewhere close to the heart of the city is vitally important. As a regular user—I am putting a declaration of interest on the table—and long-term member of that facility I am well aware of how popular it is and how convenient it is for many people in the city to just get out and go there during their workday. In a world in which we are seeking to increase people's level of activity, having the convenience of that sort of facility nearby is vitally important.

The West Basin area is one area that has been put forward as having a high potential for change, with a proposed residential mixed use zone on the western side of Commonwealth Avenue. In principle, I support this, but I have some concerns about the privatisation of the foreshore. I would strongly argue for a wide buffer zone between the residential and commercial zone and the water's edge so that public access is retained to the waterfront.

The schematic diagrams that have been released—or “artist's impressions” is perhaps a better way of describing it—suggest a wide boulevard. I think that is going to be a vitally important part of that development when it proceeds in terms of the way the area is envisaged regarding access to national institutions and that simple idea, really, that the public should be able to access the waterfront. There has been a lot of

frustration in recent years about the way Kingston Foreshore has proceeded and the way it has cut off some of the access to the lake. Certainly, there has been a break in the link around Lake Burley Griffin.

Work is being done to improve that. I was down there recently. Some parts of the waterfront have been opened up and they are very nice. Hopefully, people's frustrations will be eased by the fact that that work has now been done. But we need to make sure that, as we develop West Basin, we do not cut it off for the next decade while that work gets done and that the public retains a good level of access.

The City Hill precinct is also a key component of the city plan. You only have to look at the aerial photograph on the inside cover of the draft plan to see how clearly this part of the city is underutilised. City Hill was planned to be the civic centre of the city, yet today it is ringed by barriers that keep people away—a layer of fast-moving traffic, another layer of car parks and the backsides of public buildings. If you ever venture up onto City Hill, which I do from time to time—it is actually quite a nice spot up there; there are some mature trees, grass and the like—frankly, you take your life into your own hands because of the three lanes of traffic and the nature of the road around there. The visibility lines are not great and organised pedestrian access is non-existent. I think many people recognise that that space is not what it could be. I am pleased that has been a key focal point of the discussions, because there is a great opportunity to make better use of this part of the city. If it is done well, it will revitalise the City Hill precinct and create the missing link in the chain that connects the city centre with the lake foreshore.

The proposed changes to Parkes Way to try and break what has become a significant physical barrier between the city and the waterfront would go a long way to reinstating the vision of the Griffin plan to join together the foreshore and the city. Of course, fixing mistakes is a lot more expensive than getting things right the first time, but the challenge that this generation face is Parkes Way. Obviously, from a private motor vehicle perspective, it is very convenient. It provides a great linkage east-west across the city for many commuters, and that is obviously important in our modern traffic mode, but the actual physical barrier it creates is one that I think many people would love to see fixed in some way.

It is clear from the first round of consultation that respecting the Griffin heritage is important to Canberrans in terms of maintaining access to views and vistas. Having trees is an important part of the landscape. There is always going to be some tension here. Development around West Basin and the City Hill precinct, for example, will certainly change the feel of that part of the city and there will be changes to the skyline. That is something that will challenge some people's traditional perceptions of the city area.

Transport through the city is a key part of the plan. It is important that we start to plan now for the whole of the future light rail network so that the city to Gungahlin route is connected to the city. The plan brings the light rail alignment down to City Hill to link with potential expansions along Constitution Avenue and south down Commonwealth Avenue. It also proposes changing Vernon Circle from a major arterial road to a minor collector road and rediverting traffic to alternative routes using a bypass based

around a rebuilt Parkes Way, Cooyong Street, Clunies Ross Street and Barry Drive. I think this makes a lot of sense. At the moment a lot of the north-south traffic goes straight through the centre of the city. If we can find some clear, viable alternatives we can keep this traffic away from our centre.

I had also planned to comment on the Sydney and Melbourne buildings, which I know Mr Corbell just spoke about. I share his views that they are magnificent buildings. They are a great part of Canberra's heritage. When you see some of the old sepia photographs of the city centre those two buildings stand there as the original landmarks of our city. But now, with six lanes rumbling through there, it is not the most attractive part of our city. I think that is a great shame. If we could find a way to redesign the city to change that dynamic I think that would be a very positive thing. I welcome the fact that the city plan is actively looking at those sorts of issues.

The other comment I would like to make is that we know that people want a walkable city with good pedestrian and cycle access. The Greens have consistently advocated for good pedestrian and cycle paths—I do not think that is news to anybody—but the paths need to be planned now so that the city can develop around them, with walkability and access at the forefront of design. We need to make sure that those access thoroughfares, essentially, are set out, constructed and maintained if we are to drive a greater level of walking and cycling through the city. Again, some of the designs that I have looked at show those flows.

It comes back to the issue I was talking about earlier with City Hill and about it acting as a significant barrier. When one goes to walk from the Assembly to the other side of the city—if you have got to go to NICTA or a function over at the Lakeside—there is often a real dilemma as to how best to get there. You end up having to decide which way to go around London Circuit rather than going the way that perhaps instinct would dictate.

I welcome this motion today and the discussion of the city plan. It is a great opportunity to evolve the city into its next phase as a 21st century city and to meet the expectations of our modern residents, the current generations.

Ms Berry's motion talks about having a day and a night city, essentially. Comments on Canberra over the years have been, frankly, that you can walk through the city at night and not see anybody. I think that is changing slowly. I welcome the elements of the city plan that seek to increase the level of residential accommodation available in the city. I think this brings real benefits to the city both in terms of making it a day and a night city and in terms of improving safety, and all the benefits that go with that. If people feel safe in the city and they feel that there are people around—and that is obviously good for traders in the city—it creates an environment which people find more enjoyable.

I look forward to seeing the community comments that come in during this current phase. It will be fascinating to see what the tenor of those remarks is. I look forward to working further on the city plan and helping ensure that our city is the vibrant, energetic and well-planned hub that our residents aspire to.

**MR COE** (Ginninderra) (11.36): I, too, rise to speak on the motion moved by Ms Berry regarding the importance of a city plan for our city. We on this side of the chamber are keen and active supporters of the need for planning documents which give certainty to all stakeholders, whether they be government, citizens, businesses or community groups. Consulting on and writing planning documents gives a clear direction, and all involved can approach the future with far more certainty and confidence to, therefore, invest time, money and energy.

The government have a long history of producing reports, often at great expense, that end up failing to be implemented. Of course, whether it is the Canberra plan, the spatial plan, the sustainable transport plan, the transport plan, City Hill, the Gungahlin draft concept report, the open space network, the Canberra central design manual, the territory plan or any of the other plans that this government has put together, the plan is only as strong as its implementation. And, as we know from the 2005 city plan, nothing was implemented. It is same old, same old.

It is all good for artists' impressions, it is all very well to have sketches of trees, cafes and people riding their bikes, but unless you actually put your money where your mouth is, unless you are actually willing to commit to it from a policy sense, not just from the PR sense, it really does not mean very much. And in actual fact, failure to implement a plan, any plan, can lead to a lack of confidence in all plans.

For too long the ACT government has been making ad hoc changes to the territory plan. This Assembly and the planning committee considered draft variation 308. However, like so many other proposals of this government, the draft variation was not considered in the broader context of the city plan, with the city being drawn in each direction: to the west, with the ANU exchange developments; to the north, with redevelopment in Braddon; to the east, with variation 308; and, of course, to the south, with city to the lake.

These precincts are not detrimental and all, in and of themselves, could be a good thing. However, we have to be very careful that we are not, in actual fact, diluting the city rather than actually enhancing the city. In effect, what variation 308 did was extend the city to the east of Cooyong Street for the first time. And for the first time, it would put a commercial zone in the suburb of Reid. Such a move is not inconsiderable and should be done as part of a broader plan.

Of course, as we well know, at the time of redeveloping the Canberra Centre, the Canberra Centre put all the car parks onto Cooyong and Ballumbir streets because that was the edge of the city. It was literally the edge of the city. But now, with variation 308, it is actually extending the city such that the government is proposing to have 15-storey tower buildings overlooking multi-storey structured car parking. It is all very well to have a city plan, it is all very well to have all the plans that I ran off earlier, but if you are still going to have ad hoc decisions that are simply a cash grab by a government, it really does not mean very much.

The government acknowledge that there is a need for development of a strategy, and that is why they commissioned the city plan, with funding from the commonwealth government. The ACT government articulated the rationale as:

This new plan for the city centre will shape the way we live, work and enjoy the City into the future ...

It goes on:

While the City's broad place is defined within the National Capital Plan and the Territory Plan, there is no detailed plan that provides a cohesive direction for the development of the City.

Whilst the city plan may well tick that box, unless it is actually implemented it does not mean very much and, based on this government's past form when it comes to plans, when it comes to glossy documents, when it comes to artists' impressions, I do not hold out too much hope.

The draft city plan includes an area called city north-east. As far as I can see, for the first time the city has been led across Ballumbir Street. I believe such a change should be done with caution, and to date I have seen no reasoning in the city plan or any of the associated documents which points out the rationale for the move. Regardless of which past planning document you look at, all seem to feature the city boundary being Ballumbir Street.

The Civic centre Canberra plan of the NCDC of November 1987 and the Civic centre Canberra plan of February 1982 clearly show Ballumbir Street as the boundary throughout the documents. Tomorrow's Canberra, again used by the NCDC but this one in 1970, shows Ballumbir Street as the boundary.

If the government has a good planning reason for extending the city over Ballumbir Street, other than simply a cash grab by Housing ACT, it should be articulated in the city plan. In fact, if anything, the document seems to argue against it. Page 62 of the city plan says:

Connection to neighbouring areas of Braddon and Reid are constrained by the arterial traffic on Cooyong and Ballumbir streets. The urban environment of these streets suffers as a result and pedestrians experience delays at intersections. Ainslie Avenue and Lonsdale Street are important north-east area connection locations.

That is all it says with regard to this part of the city. This is hardly an endorsement of the construction of 15-storey tower buildings which will increase traffic and detract from the urban environment of these streets. In fact, the city plan, on page 63, is quite inaccurate as it says that "currently there are less than 100 residents in the city north-east quadrant". Of course, this cannot be so as the numbers in the ABC flats presently exceed that.

It seems to me that what has happened is that the city plan's north-east quadrant originally stopped at Ballumbir Street, but upon a request by the government, perhaps a minister, they have hastily changed the boundary of the north-east quadrant but did not change the underpinning research. Further to this, in the opportunities section on page 63 of the plan, there is no mention whatsoever of redevelopment of the ABC

flats as an opportunity—no mention whatsoever. The proposal only has a paragraph or two tagged onto the bottom of an earlier section. If this is true, it is all pretty sloppy. I am keen to get the government's response to this analysis.

Of course the opposition supports this development and implementation of the city plan, but it is a two-pronged attack. One is the development, two is the implementation. If it is going to be another document that either does not get implemented or is used to validate or justify the government's past decisions or pet projects then it will not be a worthwhile process.

I, for one, am keen to see Lake Burley Griffin and, indeed, all lakes across Canberra used more. I think they are tremendously underutilised lakes at present, and I think we should be having a mature discussion about whether we do want to have motorised craft on the lakes. This should not be a taboo subject. Let us have an informed, mature, professional discussion on this matter. It may well be that there is some sort of consensus that the community can come to with regard to some sort of concession whereby all stakeholders are happy.

Mr Rattenbury mentioned the mature trees on City Hill, which are lovely. There are mature trees up and down Northbourne Avenue which are lovely, well in excess of 500, from my counting, which will have to be removed for light rail. That may well be something that is worth while. That may well be something that this government says, "On balance, let us rip up those 500 trees because we are going to get a better benefit out of it." However, this government should be honest about that.

I do not think they can be in this make-believe fantasy land whereby they think they can put light rail down the guts of Northbourne Avenue without chopping down the surrounding trees. By the time you excavate and rip up all the roots, by the time you rip up the irrigation system, by the time you put in overhead high-voltage wires, I do not think you have got much of a chance of the *Eucalyptus elatas* all the way up and down there actually surviving. So the ones that are not chopped down because they are directly in the road—the ones that are within two metres of the high-voltage power lines, the ones that overhang the power lines or the ones that get ripped up during construction—will surely die because of the increased activity around.

That may well be worth while, but this government have to be honest about what their intentions are with this very extravagant light rail project which to date they have made a very poor case for. And it is interesting they should make such a poor case because of course I believe it actually suits some people's purposes. It is well known that there are some people opposite that are not supportive of the light rail project. It is well known that there are some directorates in the ACT government that are fighting to stop light rail, that they are not cooperating with the various people who are advocating for light rail. In actual fact it is well known that there are people very high in the ACT public service that are going around town saying this should not happen, there are other priorities, there are better things.

I imagine Shane Rattenbury, Minister Rattenbury, must be getting pretty annoyed with Minister Corbell and the dodgy sell job he is doing on this light rail because I think it is fair to say that the vast majority of people like the idea of hopping on a tram.

The problem is: how many people are going to be within walking distance of a tram stop? How many people are actually going to park in a park and ride? Is someone in Belconnen, perhaps someone in Dunlop, going to drive down Ginninderra Drive, turn left on William Slim Drive, go down to the Barton Highway, go to EPIC, park their car, walk to the station, pay \$3 or \$4, whatever it is going to be, to ride this tram, which is going to have five stops down Northbourne, similar to a bus, and is going to get held up at traffic lights, I presume, just like buses do, simply because it is there? Are people going to do this because it is there?

The fact is that, on the government's own projections, only 4½ thousand people during the morning and afternoon peaks are going to use light rail. And of course we know that there are already in excess of 3,000 people that use buses down Northbourne during the morning and afternoon peaks. So it is a lot of money to spend for 1,500 people to ride light rail. If this is going to be transformational, this is going to be something that is going to change the city, the government has got to make a better case for it. And I can imagine Minister Rattenbury, there in the subcommittee meetings of cabinet or indeed in the cabinet meetings, or perhaps even his Greens party meetings, saying the government have got to do a better job. The government have got to do a better job at selling light rail because at present I do not think they are winning the case.

To sum up, the government's city plan is simply a rehash of past ideas. The challenge is going to be whether they can and whether they do actually implement it. If it is yet another document that gathers dust on a bookshelf then it really will not mean much. And yet again it will be the government over-promising, under-delivering and eroding trust in this government.

**DR BOURKE** (Ginninderra) (11.50): The government's city plan is a vision, a vision of the maturing of Civic in our centenary year as the metropolitan centre of our city as it approaches a population of 400,000 people. It is about our government's desire to see the big picture which we have seen this week and last week is in stark contrast to that which is presented by the opposition.

We just had Mr Coe criticising too many plans, but then he says, "There are not enough plans." Then he says, "We need a city plan." And then he criticises the city planning process. The man is confused. And then he gets into a gut-wrenching excitement about the fate of trees in Northbourne Avenue. I have never known Mr Coe to care much about trees before.

By 2030 our population is expected to be almost 460,000 people. The city plans will offer us options on the dilemmas involved in modelling Civic to be the administrative and commercial centre of our city and a showcase of the dynamic city we will be living in.

So much of the effort and focus in developing Canberra throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s was on the satellite town centres and the new suburban areas of Woden, Belconnen, Tuggeranong and later Gungahlin as part of the Y plan for the city's growth. Our population was growing at over 10 per cent a year in the heyday of the transfer of government departments to Canberra and the consequent need to house a

massive population transfer. The National Capital Development Commission, the NCDC, was more concerned with settling new arrivals in well-serviced satellite cities and developing these town centres as viable commercial and transport hubs.

There was a necessity and perhaps a natural tendency for the NCDC town planners to exercise their skills and talents in these new town centres and not mess too much with Civic. Civic, after all, was the creation of the Griffins and our early planners—and we heard in the speech of Ms Berry this morning about the Griffin legacy on which Civic has been built—and it could wait for a major makeover.

However, even back in 1965 an NCDC publication, *The future Canberra*, showed one vision for Civic which included sunken ring roads, diverting traffic around the city and a city hall atop City Hill. That would have been an interesting place for us to be in here today. As I say, the focus of planners for many years, however, was on the new town centres, at the expense of Civic.

In Belconnen, in my electorate of Ginninderra, we are reaping the benefits of the early planning of its town centre which has set us up for the new growth there, making it Canberra's largest and most dynamic town centre. It shows what we can do on a grander scale in Civic, with the bold new city plan, capital metro and the city to the lake plan.

I spoke last week in an adjournment speech about how the Belconnen town centre is undergoing a transformation, with large investments in retail, business and residential developments, in addition to the government's recent investments there in rapid bus transport, especially in the Lake Ginninderra foreshore, including the parks, the new wetlands and developments along Emu Bank. I said that at Emu Bank we have already brought the city to the lake. It is lined with eateries, outdoor tables and parks where people can enjoy the vista of Lake Ginninderra.

As the vision in the draft city plan for Civic shows, we can do much better in the heart of our city. The time has come in our second century to set up Civic for the future, a future that will benefit all Canberrans and, indeed, all Australians as a worthy metropolitan centre of our nation's capital. It is truly time to think big about our city centre—not to think small, to think big about our city centre. And the plan sets out options for improved public spaces, a range of transport choices that include light rail and opportunities for future growth of the city centre.

It is an exciting time in the development of Canberra as a whole. With the maturing of our older town centres and the success of Gungahlin, the infrastructure of the old Y plan for Canberra is in place. We are now at the phase of filling it in. The newest town centre, Molonglo, is underway and developments such as the Quay at Tuggeranong are further strengthening the town centres.

The draft city plan gives focus to a trend already underway, with more and more people making Civic their home. The plan will help to accelerate the increase in the residential population of the city centre. We want a dynamic, exciting city centre, not just with more people in it. We want the advanced day and night economy and lifestyle that will support and attract others to the pulsing heart of a great Australian city.

The draft plan also looks to connect the city centre to the lake, the foreshore of one of our capital's greatest features: the views of the lake and across the lake to the national institutions and the Brindabellas, to the High Court, the National Gallery, the National Museum, those wonderful national institutions. It is an area barely visited and little seen at night, except from cars crossing Commonwealth Avenue bridge.

The city to the lake plan will add another dimension to the city which has largely turned its back on the lake. The added features of the Australia forum, the indoor stadium, a new aquatic facility and restaurants, bars, new performance spaces, playgrounds and promenades will draw people from across Canberra to enjoy our beautiful, dynamic city heart.

One aspiration which could be drawn from the recent Planning Institute of Australia's congress which was held here in Canberra back in March is the presentation of Dr Susan Parham, who is Head of Urbanism at the University of Hertfordshire in the United Kingdom. She particularly talked about the role of food-centred planning in urban design, not just about cafes and supermarkets and gardens but also about fresh food markets, food equipment supplies and cooking schools—all those things that are getting people to talk and think about food. When you think back through human history and the development of cities, it is with food at the centre. This is what has originated cities. And it is something in our 21st century we should go back to and think about how we can incorporate that into our modern city vision.

The city plan is a visionary blueprint for our city's centre for our second century. I urge Canberrans to have their say on the draft plan and share the excitement I feel about it.

**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) (11.59): I thank Ms Berry for bringing this motion forward today. I thought I would adopt a slightly unusual approach in speaking to the motion and project forward a couple of decades to imagine Canberra in 2033 looking back on the last 20 years following the adoption of the city plan and the successful delivery of the city to the lake project in tandem with the rollout of capital metro.

Our city has matured to become a truly great city, one of the most progressive, liveable and sustainable cities in the world. It has done this whilst retaining its memorable landscape identity with wonderful parks, gardens and tree-lined streets. We look back over two decades and see how transformative these initiatives have been for our city—the strategic investments in public infrastructure, public domain, the cultural and recreational facilities that have unlocked huge private investment. Canberra has proved to itself that once a city imagines a desirable future and puts in place the settings to achieve this future, it is extraordinary how quickly change can occur.

Working in partnership with the private sector, all Canberrans have been key contributors to this transformation. We have become much more a master of our own

destiny. We have learnt from the most progressive cities in the world that have reversed their motorway-dominated ways—cities such as San Francisco, Boston, Portland, Barcelona, Seoul, Toronto—which have either demolished or moved underground their inner city motorways to allow much improved access to their waterfronts. Canberra now joins that list of international exemplars with Parkes Way a smart boulevard allowing a seamless connection of our CBD to Commonwealth Park and to the lake.

One of the delights of our city is West Basin. It is a truly public waterfront for all Canberrans and visitors to the city. Our early place-making efforts to enhance the sense of public ownership and to program and support new activities, events and festivals created an authentic and memorable place. And, like Christchurch and other places, pop-ups and containers, outdoor cinemas and the like were used to seed activity and to experiment and test different ideas and formats. The pilot water gardens along the waterfront and upper catchment measures were adopted and adapted in other locations around the lake to enhance lake water quality and biodiversity. The lakeside aquatic centre, urban beach, public promenade and a separated bicycle path generate an extraordinary level of activity in the precinct year round. Families, students, young people and grandparents all flock to West Basin. It is the place where the daily life of our city intersects with special events and national and international ceremonial occasions. The formal distinction between the local city and the national capital has been blurred.

Since the completion of the Australia forum project and the city stadium there has been a profound impact on the city centre and the territory economy. More visitors are attracted to the city and they stay longer. The number of hotels and occupancy rates and the day and night-time economy of the city centre have increased dramatically. City Walk, anchored at one end by the city stadium, has become one of the most sought-after locations for cafes and restaurants. The Australia forum is a world-class facility. Its unique and flexible design has provided for significant growth in the Canberra convention and ceremonial events markets, as is appropriate for the national capital, whilst boosting the economy of the city. It underpins the visitor economy and has elevated the international profile of our city. The forum reinforces the primacy of City Hill and plays an important civic role in the delivery of a unique cultural arc that addresses the hill.

One of the most enduring changes in the city centre over two decades is that it has become a city where people live. There are now over 20,000 residents in the central city area. The doughnut city of the 20th century that stagnated and declined in favour of spreading suburbs ever further outwards from the CBD is over. After the inception of this city plan and the city to the lake project, that trend of the latter half of the 20th century has been reversed.

As more people choose to live in central Canberra, the character of the city centre has changed. It has changed radically and changed for the better. New residents bring a stronger sense of neighbourhood and place to the city. They are actively engaged in caring for and improving the city centre. Their presence ensures the support services they needed were provided to meet their needs.

The city is more culturally diverse and has become a renowned centre for the creative arts and sciences. The underlying ability for the city to make these changes was a development of the collective capacity and skill within our residents to find the technical and political solutions to move forward successfully.

The alliances between our universities, event sectors, national security, business and government expanded to provide much greater levels of engagement and cooperation, enhancing the knowledge and skills of all citizens of the city. Canberra has cemented its reputation as an international centre of expertise in technology and governance and in creating sustainable cities. Infrastructure has been provided and adapted through innovative procurement, design, financing and delivery approaches.

By 2020 the transformation of the city centre was becoming clearly evident. Canberrans realised they were living in a city that had developed an urban culture with a revered public realm that allowed for the city to renew itself, to evolve and to adapt with its own distinctive ethos and, more importantly, with foresight.

Capital metro transformed the way people engage with the city centre. The initial city to Gungahlin rail link proved the sceptics wrong. Light rail now moves large numbers of people into the city. It is now—in the 2030s—the most dominant mode of transport into and out of our city centre. The success of the project has been to make the city centre a more attractive destination with more things to do on weekends and during the week. West Basin, the new city stadium and the Australia forum have become major attractions for the region, and the vast majority of residents and visitors now prefer to access these facilities through the capital metro. New arrivals to our city find it hard to believe that only 20 years ago it was a drive-through place. It is now the living heart of Canberra.

Our city is one of the most popular destinations for the under-35s and for students, having developed a reputation for tolerance, inclusiveness and openness to new ideas and innovation. The students came here to study; they stayed to work, and now they are raising families. They want to take part in the rich and vibrant culture of the city of Canberra in 2033.

Madam Speaker, we are in 2013. This future is possible—possible if we take the opportunities that are before us with the draft city plan and the city to the lake project and if we ensure that we are innovative, flexible and respond to changing circumstances, that we capture the imagination and the passion of the people of Canberra to see their city adapt and transform in its second century. I think this is a worthwhile vision to strive towards. It will not all be smooth sailing. There will be differences of opinion, not just on what the final outcomes should be but also on how best to get there. I think we may have a debate on that coming up after lunch. Nonetheless, the objective is there, the vision is there, and we look forward over the rest of this decade and beyond to the implementation of what is an important series of transformative projects for our city. I thank Ms Berry for bringing the motion to the Assembly today.

**MS GALLAGHER** (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education) (12.08): Ms Berry rightly has pointed out some of the fundamental points about our city centre and the government's plans for it. It does play a different role for different people and different organisations. It is not just a shopping centre or a place where people come to work. There is a real community interest in and demand for change and growth in the city centre to help the city reaffirm its rightful place as territory, regional and national capital.

When I launched the city plan project back in March this year, I made it very clear that I wanted to hear from people about what they wanted the city centre to be. We have heard some strong views and some great ideas on the city centre, with about 15,000 comments right across a range of matters. In open house sessions, online consultations, surveys, Facebook, Twitter, group workshops and written submissions, I got the very strong message that the community is clearly and strongly interested in both the now and the future of the city centre.

We heard that people want a city that has an identity, with a strong recognisable heart that people can relate to, to gather in and celebrate. Part of that is reflecting the natural setting and the landscape vision set out by the Griffin plan. People want a city centre that is vibrant and alive, a city that draws people to it both day and night. We have heard a consistent view that the city centre should be less about cars and more about people. We are also keenly aware of the need for good public transport options and accessible parking in the urban mix.

But I think the key message we got from a broad cross-section of the community was simply that people want to see things happen. I believe our challenge is to change and to grow, taking what we like about other cities while staying true to our own urban traditions. This draft city plan is a clear and strong step in that direction.

Economic growth in the ACT has been above the national average over the past five years, and recent development in the city centre has reflected that strength. I am conscious that more recently investor confidence has been affected by some of the local uncertainty over federal government job cuts. With the city plan, the ACT government is moving to support confidence through a clear and long-term strategy and an environment conducive to investment. I would also note that this is one of the things the ACT division of the Property Council has asked for in its recent set of declarations, one of a number the government is already focused on.

The residential population of Canberra's city centre has grown by about 570 per cent over the last 10 years. It has brought with it some major changes to the urban environment. The Childers Street precinct has been redeveloped and enhanced to become a student and cultural hub with a street life and night-life which supports a wide range of retail and dining businesses. The Canberra Centre has been expanded and is now looking outwards to bring a street life, dining and recreation culture to the core of the city. The federal government has selected tenancies in more modern and sustainable buildings in the centre, and the ACT government has invested in upgrades to our streets and public spaces in the city centre, giving the places where people walk,

meet and gather more interest and amenity. Our investment in pedestrian and cycle networks around the city centre is making the city better for active transport and good health outcomes. Work underway on Constitution Avenue will be a step in delivering change and growth opportunities in the city centre and will deliver on another part of the Griffin plan for Canberra as a city of boulevards and vistas.

It is a simple equation: more residents in the city centre mean more economic opportunities, more investment and more people who have a clear interest in making the city centre a great place to be.

The population of the ACT is expected to increase by roughly 80,000 people over the next 15 to 20 years. In response to this forecast, the city plan looks to accommodate 10 per cent of that population growth, around 8,000 people, in the city centre. That is a lot of people; it translates to about 5,000 additional dwellings needed and therefore lots of investment opportunity. As the draft city plan identifies, we have ample capacity, even within existing planning controls, to let that happen. There is about 1.8 million square metres of capacity to support investment in growth and change over the next 20 years. Given that the city centre currently occupies approximately 1.3 million square metres, there is clearly room for growth. That amount of capacity means there are real opportunities to revitalise and rejuvenate existing areas and to provide new areas for growth and development that can shape the future of the city centre. The draft city plan sets a framework for that investment and for delivering all the services and opportunities that an increase in the population will bring.

Most of the land available for new development in the city centre is around City Hill in Vernon Circle and in West Basin near the lake. Naturally those areas will see a lot of change and development occurring, bringing character and life with them as investment happens. The draft plan looks to activate the City Hill area as the core of the city centre, the place that people will identify with and go to for cultural activities, and the place people will walk through to connect with the rest of the city centre and the lake. West Basin will be a new neighbourhood of residents and commercial activities. It will also be the place where all Canberrans can come and enjoy the great asset that the lake is for our city. From our consultations, we know there are many in the community who cannot wait for the projects from the city to the lake proposal to come to fruition.

Other areas of the city centre will also change and grow as more residents move in and bring a life and economic impetus of their own. The draft city plan looks to see the city centre consolidate its role as the prime commercial and employment centre, with modest growth to a working population of 45,000, up from the current 38,000.

The close proximity of education, knowledge and training hubs such as the ANU, the CSIRO and CIT to the city centre also offers opportunities for these key organisations to engage with the corporate community in the city, particularly where it can create career pathways for students. Building on the work and investment that the government has currently undertaken in the city centre, the draft city plan sets a clear direction for change and growth and a path for the city centre's future. It builds on key projects like capital metro and the upgrade of Constitution Avenue to reshape the way

the city centre grows and operates. The draft plan looks to build the city centre's identity as a vibrant, people-focused place with a strong economic, social and cultural life that will help Canberra become an even better city to live in.

As our city grows to a population of 500,000, we have to plan for key infrastructure and the major recreation and cultural facilities that our population of that size would require. Once again, I encourage all Canberrans to engage with the draft city plan. As a process which affects everyone, the more it can reflect the sentiments and wishes of the community the better.

**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) (12.16): I thank Ms Berry for bringing this important motion to the Assembly. The city plan is a significant piece of work for our city and it will guide a number of major infrastructure policy decisions for this government over the next decade and beyond. I commend Mr Corbell and Mr Barr for the leadership and vision they have shown on this project and for city to the lake, and for the consultative way in which they have gone about these projects. As arts minister, I have a strong interest in a number of components of the city plan. I am pleased that artsACT and the Cultural Facilities Corporation, which manages the Canberra Theatre Centre and the Canberra Museum and Gallery, have been involved in the development of this draft city plan.

At the 2012 ACT election, ACT Labor committed to undertake a feasibility study of options for a new major theatre for the ACT if re-elected. The 2013 budget papers indicated that the Cultural Facilities Corporation will work with other agencies on initiatives to plan the future directions of the city centre and the future provision of cultural facilities in Civic within the framework of the city plan and through participation in the city to the lake project. I am pleased that this has occurred and that the Cultural Facilities Corporation's input into the process is reflected in the draft city plan. In particular, the draft plan has identified a number of sites around City Hill as cultural precincts. This is an important consideration as we plan for options around timing and location and for decisions on a replacement for the existing Canberra theatre.

As arts minister, I would like to update the Assembly on other capital projects that artsACT is progressing in the Civic area and that will contribute to the transformation of Civic into a vibrant cultural hub. For the Ainslie Arts Centre, the 2013 budget committed \$1.5 million for major modifications that will enhance the function of the heritage facility for use as a music hub. This delivers on our election commitment. At the Gorman House Arts Centre, we have committed, through the budget, \$1 million for upgrades to this important historic building.

The work at Gorman House and at the Ainslie Arts Centre has taken into consideration the draft city plan, noting that both centres are outside the city centre as defined by the plan. It is also important to note that the city west arts precinct and the Street Theatre, and the ANU schools of music and art, are also incorporated in the area of the city plan and will continue to provide cultural and creative interchange across Civic. It has been noted by my colleagues that it will be essential for the city

plan to have due regard for the arts and cultural infrastructure clustered throughout Civic and Braddon. Consultation with stakeholders on the upgrades of these two centres is well underway. I am confident that they will create a greater cultural experience for our community.

I would like to emphasise the opportunities for being involved that are available for Canberrans. The second stage of consultation on the city plan commenced on Monday, 21 October and will continue through to Sunday, 17 November. Opportunities for community feedback were made available in Garema Place from Monday, 21 October through to Thursday, 24 October, and will be available in the Canberra Centre from 28 October to 22 November. Representatives of the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate will be at both venues to answer questions and to discuss the draft plan with those that have an interest in attending. I also encourage the community to visit the city plan website at [www.cityplan.act.gov.au](http://www.cityplan.act.gov.au) to view the draft city plan and other related documents, and to provide submissions, should they wish. I understand that the city plan is expected to be finalised by the end of 2013, and I look forward to seeing the final plan.

Of course, the city plan is very closely aligned with two other major projects the ACT government has embarked on: the city to the lake and capital metro projects. These city-changing projects have the capacity to transform our city's economy, which is why we have allocated funding to continue work on these projects. As Mr Barr has said today, city to the lake will transform West Basin into a great waterfront address that could be anchored by a new beach and aquatic centre, and provide a place where the daily life of the city can engage with the lake. I echo Mr Barr's assertion that the city to the lake project will be of huge benefit to local businesses, for several reasons: it will create jobs and provide a boost for our building and construction sectors at a time when the Abbott Liberal government is cutting jobs and investment in our city.

Let me go to the documentation, and I encourage people in the community to go to the websites to look at it. I will make comment, if I may, on it. I will read from the city plan paper, which talks about six key planks of the vision for the Canberra city plan.

The first is under the heading of 'Growth' and refers to:

A vibrant centre that stimulates business, education, living, entertaining and recreation.

The paper says:

The city centre will strengthen its role and place as the primary centre of Canberra and the focus of business, entertainment and recreation for the community. Residential development will continue to increase and drive real change in the city centre as people are attracted to the liveability, connectivity and accessibility that it can provide.

The second key area is under the heading of 'Land use and development'. It notes:

A prosperous and dynamic mix of uses and activities that builds character.

The paper says:

Future development will maximise the opportunities to connect the city centre to the lake and provide high quality places and spaces for residents, workers and visitors to visit and enjoy. Existing areas of the city will build on and enhance their existing character through redevelopment and regeneration.

The next key area is “Transport and movement”. The paper refers to:

A connected place people can easily get to and get around in.

It says:

The city centre will be the central hub of a connected transport network that lets people easily access and connect to and through the wider city. Streets will be for people and will let people connect simply with services and facilities.

The next area under the vision is “Public realm and design”. The paper refers to:

An attractive, diverse, high-quality urban environment.

It says:

Our city spaces will be for people to connect, meet and enjoy. City Hill will be the centre of the city and people will move through the city and to the lake through walkable, attractive and connected spaces. Our buildings will be attractive, innovative and sustainable.

The next area is “Community infrastructure”, which refers to:

A culturally rich, accessible and active place for people.

The paper says:

The city centre will have community facilities and services that meet the needs of its local, district, metropolitan and regional residents. The city will be a place where people gather and engage with each other and will be enhanced by a distinctive sense of community with services and facilities in key areas.

The final area is “Strengthening character”. The paper refers to:

A city whose character and identity is clear and enhanced through change.

It notes:

Over its 100 years the city centre has developed its own character in areas that people recognise and relate to. This character is a strong base on which we can build change and growth to deliver a stronger community, vitality, liveability, and functionality.

In closing, I note that, by the measure set by Mr Doszpot, the Canberra Liberals have no interest in this area—particularly Mr Doszpot, because he is not here to engage in this debate. Indeed, only one has stood to talk on this. It demonstrates the lack of interest from those opposite about the vision for the future of our city. That is the measure that Mr Doszpot has brought into this place; it is a measure that he will be measured by from here on in.

I commend Ms Berry for bringing this important motion to the Assembly today and I look forward to the next phase of these important plans for the heart of our great city.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Are you going to speak to close, Ms Berry? I just draw your attention to the fact that there are four minutes before lunch. Do you want to conclude the matter now?

**Ms Berry:** Madam Speaker, it would probably be better if I could come back after lunch to conclude and close the debate.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** On that basis, I will say that I understand it is the wish of the Assembly to suspend for lunch.

*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 12.26 to 2.30 pm.**

### **Questions without notice Canberra Hospital—emergency evacuation**

**MR HANSON:** My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, in the media yesterday it was revealed that last December the Canberra Hospital emergency department was evacuated on a code black as a consequence of threatening behaviour by a patient. The information concerning this code black was obtained using FOI provisions. Given this event, minister, can you outline what efforts have been made to ensure the ongoing safety of hospital staff, particularly at the emergency department?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I thank Mr Hanson for the question. All of these incidents are reviewed when they occur. It is regrettable that they occur and that staff in the hospital are put in a position where their safety is at risk. I would say that it is not uncommon, although that was a very serious incident. But the emergency department deals with lots of patients who are difficult to manage and at times are in a very distressed state.

All of these incidents are reviewed. I do not believe that there was anything in a systemic way that needed to change. Obviously there are safety protections in the emergency department, and that goes to the levels of staff. It goes to the visibility of the department, and it also goes to access into the department from the waiting areas. There was not anything major drawn to my attention about changes that had to be made, although these incidents are reviewed. The safety of the staff is paramount, and support is provided to staff when these incidents occur.

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

**MR HANSON:** Thank you, minister, for your answer. Can you explain what a code black is, and how many code black emergencies have been called at the Canberra Hospital this year?

**MS GALLAGHER:** There are different codes with different colours; I cannot sit here and recite them for you. There is code yellow, there is code brown, there is code black and there are a number of others. They specifically relate to the level of incidence and the response that is required—whether it is security staff that are required, whether it is bed management staff that are required. There is a whole range of different responses. I am very happy to provide that to you. I think that in a question I took on notice in the last sitting you asked me about a code yellow in that instance. The codes are reacted quite frequently.

**Mr Hanson:** The food poisoning was code brown, wasn't it?

**MS GALLAGHER:** The code brown related to the food poisoning. Yes, that is right. There are different colours, different codes, different responses. I am happy to provide that to the Assembly for information; I just do not have it on me at the moment.

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

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, how important is it to plan for such incidents and how does the review process work?

**MS GALLAGHER:** Again, it depends on the nature of the code that was called and the nature of the incident that was being reported. I think the nature of incidents reported through, perhaps for risk band, can be around violence and aggression. It can be around clinical handover. It can be around falls in the hospital. There is a whole range of different situations that are reported as notifiable incidents that would be seen in this instance. There are critical incidents and then there is a whole range that is seen as responses to particular codes.

I would say that the hospital—I think every operational area of government—puts a lot of effort into managing its emergency plans and its responses to particular incidents. The hospital has always performed very well. When codes are enacted, they do work. Where there are shortfalls that are identified through the enactment of those codes, they are reviewed and system changes are made when required.

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

**MR COE:** Minister, what is the rationale for not reporting code break incidents publicly? What information in particular is of a sensitive nature?

**MS GALLAGHER:** Obviously, these are not matters for the executive arm of government. Freedom of information requests do not come before the executive, nor are they decided by the executive unless they specifically relate to the executive's

office. My understanding, and I followed this in the media, is that the information that was not provided related to information that would contain personal health information.

Some of them, for example, may be about a fall in the hospital. Clearly, the incident would relate to an individual who has fallen and it would go into some detail about the situation. In that instance, my understanding is that the information was not disclosed because of that.

Again, I think we do provide a lot of information. It is up there on the FOI website. The fact that it has been talked about would show that there is a level of understanding of information out there. As I have said a number of times, the government's view is that where possible, information should be shared with the community because on one level it enables a better understanding of the stresses and strains that are placed on our operational staff in the delivery of their service.

## **Visitors**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Before I call the next question, I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of members of the University of the Third Age who are here with the Parliamentary Education Office. I welcome you to your Assembly.

## **Questions without notice Canberra Hospital—extension**

**DR BOURKE:** My question is to the Minister for Health. Can the minister update the Assembly on the recently opened expansion to the Canberra Hospital emergency department and intensive care unit?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I thank Dr Bourke for his third question to me as Minister for Health this week. Last month I opened a new three-storey extension to the emergency department and the intensive care unit at Canberra Hospital. It was an important boost for the hospital, following on from the extension that was completed at Calvary's emergency department last December.

The expanded clinical space at Canberra Hospital has increased the capacity of the ED by eight treatment spaces. Staff from the emergency management unit have moved into the new treatment spaces and the extra beds are now operational. The new beds in the space in the ED have also enabled the introduction of a new model to stream patients within the department. This model will help move patients more quickly into the treatment area and allow staff to streamline higher and lower acuity patients as circumstances dictate.

In the last emergency department report that I have been provided with, it is showing improvements in timeliness for people being treated in the emergency department, and I hope those figures will be sustained. Models like this have shown to improve the flow of patients through the emergency department. There have been improvements since 10 October when it was introduced. We look forward to seeing those trends continue. I think all members in this place would support that.

In the intensive care unit, seven new bed spaces have been provided. This will help staff to manage the patient load. A new family room and new staff areas create flexibility for the staff to manage and support patients and their families. These beds are an important early step to help prepare the unit for higher demand in coming years. The extension was jointly funded by the ACT government and the commonwealth in a project of \$7½ million. The new Assistant Minister for Health, Senator Fiona Nash, was there at the opening.

I hope to continue a productive relationship with the new federal ministers around future funding and reforms in our public health system. This project is another step forward in building the ACT health infrastructure which is being rolled out across Canberra Hospital and the community health settings.

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

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, are there any other improvements currently being planned for the emergency department?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Minister for Health—as long as you do not announce new policy.

**MS GALLAGHER:** Thank you for your direction, Madam Speaker. Increasingly the emergency department is being seen as just one part of a whole possible approach to improving the timeliness figures. The factors which affect waiting times and patient flow go to different parts of the hospital, which is why we have focused on a number of initiatives, for example the new model of care which I just spoke about and also the ability to establish surge beds earlier this year to respond to periods of increased demand. We established the medical short stay unit in late 2012. We expanded the discharge lounge at the end of 2011. We have also purchased beds at Monash Goodwin Village for patients waiting for nursing home care, which has also been very successful.

The next major step is planning for the paediatric emergency department. Following the initial design and DA submissions, we expect a managing contractor to be appointed in March 2014, with an expected construction period of around 12 months. The feedback I get from parents, particularly, who use the Canberra Hospital is that separating children from the mainstream ED will be an important step in improving the amenity and care of children in the emergency department by creating a more appropriate environment for children and parents to wait in and through a specialised paediatric emergency area to support the high-quality treatment that all parents want for their children.

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

**MR HANSON:** Minister, did the fabrication of ED data from 2010 to 2012 affect the urgency of these enhancements?

**MS GALLAGHER:** No, they had nothing to do with them.

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

**MS BERRY:** Minister, have you visited other emergency departments in recent months? How did these EDs compare with the Canberra Hospital?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I thank Ms Berry for the question. As members know, I did visit two of Brisbane's emergency departments with ACT Health officials. It was a day trip. I visited the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital and the Princess Alexandra Hospital. The reason I chose to go there was that both of these hospitals have made considerable improvements in their NEAT targets. I spoke to hospital staff and health officials about what they had done to improve their ED processes.

The visit confirmed what I had been told by those here locally, that ED performance is a whole-of-hospital issue. Both of the Brisbane hospitals are comparable to Canberra in terms of the number of patients presenting per year. But each of the hospitals had significantly more beds. In this sense, the 31 new inpatient beds that we are funding will have a positive effect.

But despite our fewer beds, I think one hospital was an 800-bed hospital and their ED performance was marginally better than Canberra Hospital with a bed number between 550 and 600 beds. But despite the fewer beds, Canberra Hospital has similar levels of performance for admitted patients but both hospitals were doing a lot better on non-admitted patients—that is, those that return home after their care.

So there were some lessons to be learnt from this visit. I went with the clinical director of the emergency department and the deputy director-general of Canberra Hospital. It was a senior high-level delegation with our ears open. It confirmed a lot of the planning that is already in place and the changes have been brought in but it also provided us with some insight into further changes that can be made, particularly around non-admitted patients in the hospital.

### **Planning—proposed Belconnen hotel**

**MR COE:** My question is to the minister responsible for planning. Minister, on Thursday, 24 October the Canberra Labor Club announced that it was proposing to build an 11-storey, 150-room hotel in Belconnen. Minister, what actions are you proposing to take to ensure that there is no perception of a conflict of interest in considering this proposal?

**MR CORBELL:** I have certainly had no discussions in relation to the proposal with any representative of that group. Any proposal from the Labor Club or any other developer will be managed in the way that all development applications are managed, and that is, through the arms-length process set out under the Planning and Development Act.

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

**MR COE:** Minister, will the organisation, the Canberra Labor Club, be subject to lease variation charge and will you rule out using your call-in powers?

**MR CORBELL:** Whether or not the proposal is subject to any lease variation charge will be determined by the Planning and Land Authority. I am not familiar with the circumstances of the proposal, their details or whether or not lease variation charge is a relevant consideration. If it is, it will be administered in the normal manner. In relation to the issue of use of call-in powers, I do not speculate on the exercise of powers in relation to any development application where currently there is not a development application and no specific proposal, as far as I am aware, before the Planning and Land Authority.

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

**MR WALL:** Minister, what confidence can opponents to this development have that their objections will be given due weight in the planning process?

**MR CORBELL:** The Planning and Development Act sets out a comprehensive framework for objections to be lodged and for public notification and consultation to occur.

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

**MS BERRY:** Is the minister aware of any opponents to this development in Belconnen?

**MR CORBELL:** I thank Ms Berry for the supplementary. I am not aware of any concerns having been raised to date. That is not to say there may not be—there may be. Nor am I aware of any support for the proposal, aside from the mention of the proposal in the media. These are all issues that will have to be canvassed through the normal development assessment processes.

### **Planning—exempt development provisions**

**MR DOSZPOT:** My question is to the Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development. Minister, the recent events at 5 Fraser Place, Yarralumla have highlighted issues in the current “exempt development” provisions under the Planning and Development Act 2007. Minister, on 10 April 2013 during question time you stated:

... I can advise Mr Doszpot that, at my request, an amendment to the regulation is being prepared to restrict dwellings with common walls to no longer be exempt from significant development works.

Minister, the issue has raised serious concern throughout the community in relation to potential redevelopment of other duplexes, and as such a letter was sent to your office dated 17 September requesting further information. Minister, it has been approximately six weeks. Why has no response been provided?

**MR CORBELL:** I thank Mr Doszpot for his question. As luck would have it, about two minutes ago I signed a letter to Mr Doszpot, so I will read it out. It says:

Dear Mr Doszpot

I refer to your letter of 17 September 2013 in which you seek information regarding my indication on 10 April 2013 during Question Time, that I had requested the preparation of an amendment to the *Planning and Development Regulation 2008*.

As you correctly state, the purpose of the amendment is to restrict the availability of certain development approval exemptions for significant development works on dwellings with common walls. I am pleased to advise that I expect the amendment will be made and come into operation in the near future.

It is proposed to amend the DA demolition exemption provision in s1.100B of schedule 1 of the regulation to remove its application to the demolition of duplexes. Related amendments in connection with significant alternations other than demolition are also being considered.

The proposed amendment on demolition will mean that the demolition of one of the dwellings in a duplex will require development approval under the *Planning and Development Act 2007*. This will ensure that such demolitions are fully assessed by the planning and land authority as well as providing an opportunity for public representations on the development application. It will also ensure that any conditions relating to the demolition, such as common wall rectification works, can be set as appropriate by the authority.

Thank you for your interest in this matter.

Madam Speaker, I think that does address the issues Mr Doszpot has raised in his question today. Of course, I will be providing him with a copy of this correspondence that I have just signed.

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

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister—and I will be quite happy to give you further dorothy dixers—can you tell us the details of the amendments that you are planning, the details of the amendments pertaining to the common party wall issue?

**MR CORBELL:** As I just indicated in my previous answer, the amendments will require that anyone wishing to demolish one half of a duplex gets formal development approval. Therefore, rather than requiring simply a building certifier, because it is currently exempt work in terms of DA approval, that would mean that up front someone wanting to demolish one half of a duplex will have to satisfy the Planning and Land Authority that, firstly, the rectification following demolition is to the appropriate standard in terms of that common party wall. Secondly, it will mean that the person residing in or owning the other half of the duplex is aware up front of what their neighbours are proposing to do and will have the opportunity to comment on that before any approval is considered. I think that would address a lot of the problems that we saw arise in relation to the Yarralumla incident.

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

**MRS JONES:** Minister, when will these changes come into effect and what consultation has been had with industry?

**MR CORBELL:** I like how Mrs Jones wants me to consult with industry but Mr Doszpot wants it done yesterday. I think perhaps Mrs Jones and Mr Doszpot need to have a conversation. I am keen to see the regulation made as soon as possible. The Planning and Land Authority has an established process for engaging with industry bodies as part of any technical changes such as these made under the planning regulations.

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

**MRS JONES:** Minister, has the government considered compensation or reimbursement for people negatively affected by this particular issue?

**MR CORBELL:** No, we have not, and nor would we. We are talking about works which are permitted to occur in a particular manner at this point in time. The government is proposing to change the manner in which these works can potentially occur. The issues that arise in relation to the incident at Yarralumla are essentially a private dispute between two parties. That can be resolved through appropriate civil law advice and proceedings as necessary. I am pleased that has not been the case at Yarralumla. My officials have sought to work with both lessees to reach a mediated outcome. That, as I understand it, has largely been achieved and that has been to the benefit of all parties.

### **Arts—Tuggeranong Community Arts Association**

**MR SMYTH:** My question is to the Minister for the Arts. Minister, the Tuggeranong Community Arts Association had 32 members when a quarter of the membership called for a special general meeting at the start of October. Since the special general meeting was called, 27 new members joined the organisation and were apparently entitled to vote at the special meeting held last night. Of these 27, it is reported that 14 were members of the Australian Labor Party. An external accountant provided a report to the board stating that the organisation should undertake a forensic audit. However, the CEO has declared there is “no crisis” and that an audit is not necessary. Minister, what actions are you taking in relation to the concerns raised by the external consultant who recommended a forensic audit needed to take place?

**MS BURCH:** I thank Mr Smyth for his question. There was a meeting last night. As I understand, most in the room expressed a level of confidence in the board and the program that they are putting in place.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order!

**MS BURCH:** As I understand, an official from artsACT was also at that meeting and observed the meeting. I will no doubt get a comment from him when I have my next

regular briefing with him. In respect of what we are doing, artsACT is very clear that we have a contract arrangement in place for the Tuggeranong Community Arts Association. What I have been advised by artsACT is that they are meeting their contract—

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, Mr Hanson!

**MS BURCH:** requirements to us as a contracted organisation. The matter that I think Mr Smyth is referring to is an internal matter for Tuggeranong arts centre.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, were any MLAs or MLAs' staff among the 27 new members who joined in the last month?

**MS BURCH:** Certainly none of my staff.

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

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, what advice have you received from artsACT or the Office of Regulatory Services about this matter?

**MS BURCH:** I have not received any advice from the Office of Regulatory Services. I do not think it has been raised with them, unlike other concerns for other community organisations that I think may have involved members of the Canberra Liberal Party. I am not quite sure—

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MS BURCH:** You did ask me to join the dots—

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, Mr Hanson!

**MS BURCH:** absolutely on that one. My advice from artsACT, as I have said in the earlier answer, is that artsACT has a contract—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Sit down, Minister Burch, please. Could you stop the clock? Mr Hanson, I have called you to order on a number of occasions. I ask you to not shout across the chamber and to not to be aided and abetted by Mr Coe. Minister Burch.

**MS BURCH:** I do appreciate your calling them to order, Madam Speaker. As I have referred to, artsACT has a contract arrangement. It has met all the contract obligations.

Tuggeranong arts is required to be independently audited each and every year as part of the annual reporting to artsACT.

*Mr Doszpot interjecting—*

**MS BURCH:** That has not raised any concerns to artsACT.

*Mr Doszpot interjecting—*

**MS BURCH:** I ask that you also bring Mr Doszpot to order, Madam Speaker. He continues to interject.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** No, I do the calling to order.

**MS BURCH:** I have asked. Whether you choose to or not is certainly your prerogative.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I hear you. You are answering the question.

**MS BURCH:** They have not raised any concern with the independent audit. As to the fact that an official was asked to be present at the meeting yesterday, I will certainly take feedback from him. From my point of my view now, they are internal matters to that organisation.

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

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, will the ACT government undertake an audit of the acquittal of the expenditure of ACT government grant funds which are, in effect, taxpayers' dollars?

**MS BURCH:** As an agency that has a contract with artsACT, part of its annual reporting and compliance is an independent audit report done each and every year, and that has been complied with.

### **Housing—homelessness**

**MS LAWDER:** My question is to the Minister for Housing. Minister, the “A place to call home” program was one of the four core outputs of the national partnership agreement on homelessness, representing approximately 48 per cent of overall initial funding in the ACT. Minister, an audit of the national partnership agreement on homelessness by the ACT Auditor-General indicates that there was poor financial record keeping and misreporting of buildings within this program. Minister, why was the Auditor-General unable to determine the actual expenditure on this program?

**MR RATTENBURY:** Yes, the Auditor-General did conduct that audit earlier this year and identified a number of problems that were present in record keeping. That is a matter of public record. I would note that the Community Services Directorate, Housing ACT, accepted all of the recommendations from the Auditor-General, and changes are now being implemented to ensure that those matters are followed through.

I think it would be fair to say, though, and I cannot recall the exact text, that I do not think the Auditor-General concluded that there were substantial issues of concern about the disappearance of money. I think that the findings were of the nature that suggested that there were trail of document questions that needed to be resolved rather than substantial concerns.

The other thing I would note here is, of course, that that whole program, the national partnership agreement on housing, is up in the air at the moment. Members may be interested to know that at this point that agreement is due to expire on 30 June next year and there is no indication from the incoming federal government as to whether the program will be continued, a point of considerable concern both for the ACT government and for the organisations that are conducting those programs.

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

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, how is it that the ACT government misreported the number of houses built under this scheme to the federal government, claiming 21 houses were built when in fact it was only 20, according to the Auditor-General's report?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I will take the details of that question on notice. I just cannot recall the exact circumstances around that matter, and I would prefer to give a full and accurate answer.

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

**MR COE:** Minister, when did you become aware of the poor record keeping within the program?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I became aware when I received a copy of the Auditor-General's report.

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

**MR COE:** Minister, what have you done to rectify the problems identified by the Auditor-General, and are you aware of any other instances in the directorate that involve the disappearance of money?

**MR RATTENBURY:** As members might expect, when I received the Auditor-General's report I specifically discussed it with my director-general responsible for that agency. The agency, as I noted in my earlier answer to Ms Lawder, has agreed to all of the recommendations and is implementing changes. As with all of my agencies, I have an expectation, and I have made it clear to them, that when there are reports from the Auditor-General, I expect those recommendations to be implemented and also to be given updates on that implementation. I will be ensuring that those matters are followed through.

**Health—healthy weight action plan**

**MRS JONES:** My question is to the Minister for Health. On 24 October in response to a question about the healthy weight action plan you said, and I quote “I know that this is the area where the plan will get most criticism, about whether or not we should ban sugary drinks or regulate sugary drinks or look at sugar-free checkout aisles. But the simple fact is that those steps have worked in terms of tobacco control.” There is no reference, however, to potential bans of soft drinks in the healthy weight action plan—only to unspecified regulation. Will the minister confirm that the government is considering banning soft drinks as stated in her answer in this place on 24 October? If so, why is it not referenced in the healthy weight action plan? If not, why did she refer to a ban as an option for the government?

**MS GALLAGHER:** It is mentioned. I do not have a copy of the document in front of me, but the action items are split into two tables. One is fairly straightforward steps that we can take and the second table outlines a list of initiatives that look at things that would require regulatory impact statements and further consultation with industry. I do not have the exact words with me, but one of them is looking at the regulation of sugary drinks.

That is something that I will be pursuing as part of the health weight initiative. We have done it at the arboretum, for example, where I have not allowed a soft drink vending machine in that facility. Because of that, we have not been able to have a vending machine in that facility. So now the shop sells water. There is juice available but there are no soft drinks for sale in vending machine-type facilities. So it is something that we have some control over.

In terms of looking at supermarkets, it is a much bigger question. One thing I would say is that there was an ad the other day for a large supermarket chain selling a limit of eight bottles of family size soft drink for half price. That is what we are up against. There is no doubt that one of the biggest single contributors to weight gain in children is the consumption of sugary drinks. It is juice and it is soft drink. That is one of the single biggest contributors. So we have to have a discussion around—

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, Mr Coe!

**MS GALLAGHER:** the consumption of sugary drinks. The difference with—

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, Mr Coe!

**MS GALLAGHER:** sugary drinks is that they have an incredible amount of sugar in them. One 600 millimetre bottle can have 16 teaspoons of sugar and there is no nutritional value. It does not fill you up. So after you consume all that sugar, you are hungry. Yes, we have to have a conversation about it. Eighty per cent of the ACT adult population is forecast to be overweight or obese by 2025.

If people think we can avoid these discussions, put our heads in the sand and just hope it is going to change, they are wrong. All the data will show that that is the wrong approach. Governments need to lead on these matters, and we will lead. We will be careful. I know I will be accused of being a nanny state, but we have those statistics confronting us, just like governments in the 1970s had about smoking and the impact of smoking. Being overweight is linked to cancer, it is linked to heart disease, it is linked to diabetes, it is linked to chronic disease. It has the exact same—

**Mr Smyth:** What about alcohol?

**MS GALLAGHER:** Children are not drinking alcohol like they are drinking Coke, Mr Smyth. They are simply not doing it. We have a quarter of our four-year-old population overweight or obese now. Imagine what that is going to be like in 20 years if we see the consumption patterns that we are seeing now continue.

This is not about denying people a lolly bag or a glass of lemonade at a party. It is not about that. But the availability of high-sugar content food, the consumption of it and the lack of understanding, I think—I understand that it is hard for parents to understand the impact that some of these products are having on their children's health but we have to start the conversation. Governments need to lead and we will lead in the facilities where we have control for it.

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

**MRS JONES:** Minister, what steps used in tobacco control are under consideration for soft drinks, as indicated in your answer last week?

**MS GALLAGHER:** One, we banned tobacco from a number of places, so that you cannot actually smoke. When I was growing up you could smoke in your workplace. That was regulated; you are not allowed to do it anymore. And shock, horror—the numbers of smokers go down and the rate of smoking goes down. We do not allow smoking in our restaurants anymore. Again, the impact that has had on smoking rates is that they have gone down.

In relation to supermarkets, children can no longer buy cigarettes. That was something that used to be allowed. Cigarettes are not able to be displayed anymore. They have to be behind a cupboard. So that is another example of regulation, and not suggestive selling. Plain packaging is another intervention by government to regulate and require healthy messages to be put on a product that, if taken as directed, will kill you. So they are some examples of successful regulation.

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

**MS BERRY:** Minister, could you outline for the Assembly the obesity and overweight prevention efforts already underway in schools as part of the healthy weight action plan?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I thank Ms Berry for the question. There are a number of programs at work in schools. There is “kids at play”, “healthy food at school”, “ride or walk to school”, “it’s your move ACT” and “healthy food@sport”. There are other programs that are being implemented under the national partnership for health promotion that we are working with the department of education on. There are steps being made in healthy foods and, of course, the health promotion grants—the \$2.1 million provided through that program—will all be targeted to this area.

We have had a good response to round one of that. I think \$12 million worth of applications have come in for \$2 million worth of funding. We will proceed to the second round of that shortly. All of that money will go into sending positive messages around healthy eating and healthy activity levels, promoting physical activity, so that we can start turning around some of these shocking statistics. And they are shocking. Anyone who pretends they are not is wrong. They are simply shocking and the health system will not be able to cope.

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

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, will the potential action on sugary drinks also apply to soft drinks with artificial sweeteners such as Coke Zero?

**MS GALLAGHER:** It is identified as an action item in the healthy weight initiative, in zero growth. There have been no decisions taken about how to proceed with that. I would say that some of the big supermarkets got in touch fairly quickly on the release of that report, our publication, to start early engagement with us on this subject and to let us know that they are keen on working in partnership with government. They recognise the problems being experienced across the community in relation specifically to the health costs of having such an unhealthy population, which is what we have got. The government will work in partnership with stakeholders as outlined in the plan.

### **Health—healthy weight action plan**

**MR WALL:** Madam Speaker, my question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, in the government’s towards zero growth healthy weight action plan, one of the identified actions is to:

Implement a program of health risk assessments for ACT Government staff and explore options for extending this to the private sector.

That is from page 18. The plan also noted that this action item may:

... include linking the assessments to a competition or exercise/nutrition program.

How will staff be identified for health risk assessments?

**MS GALLAGHER:** It will be voluntary. As the first step of implementing the healthy weight action plan, I will be meeting in the next 10 days, I think, with the working groups that have been established to lead each of the action item areas. It is being led across directorates; it is not actually being managed by the Health portfolio. I will be meeting with all of them to talk with them about how they are going to implement the action items that sit within their area of responsibility, what their priorities are and how they are going to manage them. That will happen in the next 10 days and I am happy to update the Assembly further on that.

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

**MR WALL:** Chief Minister, how will you ensure that staff within the ACT public service are not discriminated against because of their size?

**MS GALLAGHER:** We already offer programs across the ACT government around healthy lifestyles. So I see this as an extension of that. For example, we would run programs at different points where you could get your cholesterol checked. It is an extension of programs like that. They would be voluntary. It is not about making fun of people's weight—anything but. It is about encouraging healthy lifestyles, and also acknowledging that people spend upwards of 40 hours per week at work, if you are working full time. That is a considerable part of your waking hours and employers should be leading the way to encourage healthy lifestyles within their workforce.

I think we are seeing pockets of it across the ACT government. It depends on the nature of the job you do as to access to particular programs or encouragement to get out and walk and undertake physical activity or eat well. What we would like to see is a more consistent approach and the ACT government leading the way and showing all employers that it adds up—that it makes good business sense to have healthy employees who are a whole range of different weights. No-one is having a view on how many kilos you are, but it makes very good business sense to have a healthy workforce. And that is what this is about.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Chief Minister, how does the government intend to include staff in competitions? What kind of competitions will these be, and will you rule out making it compulsory?

**MS GALLAGHER:** This is all voluntary, but the government will be leading the way and will be letting staff know this is an important priority for the government. I am interested to understand what the Liberals' positioning is on this. Do they accept that there is a problem that we need to address? If so, what are the appropriate responses? I would have thought that encouraging healthy lifestyles at work was a key responsibility of employers going forward. That is certainly my view as Chief Minister—that if we can encourage healthy lifestyles and a better understanding and education of what contributes to poor health, and if we can address some of the reasons why people are physically inactive, then we are working towards solving the problem.

As an employer of 22,000 people—some jobs are quite sedentary and others are very active—I think the ACT government should be leading the way. I would have to say there is a small part of me that thought this initiative of government would get bipartisan and tripartisan support. I know I have got the support of the Greens, but I am not hearing anything from the Liberals, other than, I guess, concern at the edges about some forced boot camp, which is not what this is about. This is actually about leading the way, setting a good example and encouraging best practice amongst our staff—not just in work practice but in the way that they live and enjoy their lives.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Chief Minister, will you be referring this plan to the ACT Human Rights Commission to ensure that this policy does not discriminate against Canberrans?

**MS GALLAGHER:** It does not discriminate against Canberrans. It is always the easy way out of tough discussions like this. The minute you start to respond and say there is a problem with—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MS GALLAGHER:** I have not heard one positive response to this from the Liberal Party since it was released, and now you try to summarise it by saying that it is a discriminatory document. It is not. It is an aspirational document of a community we would like to see. The reality is that we have 65 per cent of our adult population who are overweight or obese, and that has significant consequences not only on individuals' health but on the health of the entire community, particularly in relation to how we meet the health challenges associated with that.

As I said, there are links to chronic disease, diabetes, and the elective surgery program, for example, with a lot of knees and hips replaced because of people's weight. All of this contributes to all of us; it is a shared community responsibility and it is one that we have to take seriously, or the Chief Minister in this place in 20 years will be explaining why 55, 60 or 70 per cent of all ACT revenue is being funnelled into the health system to deal with the crisis that this creates. I am not exaggerating here; that is exactly what will happen.

We have just spent a million dollars to establish a public obesity program in this jurisdiction. That is what we have had to do in this budget, and we will continue to have to grow that budget to allow it to deal with what we are seeing in the hospital. We have to change it, and the best place to change it is at work, where we have employees for 40 hours a week, and with our kids. And that is what the healthy weight initiative targets.

### **Economy—exports**

**MS BERRY:** My question is to the Minister for Economic Development. Can the minister advise what broad policies the government has to promote trade development and innovation amongst ACT businesses.

**MR BARR:** I thank Ms Berry for the question. Fostering trade and innovation is vital to the territory's future growth and to job creation within the ACT. As I have alluded to previously, the ACT business community is becoming more export focused. It is pleasing to see that the value of goods and services exported from the ACT increased by nearly 9½ per cent in the 2011-12 financial year, to \$1.3 billion. This rate of growth, at 9.4 per cent, was above the national rate of growth of 6.3 per cent. In fact, it reflected territory's position as recording the highest year-on-year growth rate in 2011-12. The five-year trend growth rate of exports from the territory is at 6.8 per cent.

We have a growing number of innovators, evidenced by the strong number of start-ups, particularly in high-tech sectors.

To ensure this growth continues, it is important that our business continues to receive support from government and there are the right policy settings to continue to grow and create jobs. The government is taking a market-based approach to supporting export growth. We are rejecting the development of old-fashioned industry plans and "cargo cult" approaches of throwing money at businesses in the hope that they will set up shop in Canberra.

**Mr Coe:** Kim Carr would be shattered.

**MR BARR:** Kim Carr; Kate Carnell. I do not care who was previously engaged in such policy approaches. We all remember Impulse Airlines and the 10 million bucks that was thrown at them. A very successful investment that was for the territory—very successful! They are a great airline, Impulse, doing a lot of operations—a lot of flights into and out of Canberra over the last decade from Impulse. That is one example—but one example—of that cargo cult approach.

The government is adopting an alternate view, one of committing significant, proactive and consistent support for exporters and innovators. Through the business development strategy, we have put in place a wide range of policies and programs to help businesses to export. Included amongst this is the establishment of InvestACT, which is a key driver for encouraging businesses to set up or expand their operations in Canberra, and help local businesses tap into the knowledge and capital of investors. The brand Canberra work will give exporters a clear identity with which to express the benefits of doing business in the ACT and will provide a new way for firms to talk about ourselves and showcase who we are, what we do and how we go about it.

We are bringing together all of the ACT government's export activities through the global connect program. This program consists of a range of subprograms raising awareness amongst territory businesses about exporting, promoting collaboration amongst local exporters, increasing the number of local exporters and helping them to tap into new markets. The innovation connect program supports the early stages of business innovation and assists entrepreneurs to commercialise and create value from their innovations. The Lighthouse Business Innovation Centre provides services for investment-oriented young companies. CollabIT does an excellent job of promoting SMEs and innovative companies and establishing partnerships between government agencies, SMEs and multinationals. *(Time expired.)*

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

**MS BERRY:** Minister, has the government provided any assistance for the space and spatial innovation precinct at Stromlo?

**MR BARR:** The government has indeed provided assistance for the space and spatial innovation partnership at Mount Stromlo. We are a strong supporter of this project, which will be a key plank in the long-term growth and diversity of Canberra's economy. The aim of the partnership is to create new jobs, expand exports and grow revenues by up to \$12½ billion per annum.

Leading space and spatial industry and research organisations, led by the Canberra company Electro Optic Systems and the ANU, established the partnership in response to the former government's call for applications under its industry innovation precincts program. To support the partnership we have pledged in-kind support of \$120,000 per year by providing the services of a business development case manager to the partnership to give businesses access to the government's business development services.

In addition, we have agreed to look at the business case for providing the partnership with a capital injection for the development of an incubator facility at Mount Stromlo. Commonwealth funding for this program is now under review. But, given the importance of the project, if those opposite would like to do a little to help the local economy they could, indeed, lobby their federal colleagues to recognise the importance of this partnership and to urge them to fund the program.

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

**MR COE:** Minister, does the government have an industry policy with regard to clubs and poker machines?

**MR BARR:** The government has an MOU with ClubsACT.

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

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, what specific initiatives have been funded under the global connect policy?

**MR BARR:** There are a number of initiatives that the government is funding under the global connect policy. This includes the trade connect program, which is a competitive grants program providing funding to emerging ACT exporters to support trade development activities. Through the ACT exporters network, we are providing a unique forum for new and experienced exporting companies to network, share knowledge and to expand and develop export markets. The trade mission program provides an annual outbound ministerial trade mission to support local companies in partnership with Austrade.

The Chief Minister's export awards, which are part of a national program to recognise excellence in export performance across a number of different categories, is supported. The Centre for Exporting Government Solutions provides resources and expert mentoring to small and medium size enterprises with a demonstrated capability of delivering innovative solutions to the Australian public sector to access international markets. The ACT international student ambassador program is a niche initiative that aims to leverage the international student experience in Canberra, both as an international education marketing tool and as a skills network that can link to the ACT economy.

### **Arts—Ainslie and Gorman House arts centres**

**MR GENTLEMAN:** My question is to the Minister for Arts. Minister, can you update the Assembly on the progress of the government's 2013-14 budget commitments to invest \$1.5 million and \$1 million in capital upgrades to the Ainslie and Gorman House arts centres respectively?

**MS BURCH:** I thank Mr Gentleman for his interest in the arts. Yes, the ACT government is committed to developing arts hubs that will add vibrancy and profile to the local arts sector. The development and enhancement of arts hubs is a significant step in achieving the goals set out in the ACT arts policy framework.

Arts hubs will be achieved by promoting the development of a critical mass of activity and encouraging the cooperation and resource sharing amongst arts organisations. More than that, arts hubs will encourage creative dialogue, promoting collaboration between artists and organisation, and support innovation in the arts.

To fulfil this vision, the ACT government is currently engaged in the design process for a capital works upgrade program for the Ainslie Arts Centre and has commissioned a schematic design from Philip Leeson Architects and cultural planner, Geoff Ashley, which outlines potential capital upgrades to enhance the function of the centre based on present and future use.

The \$1.5 million commitment will contribute to major modifications of the Ainslie Arts Centre and enhance the function of the heritage facility for specific use as a music hub. The capital works upgrade will create a greater diversity of opportunities for the local community by providing accessible and innovative education and performance opportunities for children, young people and adults of Canberra and surrounds. By including spaces for collaboration, gathering, education and performance, the Ainslie Arts Centre will become a destination for music in the ACT.

For Gorman House Arts Centre, following the allocation of \$1 million in capital funding, artsACT again engaged Philip Leeson Architects and Susan Conroy Cultural Planner to undertake a scoping study and design for the centre. The scoping study explored options for how the physical framework of Gorman House may be modified to best meet the needs of the tenants and the wider community, promoting and facilitating optimal use of the centre. The report provides a long-term strategy identifying capital works rectification and upgrades to support a coherent and overarching vision for the centre.

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

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, what consultation has there been with stakeholders on these projects?

**MS BURCH:** Consultation has indeed been a key element of the first phases of the projects at Gorman House and Ainslie Arts Centre. The development of the Ainslie Arts Centre as a music hub has been the subject of significant community conversation and reflects the government's commitment to the community consultation process. We believe that the best outcomes are arrived at through a meaningful dialogue with the sector and Ainslie Arts Centre is a good example of best practice processes resulting in real actions.

Consultation about the future of Ainslie Arts Centre was initially undertaken through two youth music roundtable meetings at the Ainslie Arts Centre in February and March last year and also supported through the subsequent establishment of independent music groups, the ACT music forum. The youth music roundtable meetings reflected that rectification of the building, with a view to enhancing music activity and vibrancy at the Ainslie Arts Centre, would be of benefit to the ACT music community. These meetings were the impetus for the consideration of capital works updates at the centre.

Responding to the advice and fulfilling commitments outlined in the ACT youth music forward plan, the ACT government engaged Phillip Leeson to undertake a space audit and planning for the centre. This was completed in March. Tenants, hirers and a range of other interested stakeholders were consulted and this has resulted in the final design. Feedback about the design has been sought from Gorman House, who manage the Ainslie Arts Centre, and tenants. The feedback will certainly be used to finalise the design.

At Gorman House Arts Centre they have been undertaking strategic and business planning exercises concurrently with a scoping study and as the managers of Ainslie Arts Centre further consultation will be undertaken in order to ensure that finalisation of these projects is consistent with the strategic directions of the centre and to reduce operational impact.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, does the government have an arts industry policy to guide these investments in the arts industry?

**MS BURCH:** I would refer Mr Smyth to the ACT arts framework and also the partnership approach that we have across many sectors in the ACT.

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

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, could you tell us more about some of the feedback during these consultations?

**MS BURCH:** I thank Dr Bourke for his interest. We have heard from stakeholders that a dedicated performance space for Ainslie Arts Centre is a common and central priority. Upgrades to the centre will include the development of an affordable, self-contained, flexible, public access, community performance space, with a focus on music for Ainslie Arts Centre.

Feedback has also informed us of the need to assess the acoustic properties and size of the classrooms and to provide sound-isolated spaces for amplified music, to create a greater diversity of users for Ainslie Arts Centre. This feedback may result in the reconfiguration of the internal building spaces, reinstating classroom spaces for rehearsals within the original “H” plan of the building. The new configuration will also provide sound-insulated rehearsal and performance pods that will allow for flexible use.

Tenants have also spoken about appropriate lighting and air flow and the need to create a pleasant and connected working environment, allowing for reduced isolation of staff working within a small organisation.

The design addresses some of these issues through the proposed co-location of administrative offices. Feedback has indicated that there is support for the concept but that further design work will be necessary to ensure that all of the tenants’ needs are met.

The report from the cultural planner for Gorman House Arts Centre indicates that a number of themes emerged through the consultation. There was clear feedback that Gorman House Arts Centre is an important and longstanding part of the arts and cultural life in Canberra. The themes reported include identity, operational matters, built form and landscape, and looking to the future. More specifically, feedback indicated arrival and way-finding within the centre needs improvement and that increased visibility of the creative activity within the centre would be beneficial.

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

## **Supplementary answers to questions without notice**

### **Health—healthy weight action plan**

#### **Canberra Hospital—emergency evacuation**

**MS GALLAGHER:** I have two matters, one being in relation to the towards zero growth strategy. Regulating the sale of sugar-sweetened drinks is outlined on page 18 of table 2 of the document.

In relation to the codes in place at the hospital, there are seven codes: code blue, medical emergency; code purple, bomb threat; code red, fire; code black, personal threat; code orange, evacuation; code yellow, internal emergency; and code brown, external emergency.

## Paper

Mr Corbell presented the following paper:

Petition which does not conform with the standing orders—Yabby traps that endanger wildlife—Mr Corbell (111 signatures).

## Planning—draft city plan

Debate resumed.

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra) (3.34), in reply: Madam Speaker, I thank everybody for their contributions to the debate this morning. The vitality of our city centre is a reflection on the vitality of our territory. While I was listening to everybody talking about the city centre plan and how wonderful our beautiful city is, I was reflecting on my childhood and how I felt about the city centre as a young person—Civic, as we called it back then. As a young teenager growing up in west Belconnen, a big event for us was coming into Civic to go to the movie theatre on the weekend. There were no movie theatres in Belconnen back then. We would catch the bus at Holt shops into Belconnen and then catch the 333 into the city to see the movies. Usually it was on a Saturday afternoon or occasionally on a Sunday, and it was an incredibly quiet place back in those days. We used to go into Chicken Gourmet, grab our chips and gravy and sneak them into the theatre. Sometimes we would get away with it.

**Mr Coe:** There were a heap of CFMEU guys in there just the other day, actually.

**MS BERRY:** It is lovely that everybody is enjoying some of the fine eateries in our fine city. But my memories of the city back then compared to how it is today show how hard it is to imagine what it might be in the future. I know my children would never, ever imagine what it could possibly look like, and when looking at some of the plans and pictures of what could possibly make up the city to the lake plan, it is something we can only imagine. It is only one day in the future when we are walking along the lake or walking through the city that we will be able to see what a fantastic city centre Civic is, how proud Canberrans are of our city and how willing we are to participate in the drafting of the plan. Mr Corbell has identified that 15,000 Canberrans made their contributions to the first round of consultations, with many more thousands to come I am sure.

I want to focus on the positives that the draft city to the lake plan can give to our city. I want to reflect on some of the things people said in this Assembly this morning about the drafting of the city to the lake plan. As Mr Gentleman said, moving the city centre towards a more pedestrian-friendly model will support growth and encourage more foot traffic around our retail precincts. You might have to walk a little bit further for your chips and gravy, but you will be able to have it on the lake perhaps instead of in the actual city, which is a wonderful thing. I am sure you might be able to meet more than just union members down there on the lake—there will be other people in our community enjoying their chips and gravy. It might be the food of the future!

I also add my voice to Mr Gentleman's praise of the consultation process. This has been one of the most inclusive and positive processes I have seen conducted by the ACT government, and I congratulate everybody involved in that process. I strongly encourage all of my colleagues in this place and all directorates to take note of this kind of consultation the next time they embark on significant projects.

Minister Corbell raised a couple of important points worth reflecting on whilst considering the development of this plan. This government has a smart, well-thought-out strategy for dealing with the significant growth that is expected over the next 15 to 20 years. By encouraging development in the city centre, in the outer town centres such as Belconnen and along major transport corridors, we are ensuring that residents maintain a good quality of life and keep the city's footprint as small as possible.

Mr Rattenbury rightly points out that, over time, the city centre has evolved in a somewhat haphazard way that has undermined some of the potential strengths of this part of our city, such as City Hill. It was heartening to hear Mr Rattenbury concur with Mr Corbell and Mr Gentleman's arguments for a walking-friendly city. I thank Dr Bourke for his insightful history lesson and contextualising of the development of our city. I also concur with his comments that it is high time our city centre caught up with Belconnen, which has had a city-to-the-lake-style development for a long time now.

Mr Barr talked about our lively West Basin and the different ways our community uses it. Ms Burch and Ms Gallagher called on everyone to participate in the process, with Ms Burch talking about the attractive, innovative buildings and community facilities that allow people to connect and to engage with the strength of our city character.

When we see the interest and the passion and the participation of everybody in our community, we can see that Canberrans really love our city. Most of us love this city; we on this side will keep talking the city up and you on that side can keep talking the city down. I am calling on all of my Assembly colleagues, including those on the other side, to have some faith in the consultation process. It is a fantastic opportunity for all of us to get involved and to engage with the government on the draft city plan. I encourage you all to participate.

Motion agreed to.

## **Planning—new convention centre**

**MR SMYTH** (Brindabella) (3.40): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the broad support for a new Convention Centre from the Canberra business community; and

- (b) the promise in the ACT Labor-Greens parliamentary agreement to “Work with stakeholders to progress the Australia forum initiative to ‘investment ready’ for consortium partners”; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

- (a) table work conducted on the “investment ready” plan by the last sitting day this year;
- (b) establish a Trust to oversee the development and implementation of the plan by 30 June 2014; and
- (c) complete the “investment ready” plan by 30 June 2015.

For a long time now, Canberra’s business events industry has not had a facility that matches the stature and the nature of the national capital. Indeed, it is appropriate to quote from a document, *Canberra: the meeting place*, that has a quote from the Australia forum scoping study, which says:

In order to fulfil its role as the nation’s capital, Canberra needs a [convention] venue of the scale, security, design and character that is appropriate for hosting major meetings of international and national importance.

That is something that we do not have. And after 12 years of Labor in office, it is something that has not even started construction. For those who were not there in the first week of December 2001, Ted Quinlan stood before the Tourism Industry Council and said, “This time next year”—December 2002—“we will announce the site for the new convention centre.” Here we are at almost December 2013 and we formally have not announced the site for the new convention centre. And that is the way that Labor operates.

It was funny to hear how Ms Berry closed the debate on the last motion. Yes, we hear lots of talk. What we do not get is the delivery. Indeed, there is a lovely quote from Thomas Edison that says, “Vision without execution is hallucination.” There has certainly been a lot of hallucination in this place over the last 12 years when it comes to a new convention centre. It is time that we have the execution of the project to deliver the benefits to the community, to the people of Canberra and to the business community. Indeed, one only needs to, again, read from the Australia forum scoping study, where it says:

Additional tourism expenditure from attendees to the Australia Forum convention centre is estimated to generate up to \$762m in Gross State Product for the ACT and 1,066 additional jobs over the economic life of the project.

Indeed, in the same document, on page 11 it says:

Ernst & Young research indicates that Canberra is underperforming in business events and is not taking advantage of growth opportunities. With the right convention centre infrastructure and by leveraging its national capital assets, Canberra could triple the size of its business events market and reach the same performance levels as Adelaide. As an indication of Canberra’s performance, in the ICCA—

the International Congress and Convention Association—

2012 World Wide City Rankings, Canberra is ranked 264—well below cities it should be competitive with, such as Washington DC (46), Cairns (134) ... and Ottawa (142).

Destinations that have decided to invest in new convention centre facilities, such as Adelaide, Ottawa and Auckland, are reporting increased investment in hotels, international air services and other associated infrastructure, as well as an increase in jobs during and after construction. Canberra continues to miss out on these economic benefits.

That rests fairly and squarely at the feet of the Treasurer. Let me say that again: “Canberra continues to miss out on these economic benefits.” It is a shame, Mr Assistant Speaker, because it would appear that everybody is in favour of a new convention centre but it is not very high on the government’s priority list. And you have to question: why isn’t it high on the priority list? This is actually a piece of business infrastructure, essential business infrastructure, that will bring revenue into the territory. Everything else that the government is proposing, whether it be the new stadium or the train set, will cost revenue. There will be outlays every year to maintain that—recurrent revenue to maintain those positions.

The problem is that the convention centre does not have a champion inside the government. There is not an officer assigned to it inside the bureaucracy. Unlike the money that is being filtered and funnelled into doing work on the stadium, the pet project of the Treasurer, there is not that sort of influence being brought to bear for the convention centre. That is why this motion calls on the government to establish a trust so that that trust can put together the work that needs to be done to enable this to go ahead. It also has a time frame attached—that the trust is set up by June next year, and that they complete the investment-ready plan by June 2015, so that we can capitalise on these benefits that Ernst & Young and other business firms have said exist and that we miss out on.

It is interesting to note the number of cities or countries that are far ahead of the ACT in this regard. The government of Rwanda have just announced that they will build a convention centre. There is no announcement from this government that they will build a convention centre. Azerbaijan have announced that they have set up a convention bureau. Why? So that they can get the benefits as well.

**Mr Barr:** Are you suggesting we don’t have a convention bureau?

**MR SMYTH:** No, I did not say that. I am just pointing out the fact that everybody is getting into this game but we lag behind because the Treasurer will not drive this project.

Convention centres are now essential pieces of business infrastructure. They allow business to happen, they allow communication to happen, they allow people to come together to conduct their business. They add to the prestige of a city. For instance, an academic at the ANU may be able to invite his colleagues from around the world to

attend a conference here. But we know that a large number of conferences cannot come to the ACT simply because the current convention centre is inadequate. Again, going back to the Australia forum scoping study, we need a venue of “scale, security, design and character”. The current facility does not have the scale, does not have the security, does not have the design and does not have the character that is appropriate to a nation’s capital. We should have such a facility, and that is why we have moved this motion today.

There is always a lot of conjecture about what should be built, what should come first. Often, even in the business community, there are varying views. But I have never seen the business community so united on a single project. I will read the list of all of the organisations—national institutions, and ACT and national organisations—that have said, “This is the number one priority if this city is to go ahead.” Let me read them: the Australian Academy of Science, the Australian Catholic University, the Australian Institute of Sport, the Australian National University, the Australian National Botanic Gardens, the Australian War Memorial, the CSIRO, the Museum of Australian Democracy, the National Archives, the National Film and Sound Archive, the National Gallery of Australia, the National Library of Australia, the National Museum of Australia, the National Portrait Gallery, Questacon—the National Science and Technology Centre, the Royal Australian Mint, the Australian Hotels Association, the ACT and Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the ACT Law Society, ACT Sport, ACT Computer Society, the Australian Information Industry Association, the Australian Hotels Association, the Australian Institute of Architects, the Australian Institute of Company Directors, the Australian Institute of Management, the Australian Institute of Quantity Surveyors, the Australian Medical Council, the Australian Property Institute, the Canberra Airport, the Canberra Business Council, the Canberra Convention Bureau, the Canberra Institute of Technology, the Chamber of Women in Business, ClubsACT, CollabIT, Consult Australia, Council on the Ageing, Engineers Australia, Family Business Australia, Institute of Public Accountants, the Master Builders ACT, Medicines Australia, the Motor Trades Association ACT, the National Capital Attractions Association, the Australian Electrical and Communications Association, NICTA, the Property Council of Australia, the Real Estate Institute of the ACT, the Safety Institute of Australia, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, the University of Canberra, the University of New South Wales Canberra, Volunteering ACT and the YWCA.

That is an impressive list of organisations, and I am told that that combined list represents about half of the employment in the ACT. This is the business sector speaking with a united voice, as it has spoken on no other issue in such a way. Indeed, I welcome the press release from the Canberra Business Council this morning headed “Australia forum a priority for government and business”. The opening paragraph reads:

Canberra Business Council hopes a motion being moved today by the ACT Liberals to establish a Trust to drive the Australia Forum project will be unanimously supported and help fast-track this important project.

“The Australia Forum is vital for the future economic stability of the ACT and it must be urgently progressed,” Canberra Business Council CEO, Chris Faulks said. “This is a critical project for the city because it will drive business tourism,

bringing more visitors to our hotels and restaurants. It will also help diversify our economy and allow the ACT to leverage off its competitive advantages in research and learning.”

It goes on to say:

For over five years—

this is the Canberra Business Council—

we have been suggesting that the best way to ensure Canberra gets a world-class convention centre is to establish an independent body that is of government, but sits outside of government. This body would be responsible for planning, implementing and possibly even managing the Australia Forum.

Mr Assistant Speaker, this is an important project, and it is an important project that is not getting the attention that it deserves from the government. You only need to look at what is happening in other jurisdictions to understand that other governments get it and the ACT government does not. In the time that we have been debating this over the last 12 years, for instance, the Melbourne convention centre doubled in size. Adelaide has had a refurbishment and is about to have another one, and the third refurbishment for Adelaide is larger than what is proposed in the Australia forum document. That is how important the business events market is to the people of South Australia.

But the shining example is what the New South Wales government is about to do. In December the convention centre at Darling Harbour will be shut and demolished and the New South Wales government, the New South Wales economy, will not have a large-scale convention centre for three to four years. Why? Because the New South Wales government understands that to be competitive it needs a bigger and better convention centre, and it needs it now. It is willing to take the short-term hit so that it can have a long-term facility that matches the stature of Sydney.

So they will not have a convention centre. Imagine if we had got our act together and the government had built a new convention centre for the ACT. We would be in such a good position to capitalise on that closure. But we are not. And the failure is the government's.

Canberra means “meeting place”. We are Canberra by name; we should be Canberra by nature. People should think of us as the meeting place, well beyond the meeting place of the federal parliament. We are home to five universities, including two of the best universities that are totally based here, in the form of the ANU and the University of Canberra. We are home to the premier headquarters of the premier research organisation in the country, the CSIRO. We are home to all of the federal departments. We are home to the federal parliament itself. We are home to the diplomatic community. So if you want to come to a prestigious city, a prestigious site that can give you so many different venues, whether it be the national parliament, the cultural institutions or the backdrop of the lake, often you cannot come to the ACT because our convention centre is not up to it.

Ms Lawder tells me that when she was the CEO of Homelessness Australia she wanted to bring their conference here. Here are an organisation whose headquarters are in Lyneham. They wanted to hold their national conference here in the ACT and they could not because it was not big enough. We are sending business out of the territory because of the failure of this government to deliver adequate convention facilities for the ACT.

If we compare it with their approach to capital metro, apparently capital metro is such a good project that there is no limit to how much money will be spent to build it. We know this from the Treasurer. He said there is no upper limit. Capital metro now has its own organisation. We have one of the highest paid bureaucrats in the territory running it, and there is \$18 million in this budget. Capital metro will cost the taxpayer of the ACT every year—if it is ever built; but there will be a subsidy to it every year. A new convention centre will grow the economy and put money back into the coffers every year as well as providing employment in the long term.

That is why it is important now that we say, “The government has not been able to do it. Let’s set up a body that will.” As the CEO of the Business Council says, they have been saying for some years, “Let’s have a trust.” I believe a trust is a way forward. But let us make sure that we get it right and that we make sure that we capitalise, that we keep the expenditure in the territory, that we bring more expenditure into the territory—and it will induce business, because if this is built then hotels will follow it and then, of course, restaurants and other things come with that sort of activity.

This is a very important piece of infrastructure for the future and I commend the motion to the chamber.

**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) (3.56): There is indeed a broad business community consensus around the need for a new convention centre. The Australia forum project has been the catalyst for that particular coalition of support. Indeed, I am tempted to think that if the long list of supporters that Mr Smyth read out would each contribute about five million bucks we would probably be there. However, I do not think it is likely that they have that capacity or that willingness at this stage.

The government, however, has committed to work with stakeholders to progress the Australia forum to the stage that it is investment ready for consortium partners. To help progress this work, the government convened a workshop on 19 and 20 September, in conjunction with the Canberra Business Council and the Canberra Convention Bureau, to identify areas of consensus for the site selection for a new convention centre for the ACT. The objectives of the workshop were to review and confirm the functional requirements for the Australia forum, to test the feasibility of accommodating the functional requirements on the identified potential sites, to evaluate alternative sites and to explore requirements to be investment ready for consortium partners.

The list of attendees for the workshop was developed in consultation with the Canberra Convention Bureau and the Canberra Business Council. Representation included the ACT government, architects, the business community, convention centre operations experts, representatives from the 2010 scoping study and the city to the lake project, and key stakeholders.

At the workshop detailed testing of sites was undertaken, including exploration of a site adjacent to City Hill on the open-air, surface car parks. This process was led by renowned international conventional centre designer Larry Oltmanns. The shadow minister and I had the opportunity, together with Minister Rattenbury and members of the Convention Bureau, to have dinner with Mr Oltmanns and to have some discussions around the development of the project.

I followed up those opportunities by attending the Australia forum workshop myself and speaking to the group. The workshop considered the City Hill site in light of the Australia forum scoping study of 2010 and the city to the lake objectives within the context of the city plan. I am pleased to advise the Assembly that the workshop participants reached a consensus view on the following: that the City Hill site will accommodate the Australia forum functional brief and achieve an iconic outcome, that the flexible design concept developed to test the site will provide for significant growth in the Canberra convention market and cater for ceremonial events appropriate for the national capital, and that the Australia forum will (1) reinforce the primacy of City Hill, (2) boost the economy of the city, (3) underpin the visitor economy, (4) play an important civic role in delivering a unique cultural arc addressing City Hill and, finally, significantly contribute to the successful realisation of the city plan and the city to the lake project.

The City Hill site is agreed. It is a prestigious position relative to City Hill itself and the parliamentary triangle. It would be fair to say it is one of the best addresses in Canberra. I am pleased that we have achieved this consensus. It was a major turnaround for some of the participants of the workshop, who had previously been strongly advocating for a waterfront site at West Basin. However, through the process of the workshop it was agreed that the West Basin site would be too remote from the centre of the city.

The work that was conducted over the two days tested the design concept—a design over two main levels, four activated frontages and multiple main entrances to Vernon Circle, which surrounds City Hill, and two on London Circuit. The frontage and entrance off Vernon Circle would become a highly visible and important element of the city itself.

Although we are at the early stages of design, the initial design concept includes two large subdividable halls, totalling 16,000 square metres, with a capacity for between 3,000 and 5,000 people, depending on the form of functions; a foyer and pre-function space, totalling around 19,000 square metres; meeting rooms, totalling 4,500 square metres; a centre for dialogue, which could potentially be an exposed sphere-shaped facility; a 3,000-seat plenary area; and retail space.

The testing concept had substantially greater convention, exhibition, meeting and banqueting capacity than the existing National Convention Centre. Car parking could be located off site, across the road in the proposed retail complex, with potential tunnel access, thereby assisting with the development packaging of adjacent property and serving other future city to the lake and Civic projects. Security is an increasingly important design criterion. Separate secure VIP access can easily be accommodated and the car park can be located on an adjacent site which will substantially assist in risk management.

Now that a decision has been made about the Australia forum location there will be a number of benefits that will flow on. These include an uplift in land value around City Hill and informing decisions by both government and the private sector on future investment in the city and, critically, about the locations for hotels and retail development. The decision will also drive major enhancements to the design of Vernon Circle and City Hill itself and, importantly, the traffic arrangements through the centre of our city. City Hill will become the pre-eminent space in the city rather than the isolated space it is at the moment within a high speed roundabout.

Symbolically, the Australia forum connects the pillars of Canberra's knowledge economy. The location on City Hill sits at the confluence of the city, the parliamentary triangle and on the corridor between the ANU and CSIRO, Russell and Canberra International Airport. This sends a very powerful message that Canberra is the right location for international dialogue, Australia's big conversations, and for bringing minds together on science, technology, health and public policy. It will bring education, research, government and business closer together and will spur further growth in the knowledge economy and tourism.

The City Hill site has now been identified in the draft city plan as the preferred site for the Australia forum. There are certainly very strong synergies with the Civic Square and theatre precinct and possible new ACT government office buildings. The site also has direct access to the potential capital metro light rail route around Vernon Circle and radiating along major avenues.

The next step for the Australia forum project will be to get the pre-design phase right. This will involve finalising the functional brief with the detailed operational components. This fuller brief will be used to inform the next stage of establishing a reference design and an indicative budget as the basis of design development. The Economic Development Directorate will be working closely with the Canberra Convention Bureau and the Business Council in the coming weeks and months to confirm these next steps as part of the process of bringing the Australia forum to investment-ready status.

I am pleased with the outcome of the Australia forum process so far. I am excited by the concept development process and the outcome that occurred from the workshop and the prospect of finally now having an agreed site across all stakeholders at City Hill. I believe that the proposed siting and the concept developed will bring considerable economic benefit to the ACT and will enhance the international profile of the city. But I must take this opportunity to reiterate again what the government has

communicated throughout the process. The ACT government cannot be the sole funder of the Australia forum. This project requires the support of the private sector and the commonwealth government.

There are various funding and development models that have been used in this country and internationally that could apply to the Australia forum based on a public-private partnership model. This requires consideration of packaging opportunities having regard to income, incentives and risk allocation. Before the federal election last month the Chief Minister wrote to the then opposition leader, now Prime Minister, urging him to consider a partnership with the ACT government and the private sector on this development.

We will continue to work with the commonwealth to secure their support of this important project for the national capital. I am pleased that in the statement that the Canberra Business Council released they called on the federal government to commit \$10 million immediately to complete the detailed planning and design of a new national convention centre and to analyse funding options to bring the Australia forum convention centre to tender-ready stage by 2015.

They have called on the federal government to make an in-principle commitment to providing up to \$150 million towards the construction of a new convention centre after the next federal election. They have indicated—and I agree—that both the ACT government and the private sector will be expected to make a co-contribution, including land. I can say very clearly today that the government will make that co-contribution. We have identified the land. The land in question we own and we can make available for the project.

We will continue to work with the commonwealth and with those stakeholders to ensure that this project advances. The government is committed to transforming the city and this is an important element of that transformation. The Australia forum project is a worthy one and will be a key part of the long-term economic and social future of our city.

As regards the specifics of Mr Smyth's motion, the trust idea was raised back in 2007-08 but has not been in recent conversations. We contacted the Canberra Business Council when this motion was put on the notice paper to seek their view and they advised us that they are not—and I underline "not"—specifying a trust specifically, and that if we read their media release carefully we will see that. The trust is something the Liberals are suggesting.

**Mr Smyth:** Read the first paragraph.

**MR BARR:** They say—and this is directly from Chris Faulks—"If you read our media release carefully you will see that we are not specifying a trust. The trust is something the Liberals are suggesting. Initially in around 2007-08 we did propose a trust and we did quite a bit of work on how it would work, how it would be established and structured, its charter et cetera. But we became aware over time that other jurisdictions are moving to other models such as statutory authorities, et cetera. We are, therefore, not specifying what form we think the body should take, rather that

there should be a body of some sort comprised of representatives of the ACT government, relevant experts, the private sector, the federal government, if they contribute money, the NCA, and that the focus of this body would be on making the convention centre happen.”

At the end of Mr Smyth’s comments he said that it is important to get this right, and I agree. The worst way to approach this is to try and run a motion through this place, with no consultation, on a private members’ day, seeking to lock the government into a preferred delivery model. If you are after a collaborative approach, Mr Smyth, which I extended to you by including you in that recent workshop and having the opportunity to meet with Larry Oltmanns and extending—

**Mr Smyth:** You included me?

**MR BARR:** I included you; I allowed you to come to that dinner. We paid for that, Mr Smyth, and I extended the hand of bipartisan friendship to you. I extended that to you, Mr Smyth. But if your response to that is to verbal the Canberra Business Council and try and run political motions here today to lock the government into a particular model, without specifying what you mean by a trust—you have given no detail at all about what you mean, how it should be structured and what sorts of governance arrangements there should be.

The government cannot support the motion as you have worded it. I have circulated an amendment that outlines the process that the government will follow. I will be back in November to provide further information to the Assembly on the government’s progress. I want to work methodically with the stakeholders to ensure we get this right. If we do not, if we establish the wrong process and put in place the wrong governance structure, it will go nowhere.

**Mr Smyth:** Why haven’t you done the work then?

**MR BARR:** I am doing the work, Mr Smyth. What you are seeking to do is to grandstand on private members’ day because you have got nothing else constructive to talk about. If that is your approach to this and if that is how you want to play this over the next two or three years, fine. We will have these debates across the chamber at each other and I will not support a single rubbish idea that you put forward. That is the reality. That is how we can play it. That is how the next three years can go. Or you can accept the hand of friendship. I move this amendment in that spirit to see this project through. I move the amendment circulated in my name:

Omit all words after paragraph (1)(b), substitute:

- “(c) the City Plan and City to the Lake development both include the Australian Forum project in their scope;
- (d) a workshop led by industry expert Larry K. Oltmanns with key stakeholders was held on the Australia Forum where an agreement on the City Hill site was reached; and

- (e) in the lead up the 2013 federal election the Chief Minister wrote to the Prime Minister and Opposition Leader requesting that the Commonwealth partner with the ACT Government and private sector to deliver the Australia Forum project; and
- (2) calls on the Minister for Economic Development to report back to the Assembly by the last sitting day this year on progress made towards reaching investment ready status for the Australia Forum project.”.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (4.11): I welcome the opportunity to discuss the Australia forum today because it is a project that all three parties in this place agree is a good idea and for which there is a clear need in Canberra. We could, indeed, say there is tripartisan unwavering support for the idea of needing a new convention centre in Canberra. As a city state without primary industry or other large private sector revenue activities, the knowledge and information sector of our economy is extremely important to the ACT.

I think we all agree our current convention centre is simply not big enough for many events and especially not for a number of simultaneous events, such as the sorts of things that take place at other convention centres. A medium to large scale trade fair is simply not possible, and EPIC is not always an appropriate venue for the wide range of trade fairs on the annual calendar.

It is a shame this proposal has lagged to a point where we have one of the smallest and oldest convention centres in Australia, meaning that we are now in a place where our facilities are lagging behind other jurisdictions. That puts us, to some extent, at a competitive disadvantage, something we need to address as a community. As a result, there is the danger of Canberra missing out on being in the convention, conference and trade fair circuit for a large portion of these events, yet we all know this could be a very positive boost to our economy.

As Mr Smyth’s motion notes, the Australia forum is an item in the ALP-Greens parliamentary agreement. And as the motion also identifies, the government is working with stakeholders to progress the proposal to a stage where it is investment ready for consortium partners. The fact that it is in the parliamentary agreement recognises the fact that, when Mr Barr and I spoke about this in November last year, we both knew this was a project that needed to have some energy put behind it, and I was pleased we were able to put that into the parliamentary agreement.

The work towards creating a new convention centre for Canberra—the Australia forum—is not only significant for Canberra as a city but also for Canberra as the nation’s capital. It is an opportunity to create a space and a venue that can be used not only by our knowledge and research sector for conferences and our commercial sector for trade fairs and exhibitions but also by the federal government for conventions and international-level meetings and conferences.

It has certainly been a shame that this has not been a possibility for the past few decades simply due to the lack of facilities. We have all been involved in those conversations when it was announced that CHOGM would be in Australia and

whether Canberra could bid or not, but we simply did not have the venues. Some very good work was done to scoop up, if you like, the opportunities that were there for Canberra through the CHOGM process of hosting some of the side meetings and ancillary events, but it seems a great shame that the nation's capital simply was never in the equation to host that event.

I should say that I am satisfied with the current process of and progress in liaising with key stakeholders. Although I think we all agree with the general intent of Mr Smyth's motion, I do not believe it is helpful at this stage to be specifically proposing the establishment of a trust, as other options are now being looked at. In fact, on Monday of this week I received a letter from the Canberra Convention Bureau that was sent to me with a copy of their budget submission for 2014-15. I assume other members received a copy of this also because I know the Convention Bureau is absolutely even-handed in making sure they communicate with all of the members of this place equally and effectively.

Included in that letter was their joint plan with the Canberra Business Council to progress the Australian forum convention centre to the status of investment ready by 2016. I find it surprising then in that context that Mr Smyth proposed a trust, as the fairly detailed proposal put forward by the Business Council and the Convention Bureau includes a schedule of activity which they commissioned Ernst & Young to undertake and which clearly outlines the steps which need to be followed to enable the forum to be investment ready by 2016, including both the business case phase and the procurement phase. And neither of those phases includes establishing a trust.

I asked Robyn Hendry, the Chief Executive of the Canberra Convention Bureau, about the detailed set of steps necessary to be investment ready so we could all get a better understanding on how we could ensure the project gets off the ground in a timely manner. Whilst that clear intent was there in a conversation I had with Ms Hendry, I had the sense that someone spelling out those steps would be a very useful way forward.

The idea of a trust for a new convention centre was certainly an idea I understand was being discussed many years ago, but it certainly has not been talked about recently and not any more at this stage. The Ernst & Young schedule of activity included consideration of a PPP-style of procurement, and establishing a trust is not necessary for this option. Until we know which bodies are going to fund this important project, I do not see the point of establishing a trust. The proposal includes appointment of a project team to oversee the development and implementation of the plan and it would not be immediately attached to the ACT government.

As Mr Barr's amendment says, the Chief Minister wrote to the current Prime Minister about this issue in the lead-up to the federal election this year, requesting that the commonwealth partner with the ACT government as well as the private sector to co-fund this project. I was pleased to hear there has been progress in discussions about the Australia forum with the new federal government, and I understand they are quite keen to support the proposal at this stage.

As we heard about for most of this morning, the city plan, which is currently open for public consultation, proposes that the Australia forum be sited in the long-stay car park near the Assembly towards Commonwealth Avenue. However, I note that last May the Canberra Convention Bureau was concerned that the City Hill site would not be big enough and it still preferred the West Basin site, as the City Hill site would not be able to accommodate the functionality needed nor any expansions which may be needed in the future.

To address this issue, noting that the ACT government were keen on the City Hill site, a workshop on the Australia forum was held last month. This workshop was specifically designed to look at whether the City Hill site would be able to deliver on the criteria within the 2011 scoping study and the functional brief. The workshop gathered six architects, including world-renowned architect Larry Oltmanns, who is referred to in Mr Barr's amendment and who has been discussed in the conversation already. My information is that this was a highly successful workshop which specifically worked through issues around putting the new convention centre on the City Hill site. The Convention Bureau, I understand, is now happy to work with the proposed City Hill site and believes it will be able to accommodate the Australia forum functional brief as long as there is flexibility in the design to suit the site.

As has been discussed, a dinner was held with Larry Oltmanns the evening after his seminar in the middle of the workshop. For those who did not manage to hear him speak when he was in Canberra, he is an industry expert in planning and designing convention centres around the world, and his key mission is to work with locals to ensure that the right building is created for the right place. That basically carries with it the idea that you do not work with the notion that there is a perfect building for a convention centre, some template you can just roll off the shelf, but, rather, that you get exactly the right building for the city and environment that you are operating in.

That dinner with Larry Oltmanns was very useful, and I appreciated the opportunity to sit and talk with him. It was an informal setting with a small crowd—Mr Barr, Mr Smyth, me and a number of business leaders from Canberra—and we had a very useful conversation where he conveyed much of his experience in designing convention centres and making sure the right building is developed in the right location. One of the key points he talked about in the role of a city was applying the five-minute rule—that is, people will generally only walk somewhere if it is within a five-minute walk, so a convention centre should be very close to the city centre. That particularly underlined the fact that City Hill seems appropriate for a convention centre.

I must say, up until that point, I was more attracted to one of the other options—the site at West Basin. I favoured it personally because of the potential for it to be very iconic with its location next to the lake. I was less convinced about the City Hill site in the regard. But after that discussion with Larry Oltmanns and knowing the workshop took place where a lot of the concerns were ironed out, I am warming much more to the notion of a City Hill site. My previous views were based very much on personal instinct, but, having listened to the much more technical and detailed discussions, I am much more persuaded that City Hill can work and, in fact, work

very well for the reasons that have been identified. Putting the Australia forum alongside City Hill will mean it will be much more integrated with the city and allow people to easily walk to the forum and any of the shops, cafes and restaurants in the area and make it much more part of that whole city to the lake project which seeks to create a greater level of connectivity and bring more life to the city.

Certainly, the current round of consultation on the city plan and any resulting planning processes need to ensure they work around the needs of the Australia forum. That is going to be critical. In particular, a hotel must be within the immediate vicinity of the forum and must be entrenched in the city plan. Issues around security and parking will also need to be addressed. This means translating requirements for the Australia forum into the city master plan or precinct plan and, thus, ultimately into the territory plan.

Another requirement is that the Australia forum be an iconic building, noting both its local and national importance and role, and that vistas to and from the building are maintained and, again, enshrined into our plans. Another thing Larry Oltmanns was clear on in my discussions with him and in the seminars he gave is the need to create a multi-functional space—one that can be used for many different purposes and rearranged easily so the venue can host many different kinds of events concurrently. Anyone who has been to the Melbourne exhibition centre would understand how this works. That is was one of Mr Oltmanns's designs, and I think people would agree that it really meets the goals of being well integrated into the city. It draws people to it. It is easily accessible by public transport and is only a five-minute walk to the CBD. It has also boosted the use of the area around Southbank, and the accommodation and hospitality sectors have a great base to rely on accordingly. That is something we can always benefit from in Canberra.

The Melbourne exhibition centre was the first convention centre in the world to meet a six-star green-star rating, and I am sure the Australia forum could easily do this and also improve, in many ways, on the Melbourne example, given its proposed positioning of prominence adjacent to City Hill in the context of the symmetry of the Griffin plans.

With those few remarks, I indicate I will support Mr Barr's amendment. The specific locking in of the trust idea is one I do not understand the detail of; no detail has been set out. Given the letter we have just received from the Convention Bureau, which sets out a clear pathway for moving this to being investment ready, I think we have a road map that is a good one. It may warrant some further discussion; I only received it in the last day or two so I have not had a chance to go through it in a super detailed way, but it has been prepared by Ernst & Young and it certainly does not identify the specific need for a trust. So I would be reluctant to support that specific mechanism at this point. Mr Barr's amendment sets out steps from here, and I think that gives us a good pathway forward.

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (4.24): It gives me great pleasure to rise here today to talk about the convention centre and what seems to be the tripartisan view about the idea for a convention centre and the very real need to make sure that it does not just remain an idea but does at some stage in the future

come to fruition. And I commend Mr Smyth for his motion, because what that is doing is trying to make sure that the promise in the parliamentary agreement of a convention centre—the word, the rhetoric that we have heard in this debate—actually does come to fruition and that we see that there is tangible action being taken by this government to deliver on something that I think we all agree would be of great benefit to the people of Canberra.

Indeed, the case for an enhanced convention centre has been well made, and I think that the comments that have been made by all members here support the arguments that are being put to us by certainly the Business Council and Chris Faulks—and I know she has been very active in her lobbying on this case—and obviously also by the Canberra Convention Bureau and Robyn Hendry and her team. So there seems to be a momentum towards this, and what Mr Smyth's motion very reasonably does today is essentially try to put some meat on the bones and some accountability on the government to actually tell us where we are at and make sure that we have a plan in terms of where we are going.

What he has asked for is that by the last sitting day of this year the government table the work conducted on the investment-ready plan. I note that Mr Barr has said that he will report back to the Assembly but, as we know from this government on things like their tax reform, reporting back on something can mean something pretty vague from this mob. It can be just, "Yeah, we're doing it," and refer to an old report. What we as the opposition want to see is the detail. We want the surety that the work is being done, that the investment is being made by the government to get that investment-ready plan ready to go.

I think it is entirely reasonable that, given that the government have said that they are doing the work, they provide that work to us so that we can look it, we can review it, we can analyse it, we can make sure that the government are actually doing the work that they say they are doing. And the fact that Mr Barr has actively sought to remove that from this motion does actually give me cause for concern and raises a red flag on this issue.

There is debate around the concept of establishing a trust, but I think it is useful if I refer to the Canberra Business Council's media release of today. I believe Mr Smyth read some of this earlier, but I will go to the specific points:

Canberra Business Council hopes a motion being moved today by the ACT Liberals to establish a Trust to drive the Australia forum project will be unanimously supported and help fast-track this important project.

That is pretty clear: It continues:

"For over five years we have been suggesting that the best way to ensure Canberra gets a world-class convention centre is to establish an independent body that is of government, but sits outside of government. This body would be responsible for planning, implementing and possibly even managing the Australia Forum.

"Other states have set up bodies such as this to oversee their convention centres and it has worked well in those jurisdictions.

A Trust would be one way to do this and we welcome this additional push by the Liberals ...

What is abundantly clear here is that the Canberra Business Council welcomes the concept of a trust being established.

If it is not to be a trust then what is it to be? And there is opportunity here for the government to say what it would be. Mr Rattenbury mentioned a project team. There are other structures that could be established that might be preferable to the government. Let us have a debate about that. If you have a different concept in terms of what entity should run this, amend Mr Smyth's motion to that effect.

**Mr Barr:** We have.

**MR HANSON:** No, that is not true. You have not amended the motion to that effect at all. At this stage, what we have got—

**Mr Barr:** I am not announcing a model today, but there will be a model. There will need to be. But it will be different from a trust.

**MR HANSON:** What is that model?

**Mr Barr:** I don't know yet. I will announce that once we have done the work.

**MR HANSON:** You do not know yet. Anyway, what I think we are seeing, and what the point is, is that we have a minister who is trying to essentially step away from the concept that is—

**Mr Barr:** I am just not accepting your bad idea, that is all.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Doszpot):** Mr Barr, through the chair please.

**MR HANSON:** It is not such a bad idea in Melbourne. It is not a bad idea in a lot of other jurisdictions. What we are seeing is: if it is not Andrew Barr's way then it is the highway. It is a very reasonable proposition, it is the consistent model in other jurisdictions and it works effectively, and what we are seeing is Mr Barr basically looking for an option to just water down Mr Smyth's motion. And that is exactly what he has done, which is disappointing.

Let us also look at what the motion says in terms of some dates. It does say that we will establish that trust by a specific date, 30 June 2014. But it also calls on the investment-ready plan, shovel-ready plan, whatever you want to call it, to be completed by 30 June 2015. Is there going to be an alternative date proposed by—

*Mr Barr interjecting—*

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson, could I ask you to resume your seat for a second. Stop the clock. Mr Barr, please stop interjecting. You were listened to in relative quiet. Mr Hanson.

**MR HANSON:** If the minister has dates that are different from those then let us hear them. The investment-ready plan is in the Greens-Labor parliamentary agreement. “Work with stakeholders to progress the Australia Forum initiative to ‘investment ready’ for consortium partners.” What is the date? What is the date by which we are going to get that investment-ready plan? If there is a date, let us know what that is but in the absence of it, why will Mr Barr not support the date that has been reasonably proposed?

We have used the government’s language. We have used the language that is in the Greens-Labor parliamentary agreement. We have acknowledged that that is in there. We have asked for a date to be provided. The date that has been put in there, 30 June 2015, is not reasonable because what we do not want to see is a plan on the eve of the next election. What we want to make sure is that there is a plan that is provided in sufficient time for that to be perhaps put into budgets and this started to be rolled out. So what we do not want to simply see is the government producing reams of paperwork, lots of glossy visuals but nothing happening, because that is the form of this government.

If Mr Barr is not going to support that date then I think, likewise, he could have quite reasonably said, “This is our date.” I find it odd in the extreme that this is a government that formed a parliamentary agreement with the Greens some 12 months ago to produce an investment-ready plan but it is unable to tell us when they will deliver us that investment-ready plan.

**Mr Barr:** Within the parliamentary term is the commitment.

**MR HANSON:** The answer is: within the parliamentary term. That is a cop-out. Why will they not give us that date? And the suspicion would be: as late as we possibly can.

**Mr Barr:** Technically, the final date will be by 15 October 2016.

**MR HANSON:** There you go. We will get it on election day, Mr Barr was saying. We are going to get it on election day in 2016.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson, please do not acknowledge the conversation.

**MR HANSON:** That is going to be a lot of use to people. It really is an indication of this government’s lack of commitment when it comes to this. Why do you not support Mr Smyth’s date? I think that is reasonable. That would give everybody time to have a look at this plan and do the work to get us to the next stage, which is actually further progressing the convention centre.

I commend Mr Smyth for bringing this motion here today and I commend him for his ongoing enthusiasm, lobbying and understanding of this project. I express that the opposition remains committed to seeing a large convention centre in Canberra. What is not clear, though, is the detail of how that is going to be delivered, and it is very important that the investment-ready plan is provided so that the next stage can be delivered.

So we will not be supporting Mr Barr's amendment. It waters down Mr Smyth's motion, which is a very reasonable motion, and what we are seeing again from this government is words and rhetoric but when it comes to putting some specific dates and metrics around what they have promised to deliver, they are going weak at the knees. And what we are seeing again from Mr Barr is a refusal to actually provide any detail.

**MR SMYTH** (Brindabella) (4.35): I will speak to the amendment, Mr Assistant Speaker. Mr Barr's speech was very instructive. I heard lots of words but I did not hear any commitment. I did not hear a champion for the project who could come in here and clearly lay out for all how this will happen and the time frames in which it will happen, except to say that the latest date he will present his investment-ready strategy is 15 October 2016, and that is the problem. That is three years away. Then when you add on top of that, potentially, four years for construction, you are talking about not having a world-class convention centre worthy of this city for probably seven years. That is the problem.

It is compounded when you think of the opportunities that are lost and it is compounded because even that seven-year time frame has not been committed to by the government. I did not hear a commitment of any kind to establish a body to oversee the project. And I did not hear a commitment from the government to put up the \$9 million that the Ernst & Young review says would be required to get it investment ready.

Indeed, the minister said—he can correct me if I heard him wrongly—that he is quite happy to back the Canberra Business Council proposal that says the federal government should commit \$10 million to do the work, because it would appear that he is not going to do that. The minister can get up and speak again but the Ernst & Young report that Mr Rattenbury speaks to, which is appendix E to the document that the Canberra Convention Bureau sent around, said that the cost is an investment of approximately \$9 million to get it to investment-ready stage. Is the minister telling us that the government will stump up that \$9 million?

**Mr Barr:** Not if the federal government is going to.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Mr Barr, next time you are warned.

**MR SMYTH:** Not if the federal government will do it. So this project—

*Mr Barr interjecting—*

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Mr Barr! You are warned, Mr Barr.

**MR SMYTH:** This project is held in eternal limbo because the government will not commit to it. We have seen them commit \$18 million in just this budget to capital metro. We know that the minister is spending money hand over fist on his stadium project but they cannot commit funds to enable this to get to the next stage quickly, and that is a shame. The minister is exposed.

He uses words. We know on that budget day he said something at the breakfast that we were not invited to. He talks about the hand of friendship and bipartisanship but we were excluded from the budget debate by threats that it would not go ahead if we were invited. He played to the crowd by saying, "Yes, I am happy to work with the business community." But when he got back here he said, "No, it is not going ahead until the feds fund it." That is the problem with this minister. There is no commitment and there is no truth in what is said here.

What are the outcomes of today if this amendment gets up? The outcome is that there will be no trust. There will be no body because he said, "I do not know." He has not thought about this. This project has been on the table now for 12 years. I put forward convention central in February 2006, which was really the catalyst for this work to continue.

*Mr Barr interjecting—*

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Mr Barr!

**MR SMYTH:** Nothing has genuinely happened. Give him credit for some money; \$250,000 went to the Australia forum study. They put \$1 million in and called it the Australia forum work but it was money used to progress city to the lake so that they could get some more money from the sale of retail land. Hardly any of that \$1 million was actually spent on furthering the Australia forum concept.

We cannot even get a commitment out of him about whether it is the actual site. Is the site on City Hill now the site?

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** Is it?

**Mr Barr:** It is the site.

**MR SMYTH:** It is the site?

**Mr Barr:** It is the site.

**MR SMYTH:** The government wants it built there?

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** There you go. Let the *Hansard* catch that. Did the minister say—

**Mr Barr:** That is what I said in my statement.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Mr Barr! Mr Smyth!

**MR SMYTH:** I apologise. It is my fault. I should not egg him on. But in his own speech he said that it was the agreed site by all those that went to the forum. But it is only the preferred site of the government. Is it the site? If so, that really does set a lot of things in train. If it is not the preferred site or it does not become the site—I think we should stop using the word “preferred”. It either is the site or it is not. It is now identified in city to the lake and the city plan. So, is it the site? If the minister wants to get up and confirm that it is the site that the government will start to do all its work on for the new convention centre then so be it.

But what we have got is a minister who will not commit to this project. I think that is the shame. He has now been in charge of this for several years. He does not have an idea of what sort of body it will be. He just said, “I do not know.” Mr Hanson said, “So what body will it be?” He said, “I do not know.” So what is driving this? What keeps this moving along? Not a great deal, it would seem.

The minister asks, “What is the detail of the trust?” If you want me to detail the sort of trust that I would set up I am quite happy to do that. But as I said when, for instance, we moved the amendment for the costs of living in the FMA, it really—

**Mr Barr:** Four and a half minutes; tell me.

**MR SMYTH:** is for the government to decide—

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Mr Smyth, could I ask you to sit down, please? Mr Barr, you have been warned. You have ignored the warning. Under standing order 203, after having been warned and still persisting, I name you and put the question:

That Mr Barr be suspended from the service of the Assembly.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 7

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

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

*Mr Barr was therefore suspended at 4.45 pm for three sitting hours in accordance with standing order 204, and he accordingly withdrew from the chamber.*

**MR SMYTH:** What I was saying was that when we did the amendment to the Financial Management Act to establish the cost of living reporting, we allowed the government the flexibility to report in any way it wanted. That is why I have simply said “a trust” in this way. If I wanted to legislate for a trust, I would bring forward my own legislation, but I deliberately did it this way to allow the government the flexibility to set up the trust that would suit their needs.

Mr Barr, when he was interjecting against Mr Hanson, said that the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre does not operate under a trust. Yes, it does. You only need to go to the last annual report or to the website to read:

The MCEC is owned by the Victorian State Government and managed by the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust (MCET).

In order to meet the Trust's objectives, the MCEC works closely with several key business partners including the Melbourne Convention and Visitors Bureau, Tourism Victoria and the Department of Business and Innovation ...

Melbourne currently has the biggest convention centre in the country and it is run by a trust. That is the point. These things work. If the government do not have the wherewithal to draft some legislation for a trust, I am happy to do it for them. They could just get on the Victorian government legislation website and find a trust there. It is set up and it is ready to go. The trust system works.

In New South Wales, for instance, the existing convention centre was with the Darling Harbour authority. The redevelopment has been given to Infrastructure New South Wales because I assume the authority did not have the skills to do it. They are going to do that, and then it will be transferred back to the authority. In Brisbane, for instance, it is a government corporation. There are a number of models here. A trust seems a reasonable way to do it. If the minister wants me to do his job for him, I am more than happy to do his job for him. But the problem is that there is no point here, because there is no commitment to it. There is no champion for this in the government in the same way that they are championing capital metro or they are championing the stadium. That is the whole point.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 7

Noes 7

Ms Berry  
Dr Bourke  
Ms Burch  
Mr Corbell

Ms Gallagher  
Mr Gentleman  
Mr Rattenbury

Mr Coe  
Mr Doszpot  
Mr Hanson  
Mrs Jones

Ms Lawder  
Mr Smyth  
Mr Wall

Question so resolved in the negative in accordance with standing order 162.

**MR SMYTH** (Brindabella) (4.51), in reply: Mr Assistant Speaker, I will close the debate. Minister Barr read out some words that he claims were from the Canberra Business Council. I do not know the provenance of those words, but I do know that the Canberra Business Council put out a press release dated 30 October—that would be today—and I want to read it again for those present here. It is headed “Australia forum a priority for government and business”. The first paragraph clearly and

unambiguously says, "Let's have a trust." It calls on the members of this place to support this motion today. I will read the words:

Canberra Business Council hopes a motion being moved today by the ACT Liberals to establish a Trust to drive the Australia Forum project will be unanimously supported and help fast-track this important project.

Members, that is the request of the business community. Let me read the last line in relation to the project and the groups that support it, the groups the Canberra Business Council speaks for. The last line says:

Combined these groups represent over half of the employment base in the ACT.

This is your business community talking to you, speaking to you, asking you to act urgently, and to act today, to establish a trust to facilitate this project.

We had Mr Barr say, for instance, when Mr Hanson was speaking, that Melbourne did not have a trust. Melbourne does have a trust. The biggest convention centre in this country is run by a trust. Indeed, as the Business Council's press release says:

Other states have set up bodies such as this to oversee their convention centres and it has worked well in those jurisdictions.

A Trust would be one way to do this and we welcome this additional push by the Liberals ...

Ladies and gentlemen, members, through you, Mr Assistant Speaker, it is time this city had a body that is dedicated to delivering the sort of convention centre that this city deserves. Going to the Australia forum report again, it says that in order to fulfil its role as the nation's capital, Canberra needs a convention venue of a scale, security, design and character that is appropriate for hosting major meetings of international and national importance. It is about time this happened.

There is a statement of support for the Australia forum which is also contained in *Canberra: the meeting place of Australia*, a document put out by the Canberra Convention Bureau, Think Canberra, and the Canberra Business Council. It is a statement of support. It says that we need this. The final line is this:

Canberra is Australia's capital and it takes its role seriously. A 21st century events venue is needed urgently and it is appropriate that such a facility stand alongside the national and international institutions in Canberra.

It is needed urgently. What my motion sets out is a time frame that is a reasonable time frame but is also a time frame that ensures this happens quickly to meet that urgent need.

It would be great to see the government put aside the sort of money that is put aside for capital metro. How is it that capital metro gets \$18 million in this year's budget, yet any significant funding at all for the convention centre is yet to be put aside by the government.

Let me go back to the report that Ernst & Young did, seeing as how Ernst & Young is being quoted by Mr Rattenbury. Ernst & Young research indicates that Canberra is underperforming in business events and is not taking advantage of growth opportunities. Chief Minister, through you, Mr Assistant Speaker, that is your responsibility. Why are we underperforming? Why haven't we taken advantage of growth opportunities? With the right convention centre infrastructure, and by leveraging its national capital assets, Canberra could triple the size of its business events market and reach the same performance levels as Adelaide. As an indication of Canberra's performance, we are ranked at 264, Cairns is 134 and Adelaide is 142. We are behind the game, members.

I would love to see a graphic on the front page of the *Canberra Times* in the morning, perhaps with the logos of all the Canberra organisations that support this. The full list is amazingly impressive. What you see in these documents—members cannot see it—is a page and a half of logos. I would like to see 55 logos saying yes and then, in the no column, just the logo of the ACT ALP. They are the ones who are standing in the way of this important bit of infrastructure.

Let us read the list again. I will finish by reading the list again so that there is no doubt. I am actually surprised that this list has not been read more often or appeared more often in the media. In my 15-odd years in this place, never have I seen the business community so united on an issue. There are people on this list who I know, for instance, like the train set. There are people, I know, who would love a stadium. But they have put aside their personal desires to say what is best for this city. And I will tell you that what is best for this city is that we get a convention centre. Why is it good for this city? Because, as Ernst & Young say, significant moneys will come to the city if this is built. You only have to read the documents that have been provided to us to know this. In one of the Ernst & Young documents it says that we could probably treble the size of the billion-dollar business that business events are in the ACT—treble it. That would put money in the government's coffers and help pay for things like sub-acute hospitals and train sets.

But let us read the list, and I will finish with the list, members. These are the people who want you to vote in favour of urgently establishing a convention centre in the ACT. These are the people that have signed up. The statement is in the document that has been sent to you all. Let me read the statement again. Let me read the last sentence:

Canberra is Australia's capital and it takes its role seriously. A 21st century events venue is needed urgently and it is appropriate that such a facility stand alongside the national and international institutions in Canberra.

These are the people that have signed up to that: the Academy of Science, the Australian Catholic University, the Australian Institute of Sport, the Australian National University, the Australian National Botanic Gardens, the Australian War Memorial, the CSIRO, the Museum of Australian Democracy, the National Archives, the National Film and Sound Archive, the National Gallery of Australia, the National Library of Australia, the National Museum of Australia, the National Portrait Gallery,

Questacon—the National Science and Technology Centre, the Royal Australian Mint, the Australian Hotels Association, the ACT and Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the ACT Law Society, ACT Sport, the ACT Computer Society, the Australian Information Industry Association, the Australian Hotels Association, the Australian Institute of Architects, the Australian Institute of Company Directors, the Australian Institute of Management, the Australian Institute of Quantity Surveyors, the Australian Medical Council, the Australian Property Institute, the Canberra Airport, the Canberra Business Council, the Canberra Convention Bureau, the Canberra Institute of Technology, the Chamber of Women in Business, ClubsACT, CollabIT, Consult Australia, the Council on the Ageing, Engineers Australia, Family Business Australia, the Institute of Public Accountants, Master Builders ACT, Medicines Australia, Motor Trades Association ACT, the National Capital Attractions Association, the National Electrical and Communications Association, NICTA, the Property Council of Australia, the Real Estate Institute of Australia, the Safety Institute of Australia, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, the University of Canberra, the University of New South Wales Canberra, Volunteering ACT and the YWCA of Canberra.

Through the Canberra Business Council, I will finish by reading the first paragraph again:

Canberra Business Council hopes a motion being moved today by the ACT Liberals to establish a Trust to drive the Australia Forum project will be unanimously supported and help fast-track this important project.

Members, I hope you vote unanimously that this project go ahead.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 7

Noes 7

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

Question so resolved in the negative in accordance with standing order 162.

## **ACT Emergency Services Agency—management**

**MR SMYTH** (Brindabella) (5.03): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that various problems exist within the ESA and its component organisations:
  - (i) ACT Fire and Rescue;
  - (ii) ACT Ambulance Service;
  - (iii) ACT State Emergency Service; and
  - (iv) ACT Rural Fire Service; and
- (2) calls on the minister to, on the first sitting day in November, detail how he has addressed the following issues:
  - (a) ACT Fire and Rescue—
    - (i) first responder medical training and pay;
    - (ii) draft terms of reference for capability review to be carried out by JACS;
    - (iii) effectiveness of cross-crewing;
    - (iv) requirement for second Bronto;
    - (v) post-incident debriefs; and
    - (vi) replacement for out-of-date PODs;
  - (b) ACT Ambulance Service—
    - (i) culture within the service;
    - (ii) status of cardiac monitor and defibrillator problems;
    - (iii) disciplinary processes;
    - (iv) complaints to WorkSafe ACT;
    - (v) complaints to Fair Work Ombudsman; and
    - (vi) complaints before ACAT;
  - (c) ACT State Emergency Service—
    - (i) replacement of Deputy Officer as per section 58 of the Emergencies Act 2004; and
    - (ii) truck licensing of SES drivers; and
  - (d) ACT Rural Fire Service—
    - (i) replacement of Deputy Officer as per section 53 of the Emergencies Act 2004;

- (ii) payment of close call/on call allowances;
- (iii) availability of trained IMT officers;
- (iv) funds for training;
- (v) acquisition of a second bulk water carrier; and
- (vi) movements of the fire tankers.

This minister's administration of the ESA and its agencies is deficient, and it is deficient in a number of ways. There are 20-odd points listed in this motion of a failure of leadership and a failure of administration by the minister. And it is from a minister who has got form. For those with a history in this place, we remember FireLink, with almost \$5 million worth of taxpayers' money thrown down the drain, the Jerra and Rivers sheds, with their flaws which meant you could not open the truck doors when they were inside the shed and, 10 years after the 2003 fires, the 10 years it took to build the Tidbinbilla shed.

The recent Auditor-General's report into fire readiness said that the minister had not complied with the law. We have had numerous budget blowouts and appeals to Treasurer's advance to bail the ESA out, and the number of times that we have asked for documents that detail the required capability for the Emergency Services Agency, which, of course, the government until recently had always failed to make available. They are the forerunners to this.

It is no surprise that you can list 20 items because this is a minister who does not deliver. We know that the broad funding issues, budget blowouts and the use of the territory's advance have been forced on various commissioners because the minister has either been unable to get the funding or unwilling to get the funding to do the job properly.

Let us go to some of the issues. This motion calls on the minister to table, by the first sitting day, detail on how he has addressed the following issues. Let us go to Fire and Rescue. There is a very serious issue in regard to the first responder medical training and pay. If an ambulance is unavailable, we send the fire brigade. They have advanced first aid certificates, but what they do not have is what happens in other states. They have a higher level of training in other states and they get paid an allowance for it.

There are a number of papers floating around in regard to this issue that the UFU has put together and given to the minister and the minister has just, with disdain, said it does not apply to the ACT. It is beyond me how somebody in Victoria or New South Wales as a firefighter can respond to a medical emergency, be given the appropriate training to do so and receive remuneration for that, and yet it does not apply in the ACT. It is an important issue and I know it is an issue that concerns a lot of members of the Fire and Rescue service.

Another issue that people in the fire brigade have brought to my attention is that, in the 2012-13 budget, the numbers vary but somewhere between \$120,000 and \$200,000 was set aside in JACS for a capability review—a review to be carried out by JACS, not by the ESA or its constituent organisations, which I find quite curious. Apparently, the money was there, some draft terms of reference were put together and then the project was shelved. You have to ask: why was that project shelved? And the only answer can be that people got cold feet. They got nervous because what it would do was expose the failings of the government to adequately provide for the protection of the ACT. It would be interesting for the minister to get somebody to dust off those draft terms of reference, make them available to the Assembly and then tell us why that review did not go ahead. I find it strange.

Issues have been raised with me on the effectiveness of cross-crewing—the different scale of crewing in what you would call an urban unit as opposed to an RFS unit and whether they translate or not. It has been put to me that because of the crewing arrangements a number of RFS-style vehicles for fighting bushfires cannot be crewed by Fire and Rescue because they simply do not have enough members aboard. Perhaps the minister could refer to that if this motion gets up.

Part (2)(a)(iv) is the requirement for a second Bronto. The Bronto is the high-lift platform that the Fire and Rescue service uses to fight fires in high-rise buildings. We have one. We have had one for a very long time. But I am sure members would be aware, Mr Assistant Speaker, as you look around the city that there are numerous high rise now. The tactics in fighting a high-rise fire virtually mean you have to have two units, because a Bronto can either be fighting a fire or it can be conducting a rescue. And if there is a high-rise fire then there is a likelihood that people will need to be rescued. So do you fight the fire and stop its spread or do you save those whose lives are under threat? You cannot do both with one Bronto.

People from the brigade constantly talk to me about the need for a second Bronto. When we got the new Bronto, the old one was put into reserve. But my understanding now is that it has not been maintained, parts for it cannot be obtained and to service it each year costs something like half a million dollars. So we have got a Bronto that the brigade will use. They will use it for one of two functions. They will use it to fight the fire or they will use it to rescue people in dangerous situations. You cannot have both.

Again, I would ask the minister to consider this and I would ask the minister, if this motion gets up, to come back and detail why the government have decided against the modern doctrine of firefighting in high rise, and they think it is adequate to have one Bronto. We have just had a debate this morning in which all the Labor members spoke about the city plan and how many thousands more people would be living in the city. They will be living in high rise. You will need a second Bronto. You need it now.

The next issue is post-incident debriefs. This is something I have also asked a lot of questions about. My understanding is that, with the post-incident debrief, one gentleman said to me that it is basically a tick and flick. Somebody will say to you, “Do you feel debriefed and are you stressed?” You say “No” and everybody goes away happy. But I understand there are lots of people—and I understand that even this

year there are people, for instance, who fought the 2003 fires coming forward regarding incidents where people have not been counselled properly, have not had the opportunity to get the counselling or tell their story or they have not been ready for various reasons. With the Ambulance Service, the RFS and the Fire and Rescue service, I have had people say to me that the post-incident debriefs are inadequate and therefore it should be improved.

Some have raised the question of welfare officers; some have raised the question of whether we need a chaplain, as, for instance, the AFP has. So there are real questions there about the care of the staff of the ESA, as to whether or not they are getting the support that they deserve. Again, it is an issue I have asked about many times over the last couple of years. I get the job but people keep coming to me and saying that there are people who are suffering inside all of the services.

The last point under Fire and Rescue is a replacement for out-of-date PODs. PODs were given—they are containers with equipment in them—to the ACT by, I believe, the Howard government. They were unused for many years simply because we did not have the crews for them. The government has established a platoon to look after them. Indeed, I understand that the government has bought new PODs but people have raised with me that the equipment in some of these PODs is now out of date. If you are going to a chemical, biological or nuclear incident or potential incident, a white powder scare perhaps, you would want to be certain that all of that gear is up to date. Perhaps the minister could detail the program to replace the equipment and guarantee to the Assembly that all the PODs are fully useable, that they can be fully crewed and that they are fully up to date.

Part (2)(b) relates to the ACT Ambulance Service. We know from this morning's paper that there are problems within the culture of that service. We are going to have a review. The minister had some amazing lines on the radio. I do not know who is working up the spin but they need to get better. At quarter to eight on 2CC it was kind of like "growing pains"—the service had got a bit bigger and the culture was because of growing pains.

Bullying is not because of growing pains. Standover tactics and vindictiveness are not growing pains; it is lack of appropriate management. This was made public 12 months ago and the minister has done nothing. After 12 months we do not even know who is going to conduct the review. I do not believe the terms of reference of the review are publicly available. This is a minister who is failing his staff by not ensuring that happened earlier. This minister is a failure.

The problem here is that in one of the incidents apparently two reasonably senior officers were suspended for a racial slur. I understand those officers may well still be on suspension, some 60 or 70 weeks after the incident. So the person who made the complaint has not got closure. One of the officers, I understand, has moved on. The other is now not working within the ACT Ambulance Service. He is doing other roles in a government organisation.

How can you not resolve an issue 60 or 70 weeks later? That is not growing pains, minister; that is incompetence. It is just sheer incompetence. We had this remarkable

statement, “We’re having the review because you’ve to get in early and get on top of these things.” I would not say that wasting 12 months, not having your terms of reference and not having selected somebody to do this is getting on top of things. It is negligence and it is failure, and it rests at your feet, minister.

We then go to part (2)(b)(ii). We have the debacle of the new cardiac monitor and defibrillators where we have got teething problems. So there is a bit of a theme here from the minister. “We’ve got growing pains,” and that causes bullying, and “We’ve got teething problems with defibrillators.” They are not teething problems. When you put a piece of equipment, lifesaving equipment, into the field, it has to work 100 per cent of the time. There is no trial period. You do not get a trial period when you are having a heart attack. “Come back tomorrow, heart attack; the defib wasn’t working.” It does not work that way.

You can say that it is a software upgrade. If you have trialled one item and it worked but you install a different item, that is not good process. Surely, what you trial is what you install. So you have to have a question over the trial period, Mr Assistant Speaker.

We now know there are problems with their disciplinary processes. As I said there are outstanding claims. We know that there are now complaints to WorkSafe ACT, to the Fair Work Ombudsman and, I understand, to the human rights commissioner. Mr Corbell said there have only been a small number of complaints. It is only a small organisation. So it would be interesting to know what the number of complaints are and perhaps—

**Mr Corbell:** Six.

**MR SMYTH:** Well, there you go—six. And how many of those have gone to ACAT, minister?

**Mr Corbell:** Six in three years, Brendan.

**MR SMYTH:** A number of those have gone to ACAT. Well, you see, sometimes when there is a culture of bullying, people do not complain, because when you complain you draw the ire of those that are doing the bullying. So if there is no bullying and there is no problem with the culture, why are you doing a culture review of the service? You are doing it because you know you have got a problem.

As to the State Emergency Service, the deputy officer has resigned and I understand that staff were told that, as a cost saving, he would not be replaced. Section 58 of the Emergencies Act says there must be a deputy officer so I expect we will get an announcement that somebody will be assigned as the deputy officer, but the real question is: is some poor soul now doing two jobs because the minister cannot administer the act?

There is an issue, I understand, with new vehicles. There are five or six new vehicles among the SES brigades that the government was told could be driven by those holding a standard car drivers licence. Unfortunately, if you crew up to the limit of seven, it takes it over the weight limit and you need a truck licence. So apparently we

are understaffing these vehicles because we cannot get our processes right. Another procurement disaster lauded over by this minister!

Then, of course, we have the Rural Fire Service. On the replacement of the deputy officer as per section 53 of the Emergencies Act, again, staff were told the deputy officer would not be replaced and that the money would be assigned to do the review of the strategic bushfire management plan, in contravention of the act. I bet suddenly we will have somebody acting in the job. I understand it will be the operations officer. How, approaching the fire season that we are potentially facing, can you ask the ops officer to be the deputy chief officer at the same time? It does not sound like good management to me, minister. Another one of your failures!

Of course, there is the debacle of the close-call, on-call allowances. The close-call allowance is for the duty officer who is meant to be on close call. So if the call comes, he is there. It is about \$50,000 a year. It was scrapped without consultation, which meant that members were then allowed to go to the on-call allowance. I understand when you get called out that you immediately get an hour's overtime, or whatever the period is, if you claim it. Because they have now scrapped the close-call allowance, apparently they have had a blow-out in the on-call costs which is now costing them more. So, again, poor management, minister, that rests at your feet!

I have asked about this before, but the availability of trained incident management officers is a real concern. Yes, a number of people have the IMT qualification, but they have not upgraded, they have not gone to refreshers or they have not exercised the skills they need to exercise. You can count heads and you can give me names any day you want, but the question is: do they have the experience to do the job in a bad season? People are telling me that there are real concerns. I understand funds for training in the RFS have virtually been squashed and there are concerns that the middle level managers and the incident managers are not getting the training and the experience they need and are not attending some of the national functions of organisations they belong to, as a cost-cutting measure. Relationships made at those meetings so that in an emergency you can ring your opposite number in another jurisdiction are vital, and that is being stymied.

The McLeod report said we should have two bulk water carriers. Apparently we are down to one. Of course, there is the movement of the only heavy fire tanker at the TNR across to Googong. The lack of clarity when we asked questions about this the other day was startling. These are important issues the minister should answer. I have given him to November to do so. I ask the Assembly to commend the motion.

**MR CORBELL** (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations and Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development) (5.18): I am sure that if there was a malfunctioning drinks machine at the ESA headquarters I would be held responsible for it by Mr Smyth opposite. He seems to have a remarkable understanding—unique, I would suggest—about the role of a minister when it comes to the day-to-day management of our emergency services. Believe it or not, I do not check and make sure that the oil is put into the tankers when they go through their service. Believe it or not, I do not check that the batteries are charged for the radios. It is not my job to

do so. It is the job of the operational leaders of the services to make sure these things are done.

I have every confidence in our operational leaders. Really, the question for Mr Smyth is: does he have confidence in the operational leaders? They are charged with the statutory responsibility of ensuring that the services are delivering in terms of the operational response. They are charged with that. Is Mr Smyth saying he does not have confidence in the Chief Officer of the Rural Fire Service, that he does not have confidence in the Chief Officer of the ACT Ambulance Service, that he has no confidence in the Chief Officer of the State Emergency Services, and that he does not support the work done by the Chief Officer of ACT Fire and Rescue? You would think, having listened to his speech today, that he has very serious concerns about the way they do their jobs. Well, if that is the case, why does he not just say so? But he always squibs it.

Let me address the issues Mr Smyth has raised in his motion, first of all, the issue of first responder medical training and pay. Let me remind Mr Smyth that in 2004 the ACT Fire Brigade work value case that looked at the level of pay for firefighters in the ACT deliberately took into consideration the first medical response role they perform when determining the new base pay rates for firefighters. So, contrary to the claims of Mr Smyth, the responsibilities of our firefighters when it comes to their first responder medical capability have already been taken account of in their base rates of pay. It is an absolutely absurd and misinformed allegation from Mr Smyth in relation to that proposal.

In relation to the draft terms of reference for the capability review to be carried out by the Justice and Community Safety Directorate, I assume what Mr Smyth is referring to here is the expenditure review being undertaken as announced in the budget by the Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate. The purpose of this expenditure review is to identify the process for critically reviewing expenditure and ways to improve services while delivering operational efficiencies across the agency. This review is important. It is being undertaken in a transparent and consultative manner with stakeholders, and consultation is underway in terms of the conduct of the review, including the representatives of the relevant services.

I turn to the issue of cross-crewing. This is a practice where a single crew is able to respond in more than one appliance depending on the type of call. It has been used very effectively by ACT Fire and Rescue since 1994—since 1994. So all through the term of the Liberal government when Mr Smyth was the minister, cross-crewing was standard practice, as it is still today. That means that on days of relatively low fire danger, ACT Fire and Rescue crews respond with the most appropriate vehicle depending on the type of call—whether that is an urban pumper for a structure fire or whether it is a bushfire tanker for a grass or bushfire. But on days of elevated or higher fire danger, cross-crewing is not used. Instead, dedicated crewing, additional firefighters, are put on duty to respond with either vehicle as needed. So there is a dedicated crew sitting ready to go for the pumper and the tanker or light unit. So, once again, Mr Smyth gets it wrong.

Let me turn to the issue of the requirement for a second Bronto. At no time has the government ever received advice or recommendation from ACT Fire and Rescue for a second Bronto. I would have thought that the operational leaders of the Fire and Rescue service would be best placed to make the judgement about whether or not there should be a second aerial fire-fighting appliance for the ACT Fire and Rescue service. It is not my call on that; I rely on the advice of our operational leaders. As minister, that is the appropriate thing to do. At no time have they come to me and said, "We need a second Bronto." If they do, it will be given appropriate consideration.

It is worth also making the point that no consistent standard is applied within Australia for the ratio of these aerial appliances to city size or building density. No consistent methodology is applied. It is an operational assessment best undertaken by operational leaders and with consideration to practice in other places.

Mr Smyth wants to know about post-incident debriefs. Mr Smyth was recently provided with a related answer on this matter during the estimates hearing in June this year—in June this year. Further to what I have already told him, I can advise Mr Smyth that ACT Fire and Rescue undertake regular post-incident reviews to identify learnings and potential improvements. For example, post-deployment reviews were conducted following the return of Fire and Rescue personnel from interstate deployments during the recent fires in New South Wales. So we have an established process and it is an ongoing one.

Mr Smyth seems to think that there are out-of-date PODs. I can advise Mr Smyth that ACT Fire and Rescue currently has no—I repeat, none, nil, zero—platform on demand units that could be described as out of date. If Mr Smyth thinks that is wrong, I will be very happy to arrange a meeting between him and the Chief Officer of Fire and Rescue or, perhaps even better, the ESA commissioner, to disabuse him of his misunderstanding on this as well as on many other matters.

In relation to the ACT Ambulance Service, the government has made substantial investments in improving the capability of our ambulance service to meet growth in demand for services. As organisational behaviour and culture are integral to maintaining service standards, it is timely, therefore, following this period of growth, to have an assessment of the arrangements that support culture and behaviour in the Ambulance Service. This approach is supported by the union that represents ambulance officers. I think this is a sensible thing to do in response to significant growth in the organisation, and it is, indeed, timely that we now undertake that work.

Mr Smyth continues to scare Canberrans when it comes to the issue of cardiac monitors and defibrillators. People, rightly, expect that, if the worst happens and they have a heart attack or a friend or family member does, the ambulance officers that respond have equipment that enables them to deal with that heart attack. Well, at no point in time have these defibrillators operated in a manner that meant they did not work in terms of the electric shock treatment. We are talking about two minor technical problems with the defibrillators which were not identified during the extensive multi-month trialling period but were, instead, identified as a result of software loaded onto the defibrillators that were subsequently provided after the end

of the trial period. They have been rectified by the supplier in accordance with the terms of the contract. Mr Smyth might live in some bizarre world where contracts are never fully executed properly by suppliers, but it happens. And the territory has contractual terms that ensure the supplier makes good, and that is what has occurred on this occasion.

Mr Smyth also notes that the paramedics union, the organisation that represents our front-line ambulance officers, and the Chief Officer of the ACT Ambulance Service have both said on the public record that at no time was there any risk to patient safety due to these complications. But Mr Smyth continues to make allegations about these machines, deliberately and wilfully causing worry and concern amongst the Canberra community in a way that he should be ashamed of. He should be absolutely ashamed.

In relation to disciplinary processes, any misconduct issues within any ACT government service are dealt with consistent with the procedures set out in the Public Sector Management Act, associated documents and the relevant enterprise agreement. Mr Smyth asks whether there have been any complaints to WorkSafe ACT. The Justice and Community Safety Directorate can advise that it has not been notified of any details of any complaints made.

In relation to complaints to the Fair Work Ombudsman, staff, of course, have a right to raise concerns, and do so from time to time, with the Fair Work Ombudsman. That is why the office exists. The government is aware of concerns raised about the leave audit of ACT AS staff records. The matter has been raised with the Fair Work Ombudsman, who has conducted a review of the matter. A final report is pending from the ombudsman. I do not think it is appropriate to speculate on the outcomes of that report until it has been delivered. In relation to complaints before the ACAT, I am advised by the ACT Ambulance Service that it is not aware of any current complaints before the ACAT.

In relation to the State Emergency Service and the replacement of the deputy chief officer, this role is a public service position. Members would be aware that the former deputy chief officer resigned from the SES with effect from 31 October 2013 to pursue other career opportunities. An acting deputy chief officer is likely to be appointed in early November.

In relation to truck licensing—can you believe of all the things we are debating in this place we are debating truck licensing?—the SES are currently working with a number of organisations that provide driver training and assessment activities to determine value for money for the truck licensing requirements for the ACT SES. It is expected a decision on this will be made in the coming weeks, at which point the training and assessment program will commence.

Mr Smyth has asked about the Deputy Chief Officer of the Rural Fire Service. Believe it or not, things happen and people resign from their jobs. In fact, this resignation occurred because the gentleman involved retired from the public service. The position is currently being filled in an acting capacity, as is normal when someone retires from a position.

In relation to payment of close-call and on-call announces, all ESA staff, including RFS staff, are paid allowance and entitlements, such as overtime, in accordance with the relevant enterprise agreement. It is appropriate that the ESA continually improve its processes, and it is currently assessing a draft duty officer arrangement policy and is consulting on that with staff and union representatives. Once that is complete and all views have been canvassed, new agreed duty officer arrangement policies will be implemented. It sounds to me like a pretty competent management response to an important issue.

In relation to the availability of trained IMT officers, the ESA has a comprehensive register of trained and experienced IMT personnel. These members have been involved in active IMTs—instant management teams—within the ACT over the last three years, and many have participated in training in IMTs in other jurisdictions. Members of our IMTs come from RFS staff, volunteers and the parks brigade. (*Extension of time granted.*) They are supported by additional IMT personnel from ACT Fire and Rescue and the ACT State Emergency Service.

In relation to funds for training, each of the respective services allocates a budget for training and utilises the resources available through the excellent, up-to-date, contemporary and modern ESA training centre built and funded by this Labor government. I pose the rhetorical question: what sorts of training facilities did the previous Liberal government leave for our emergency services? What sort of investment did they put in to, say, hot fire training for volunteers, trench rescue capabilities or vertical rescue? Did they spend any money on those things when they were in government and Mr Smyth was the minister? Not that I can recall.

Mr Smyth wants to know about a second bulk water carrier. The ESA has contractual arrangements with at least eight private bulk water carrying capabilities in the ACT should they be required. That is in addition to its own bulk water carrying capability. There you have it—significant capability available through appropriate contractual arrangements as needed. As it should be, it sounds like a pretty competent management and operational arrangement to me.

Mr Smyth's motion is really just an attempt to take away from the very significant investments and hard work of the government and undertaken by ESA personnel to make sure our city is well prepared to respond to an emergency. Take, for example, the recent opening of the new west Belconnen Ambulance Service and Fire and Rescue station in October this year. You were present at that, Madam Speaker. That facility has been overwhelmingly well received by the west Belconnen community—a dedicated ambulance coverage capability for the first time for the west Belconnen district and improved facilities for our Fire And Rescue personnel considered by the chief officers of those services as state of the art and one of the best facilities in the country.

We have seen excellent work by our RFS personnel, most importantly in their deployment to the fires in New South Wales where, once again, the ESA demonstrated that, when it comes to our RFS volunteers as well as our parks brigade personnel, Fire and Rescue personnel and other personnel who were deployed, we

have the capability to respond on a significant scale in a very short period of time to deal with an emergency.

We have seen excellent work by the RFS with the launch of the Bushfire Awareness Week and we have seen excellent engagement by the ACT Ambulance Service in convening from around the country and around the world a recent conference of the Council of Ambulance Authorities, which provided valuable learnings on how to respond to mass casualty events, drawing on the experience of the Boston bombings.

The ESA has a strong and dedicated focus and capability. It is supported by a significant level of resourcing and investment in new equipment, facilities and training by the government. It is a capable, organised and well-prepared organisation and it is led by good operational leaders. My job as the minister is to make sure the operational leaders do their jobs, to make sure the commissioner does his job and to make sure all of our emergency personnel are appropriately supported when it comes to resourcing, equipment and facilities. I think I have set out very clearly today that all of those things are the case and that Mr Smyth's motion is one of the silliest he has ever presented to this place.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (5.39): I rise to speak to this motion, recognising Mr Smyth's ongoing enduring interest in matters emergency services related. I think it is fair to say it is something he often brings up in this chamber, and certainly I always enjoy these discussions because I think it is an area of considerable importance and one well worth discussing in this place. I have no problem with the information in Mr Smyth's motion being made public, although perhaps the only place I would have any exception is the details about the investigations of complaints that may be ongoing, where some care obviously needs to be taken about revealing personal details about these matters or legal matters. But I am sure that would be a point of agreement as well.

The only concern I have with this motion is the very broad nature of the questions that are being framed. It has asked for a large amount of information going across the four branches of the ESA and for some detail of operational matters. I note that Mr Corbell has just provided quite a bit of information. I imagine Mr Smyth is not entirely satisfied with that and would want some further information, but I certainly feel some of the information requested is of a very broad nature. My view is that, in its current form, the motion is so broad that it would be at considerable cost to ESA time, time that is very valuable and time that clearly, with the impending arrival of bushfire season, is something we need to be thinking carefully about.

In thinking about this motion and the best way to respond to it, I reflected on the fact that the ESA commissioner, Mr Lane, will be appearing at annual reports hearings on Thursday, 14 November, just over two weeks from today. And I feel that, in light of that, the most appropriate approach to deal with a number of these questions, particularly in light of the information that Mr Corbell has provided today, will be for Mr Smyth to take up these questions at that annual report hearing.

I think that would be a very time-effective way to address the questions that have been asked. I think it would also enable Mr Smyth to get more specific information about

what he wants to know on some of these matters, because he will actually be able to have a two-way conversation in that forum where some answers will be provided, the nuance can be worked through, there can be a back and forth. And then also obviously, out of those annual report hearings, if the matters are not addressed adequately, there is a capacity for questions on notice. My view is that, rather than supporting his motion today, that is a better way at this time to take up these questions. Then matters that arise from the answers might be best brought back to the Assembly if necessary.

I am strongly in favour of open government and the principle that government information should generally be available to members of the Assembly and the public. And there are limited circumstances where that might be the case. I think that can be demonstrated by the fact that, for example, I will shortly bring forward to the Assembly new legislation for freedom of information reform. It is part of the parliamentary agreement. The drafting of that bill is being done in partnership with PCO, Mr Hanson will be assured to know. I will be presenting that bill to the Assembly and it will substantially widen the scope of FOI and limit the number of circumstances in which information would be deemed not to be available.

Members will also recall that I recently supported a motion from Mr Smyth relating to bushfire matters and the seeking of information as well as a motion on information on tax reforms and having that information made available to the Assembly. I think those various decisions demonstrate I have no problem with information being made available in the appropriate form and in the appropriate forum.

But having looked at the nature of these questions, particularly the operational nature of them, in addition to the comments that Mr Corbell has made today, I will not be supporting the motion on the basis that I think these can be best taken up in the upcoming annual reports hearings.

I would say, and I emphasise, that Mr Corbell, as the emergency services minister, is, of course, ultimately responsible for the matters listed in this motion. Some of them are quite operational and are primarily dealt with inside the Emergency Services Agency. But Mr Corbell, as the minister, remains responsible. The fact that they are operational matters is not a reason of its own for not providing the information.

Similarly, as the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services and Minister for Corrections, I am responsible for agencies which have large operational components. They manage the day-to-day matters of the prison, they manage the nature parks, they drive and maintain ACTION buses. And whilst I cannot know every operational decision that occurs in these agencies on a daily basis and it is quite appropriate that I put trust in the experiences of the people who manage them, I am also, of course, ultimately responsible for these agencies. I am also happy to be a conduit for information about operational matters when it is appropriate to provide it to other MLAs and the public.

As I say, I think it is, from my mind, the very broad and extensive nature of Mr Smyth's motion that I really have a problem with, and I am not sure this is the best way to get the information that is being sought. I have outlined that I think there are good mechanisms coming up in the near future which will allow a dissection of these issues in some detail.

I also note that in today's press Minister Corbell has announced a review of the ACT Ambulance Service, which obviously goes to the issues that Mr Smyth has raised in his motion about that particular service. I am supportive of that review and I am aware that the Transport Workers Union, on behalf of employees, is supportive of a review as well.

The Ambulance Service certainly is a high-stress and unique working environment. Most of us probably cannot really imagine what it is like even if we have heard some of the stories. It is obvious there are improvements that can and perhaps need to be made within the service. Certainly the press reports and the conversations I have been privy to indicate there are some issues that need to be looked at there, and I think this review is a good approach. I will certainly be keen to hear the details of how that progresses.

With those few remarks, as I say, I will not be supporting the motion in the formal sense of voting for it today, but I believe there are opportunities to take up these matters and allow for a detailed discussion about them in the near future.

**MR SMYTH** (Brindabella) (5.45), in reply: I start by thanking Mr Rattenbury for his approach and his consideration. It was in stark contrast to the snide manner in which the minister responsible for these issues approached the motion. And while I am not happy with the outcome, I hear what you are saying. This was an attempt to get more information, and it is interesting how much information the minister has given out today, none of which fills me with any confidence that the minister is across his brief. So, Mr Rattenbury, thank you for your approach. I accept your decision but it is our job, I think as you stated, to hold ministers to account for what happens in their portfolios.

Mr Corbell is the minister for emergency services. And he can get up and he can ridicule me, that is fine, and he can make flippant remarks about drink machines and changing the oil. But at the end of the day, he is the minister under the administrative arrangements, and it is the minister that we challenge and question. It is not public servants, it is the minister.

The amount of information that one garners from what Mr Corbell says is interesting. I will start working my way through the list, and I foreshadow to members that I will probably need a little more time, a courtesy that was extended to Mr Corbell.

I have a document from the United Firefighters Union that actually calls for a review of the emergency medical response. There is an executive summary. Mr Corbell has this document. He treated it with disdain as well. But it is not going to stop the union sticking up for their members. But I think it is reasonable to read out a couple of the dot points:

- The ACT Emergency Medical Response program (EMR) plays a vital role in pre-hospital patient care.

- Firefighter First Responders significantly reduce response times to critical and medical emergencies, improving patient outcomes and increasing the chances of patient survival and recovery.

I will skip a couple. Then we go to:

ACT Firefighter First Responders are not sufficiently trained to perform the EMR role.

That is from the UFU, the United Firefighters Union. It continues:

This poses risks to firefighter mental health and to the public that must be addressed.

So, minister, you are on notice. Your union have told you that their members, in their belief, are not sufficiently trained to perform the EMR role and that the public and the firefighters are at risk. That is on your head. Treat that with disdain, minister. Be snide about that. But you have been warned by the union that you put those members and the public at risk.

This is why, Mr Rattenbury—maybe you will change your mind as I speak—this motion should get up today.

**Mr Corbell:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker, could you remind Mr Smyth that he has to direct his comments through the chair?

**MR SMYTH:** Devastating! Madam Speaker, I apologise.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Smyth, there is no point in making snide comments. I ask you to comply with the standing orders and direct your comments through the chair.

**MR SMYTH:** Madam Speaker, Mr Corbell has been snide; he has treated this debate with disdain. The ridicule is noted, and all of the members of fire and emergency, the SES, the RFS and the ACT Ambulance Service have heard his response. These points that I raise today have come from those people.

In regard to the draft terms of reference, let me say this. It was last year's budget, Madam Speaker, that I referred to. I made that clear in my speech. So again, I would say to Mr Rattenbury, through you, Madam Speaker, that that is why it is important that this motion gets up today. Mr Corbell just avoids the issue.

Yes, Mr Corbell, through you, Madam Speaker, I did get the question on notice response about the post-incidents debrief. The officers that have come to me have said, "Yes, those things occurred, and they are inadequate." Will you check the adequacy of those things? Perhaps you would like to get on to that. There is the culture within the service of the ACT Ambulance Service. This morning we heard him describe the Ambulance Service as a cottage industry. How disgraceful! What disdain! Perhaps it was just a really poor metaphor, but I would not have thought that the professional

officers, the trained paramedics, would have liked to think of themselves as being a cottage industry at any time. It is that sort of attitude that gets this minister into trouble.

We move to the cardiac monitors and the defibrillators. Of course, he spoke about the defibrillator bit, but he refused to talk about the cardiac monitor. After this issue became public I had a phone call from a woman. An older member of their family called the Ambulance Service because of a suspected heart attack. It took four times to get a reading on this lady's blood pressure. As you would understand, when you are having a heart attack, blood pressure is probably an important thing to know about. The ambulance officer cursed the machine and said: "I wish they'd bring the old ones back. At least they work." This is from the ambulance officers, minister.

As to the complaints, well, there have been complaints. I know of at least one officer who has complained to WorkSafe. I will review the words the minister used. He is very careful with his words. He did it a couple of times. He said, "Are there any complaints before ACAT?" He said, "No, there are no current complaints." There you go. Maybe there are not. I wonder how many there were in the past. But the fact is that I am told there is a complaint to WorkSafe.

The union had to go to the Fair Work Ombudsman because of the process on the audit of leave. For those who do not know, there was a look at all the leave that was outstanding. Members of the Ambulance Service had to justify where they were on a specific day three, four or five years ago—and why they had or had not put in a leave form and whether or not they had the leave. I defy anybody to know exactly where they were three, four or five years ago and what forms they had put in. But the fact that the union, on behalf of its members, took the government to the Fair Work Ombudsman speaks volumes. It speaks very eloquently. Madam Speaker, the minister can treat it with all the disdain he wants but the fact is that they are with the Fair Work Ombudsman now. In fact, the only thing that minister got right today was that, yes, the result is expected within a couple of minutes.

As to the replacement of the two deputy officers, yes, they do resign. That is correct. But it is about the replacement process. And when staff are told, for instance, that the deputy officer for the Rural Fire Service will not be replaced because the money is being used to fund the review of the strategic bushfire management plans, I have concerns, as do the people who reported it to me. I understand that the ops officer will become the deputy chief officer of the Rural Fire Service and will do both jobs. You have to question whether that is fair to the officer and whether it is fair to the service that somebody does two incredibly important jobs in what we all acknowledge could be a potentially quite disastrous bushfire season. That is poor management. If it is being driven as a cost saver, which is how I was told it was expressed, then that is appalling.

The minister tries to portray the close call/on call allowance issue as something that has just been announced. It is not being consulted on; it was just announced. The members were told, "It's gone." That is not consultation and that is not improvement on negotiation. That is incredibly poor management. If that is the case, the minister needs to look at it—and needs to look at it quite seriously.

And again, when we talked about truck licensing for SES drivers, the ridicule and the disdain that was expressed! I have had it from an SES officer that they do not take full crews out because if they load up with a full crew, the truck is over the limit. The government's answer is, "We'll get everybody a truck licence." How ridiculous. Here is another Simon Corbell procurement special along the lines of FireLink and some of the sheds that they have procured. Here is another one where we get something where we have not fully worked out, when it is loaded up, whether or not it complies with the road regulations. You can laugh about it, minister, but if you are only sending out two-thirds or half a crew in a vehicle, that is a problem. It puts additional pressure on the crews, which again goes down to stress, and it may hamper the response. Apparently they have been aware of this for about 12 months, but we have not got a solution yet. If you are talking about now making sure that every member of the SES has a truck licence so that you can respond vehicles, there is something wrong with your management, there is something wrong with your approach and there is something wrong with your timeliness.

That is the problem with this minister. You know when Simon Corbell is on a good thing; he brings out the detail—long, detailed speeches. You know when he is in trouble when he goes the ridicule approach. And he is obviously in lots of trouble, because all we got today were doses of ridicule.

I hope that Mr Rattenbury reconsiders his position. The fact that everything the minister has said can be easily countered shows that this detail needs to be addressed. The reason I asked that he respond to the Assembly is that yes, I am quite aware that we are having ESA, but a couple of these issues could use up the entire time allocated to the ESA inside JACS. These are big issues for those people on the ground who have concerns about their colleagues and concerns about themselves. (*Extension of time granted.*)

This is an important motion. The minister knows that I have people who speak to me in all the services. We all do. These are not issues that have just come up. It is not "Look, it's Monday; I need to write a motion for Tuesday so I can debate it on Wednesday." These are things in many cases that I have followed for a long time. Certainly people raise the issue of the Bronto with me all the time. Certainly there are the issues in terms of staffing. It would be interesting, minister—maybe I will put a question on notice—to know what is the staffing level of RFS in comparison with other services. As they have grown, has the RFS staffing grown? It would be a very interesting question, because there are concerns about that as well.

People raise with me the issue of compliance with the law in sections 58 and 53 of the Emergencies Act. We go to the deputy chief officer of the State Emergency Service. Again, the staff were told it would not be filled because it is a cost saving. If it is a cost saving, that is fine. But do not put pressure on an individual and say, "You now do two jobs," and expect those people to perform at the same level. They will do it for a little while, and I honour all the members of the Emergency Services Agency. They are there because they want to be. They love these jobs. They love doing these jobs. They love the role that they perform. But let us give them the structure and the tools to do their job properly.

It does then get back to the issue of reviews. Again, I thank Mr Rattenbury, through you, Madam Speaker, for support for the tabling of the statement of capability in November. It will be interesting to see what it says. I know that there was a review that started last year inside JACS—the last financial year, minister; not this year. It was quickly shelved but draft terms of reference exist. It would be very easy for the minister to find those and table them. I suspect he will not, but if we have to go through other methods and other venues, we will.

How we fund, staff and equip our emergency services are vitally important to the people of the ACT. These issues are vitally important to the safety and wellbeing of not just the officers but the community they serve. The questions raised here today are serious and did not deserve the snide, ridiculous approach and the disdain that was aired in this place. These concerns have been raised with me by members of the Emergency Services Agency. These concerns in some cases have been raised with the minister by various unions and groups. The fact that these issues still abound shows that we have a minister who is incapable of resolving these issues and serving the community properly. There is a real question over the minister's administration of emergency services and its agencies, and I believe his administration is deficient.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 7

Noes 7

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

Question so resolved in the negative in accordance with standing order 162.

*At past 6 pm, in accordance with standing order 34, the debate was interrupted. The motion for the adjournment of the Assembly having been put and negatived, the debate was resumed.*

## **Planning—Tuggeranong**

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella) (6.03): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) work is about to start on Southquay, a new mixed use development on the shores of Lake Tuggeranong;

- (b) Southquay is one of the first catalyst projects to be delivered after the release of the Tuggeranong Town Centre Master Plan;
  - (c) this development will see up to 1,000 dwellings and more than 3,000 square metres of commercial space;
  - (d) sites that have frontage to Anketell Street will allow for development of 6 to 8 storeys, with allowance for three towers of a maximum of 12 storeys. Development will step down to 2 to 4 storeys at the Lake's edge in order to maximise lake views and retain appropriate scale; and
  - (e) this development will revitalise the Tuggeranong Town Centre, create jobs in the construction sector and provide new opportunities for people to buy in the Tuggeranong Valley; and
- (2) calls on the Government to:
- (a) progress the Southquay development as a priority;
  - (b) continue to look at new opportunities for residential development in Tuggeranong;
  - (c) continue the implementation of the Tuggeranong Master Plan; and
  - (d) continue to work with stakeholders in Tuggeranong Town Centre as part of its urban renewal priorities.

I was very pleased to join Minister Barr and Wayne King from the Tuggeranong Community Council a couple of weeks ago on the shores of the southern end of Lake Tuggeranong for the announcement of this fantastic development, Southquay. I must say I had a bit of Tuggeranong pride there when I stood with the minister to talk about this fantastic development. The ACT government has identified potential land release sites in the Tuggeranong town centre for infill development, responding to key objectives to increase density in existing areas.

The Greenway lakeside development, Southquay, includes potential development on both the eastern and western sides of Lake Tuggeranong. This is an exciting project for Tuggeranong residents, with the promise of rejuvenating the town centre. The entire estate will consist of about 1,000 residential dwelling sites comprised of a mix of both medium and high-density development. Approximately 3,300 square metres of commercial gross floor area will also be available on the western side of the lake.

The Greenway lakeside master plan is based on a set of key planning principles that have guided the design development. They include elements such as design that focuses activity towards Lake Tuggeranong to encourage a lively waterfront for the town centre.

This development seeks to aid the revitalisation of the Tuggeranong town centre by providing new opportunities for people to live in the Tuggeranong valley. The development that is underway will also create jobs in the local construction sector.

Future development sites that have frontage to Anketell Street will allow for the construction of buildings between six and eight storeys, with allowance for three towers. Development will step down to two to four storeys at the lake's edge in order to maximise the lake views and retain appropriate scale. Development on the eastern side of the Tuggeranong pond will allow for buildings of two to three storeys between Drakeford Drive and the lake's edge.

Open space focuses on a central park on the western side, which will provide high-quality urban parkland for recreational use. The existing shared-use path on the western side of Tuggeranong pond will be realigned to accommodate the development and will be extended to the southern section of the lake. The shared path will link the eastern shores of the pond via a new shared pedestrian and cycle bridge.

The Tuggeranong town centre master plan was prepared by the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate, in parallel with the Land Development Agency's Greenway lakeside master plan, throughout 2011. The Greenway lakeside precinct is incorporated into the Tuggeranong town centre master plan and reflects the development densities and building heights proposed in the master plan.

In September last year the ACT government announced what has been nearly two years worth of consultation in the Tuggeranong master plan. This 75-page document will guide the transformation of Tuggeranong. The ACT government has listened to residents and will be delivering up to another 7,800 new dwellings, transforming major streets into people-friendly boulevards and boosting the amount of on and off-street parking. The plan also sets out a sustainable direction for the area. With proper planning, the town centre's street grid will establish views to the mountains, residential redevelopment that can take advantage of good solar orientation, walking and cycling links to Lake Tuggeranong and sunny, sheltered spaces for outdoor dining and relaxation.

The community consultation has been varied and comprehensive through the use of consultancy agents as well as working with ACTPLA and ESDD through the four consultation sessions to ensure the largest possible stakeholder engagement. Events such as a youth consultation road show, which went to local school and youth groups to have their views heard, as well as stakeholder interviews, community drop-ins and consultation with residents at the Tuggeranong Community Council and the Tuggeranong festival, ensured that no-one missed out on having their views heard.

With the plan now endorsed by the ACT government, the next step is, of course, the implementation of this plan. Southquay is the first step in this process, with future advancements being to prepare a precinct code which specifies land use, height and design details, which will encourage development and redevelopment and ensure it achieves the principles outlined in the master plan and start the territory plan variation process; to investigate options for private-public partnership establishments and look at land release of territory-owned land on section 19 and land around the foreshore; and to identify and prepare capital works proposals for public realm and infrastructure improvements for consideration by government in subsequent budgets.

The community will still be involved as implementation of the master plan occurs, either through notification on variations to the territory plan, such as the introduction of the precinct code, or notification on development applications as they are lodged, such as the one planned for Southquay. With the plan now endorsed by the ACT government, the next step is, of course, the implementation of this plan. Southquay is just one opportunity for this development.

The development at Greenway is responsive to government policy objectives for urban intensification as it delivers significant infill development that directly supports the government's land supply aim of supplying at least 50 per cent of all land releases from infill projects. That was outlined in the ACT planning strategy 2012.

This site is strategically located within the Tuggeranong town centre and provides the future residents of the estate with immediate access to employment opportunities, amenities and services, and public transport choices. Community engagement has been a key component of the development of the master plan for Greenway lakeside. The most recent consultation was a community information day held in March this year at the Tuggeranong Hyperdome and a static display at the Tuggeranong Library from 25 March to 10 April.

Responses from the community information day were positive, with the majority of the interested public being fully supportive of providing more residential housing in the Tuggeranong town centre. The Land Development Agency also presented at the Tuggeranong Community Council meeting in May, continuing its commitment to keep the public informed on the progress of the development at Greenway. I will just quote from the Tuggeranong Community Council. In their latest release they said:

It's been another busy month with a mix of positive news but still plenty of challenges. On the positive side, it was pleasing to see work starting on the South Quay project (opposite Bunnings). This will bring jobs and more residents close to the Town Centre.

So there was great support from the Tuggeranong Community Council.

This recent engagement that I have spoken about follows a robust process in 2011, which encompassed a variety of consultation method and events, in order to gain a wide range of feedback from the community that informed the development of the final master plan, which is now being delivered.

Constituents that I have spoken to since the project was announced have been excited to see how this development will bring more life to the town centre. For some older Tuggeranong residents, this provides them with the opportunity to downsize while still staying close to family. For younger residents, this proposal provides them with the opportunity to purchase their first home in Tuggeranong close to their family, friends and workplace.

I am advised that development on the eastern side of the estate is subject to a draft variation to the territory plan to enable sites for about 150 dwellings to be constructed

and released for sale. The sites on the eastern site are expected to be released in 2016-17. Sites which can accommodate about 300 dwellings will be released on the western side during 2013-14. The remaining residential and commercial development sites will be released over the next three financial years.

Construction on the western side has now started, with the mobilisation of the machinery and equipment on the site expected to start within the next couple of weeks. I think this is a fantastic way for the government to progress the Southquay development as a priority. It will continue to look at new opportunities for residential development in Tuggeranong, it will continue the implementation of the Tuggeranong master plan and it will continue to work with stakeholders in the Tuggeranong town centre as part of its urban renewal priority.

I am sure that Southquay will be a popular place to live. As a member for Brindabella, I hope the other members for Brindabella will join me in sharing the excitement about this development. I look forward to a reinvigorated town centre with vibrant waterfront views.

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

## **Adjournment**

Motion by **Mr Corbell** proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

### **Arts—Belconnen Arts Centre**

**MR COE** (Ginninderra) (6.14): I rise this evening to speak in the limited time available about the Belconnen Arts Centre—the arts centre on the foreshore of Lake Ginninderra—and how it has, in a relatively short time, become a dynamic centre of visual and performing arts in Belconnen and beyond. After a decade or so of discussions and consultations the Belconnen Arts Centre was finally opened in 2009. It is managed by the Belconnen Arts Centre Inc through an agreement with the ACT government.

The building was constructed by a local building company, Project Coordination, and designed by William Ross Architects. I, like all members I would think, have had the privilege of visiting the centre on many occasions. Whether it is to see art produced by school students or by local or visiting artists, concerts, performances or rehearsals, the arts centre is the hub for the Belconnen community, and its role will only increase. Whether it be through creative arts workshops, music, dance and movement classes, or seniors, children or holiday programs, there are many ways Canberrans can be actively engaged with the arts at Belconnen Arts Centre.

I commend the board and management of the centre for their professional advocacy for the expansion of the centre, including the construction of a versatile performance space. The arts centre makes the most of its superb location by capitalising on the wonderful vista provided by Lake Ginninderra. I share the view of those involved in

the centre that Emu Bank could develop further into a rich cultural and entertainment precinct and I hope that such an opportunity is articulated in any updates to the Belconnen master plan.

Madam Speaker, I would like to commend the board of the Belconnen Arts Centre for their commitment to the arts, but also the Canberra community in general. I mention Ms Evol McLeod OAM, the chair; Mr Rex Hollier, the treasurer; Mrs Maryann Mussared, secretary, also with the Strathnairn Arts Association; Mr Graham Bauerle, the public officer, also with the Phoenix Players; Mr Asmi Wood, a senior research fellow at the National Centre for Indigenous Studies and the HDR program manager; Ms Shirley Gourgaud, formerly of the Belconnen Community Council; Ms Gillian Harris-Mayes, human resources consultant; Paul Hetherington, an associate professor of writing at the University of Canberra; and Mr Shane Radnell, general manager at Colliers International.

I would also like to commend and thank the staff for their professional approach to the smooth management of the centre and the promotion of the objectives of the arts centre. I mention Daniel Ballantyne, the chief executive officer; Jack Lloyd, the business and operations director; Jacque Schutze, creative programs director; Pat Miller, finance officer; Dianne Libke, front of house officer; Julia Boyd, the marketing and events manager; Nola Adcock, the administration and volunteer officer; Robin Davidson, Nicola Lambert, Ann McMahon and Philip Pigginn.

Finally, I encourage all members to visit their website at [www.belconnenartscentre.com.au](http://www.belconnenartscentre.com.au), sign up to their great newsletter or, better still, attend one of the many exhibitions, events and concerts in their great program.

### **Mr Greg Mews**

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (6.17): I rise tonight to speak briefly about Greg Mews, who has been working at the National Heart Foundation since 2008. Greg is shortly to leave Canberra and it seems an appropriate time to acknowledge the contribution that he has made. It was rather revolutionary for a health-based NGO to employ an urban planner. Certainly, the first time I met Greg and I found out that he was with the Heart Foundation I think I experienced that sense of surprise as well.

He has facilitated a great depth of work in holistic policy-making in the area of preventative health, including how transport, urban spaces and path networks all relate to healthy lifestyles. What he has sought to do is really bring together that whole picture and deliver the Heart Foundation's mission to get us all more active and more healthy through the eyes of an urban planner.

I think his erudite explanations of how this all links together makes perfect sense to me, and I am sure other members who have met Greg would acknowledge that. His personal contribution has been outstanding. He has been tireless and enthusiastic in his advocacy for better outcomes. I can only demonstrate this most accurately by sharing a brief anecdote.

I ran into Greg last year at a conference at the University of Canberra. I had gone to the university on a bus from the Assembly. The stop is right outside and drops you right at the UC. Greg, of course, as he always does, was taking public transport to come back. So we said that we would go together to get the bus. We were so busy and so involved in the conversation that we actually got on the wrong bus on the way back.

Instead of coming conveniently back to Civic in about 10 minutes, which is what we thought we were doing, we ended up on the circuitous route to Gungahlin from the University of Canberra at 6.30 at night. So it took us well over an hour to get back to the city. It was not a problem, because we had plenty to talk about. But I think it demonstrates his enthusiasm. I was so caught up in it I did not even notice we were getting on the wrong bus.

Greg has been on many government working groups and I think he has been a key player in sharing ideas and broadening the perspectives of many others in those working groups as to both what was appropriate and what was possible as we sought to think about the future of Canberra. He brought European planning ideas to Canberra in a credible and plausible way.

I think before Greg came along, many people used to laugh about comparing Canberra to anywhere in Europe. But Greg took this challenge on with relish and sought to bring some of those urban planning principles and experiences into an environment that is different and apply them in a way that was relevant and useful to Canberra. I think he has played a key role in shaping debate on urban planning issues and bringing health, happiness and wellbeing into the story.

I would also like to congratulate Greg on his creativity. I think he is the only person I know that could frame the urban policy wars as a *Star Wars*-like epic struggle. To try to get this point across, he went so far as to dress up as a Jedi for a photo shoot with the *Canberra City News*. He was trying to get his point across in what was a humorous and creative way. I think, again, that that small anecdote underlines his boundless enthusiasm for making this city a better place.

I want to conclude by wishing Greg well in the next phase of his life as he returns to his native home, thank him for the contribution to the future of our city and let him know that we will miss his boundless enthusiasm in urban planning debates in Canberra.

### **Mental Health Week**

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (6.20): I rise today to speak about an issue that affects many Australians and, in fact, many Canberrans—that is, mental health and mental illness. Mental illness is a serious problem faced by millions of Australians. Around 20 per cent of adults in Australia are affected by some form of mental disorder every year. Many are disabled by the effects of that mental illness and, sadly, there are many people with a form of mental illness who commit suicide.

The Mental Health Community Coalition ACT is the peak body representing the not-for-profit community mental health sector in the ACT. This body promotes a diverse range of community agencies and local consumer and carer groups that support people recovering from a mental illness. The Mental Health Community Coalition works with stakeholders to support the development of new community services and supports the interests of consumers, carers and not-for-profit community organisations.

The Mental Health Community Coalition also coordinated Mental Health Week events in the ACT, which took place recently from 6 to 12 October. I want to reflect on that week today. Mental Health Week is an important initiative to raise community awareness and understanding of mental illness, to encourage the reduction of stigma and discrimination against people living with mental illness and to promote positive mental health and wellbeing. It aims to provide the opportunity to engage the wider community in learning more about mental health and illness issues.

The theme for Mental Health Week this year was building wellbeing, resilience and connectedness while promoting health-seeking behaviours. Throughout the week there were a number of events run, ranging from LGBTI mental health panels to a short film festival. I was pleased to be invited to the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network's mad hatter's tea and croquet party on 10 October.

The event was very well organised with an absolutely beautiful setup around the theme of Alice in Wonderland and the mad hatter's tea party. It was a very fresh way of communicating the message which is so important in Mental Health Week. It was a great opportunity to speak with some mental health consumers while enjoying a lovely meal with a cup of tea and a game of croquet thrown in for good measure. Of course, hats were also obligatory, and I was quite pleased I had brought my own hat.

I would like to pay tribute to the Mental Health Community Coalition, the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network, the Mental Health Foundation and various other organisations that play such a vital role in raising awareness for and assisting those with mental illness, not just in Mental Health Week but every day and every week.

### **Ms Margaret Stalker—death**

**MR DOSZPOT** (Molonglo) (6.23): As shadow minister for ageing, it is my privilege to work closely with many members of our community, and that includes our Assembly community as well. One of our colleagues, Dick Stalker, recently retired as an attendant in this place, but I have had opportunities to keep in touch with him from time to time. When I bumped into Dick last week outside the Assembly, he gave me the sad news of his mother's death.

Margaret Clare Stalker, better known as Midge to her very wide community of friends, died at the age of 103 on 19 October 2013. Midge was born at Six Mile Flat on 2 June 1910, the second youngest child of Richard and Ellen McDermott. She was one of 10 children—five boys and five girls. She was the proud mother of two and grandmother of four, and her passing will be felt deeply by them and by many others in the community.

Midge was legendary in the Braidwood district—life member of the bowling club, the servicemen’s club and the hospital auxiliary. Dick told me that right until the end she had all her faculties and that her energy and enthusiasm were endless. Her card days were as legendary as her dedication to the daily ritual of attendance at mass. She knew everything and was at everything.

Dick tells me that his father, Alexander, took special leave from the Army during wartime to marry his bride. They were married at 7 am one morning, with a brief honeymoon in Sydney before duties of war resumed. When peace was declared, he returned home, and Mr and Mrs Stalker set up home in Braidwood.

But her life was not always rosy. She was widowed in 1954, when Alexander was electrocuted, with two young children to raise and with no breadwinner. She overcame this by taking in boarders to help make ends meet and she just got on with living life to the full. At 103, it was truly a full life well lived.

Her funeral was held at St Bede’s Catholic Church, Braidwood last Friday, with the mass delivered by her godson Dermid, who had only recently been ordained. Our condolences go to Dick and his sister, Marcia; his wife, Sue; his brother-in-law, Nick; and Midge’s grandchildren, Kim, Paul, Joshua and Matthew.

In closing, I would like to repeat the Irish blessing that was delivered by Dick in a eulogy to his mother, Margaret Claire “Midge” Stalker nee McDermott:

May the road rise to meet you  
May the wind always be at your back  
May the sun shine warm upon your face  
May the rain fall soft upon your fields  
And until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of his hand.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

**The Assembly adjourned at 6.26 pm.**