



Debates

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Wednesday, 19 March 2014

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Wednesday, 19 March 2014

The Assembly met at 10 am.

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.

Economy—infrastructure development

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (10.02): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes the important contribution that the development and maintenance of infrastructure plays in underpinning jobs growth by creating a productive and sustainable ACT economy;
- (2) recognises the importance of specific projects that are delivering on these objectives including:
 - (a) the significant private sector investment in the Canberra Airport;
 - (b) the Majura Parkway upgrade;
 - (c) the Enlarged Cotter Dam Project;
 - (d) the Constitution Avenue upgrade;
 - (e) community health facilities in Tuggeranong, Belconnen and Gungahlin; and
 - (f) the Gungahlin Leisure Centre;
- (3) notes the impact on the ACT economy of a contraction in spending by the Commonwealth; and
- (4) calls on the ACT Government to continue progressing important transformative projects including:
 - (a) the Health Infrastructure Programme;
 - (b) the City to the Lake project;
 - (c) the Capital Metro project;
 - (d) the City Plan;
 - (e) facilitating investments in renewable energy; and
 - (f) the Riverview Development.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss the important contribution that development and maintenance of infrastructure plays in underpinning jobs growth by creating a productive and sustainable ACT economy. The government recognises the importance of high-quality infrastructure to a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable Canberra.

Infrastructure, as the foundation on which our community is built, is a critical element in determining how our local community grows and develops. It underpins our strong and robust economy, allows for the efficient delivery of essential social services and contributes to a healthy and sustainable environment capable of responding to the challenges of climate change.

Ultimately, it contributes to Canberra's vitality and the high quality of life we enjoy in the ACT. Strong infrastructure necessitates a long-term perspective, vision and commitment and the government has a longstanding commitment to, and record of, investing in quality infrastructure for the territory.

Strategic infrastructure planning aims to prioritise investment in the right infrastructure to meet the needs of our community. This includes ensuring that the territory gets value for our money, is able to work efficiently and effectively, and grows sustainably.

Infrastructure investment decisions cannot be developed in isolation of each other. They must be considered together in the context of the government's and the community's priorities and the vision for the territory. To this end we extend our infrastructure planning a decade into the future, to look at long-term and emerging trends, such as the ageing population, and Canberra's growing role as a regional hub.

Our infrastructure vision is set out in the government's 10-year infrastructure plan, which shows how our vision is translated into real plans and projects. The plan is developed and updated in consultation with the community and industry.

The ACT, like most urban centres, will face a number of significant challenges in the coming years. We continue to see contraction in spending by the commonwealth government, and we anticipate more impacts to be revealed in their upcoming budget. We are seeing a shift in the profile of our workforce and population more generally due to the ageing population, a trend that will also increase demand for health and other social services.

We will grapple with the challenges of limiting urban sprawl and increasing urban densification, a challenge that has implications extending across the economic, social and environmental frontiers. We are also increasing our integration with the surrounding districts of New South Wales, such as the fast-growing areas of Queanbeyan, Palerang and the Yass valley. While this will provide great benefits for the territory, we must also address our role as a regional provider of services such as health and education for the broader capital region. We must also be mindful about how we fund infrastructure and services which effectively straddle the ACT-New South Wales border.

The principles of this motion are best illustrated by a close look at some of our city and region-building infrastructure which is at various stages of development. I turn to the Majura parkway upgrade. Surrounded by New South Wales, the ACT depends on the national freight network to access the goods that support and keep the ACT's economy strong. The Majura parkway, a capital investment in our roads, will play a significant role in improving the national and regional freight routes.

From a national perspective, it will improve an important freight route, providing a direct connection between the Federal and Monaro highways. From a regional perspective, it will provide better access to Canberra Airport, a transport hub for the region. Locally, it will add to the capacity of the city's main road network, taking some through-traffic, especially heavy vehicles, out of the inner north, upgrading access between Gungahlin through north Canberra to the airport and to south Canberra and Tuggeranong, and improving access for visitors to our region—for example, those heading to the snowfields.

The project will result in a new 11.5-kilometre dual carriageway road linking the Federal Highway in Canberra's north to the Monaro Highway in Canberra's south. It will also include 11 bridges, three interchanges with roads crossing at different heights, and dedicated on-road cycle lanes.

The Australian and ACT governments are each contributing \$144 million towards the project, due to be completed in 2016. From an infrastructure investment of \$288 million, we anticipate the Majura parkway will generate long-term economic, social and environmental benefits worth almost a billion dollars. It is a major boost to our local economy, not just during construction but in the longer term as freight links are established and further enhanced.

In celebration of the centenary of Canberra, the Australian government gifted \$42 million to the ACT government for the upgrade of Constitution Avenue. The 2.5-kilometre Constitution Avenue connects Civic from London Circuit to Northcott Drive in Russell.

Community consultation on the preliminary design plans for the upgrade was held in September 2012. Over 100 people provided feedback during the consultation phase and this feedback has been used to help finalise design plans for the upgrade. Detailed design was completed in December 2013. Minor amendments are currently being made before works approval will be provided by the NCA.

Stage 1, the early construction works, was tendered at the beginning of the year and will be let by the end of March 2014. All works are anticipated to be completed by late 2015, subject to the approvals being provided. The road is a key element of the Walter Burley Griffin plan, and, as the base of the national triangle, it is significant in the implementation of the Griffin legacy.

The section of Constitution Avenue being upgraded is between London Circuit and Anzac Parade. The upgrade will provide major public space and transport infrastructure improvements along Constitution Avenue. The upgrade project will

deliver staged transport improvements along the road corridor in the Civic section, including a dedicated bus lane in each direction, a separated cycle path, improved pedestrian facilities, and a new central median strip planted with trees.

The long-term vision for Constitution Avenue is to provide a vibrant, mixed-use, tree-lined grand avenue with enhanced public transport, cycling and pedestrian movement—indeed, a grand avenue, Madam Speaker.

As part of the project the character and visual amenity of the avenue will be enhanced through the delivery of a tree replacement program for the existing oak trees to replace trees in advanced stages of decline. Established trees will be used to replace the trees that have been removed and an additional 229 new trees will be planted along the avenue. A central median will be created and planted with new oak trees and the verge on both sides of the road will receive significant landscape upgrades.

As commercial and residential development advances along Constitution Avenue, the public realm spaces will be upgraded to achieve the visionary design. The phase will be coordinated by the National Capital Authority in conjunction with site owners and developers. The upgrade of Constitution Avenue will ensure that the necessary infrastructure is in place to support the visionary design.

Last week the Chief Minister announced the release of the government's city plan, a blueprint to continue the transformation of our city centre. The ACT government's city plan initiative will generate economic activity and create jobs. The plan sets the spatial and urban planning policy framework for the city centre towards 2030 and beyond. Importantly, the city plan provides a guide for decision-makers, both public and private, which will steer the city centre towards the commercial and cultural hub which the community clearly expressed Civic should be in the consultations.

A central element of the city plan is the introduction of light rail—capital metro. Capital metro is the critical component of our future public transport network. Walter Burley Griffin designed the major avenues in Canberra, including Northbourne Avenue, to include electric street cars operating within broad central medians. The capital metro project continues this vision and will be the backbone of Canberra's future public transport network. It will also provide a catalyst for an economic resurgence along Northbourne Avenue.

Capital metro stage 1 will be a light rail service along a 12-kilometre route from Hibberson Street in Gungahlin to the city centre. The government will be integrating transport and land use planning with existing or planned infrastructure to create a revitalised urban corridor, provide better access to public transport, generate a range of housing and commercial opportunities and optimise land and infrastructure use.

The capital metro project will encourage development, particularly at the anchor points both in Gungahlin and in the city. As a key landowner and as a land manager under the leasehold system, a unique opportunity exists for the ACT government to both directly and indirectly encourage urban renewal along the corridor.

Capital metro represents a major capital investment to deliver economic growth and development with a significant economic uplift effect along the corridor,

transformation of the city centre, commercial growth in the Gungahlin town centre and Dickson group centre, and a template for the transport system of the future.

In another example of the vision this government has for the city, we have embarked on the city to the lake project. This is a transformational project to better utilise the broad southern flank of the city—the ACT's economic centre. The project area stretches from the West Basin to Anzac Parade, including the Canberra Olympic Pool, the existing convention centre and nearby large surface car parks. The project aims to create a new public waterfront for the city and to realise Commonwealth Park and City Hill as celebrated urban parks integrated within the centre of the city.

The project investigates a number of infrastructure elements, including improvements to Parkes Way to better connect the city and Lake Burley Griffin, and identifying and reserving potential locations for a new convention centre, a 30,000-plus-seat rectangular stadium—and we could imagine watching the Raiders and the Brumbies play there, Madam Speaker—and a regional aquatic centre. The project will also enhance the attractiveness of the city centre as an anchor for the first stage of the capital metro.

On Monday the Treasurer announced an additional \$500,000—half a million dollars—towards the city to the lake initiative, specifically for the design and planning of the waterfront precinct at West Basin.

This government's approach is to provide the full spectrum of infrastructure planning, recognising the critical importance that infrastructure has for Canberra's future. Our infrastructure pipeline is strong and reflects our commitment to delivering high-quality infrastructure for the ACT community now and well into the future.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (10.16): I thank Dr Bourke for raising in the Assembly this important motion about infrastructure development here in the ACT. The opposition believe that governments have an important role in the provision, facilitation and delivering of infrastructure and consequently the maintenance thereof. However, it is unfortunate that in the last decade or so the ACT has had a pretty bad track record when it comes to the planning, construction and implementation of major infrastructure projects and, of course, the budget papers are littered with examples where projects have been poorly planned, dragged on for too long and have blown out in cost enormously.

One notable exception in the list that Dr Bourke highlighted in part (2) is, of course, the work undertaken at the Canberra Airport. The work done at the airport is a great example of what can happen when enterprises are given the scope and flexibility to be entrepreneurial in their response to demand in the market and to, in turn, generate additional growth and additional investment in our city.

Of course, all members here would be aware of the amazing new terminal at the Canberra International Airport which truly is a magnificent gateway for our city. I have tremendous pride when I am on a plane taxing to or from the runway and look across and see the wonderful new terminal. It really is a tremendous gateway for our city and a vast improvement on what was there when the airport was owned and operated by the commonwealth. It is a great example of what the private sector can do

and a great example of how private sector investment does indeed add value for all Canberrans.

This week the airport, of course, released their master plan for the future of the airport and surrounds, and I welcome their innovation and continued investment in the precinct. There is, of course, still work to be done on how the airport can be better integrated with the rest of the city, and I hope the ACT government will live up to their end of the bargain in making sure that the airport can work as effectively as it can with the rest of the city.

The other notable exception in Dr Bourke's motion, albeit for the wrong reasons, is, of course, the enlarged Cotter Dam project. This is a project that had problems from the very beginning, in fact, from before the beginning if there is such a time, and I do hope that the Auditor-General's inquiry, the current investigation, will get to the bottom of how, indeed, it blew out in time and how, indeed, it blew out in cost from the early estimates in the low \$100 million to over \$410 million for the Cotter Dam alone—not counting all the water security measures, just the Cotter Dam.

It is important that we as members are fully across the story of the Cotter Dam. I might turn to the core of the dam, that is, the cost of the abutment and the dam wall, in effect the foundations and the actual dam wall itself. In the 2009 contract it was meant to cost \$93.7 million. In 2013, the actual figure was \$146.4 million. So it has gone up by \$52.7 million. The only known externality, the only known additional cost, was a geotechnical issue in the valley which cost \$3.7 million.

What is the other \$49 million for? The dam wall and the foundation went up by \$49 million, and there is no explanation for it. It is important to note that the government and ACTEW said there were fish studies, there were habitat studies, there was a flood et cetera. They are not included in this cost. The increase from \$93.7 million to \$146.4 million does not include any of those costs. They are all separate. They all contribute to the overall cost of \$410 million but they are not included in this additional \$52.7 million. The only known externality is the \$3.7 million they spent for a geotechnical issue in the valley of the dam.

On a number of occasions the government said that the dam cost had increased due to excavation of an additional nine metres. However, the planned excavation was only four to seven metres, and that is in effect what they did. Upon discovery of this geotechnical issue, they needed to use an additional 10,000 cubic metres of concrete. That might sound like a lot but in the scheme of things it was a pretty small amount, in fact only about three per cent of the additional concrete that was used.

However, in another pass they actually saved concrete. So it was not even a three per cent increase. The net increase of additional concrete was even less than three per cent. In 2009, they expected to use 9,000 cubic metres of conventional concrete, and they used 20,000 in reality. However, in regard to the roller-compacted concrete, they expected to use 386,000 cubic metres and they only used 361,000 cubic metres. So there was a saving there. In effect if you go through all the government's stated reasons as to why the cost blew out—and they can all be debunked—it was not more excavation, it was not more concrete. It was not fish. It was not habitat. It was not the flood.

So what were the additional \$49 million of increased costs? That is something that nobody knows, and this is all separate to everything else out at the Cotter Dam. It is separate to the saddle dams. It is separate to the roads. It is separate to the visitors centre. It is separate to the walking paths. It is separate to the signage—everything. There is \$49 million of costs attributed to the cost of the abutment and dam wall which is unknown. And I do hope the Auditor-General will be able to shed some light on this issue because that is a huge amount of money.

Look at the opportunity cost of that \$49 million and think of what that \$49 million could do elsewhere in the ACT or what that \$49 million could do had it been returned to the taxpayers. That would be a stimulus package. A stimulus package would be to not take the money in the first place and to allow individuals to actually make their own choices rather than have a government which is so prescriptive in influencing consumers and citizens with their ideological projects.

There are of course other projects which are listed in Dr Bourke's motion. The Constitution Avenue upgrade is an interesting one. I think everybody likes the idea of the Constitution Avenue upgrade and the artist's impression, which was released about four or five years ago, of the tree lined streets, the cafes, the bicycles everywhere, everyone's all rosy. But that was years ago, that artist's impression. And we keep getting told, "It is six months away. We are going to start soon. We are going to start soon." I do hope the government is going to give a definitive time line as to when the Constitution Avenue upgrade is actually going to happen and when we are going to see these cafe-lined streets with bicycles everywhere, as it was in the artist's impression years ago.

The Gungahlin leisure centre, of course was a promise in 2008 by the Labor Party. A 2008 election promise was: "We will deliver a pool for Gungahlin. We will also deliver a cinema." Again, we have been waiting for a very long time. And of course with health facilities, those too were running overtime and over budget.

As for the Majura parkway, it goes to show that it is a real snub to this government when Infrastructure Australia gave the go-ahead for that project but would not even give the go-ahead for a \$15 million study into light rail because they said not even the study was worth while. And that is something I will go to shortly.

Part (4) of Dr Bourke's motion discusses transformational projects. The health infrastructure program has been in part put on hold because there was not enough money; yet there is money for other projects. So you do see the priorities of this government, when they are willing to spend money on a light rail project but they are not willing to spend money on the health infrastructure program.

With regard to the city to the lake project, the artist impressions came well before anything substantial. It was very much sold to everyone, oversold to everyone, as the bee's knees of capital works. But I think we will be waiting a fair while before we go on the land bridge over Lake Burley Griffin.

In addition, we have got the city plan. This is about the fifth or sixth iteration of the city plan. Full credit to the designers and the printers; they have done a superb job in presenting that document. It really does look a million bucks. That is incidentally not dissimilar to what the cost was. But the fact is that these plans are just plans until they are implemented.

That of course leads me to the one that I am very keen to talk about, and I am sure those opposite are desperate to hear me say a few words about capital metro. Wait no more! Due to popular demand, I will say a few words.

Mr Hanson: I have come back into the chamber for this.

MR COE: Thank you, Mr Hanson. He could feel me building up to capital metro. He could feel me building up to it. And what a massive improvement to the chamber, with Mr Hanson coming in and Mr Barr leaving! The chamber is a better place right now and it is going to get even better when I discuss some of the issues with capital metro, the \$614 million extravaganza. And only now are they doing a master plan.

How is it that you chose to do a route for light rail between the city and Gungahlin before you even assessed the other options? It is just extraordinary. And it will be interesting to see whether the master plan actually does detail what the economic impact will be of doing the other routes first, because that is an all-important question. Regardless of whether the overall project stacks up, the overall grand plan for light rail stacks up, it would be better if the most productive route were done first. I am not sure that is going to be happening here.

If you go to the government's own submission to Infrastructure Australia of August 2012—and it is pretty interesting—it says that the cost-benefit analysis for bus rapid transport is 1.98, with business as usual. With light rail, it is 1.02. The higher density situation—and this is what the government keeps talking about; it is all about the uplift; “we will be able to redevelop Northbourne et cetera”—includes the uplift value. This includes what you can do around the track. For light rail, it is 2.34; for bus rapid transit, 4.78.

According to the government's own submission to Infrastructure Australia, even with the uplift, even with the patronage projections, even with the environmental benefits, even with all the social benefits that they have touted, bus rapid transit, in their own report, is doubly effective, doubly efficient than light rail. Light rail comes in at 2.34; bus rapid transit, 4.78. The government cannot say, “That does not include uplift.” It does. It does include uplift. It does include land value. It does include what you can do in the corridor. And bus rapid transit comes in doubly as good.

So how is it possible that they made this decision? Of course, it is all about the politics. And I imagine, as I have said before, Mr Rattenbury would be pretty cranky with how the government is selling light rail, because they are doing a pretty ordinary job. And that is indicative in the government's own survey.

This is something that the government did not manage to make a media release about. Believe it or not, they did not put out a media release about this report, the reason being that the survey said, “Thinking about the transit corridor between the City and Gungahlin”—blah, blah, blah—‘do you support, in effect, light rail transit?’ And 68.5 per cent said yes. Only 24.3 per cent said they supported bus rapid transit. So light rail is a winner there. However, in the government’s own survey, after you inform them of what the cost is, light rail goes to 45.8 per cent—45.8 per cent of Canberrans support light rail—and 46.5 per cent, more people, support bus rapid transit. So by the government’s own economic figures, it does not stack up, and by their survey people do not want it.

There are many questions about how this government manages infrastructure projects, and I appreciate Dr Bourke moving this motion to give us an opportunity to talk about some of their mismanagement.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for Ageing) (10.31): I thank Dr Bourke for bringing on this motion today to give us yet another opportunity to discuss these sorts of issues around infrastructure and employment here in the ACT. The motion does speak to quite a few specific projects, as well as making general observations.

I certainly do agree that infrastructure is important and does create jobs, but as I emphasised yesterday during the MPI, the ACT’s sustainability is not just about economic growth. We need to look at our future through a triple bottom line lens: the economy, the environment and the social consideration. As an example of that, perhaps on a smaller scale, we could consider the building of houses and units in Canberra. They are going to last for decades and decades. So we need to ensure that they are efficient and environmentally friendly houses as they are going to be using energy well into the future, and certainly at times when we have very ambitious greenhouse gas targets.

I would say that the same argument applies to infrastructure, whether it is thinking about light rail, which I think will deliver incredible benefits to this city over its lifetime and help transform the city in a range of ways from environmental, social and economic perspectives, through to thinking about whether we invest in particular roads, and long-term considerations when it comes to the infrastructure dollar spend and where we need to prioritise for the limited amount of capital that is available to the government.

I take this opportunity to speak about a few of the particular issues in Dr Bourke’s motion, because I think that is the way of illustrating some of the broader points I would like to make. On the issue of private sector investment at the airport, which again I spoke of yesterday, I think there are many beneficial aspects to what the airport has done. Equally, I think it is an example of where we need to think about what the fabric of the city looks like.

I have said this to people at the airport. I think they have done an incredible job out there. They have been incredibly entrepreneurial and they have operated within the rules that are available to them. I think they deserve credit for building buildings that are of a high quality, that have strong environmental performance, that are architecturally interesting and that create I think quite a pleasing environment at the airport, a pleasing urban fabric.

That said, and I have again said this directly to the owners and developers of the airport, if they had done that at Gungahlin I would be their biggest fan in Canberra. I think that what has happened at the airport in creating a new precinct out there has distorted the planning of this city. It has led to a situation where we have got what is essentially evolving as a town centre in a place that was never intended to be a town centre for which the infrastructure, such as roads or public transport, is not available.

A shopping centre has been created that requires people to drive to it. It is the only way to get there. People are not going to cycle to Majura Park. They are certainly not going to walk there. There is very limited public transport. So you are building in a dependence on the private motor vehicle in a way that I think is unsustainable in the long run and compares far less favourably to some of the other developments that are occurring. If you think about the way that Gungahlin has been done, where so many of the suburbs and many residents are directly in the Gungahlin town centre area. They have a much more convenient lifestyle in that regard, and I think a more sustainable lifestyle in the long run.

So I do wish that the owners of the airport had built their very excellent developments somewhere else in this city. I think that that would have been very beneficial. We think about the way we have often debated in this Assembly the need for more employment opportunities in Gungahlin. I think that rather than people having to make the trip to the airport, it would have been better if those new office developments, as good as they are, had been placed somewhere else.

On the issue of the Majura parkway, as I have said before, Majura parkway will undoubtedly have benefits in the assistance it gives to road freight. It will also open up faster travel time for cars moving on this corridor, certainly at least in the short term. But there are also, again, long-term questions about how we want our city to grow, how it is planned and the type of transport modes we want to encourage.

That brings me to think about the definition of, and the idea of, induced or generated traffic. I have dug up through research this quotation on what that means.

Traffic congestion tends to maintain equilibrium. Congestion reaches a point at which it constrains further growth in peak period trips. If road capacity increases, the number of peak period trips also increases until congestion again limits further traffic growth. The additional traffic is called generated traffic. Generated traffic consists of diverted traffic (trips shifted in time, route and destination) and induced vehicle travel (shifts from other modes, longer trips, and new vehicle trips).

Research indicates that generated traffic often fills a significant portion of capacity added to congested urban roads. Generated traffic has three implications for transport planning. First, it reduces the congestion reduction benefits of road capacity expansion. Second, it increases many external costs, and third, it provides relatively small user benefits because it consists of vehicle travel that consumers are most willing to forgo when their costs increase. It is important to account for these factors in analysis.

That is an interesting quote. I think that raises interesting policy questions. This is not one where we just scoff and say, "Yes, that is just the Greens being anti-road." Far from it; it is actually looking at the evidence and saying, "There are limits to how much benefit additional infrastructure can provide when it comes to private motor vehicle transport." There are challenges there. Again, we are debating Northbourne Avenue in the context of light rail. We cannot just add more lanes to Northbourne Avenue. It has reached a physical limit. When you start to think about things like this, it raises interesting debates about what is the right infrastructure for the future of our city.

I might briefly say while I am talking about the Majura parkway that I think there is some important recreational infrastructure. Right at the moment there is a consultation period for the reinvigoration of the Majura Pines site. The Majura Pines site unfortunately was a negative consequence of the Majura parkway, in the sense that a swathe did have to be cleared. I think that was a great disappointment for a lot of runners, mountain bikers, walkers, equestrians and the like.

But through TAMS we now are working to revamp that site and ensure that it does return to being a great recreational facility. For anyone that may be interested in it, the consultation period is still open. I hope to see those works move forward fairly quickly so that people can begin to use that again.

On the issue of Constitution Avenue, just before Mr Coe leaves, I can assure him that the design plans are finalised and the work is about to commence. I will have some more details on that very shortly. Hopefully we will get to having those things that Mr Coe talked about. I expect to see him cycling down the edge of Constitution Avenue, stopping for a coffee on a Saturday morning. I look forward to that moment. I know that Mr Coe does get out on the bike occasionally and I look forward to the day when he can cycle down Constitution Avenue on a separated cycle path feeling safe, secure, and joining the many other cyclists that no doubt will be using the facility.

Dr Bourke outlined in some detail the works that are going to take place in Constitution Avenue, and I will not, for the sake of the Assembly, repeat those, but I think that the long-term vision for Constitution Avenue, to provide a vibrant mixed-use tree-lined avenue with enhanced public transport, cycling and pedestrian movement is a good outcome for this city.

I welcome the partnership with the federal government and the National Capital Authority in moving those works forward. I think it is an exciting redevelopment and upgrade of Constitution Avenue which will provide great infrastructure to support the

visionary design of Constitution Avenue that perhaps goes back to the time of Walter Burley Griffin and has been talked about many times since. I look forward to those works getting underway and, more importantly, being completed.

When it comes to the issue of renewable energy, which Dr Bourke has also mentioned in his motion, I think that the large-scale option which seeks to meet the ACT's 90 per cent renewable energy target will, again, lead to new infrastructure developments in the territory and some outside the ACT as well. But I am relaxed about that. I think we very much do operate in a region and I do not think that works taking place just across the border should be seen in a negative way. I think it is a positive for our region and also a positive for the ACT in sourcing clean green energy for the future at what I believe are going to be very competitive prices that will insulate this city against future price increases.

Renewable energy also provides an opportunity to develop resilience in the ACT grid. The decentralisation of energy supply means that the sorts of issues that even arose in the context of the 2003 bushfires—the fact that the ACT only has limited connection to the national grid—are ameliorated. With a decentralised energy supply some of those issues are ameliorated. I think that growth of infrastructure, be it large-scale private works or personal infrastructure on individual roof tops, will all help provide energy infrastructure to this city which will improve our resilience.

Dr Bourke has mentioned the Riverview development in his motion and I would like to make a few observations on that because I think it is a very interesting evolution in development in the ACT. The Greens have had some reservations about greenfield developments in outer areas in the sense that they create dormitory suburbs where people potentially are living some distance from necessary amenities with a potential for things like transport poverty to arise for residents of those areas.

However, from what I have been led to believe from the discussions I have had with the developers and from the documents I reviewed, Riverview does promise to be a different type of development for the ACT. For a start, the planners of Riverview have brought ecologists and biodiversity specialists in from the outset to ensure that they are protecting and working with the biodiversity that is on the site, not seeing it as a problem to work around but rather seeing it as the natural asset that it is and incorporating it into the development.

I think this comes from the owners of the land understanding the site and having a real appreciation of the proximity of it to the Murrumbidgee River. I think many members have already been out to the site and have a real sense of just how close it is to the Murrumbidgee and the integration that development is going to need to have with its surrounding environments. They are also planning for community gardens to be incorporated into the plan. They are planning to ensure that people can use active transport to connect them to the ACT's existing public transport network and to access existing facilities in west Belconnen.

Unfortunately, this sort of thinking is an unusual practice for suburban developments. I certainly hope that the ambition and the vision that has been set for Riverview are

met and that it sets a higher standard for development in the ACT. If the developers do achieve what they have set out to do, I think they will set a new benchmark and one that will hopefully influence thinking right across the territory.

The challenge that remains, I think—the ACT government will need to work on this issue—is to ensure that we deliver the necessary transport infrastructure to match the increase in residents moving into that area and not just enhance road infrastructure. It is about ensuring that we provide the public transport infrastructure in to the area as well so that we do give the residents the choice of how they move around this city and that we do not simply condemn them to needing two or three cars per household, that there are viable alternatives for residents in that area.

Dr Bourke also mentions health infrastructure in his motion. I think that there are a couple of areas here that I am very supportive of. I think the walk-in centres have been a success. We will talk about those more later today; so I will keep my remarks on that short for now. But the new women's and children's hospital has been well received. Certainly, on a recent visit when I had a younger family member in there I was very impressed by the facilities as well as by the staff. The physical infrastructure is also very welcome.

The secure mental health facility is another very important piece of infrastructure that we need to get moving on. It is reflected in the parliamentary agreement because it is something the Greens certainly support. I think that we need that sort of community mental health facility in the ACT. Certainly, as the Minister for Corrections I am mindful of ensuring that we have good mental facilities in the ACT so that people who need health treatment do not end up incarcerated because there is no other choice or they do not have alternatives. We should ensure that the people in the AMC are there for the right reasons and that those that need mental health support get it in other places. Prison is not the place to be treating mental health concerns.

There is a whole range of other health matters that I could turn to but I am mindful of the time. I will not re-prosecute the light rail discussion today. I note Mr Coe's comments. I think it would be fair to say that I do not share his pessimism. I think that light rail is a project that is going to deliver substantial environmental, economic and social benefits for this city and I reject particularly the observations around the master plan.

We well know that this corridor that is planned for is both the most congested corridor in town and one that offers significant opportunity for urban renewal and for economic opportunities. I think it will really set a new standard in Canberra and provide newer opportunities for this city that are not currently envisaged. I look forward to seeing that rollout over both the immediate term as the infrastructure is developed but also over a longer period as the city builds around that very valuable and innovative infrastructure.

There are other projects I could comment on. However, I shall have to leave my remarks there.

MS PORTER (Ginninderra) (10.46): I welcome the opportunity to speak on this very important topic and thank my colleague Dr Chris Bourke for raising it. As I have stated in this Assembly on several occasions, it is the duty of every elected member in this place, I should think, to protect jobs and to maintain confidence in the ACT economy. This should be at the forefront of every representative's mind, and not only those who are in government. As you will recall, not too long ago the ACT was exposed to the global financial crisis closely followed by instability in the euro zone. In spite of these most challenging times, coupled with meaningless opposition for opposition's sake, this Labor government has developed and continues to develop policies that have and will continue to protect Canberra's economy. The ACT Labor government chooses to support local jobs in comparison to the job threatening behaviour of the Canberra Liberals and their federal colleagues.

This government's vision for Canberra is that of a vibrant, liveable city, as Dr Bourke has said, that continues to grow and change to meet the challenges and opportunities for the future and continues to live up to its reputation as Australia's most liveable city. We particularly saw this in the 2013-14 budget, which delivered on important transformational infrastructure projects and laid the foundations that are helping the private sector to diversify, grow and create jobs.

Notwithstanding the issues that Mr Rattenbury has raised in relation to the private sector development of the shopping precinct adjacent to the airport, the private sector has invested in the Canberra Airport to develop a world-class facility. As you know, the benefits of the new airport will be spread across the region not just for travellers but also through economic development opportunities such as the curfew-free freight hub.

As the Treasurer stated yesterday—I am sure he will do so again today—the government in conjunction with Canberra Airport is pushing hard for international flights to cater for those who desire to avoid Sydney Airport with all the issues we have there and transfer to New Zealand or Asia from the ACT. As you can imagine, this will foster business links to important outside markets as well as significantly boost regional tourism.

It is this sort of forward thinking that the territory needs more of, particularly now when the ACT economy is faced with a contraction in spending and the needless attack on the public service by this current federal coalition government. As the Treasurer stated in the last sitting during question time, this government will do everything in its power not only to actively seek and facilitate private sector investment as a driver of economic growth but to protect jobs in the ACT as an employer.

Notable infrastructure projects that are playing a major role in the ACT's growth, some of which have already been mentioned, include the Majura parkway upgrade, the enlarged Cotter Dam, Constitution Avenue upgrade, Gungahlin leisure centre, and the community health facilities in Tuggeranong, Gungahlin and Belconnen.

Madam Speaker, as you are aware, health care and social services are major employers in the ACT, employing nearly 20,000 people. That is why continued investment in our health system through the health infrastructure program, or HIP, is vital, as it is not only enabling and informing the sustainable expansion of the health workforce into the future but continues to generate jobs within the construction industry, including jobs relating to the design and construction of HIP projects and the planning, management and coordination of related activities.

At the end of January 2014, over 2,350,000 man hours had been invested in HIP construction projects in the ACT, many of which are in Ginninderra, including minor refurbishments of the pre-rinse sterilising unit at the Calvary hospital, new critical care inpatient unit with four additional beds for intensive care at Calvary Hospital, expansion of the emergency department at Calvary hospital and, of course, the Belconnen Community Health Centre.

I congratulate the government on its commitment to progressing HIP programs, which include the University of Canberra public hospital. That is very important to the people of Ginninderra and the whole of the ACT. The completed project has potential in the long term of promoting excellence in education by attracting more students, more researchers and more academics to the city. World-class educational institutions such as the University of Canberra and the Bruce CIT campus will be partnering with us in this attempt to improve our health system by responding to the large number of older people in the ACT and the numerous health challenges we all face. Groundbreaking research has already started, and that will see huge benefits not only to the people of the ACT but to our region.

I join my colleagues in calling on the government to continue progressing other important transformational projects, including: the city to the lake project, which we have heard extensively about this morning; the capital metro project, which has been talked about before; the city plan; facilitating investments in renewable energy; and, of course, the Riverview development, which we have just been talking about.

I will quickly say something about the Riverview development. I think Mr Rattenbury said his eyes were opened when he saw this development and realised that all urban development that happens somewhat distant from the city is not a threat to the environment necessarily. As we know, this project has been under active consideration by the ACT government. Currently the Land Development Agency is progressing the rezoning of the land to enable development of the area identified under the heads of agreement, with the first 200 blocks of land projected to be released in 2015.

There is no doubt that the Riverview development will transform the west Belconnen region as we know it. It is a fine example of a developer working with government to achieve greater environmental outcomes as well as suburban development. I encourage everyone to visit the display centre at the Kippax shops or to log on to their website. This development coupled with other stimulus measures the Chief Minister recently announced and talked about yesterday will continue to create construction jobs in the ACT and provide certainty to industry.

We all know that Canberra forms a small part of the overall Australian economy. As a result, we must be outwardly focused. This government is focusing on regional issues as well as we recognise the importance of working together with our regional councils and the potential this has in positioning the ACT as a hub for service provision. That is why it was disappointing to see the deliberate dismissal by those opposite to the recent contribution of many council representatives to the select committee.

This government has learnt from the Howard government's experience and has decided to act now to protect and stimulate the ACT economy. This Assembly should give its unequivocal support to the motion before us today.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Community Services) (10.54): I thank Dr Bourke for the motion today and for his ongoing interest in jobs and economic growth in Canberra. The government is acutely aware of the importance of infrastructure delivery and the importance this has to economic development and job security in Canberra. As I and other members of the government have mentioned before in this place, we are firmly committed to supporting jobs in our economy. This is the Labor way.

Whilst conservative state governments around the country have sought to slash their workforces putting many thousands of public servants out of work across this nation, this ACT Labor government is getting on with the job of supporting our public service and supporting our private sector to create jobs. It is certainly one of the key priorities in the government's business development strategy that I issued in 2012. The strategy, with its numerous programs and policies, is assisting the private sector to grow and create jobs in this territory. This is going to become even more important for us in the coming years.

Whilst our economy is presently one of the strongest in Australia with the lowest jobless rate in the country, we are certainly very aware of the challenges presented by the Liberal Party, particularly their trumpeted reduction in commonwealth spending and employment in our city. The government believes the long-term prospects for our city are bright, but we need to do all we can now to support our economy and support jobs during this difficult period.

Firstly, the government will continue to fund and progress productive infrastructure to help mitigate against the commonwealth's slowdown. Not only will this ensure that the community receives the facilities and services that it needs, but the economic activity created by these infrastructure projects will help contribute to our city's growth.

Secondly, the Chief Minister has recently announced a package of initiatives to support the local building and construction industry. This sector is a major driver of economic growth in Canberra employing more than 13,000 people, hence the government's efforts to support this particular sector. I would particularly like to outline this morning the importance of the acceleration of works in the new suburb of Moncrieff that were announced as part of the package.

This involves the simultaneous release of four civil works contracts with an estimated combined value of around \$150 million. These contracts will be for the construction of roads, water, sewerage and public spaces such as parks and playgrounds. This work will, of course, create a direct amount of significant economic activity, but the benefits are not just limited to the building and construction industry. Investment in this infrastructure lays the foundations for future investments in new commercial centres, schools, health facilities and, of course, the other activity that accompanies the development of a new suburb.

The same is true of the Riverview development that Ms Porter has just spoken about, the new development front in west Belconnen. The first blocks here are expected to be released as soon as next year. Over the next decade we will not only see construction begin on 4,500 new dwellings at Riverview but we will also see the jobs and economic activity that are driven by the construction of thousands of new homes and the services for these homes.

We have certainly seen such effects in several suburbs in Gungahlin over the last few years where tens of millions of dollars have been invested in community infrastructure. For example, the Gungahlin leisure centre is a major asset for the Gungahlin community and is expected to open in this fiscal year. Not only will this centre provide a wide range of health and fitness programs for the community but it will also provide a number of jobs in the centre's operation.

Also about to open at the end of this month is the Gungahlin enclosed oval. This facility in the town centre will allow Gungahlin clubs in all four football codes to play matches in their local area on a high quality playing surface with competition-standard lighting.

Of course, the government's investment is not restricted to Gungahlin. The government continues to support significant infrastructure projects which are creating jobs not only in the construction phase but also ongoing employment opportunities. As Minister Rattenbury has indicated, we have recently held consultation on the upgrade of Constitution Avenue, a \$42 million investment that will improve inner city transport and amenity. The provision for improved public transport, car, cycle and pedestrian access will facilitate increased and more efficient economic activity in central Canberra.

This upgrade forms part of city to the lake, a project which is integral to realising our city's potential. I have spoken at length before about the importance of this innovative project, which will be worth in the vicinity of \$2 billion to the territory economy. This is, of course, in addition to capital metro, which is key to improving not just our transport system but also transforming the city to Gungahlin corridor and, in time, other routes across the city.

As well as creating jobs, these developments add to the productive capacity of the territory allowing us to live and work more efficiently but also adding to the cultural and social life of the city.

There are, of course, not just benefits to public investment in infrastructure. As other speakers have alluded to the award winning \$480 million redevelopment of the Canberra Airport is a prime example of private sector investment in infrastructure that is driving job creation and growth in the territory. The new 55,000 square metre terminal has expanded check-in facilities, greater security, lounges and retail and hospitality areas and is an investment in improving Canberra's competitiveness to help attract international flights and increase tourism and investment.

The government has commissioned a recent study by Independent Economics to estimate the value of direct international flights to Canberra. This study has confirmed economic benefits for Canberra and the surrounding region of more than \$100 million annually. This would be on top of the tourism sector's existing contribution to our local economy, which is currently in the order of a \$1.65 billion a year and 16,000 jobs. This is a very clear indication of why supporting the introduction of direct international flights is a priority for the government and for the airport.

The airport, though, is just one example, and the government is actively pursuing a range of investment opportunities through Invest Canberra, the newly established dedicated investment facilitation body to facilitate and attract companies and investors to undertake business in Canberra.

The combination of government investment and public infrastructure and facilitating private investment is the pillar that will underpin our job growth and sustainable economic growth now and into the future. It is important to recognise, as I have indicated in this place on a number of occasions, the need for the territory to be able to attract investment of national and international partners. Our economy is simply too small to be able to sustain the level of growth that we have experienced in recent times without new investment coming nationally and internationally.

The commonwealth government is going to significantly withdraw expenditure from the territory economy. The Liberal Party is determined at a national level to mug this economy. There is no doubting that, and all of the talk around the federal bureaucracy is of difficult times ahead.

The government's response at a local level is to ensure that we are engaging with national and international infrastructure partners to secure new investment for this economy. The government locally also has a role to play in relation to our own infrastructure program. The simple point is: if we do not play that role and if we do not seek to secure new investment into our economy, our economy will shrink because there is no one else to make that investment. That is why the government is focused on the policy directions it has outlined and will continue to outline particularly through 2014-15 budget.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella) (11.04): I rise today to speak in favour of this motion. The motion demonstrates the government's support in many areas of development and infrastructure around the territory. It shows that the government is committed to the advancement of renewable energy, health and urban development.

In Tuggeranong we recently saw very positive developments occur with the Southquay project. A sale by auction of the first release of blocks in the new development of Southquay confirms the faith that the local community has in Canberra's future. Spirited bidding by six registered bidders saw each block sell for \$4.5 million, and both were purchased by local developers. The first block is on the lake foreshore and allows for a development of up to four storeys and a maximum of 95 apartments. It was purchased by Kendrick Enterprises Pty Ltd. The second block was bought by Empire Global Developments No 2 Pty Ltd. Both of these companies are proudly local, ensuring that jobs will be created locally from local businesses. This will see a mixed use development of some 12 storeys and 211 apartments through this development. These apartments will have an active frontage on to Anketell Street featuring retail and commercial businesses.

The development at Greenway is responsive to government policy objectives for urban intensification. It delivers significant infill development that directly supports the government's land supply aim of supplying at least 50 per cent of all land release from infill projects as outlined in the ACT planning strategy 2012. The 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.

This is exactly what the Tuggeranong town centre needs. With 300 new and modern apartments, we will see a town centre start to be reinvigorated into a town centre which caters for those surrounding it. As can be seen in the Tuggeranong master plan, this assists with the government's goal of a full transformation of Anketell Street and in doing so will help bring the town centre to the lake.

Along with the Southquay developments, infrastructure spending in my electorate of Brindabella spreads to health care, with health care in Tuggeranong and surrounds receiving many major improvements. I have spoken on several occasions regarding the popularity and success of the nurse-led walk-in centre at the Canberra Hospital. This great example has allowed us to look at bringing this type of service to the town centres, close to accessible public transport and parking to ensure they are easy to use. I am proud to be part of a government which is continuing to work on this commitment and has, as part of the recent budget, funded the design work behind implementing this policy. This is a policy that is delivering for Canberra, providing free health care where it is most needed. That is what Canberrans are asking for.

This is only one part of what the ACT government is doing in health infrastructure, with the nurse-led walk-in centre taking pride of place in the multimillion dollar refurbishment of the Tuggeranong healthcare area.

The Tuggeranong Community Health Centre will continue to deliver a comprehensive range of healthcare services to the local Tuggeranong community. The centre offers services aimed at assisting clients to better manage acute and chronic conditions in a facility closer to home, which is, in turn, ensuring the reduction of reliance on our hospital system. A wide range of services are offered at the centre. Upgrading these local community health centres has been a strong priority for this government,

through ensuring that health services are out in the community and widely accessible to those most in need.

We have also seen the funding and the opening of a great community health cooperative in Chisholm, based on a model from the west Belconnen health cooperative. Having recently opened, the health cooperative will see the membership-based bulk-billing model that has been so popular in west Belconnen. I understand that Minister Burch is one of their very first members. With access to the bulk-billing services always in demand, and with the ACT investing \$200,000 in infrastructure funding, the south Tuggeranong community now have a new clinic to provide this.

Along with supporting the investment that the government is making in the future of health care in the ACT, this motion supports the investment that the government is making in renewable energy. The motion's focus on investment in renewable energy is very important for the ACT, and indeed Australia. Investment in renewable energy is a vital factor for reaching the ACT's renewable energy target to be powered by 90 per cent renewable energy by 2020.

It is important for the future stability of our national economy and local economy, not to mention our way of life, that we reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced. The best way to do this is evidently through renewable energy and the renewable energy target of 90 per cent electricity production by 2020.

Members may be interested to know that 66 countries across the world have introduced a renewable energy target. Some 47 countries also have feed-in tariffs to provide incentives for generators to move to renewable energy. Germany has been deemed to be the most successful, with a move to 123.5 terawatt hours of renewable energy, investing some €26 billion just in 2010. That goes to show how large an effect this investment can have on a nation's economy.

The announcement of further investment in wind farms by the ACT government shows that a jurisdiction such as the ACT is doing its best to avoid the inevitable problems caused by human induced climate change and achieve the required targets.

The amendments to the Electricity Feed-in (Large-scale Renewable Energy Generation) Act 2011, which allowed for 200 megawatts of generation potential to be awarded by reverse auction to various tenders, provides an opportunity for job creation, economic stimulus and a reduction of our greenhouse emissions.

The job creation potential for these projects is already large, and it is increased yet again by the ACT renewable energy local investment framework. This framework will include regional contractors and the regional labour force in order to benefit local businesses through these wind farm developments. This boosts the local economy to the benefit of all Canberrans.

As part of their contracts, the parties who decide to invest in these projects will be required to show through their planning how these goals will be achieved, thereby guaranteeing benefit to the ACT community. The innovative nature of these programs gives requirement for training and skills acquisition, helping to develop Canberra's capacity as a tertiary education and trade skills hub.

The great advancements which are to be made through this investment—the reduction of greenhouse emissions, job creation, education industry growth—are all supported through this motion, which demonstrates the ACT’s commitment to wind farming and renewable energy. The recent position statement by the Australian Medical Association gives even more support for this initiative. The AMA stated:

The available Australian and international evidence does not support the view that the infrasound or low frequency sound generated by wind farms, as they are currently regulated in Australia, causes adverse health effects on populations residing in their vicinity.

What is more, it is interesting that they also note:

The reporting of “health scares” and misinformation regarding wind farm developments—

of which there is often a great amount—

may contribute to heightened anxiety and community division, and over-rigorous regulation of these developments by state governments.

Not only are these investments good for the Canberra community and good for our greenhouse emissions; they are perfectly safe.

I wish to commend this motion as it supports so many facets of necessary development and investment in the future. It demonstrates the government’s commitment to these excellent initiatives which are viable for the advancement of our territory.

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) (11.13): I thank Dr Bourke for proposing this motion to the Assembly this morning. As a Labor government, we are committed to protecting jobs and supporting local jobs growth in our city and in our territory. Jobs are the cornerstone of a sustainable economy.

The recently released renewable energy local investment framework, which I released in the context of the government’s 90 per cent renewable energy target and associated projects, sets out a series of priorities that the government has identified for local investment as we help make the transition to a more renewable and sustainable energy future. The principles outlined in the renewable energy local investment framework are designed to ensure that we see enduring economic benefit for our city from the strategic policy decision the government has taken to invest in renewable energy, to decrease our city’s greenhouse gas emissions, and also to achieve a more sustainable urban environment. The principles include delivering enduring benefits to local businesses through the inclusion and use of regional contractors and the regional labour force; the building of Canberra’s capacity as a national tertiary education and trade skill hub in the area of renewable energy; stimulating productive research

partnerships that will develop and further strengthen the capacity and the global recognition of our tertiary institutions; and growing the local corporate footprint of national and international renewable energy businesses.

In the immediate term, and in particular having regard to the announcements made by the government last week about the deployment of large-scale wind as part of our 90 per cent renewable energy target, all parties that submit proposals through this auction process will have to set out how their projects contribute to the priorities that I have just mentioned, and their proposals will be closely evaluated and scored in regard to these matters as well as the others set out in the auction documents.

The bottom line is that all proposals for feed-in tariff support for large-scale renewables will be required to demonstrate and compete on the basis of what local economic development benefits they bring to the ACT. They may be in the form of using local contractors, setting up local offices, or investing in research partnerships or our trades training capacity.

Whatever it may be, the framework is built around a vision of how Canberra can be an internationally recognised centre for renewable energy innovation and investment. The priorities in the framework build on our strengths as a strong and forward looking knowledge economy. The framework also seeks to nurture and grow the capacity of our renewable energy industries to take advantage of the enormous level of investment that is occurring globally in this sector. Bloomberg New Energy Finance has projected that the expected level of investment in the industry globally over the next 20 years is expected to exceed \$US7 trillion. This highlights the very significant level of investment that is occurring globally and the importance of the ACT sharing in some of that growth.

Through the application of the framework in the wind auction and beyond, the government expects to see more local trade jobs and more companies transferring their design, logistics or corporate functions to Canberra. We expect also to see new research and development partnerships formed here, generating local intellectual capacity and property which can then be exported to global markets. This all contributes to the government's plans to diversify the ACT economy and support new avenues for sustainable economic growth.

Renewable energy projects create jobs not just in the short term but in the long term. For example, right now there are approximately 100 people working on the Royalla solar farm project, with more working in design, engineering, research and development. We know that wind projects typically employ one person per four megawatts during operation, and many more during the construction phase. Capital expenditure is around \$1 million per megawatt of capacity. So the government's policy settings on large-scale renewable energy investment will create jobs—jobs in construction, maintenance, research and development, logistics, sales marketing and corporate functions. All of these will provide support to our local economy and the economy of the surrounding region.

A great example of how this is already starting to happen is the recently announced windscape institute announced by the ACT start-up Windlab. Windlab were winners

of major ACT government economic development prizes last year, and are a spin-off of work originally commenced in the CSIRO. Windlab now have international operations, as well as operations here in Australia, mapping wind resources and selling that intellectual capacity, property and knowledge to wind farm developers globally.

The windscape institute has been announced by Windlab as a mechanism to support the training and development of wind resource professionals. It is a fantastic investment by a local Canberra business and is a good example of the level of knowledge and skill already present in the ACT in the renewables arena. Windlab have chosen Canberra as their base not just because they come here, but because it is a great place to live, and they continue to invest in their city. It clearly demonstrates what we have to offer in this space. Who knows how this example may further develop as the initiatives of the wind auction and priorities of the renewable energy local investment framework start to be realised.

I now turn to some other major elements which support and promote the ACT economy, in particular the development of our first light rail route of capital metro.

This is a major infrastructure project for the ACT. It will do much for local industry and local jobs. Firstly, light rail is proven to increase employment. Based on experience in other cities, we anticipate significant economic activity by intensifying land use along the corridor. In Washington, areas within two kilometres of a light rail stop have eight times the employment density and three times the population compared to outside the area. On the Gold Coast, stage one of the light rail system generated around 6,300 direct and indirect jobs. And Sydney's CBD and south-east light rail is projected to create approximately 10,000 jobs.

This increased economic activity can drive new opportunities for other parts of the city and will support other important initiatives such as the city to the lake initiative. Capital metro will also assist in the revitalisation of the declining Northbourne Avenue corridor. According to research undertaken to date, building rail in advance of market demand can yield positive economic reward if done in conjunction with effective land use planning. That is exactly what this government is doing right now by planning development along these corridors and projecting future uses.

Capital metro will provide business and investment certainty, stimulating significant economic activity as land surrounding the light rail increases in value and is used more efficiently. And the project will leave rich opportunities for local employment. We are seeing that right now. The recently appointed consortium of technical advisers to the project include a range of local specialist consultancies, including Brown Consulting, LANDdata Surveys, Philip Chun Access, SLR Consulting, GML Heritage Consultants and dsb Landscape Architects—all local firms benefiting from this government's investment in the development of light rail. The consortium leader of these firms, the global firm Arup, has had a Canberra presence since 1968 and will be growing its presence here in Canberra as a result.

Light rail is a powerful tool to revitalise and reshape cities. It is not just a form of transport. Tracks in the ground provide business certainty, encourage investment and connect people and places.

This government has a long-term vision for the city. Based on careful planning and investment, we are now embarking on the delivery of major and innovative infrastructure projects such as capital metro, city to the lake and our renewable energy projects. All of these will deliver on a vision and shape for a Canberra that people will be proud to live and work in well into the future.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (11.23): I rise to speak in support of Dr Bourke's motion and to stand up for working people in the territory. With our city's economy facing some uncertainty as we wait for the release of the Liberal government's Commission of Audit report and the federal budget, the ACT government knows that we have to do what we can to maintain confidence in the economy and in our community. We cannot stop the commonwealth cuts but we can play a role in ensuring that we emerge out of this period as soon as possible and in a stronger position.

We will do what we can to stimulate the economy and to provide confidence for the residents of our community by implementing the growth, diversification and jobs strategy, developing and growing business opportunities to expand our economic base and grow local employment, promoting Canberra to the region, the nation and the world to attract tourism and business investment, growing our export capabilities including partnering with our universities to support their growth and international outreach, and producing major events for our city and managing significant sports and event infrastructure.

The ACT budget, as nine per cent of our economy, can respond to some federal cost saving, but not, as the Chief Minister has said, "to savage austerity". The APS represents 34 per cent of the ACT workforce compared to the ACT public service figure of 11 per cent. We simply cannot absorb the cuts that are coming just by hiring more territory public servants. But we will do what we can to protect and grow jobs in the ACT, because that is what good Labor governments do.

The ACT government will facilitate employment both as an employer and as a driver of economic growth. We are committed to supporting sustained growth and development of our economy. We will work with all stakeholders in the region, in businesses, institutions and the wider community, to increase economic activity and opportunity.

We are also committed to ensuring that when jobs are created in the ACT they are good jobs. Jobs in construction, jobs in education and in health, jobs in innovation and technology: these are the jobs that we would like to see grown here in Canberra. This government is playing a role in the creation of these jobs by investing in the projects which we have already talked about this morning. I refer to projects like the city to the lake, the city plan, capital metro, the health infrastructure program, facilitating investments in renewable energy, and the Riverview development in west Belconnen.

This is an important thing to underline, because when I am out in the community talking to residents in west Belconnen, they tell me that they want to make sure that their kids and their loved ones have the best chance they can to obtain a well-paid, secure job.

I want to turn briefly to some of the projects that are happening in my electorate of Ginninderra because I want to show that this government is supporting new developments and investments right across the ACT. I want to talk about the new health centres, and particularly the ones on my side of town, in Gungahlin and Belconnen.

I have had personal experience with both of these centres, for cracked teeth on my 10-year-old son. We spent some time in the dental surgery getting those repaired in both of the centres—in the Gungahlin centre first and then in the newly opened Belconnen health centre. My own personal experience and the stories that I have heard from neighbours and people that I talk to in west Belconnen have been very positive about both of these new facilities. I am sure Mr Gentleman and Ms Burch could tell the same positive stories about what is happening on the other side of our beautiful city.

The Belconnen Community Health Centre is not just providing new and innovative health services to the ACT; it is also providing opportunities for community organisations to set up social enterprises in the facility, in the form of a cafe which provides opportunities for people with disabilities to learn and get their qualifications in hospitality and to be able to work in a sector that they probably would not have had an opportunity to work in previously. So not only are we providing good services to the people that live in this city but also we are providing services for people inside that to be able to work and thus provide even more to their local community.

I refer also to the women's and children's centre, which Mr Rattenbury referred to earlier. I have been to the new women's and children's health centre, and particularly the paediatrics unit, with my son when he had a broken nose. Also, a couple of weeks ago, I was very lucky to have a nephew born in the birth centre. Again, whilst childbirth can be an experience in itself, the experience in the birth centre was a very positive one and we have a beautiful new nephew whose birth we are celebrating.

This government is working very closely with the Riverview Group to build 4½ thousand homes in west Belconnen. Mr Rattenbury has already talked about the way that this developer is communicating with the community and how they are consulting about their project. So far this development has been a good model for all greenfields developments in the ACT.

The Riverview Group have undertaken extensive environmental research and have committed to protecting much of the riverland surrounding the development and building as sustainably as possible. To their credit, they have also committed to a new level of community consultation. Riverview have held a significant number of community forums, engaging with local residents, businesses and community groups, and they have also opened a shopfront in the existing community, in the Kippax centre at Holt.

It is not often that you will find me giving praise to property developers this easily, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I do want to highlight the positive role that government can play when it works closely with business to support the creation of jobs and to promote good investment in the ACT.

I was looking at the *Canberra Times* regarding the ACT government's release of the stimulus package. I looked at the comment from the Liberal Party. The Liberal Party's comment was that the construction sector should not need to have a stimulus package, or perhaps not a stimulus package like this one. But we would not have needed that if we had not been facing the cuts that we are going to be facing from the federal government.

I looked at the web page to find out whether they had some other plans to protect jobs and support our economy—and it was pretty slim pickings, I can tell you. In the nearly 18 months since the election, the Liberal Party have yet to tell Canberrans what they would do if they were in our shoes. Where is the policy for urban development? Where is the policy for attracting new industries to Canberra? Where is the policy to encourage infrastructure development for the ACT? The opposition are pretty good at having a whinge and at opposing things, but they do not have the leadership skills required to navigate the ACT through any hard times that we might be facing.

Today, through Dr Bourke's motion, we are showing that we have a plan for our community to protect jobs and services. We are the ones with a plan to bring new investment to Canberra, we are the ones with a plan for our construction industry, we are the ones with a plan to encourage new industries to grow here and we are the ones with a plan to build critical infrastructure that is necessary for our growing city.

The ACT government, in the words of Optimus Prime, will continue to transform and roll out these progressive and important projects. Only a progressive government like Labor puts the welfare of people first to achieve these goals. I commend Dr Bourke's 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) (11.33): I welcome this timely motion from Dr Bourke, as it is important that we have this conversation. It is an important conversation, not just because Canberra is entering its second century but because there are many in our community that wait with a level of concern about the outcomes of the federal government's Commission of Audit and the first federal Liberal budget and how that may impact on our community, as Ms Berry made reference to.

The ACT government will continue to support our local economy and the ongoing prosperity of this community. We will do this by ensuring that it has the right infrastructure to encourage the growth of jobs and a sustainable community. We know that infrastructure and its construction provides an important contribution to this city's economic growth, its sustainability and its resilience.

We also need to acknowledge the benefit of “enabling infrastructure”, such as the government's announcement last week of the digital Canberra initiative. The rollout of free wi-fi in Canberra, commencing with Civic in the second half of this year, will deliver benefits of greater connectivity across Canberra. Garema Place will become the centre of digital innovation—a space for the meeting of minds and creative digital ideas in the city.

Further enabling our economy is this government's significant investment in education infrastructure. Investing in education infrastructure has a two-fold impact on the ACT economy. In the first instance it provides a direct boost to the building and construction industry in the short term, providing jobs direct on site and through the flow-on effects that accompany any large building project.

However, there is a much larger and longer-lasting economic impact of investing in education infrastructure—that is, delivery of a high-quality, high-achieving education system that ensures current and future generations of students can gain an understanding of the world and can obtain meaningful and dignified careers.

As I have said before in this place—and I will repeat it, because it remains true—it is the philosophy of the Labor Party that students should be given the tools to succeed no matter what their background is. This philosophy includes making sure that the built environment is not only fit for purpose but contributes to a culture of excellence in our education system, and that the learning spaces in the ACT should be equipped to provide students with learning opportunities for the 21st century.

I think we can all understand how the built form of a school or a CIT classroom can have an impact on learning, providing a welcoming environment that shows that there has been a deliberate plan and attention to detail that gives the students and teachers the space to engage in education, and also shows that education is a high priority and that it is valued by this government and by the community.

This is our philosophy and our commitment, and it is why I was so proud yesterday to announce \$7 million to kick-start the construction of Coombs primary school. The Coombs primary school will be the first school in the new Molonglo valley development and will cater for 712 preschool and primary students when it opens in the 2016 school year. Coombs is another great example of this government's commitment to providing greater education infrastructure and follows a long list of great infrastructure that this government has provided.

Indeed, as I said in an answer in this place last month, the ACT Labor government has invested \$35 million in school infrastructure ahead of the 2014 school year. I refer to projects such as the new hospitality trade training facility at Erindale College, the new library and classroom at Malkara special needs school, car park extensions and traffic improvements at Weetangera and Curtin primary schools, and the new modular relocatable classrooms assembled at Duffy Primary School and which will also support growth in the Weston Creek and Molonglo area.

There are other larger projects as well, such as the \$13 million upgrade to Taylor Primary School in my own electorate. I was there at the opening with Mr Gentleman. As I said in the Assembly earlier this year, we took the opportunity following the storm not just to restore Taylor but to provide significant upgrades to the facility and to provide new classrooms and expanded facilities.

Some of the features of the Taylor primary upgrades include relocation of the preschool into the main school and the expansion of child care on the site to ensure a better transition between child care, preschool and school, a new school hall with a portable stage, audiovisual equipment—

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot!

MS BURCH: and hearing assistance loops, new playgrounds and equipment and outdoor learning areas, and upgraded car parks and lighting. Taylor primary upgrades have strong support from its community, expressed to me personally on the open day and shown through the strong enrolments for this school year. The refurbishment of Taylor and other schools is combined with the construction of new schools. It was with great pleasure that I joined the Chief Minister and members—

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot, you may comment when Ms Burch has finished, if you wish to. You can get to your feet and talk to this motion. Thank you, Ms Burch.

MS BURCH: It was a great pleasure to join the Chief Minister and members of the family of Neville Bonner at the official opening of the Neville Bonner Primary School, a wonderful facility with an attention to detail that was not only delivered on time but some \$14 million under budget.

At the same time that Neville Bonner Primary School opened to students, the Franklin Early Childhood School was opened. Like the Neville Bonner school, this was opened on time and under budget. The Franklin Early Childhood School is the latest addition to the highly successful early childhood school model which will cater for around 300 students from preschool to year 2. Also on site at Franklin early education is a 120-place childcare service run by Anglicare, again to better support the transition for children in our schools.

I would also like to refer to the infrastructure in my electorate of Brindabella—infrastructure such as the Tuggeranong Community Health Centre, which will open this weekend. It is a fabulous new addition. Mr Gentleman and I, as we move around the electorate, have seen that development go up. It is very good to see it finished, and I cannot wait for its official opening this weekend. I understand that local residents will also get an opportunity to look through it on the open days.

The south Tuggeranong fire station and upgrades to Ashley Drive are further examples of the work being done in Brindabella to secure the future prosperity of that local area.

In the time I have left I will go through some of the other investments that we have made. I will read from the annual report 2012-13. In the Molonglo electorate:

The Gungahlin College was constructed in the Gungahlin Town Centre and opened to year 11 students from the start of the 2011 school year.

The Gungahlin College was the winner of the 2012 Council of Educational and Facilities Planners International (Australasia) in the new construction and overall projects categories.

It is a fantastic commitment to this community from this government to provide first-rate internationally-regarded infrastructure for our students. The report continues:

During the current reporting period, the college received certification from the Green Building Council of Australia as a 5 Green Star design school.

During the last annual reporting period it continued to provide wonderful learning opportunities for the community.

Down my way, the new Namadgi School, which I think Mr Barr referred to yesterday, was constructed on the former site of Kambah high. It was opened to preschool to year 7 students. During this period the work has continued to provide excellent facilities for that area. You cannot drive along Drakeford Drive in that area without being impressed by the physical infrastructure that we provide to our students. Harrison School was ready for the start of 2012, catering for students from years 6 to 8, and from the beginning of this year it will cater for students up to year 10.

With respect to other school improvements, I refer to the Canberra College performing arts centre. I refer also to Canberra College cares, a \$14 million investment. I had the opportunity to turn the first sod, ably assisted by a young mum and her daughter who is a current student of CCCares. That is exactly why this government is investing in programs such as this—to help these young mums, and some young dads, to make sure that they are not disadvantaged and are supported through those vital years and have a solid education. I am looking forward to CCCares, Canberra College cares, when it formally takes students at its new site in Woden.

We have invested in childcare centres. We have provided significant investment at the Holder childcare site, which will have 120 places.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (11.43), in reply: This motion in its first point notes:

... the important contribution that the development and maintenance of infrastructure plays in underpinning jobs growth by creating a productive and sustainable ACT economy ...

Last year the Centre for International Economics, the specialist adviser to the 2013 estimates committee, echoed those remarks:

Delivering the capital works program is likely to require a range of technical skills found in the scientific and technical services sector and construction industries, as well as administrative skills found in the Public Administration and Safety sector.

Approximately half of the ACT workforce is employed in these industries indicating that there could be a considerable pool of resources to draw on for the ACT's capital works program. Unemployment estimates suggests there is some underutilisation of the workforce in these industries, which makes the capital works program stimulatory to workforce participation and indicates that there is workforce supply capacity to help meet demand.

That is what the specialist budget adviser to the 2013 estimates committee said.

While I listened to Mr Coe's comments this morning on this motion I heard all about his experience as a dam builder. I heard about his concern for fish. I heard about his interest in excavations and how deep they should be—whether they should be 12 or 15 or even 20 metres. I heard about his interest in geological studies. I heard about how many cubic metres of concrete he thought was an appropriate number for a dam to be built with. I suggest that if Mr Coe wants to be doing these things he should be in engineering and not in politics.

What I did not hear from Mr Coe is whether the Canberra Liberals support this motion or not. Do you? Are you going to support this motion or not? The silence is deafening, Madam Deputy Speaker. The silence is deafening as to whether the Canberra Liberals actually support this motion and support the idea that an infrastructure development program is going to support a productive and sustainable ACT economy.

My motion puts forward a suite of projects that have been brought forward by this government to support the economy. Why is that necessary? For me, it is personal. I was here in 1996. I ran and owned my own small business, unlike those opposite as far as I know. I saw people lose their jobs. I saw people lose their businesses. I saw people go bankrupt. I saw the pain and suffering this town endured at that time. Now it looks like it is going to happen again, and the ACT opposition are in denial about Mr Abbott's sacking of public servants and the effect it will have on jobs that are essential to our economy.

I take you back, Madam Deputy Speaker, to Mr Abbott's comments last year on 8 May reported in the *Canberra Times*:

Because the public sector payroll in Canberra is about 20,000 more than it was in 2007 and the fact that under this government

—the then Labor federal government—

there's been a very slight reduction in numbers demonstrates that it can be done, and it will be done much better and much more effectively under a coalition government ...

We are yet to see the full impact of those commonwealth government job cuts. The detail of the Commission of Audit report is obviously being held back until after the WA senate election, and the full devastation will become apparent in the federal government's first budget. That is why this ACT Labor government is talking about maintaining infrastructure and jobs, and I am proud of that. Back in 1996 I was one of the forgotten people of the Canberra Liberals—someone working in small business, owning their own business in this town. They are not interested in supporting this motion to bring about infrastructure to support ACT jobs.

I will talk a little bit about some of that suite of infrastructure progress which will be boosting jobs and the economy. We have already heard from my colleagues about the city plan, the capital metro and Constitution Avenue, but there are others: the north Canberra public hospital bringing more jobs and services to the north; Calvary hospital car park and clinical enhancements at the hospital for front-line services in my electorate and your electorate, too, Madam Deputy Speaker; the new fire and

emergency services facilities to protect life, property and the environment, including \$17 million for the construction of a new fire and rescue station at south Tuggeranong in Mr Gentleman's electorate, in addition to the recently completed station at west Belconnen in my electorate and your electorate too, Madam Deputy Speaker; the refurbishment of the Supreme Court building and a building linking to the Magistrates Court which is being delivered through a public-private partnership over four years; and, of course, the Belconnen Community Health Centre.

The government delivered the new Belconnen Community Health Centre to the public on 11 November, on budget and on time. That is right, Mr Coe—on budget and on time. The Belconnen Community Health Centre is part of the ACT government's health infrastructure program—a centre designed in consultation with stakeholders. I have been for a tour there and I had a look at the suite of dental facilities that are available. They are excellent. You would be filled with pride to work in that environment. This 11,000 square metre development is a great example of needed infrastructure providing jobs in the construction and operational phases whilst serving an essential community service. There will be about 90 staff working there.

When fully operational it is expected to host about 57,000 appointments in the first year and up to 100,000 by 2020. It will include a nurse-led walk-in centre, which will be opened later this year, to complement the service in Tuggeranong. It will also offer breast screening, medical imaging, mental health services and pathology collection. The services to be enhanced or increased are allied health services such as physiotherapy, child health, dental—which I have already talked about—community nursing and ambulatory care services that are normally only accessible from a hospital. Medical services, including the kind of services constituents have been asking me about, include satellite dialysis and outpatient clinics operating up to 24 hours a day, six days a week. This new health centre is a wonderful addition to our community and it complements the ACT healthcare system, which is one of the most technologically advanced, state-of-the-art healthcare systems in the world.

To return to that first paragraph in my motion, this motion notes the important contribution of capital infrastructure to building jobs growth. Note, Madam Deputy Speaker, that not once during this debate have the Canberra Liberals said that they will support this motion. I think they just do not care.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 7

Mr Barr
Ms Berry
Dr Bourke
Ms Burch

Mr Corbell
Mr Gentleman
Ms Porter
Mr Rattenbury

Mr Coe
Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne
Mrs Jones

Ms Lawder
Mr Smyth
Mr Wall

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Construction industry—development conditions

MR COE (Ginninderra) (11.55): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the Government introduced the current formula for commence and complete fees in 2008;
- (b) the Government introduced the lease variation charge in 2011 at levels that were strongly criticised by industry;
- (c) the Government announced in March 2014 a partial winding-back of their own changes to commence and complete fees and the lease variation charge;
- (d) the Government's "stimulus package" is an admission that their fiscal policies have failed;
- (e) the lease variation charge has served as a strong disincentive for increasing density in areas designated by the Government as being appropriate for densification;
- (f) numerous commercial projects have not gone ahead due to the disproportionately high commence and complete fees;
- (g) the Government's excessive fees, charges, taxes and regulations are hurting job creation and investment in the construction sector; and
- (h) in February 2014, the Government opposed calls by the Opposition to significantly reduce commence and complete fees and lease variation charges; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) significantly and permanently reduce the lease variation charge which contradicts the Government's infill policy and serves as a disincentive for investment;
- (b) put a hold on any further increases in levies for portable long service leave;
- (c) significantly and permanently reduce commence and complete fees for commercial properties;
- (d) abandon the Government's monopoly of land supply and commit to a land supply model which is accessible for builders of all business sizes;
- (e) improve ACTPLA's performance by minimising their demands and improving decision times; and

- (f) simplify the Territory Plan so that it is more easily comprehended by those in the building industry and residents.

The Canberra Liberals support the construction sector and the important role that it plays in building our city and the jobs, wealth and opportunities it creates for thousands of Canberrans. It is disappointing that the ACT Labor-Greens government has seemingly taken delight in strangling the industry to a point where many companies have gone out of business, moved interstate or have wound back their operations considerably. Only now, years later, has the government acknowledged that their own policies have been destructive.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the government's stubbornness is getting in the way of good public policy and it is hurting Canberra families. Of course, at the top of the list is their reluctance to acknowledge at any point over the last few years that the lease variation charge and the commence and complete fees were severely hurting the construction sector. In fact, they said the opposite. Like a mad general painting a rosy picture of the situation just days before losing a war, the government had been blindly defending their lease variation charge and commence and complete fees, despite rationality saying they were a disaster.

On numerous occasions in the media, in the chamber and at forums, government ministers have defended the commence and complete fees regime as being right. Yet, this month, the government has finally backed down and said they have a problem. Why has it taken so long? The Property Council, the Master Builders, the Housing Institute, the opposition, builders and others have all been saying that the commence and complete fees put an impost on commercial properties that is unreasonable and that is hurting our economy. Not only were individuals unable to pay the fees but the fees were holding up development significantly.

One great example of this has been the Kingswim proposal in Tuggeranong. We are also aware of projects in Fyshwick, medical facilities and others which have been put on hold at a time when the development of those projects would provide a much needed shot in the arm for the ACT economy. Despite repeated efforts by numerous people the government has waited and waited. Now, at the 11th hour for many businesses, the government has finally seen sense. However, it needs to be permanent.

The lease variation charge is another example where the government is desperate to get a cash grab but has left common sense out of the equation. Whilst many people were happy when the government commenced codification of lease change arrangements, the devil was in the detail. The amounts of those codified rates were extremely high. In fact, in some instances it was up to \$50,000 for each unit in a development in some inner suburbs. Of course, the government said developers would happily pay this but in reality, if the projects went ahead at all, it would simply mean passing that \$50,000 on to consumers.

The government has not got the numbers that they thought they would have. This has led to a situation where there are few developments under construction or in the pipeline. Like the commence and complete fees, the government was still saying that

everything is fine. Here is a pretty special quote from Minister Barr just a year ago, “The lease variation charge is excellent public policy and will not be changed.” He said, “The lease variation charge is excellent public policy and will not be changed.”

Further context for this is as follows. It was at PAC on 21 February where there was some great questioning by my colleague and shadow treasurer, Mr Smyth. He asked:

Given the lease variation charge has not delivered that which you have promised and you have now downgraded the estimated take this year from something like \$23 million to \$19 million, when will you admit that the lease variation charge has failed?

Mr Barr’s response was:

The lease variation charge is excellent public policy and will not be changed.

Mr Smyth posed:

Is it not becoming, for instance, your mining tax—

Mr Barr responded, “No.” Mr Smyth goes on:

in that it has lots of promise but fails to deliver?

Mr Barr replied, “No.” We were told that the lease variation charge is excellent public policy and will not be changed. It seems that Mr Barr was wrong. Either he was wrong, is wrong or he has been rolled. This would have to be, I think, the first time in the history of the world that a government had excellent public policy, still thinks it is excellent public policy, but repeals their own policy. When it comes down to it, the government’s stubbornness is getting in the way of good policy and Canberrans are paying the price. The opposition wants lasting changes to the planning and regulatory regime so that it instils certainty in the construction sector.

As I have said before in this place, in our competitive federal model, New South Wales is competing and they are winning. The Queanbeyan council is making land available and, in conjunction with the New South Wales government, they are making it attractive to invest in their state just over the border. Meanwhile, the ACT government is allowing the demise of our economy.

The opposition will do anything we can to avoid further imposts on businesses. We call for certainty for all concerned, whether they be residents, neighbours, planners or the construction sector through a simplified and stable territory plan. At the time of the introduction of the territory plan, the government promised certainty in the planning sector. We have not had it. The government chops and changes their planning policies with complete disregard for those in the sector. We need a simplified territory plan that allows people to understand their rights and responsibilities and that provides opportunities for innovation.

I commend my motion to the Assembly. I congratulate and thank all those in the community who have kept up the fight on these very important issues.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Community Services) (12.01): The government will not be supporting Mr Coe's motion this morning, and I have circulated an amendment to the motion.

First, though, I would like to make some comments in relation to the construction sector. As we have just noted in this place, through Dr Bourke's constructive motion, construction is a key driver of economic growth and jobs in the territory. Measured in terms of output, it is the second largest industry in the ACT and contributed \$3.4 billion or around 10 per cent to real territory output in the 2012-13 fiscal year. It also accounts for around 6½ per cent of employment in the territory, with just short of 13½ thousand people employed as at November 2013, an increase of nearly 50 per cent on the level of employment of 10 years ago. As such, the government will continue to play an active role in supporting the sector, and today presents an opportunity to further discuss some aspects of this support.

Turning specifically to the issues raised by Mr Coe in his motion, extension of time fees encourage the timely development of land without undermining the security of the crown lease. They have been used in the ACT since well before self-government and have always been an integral part of the land administration system. There are a number of adverse social and policy consequences associated with having too many undeveloped blocks, particularly in residential areas. As such, extension of time fees provide the government with a policy lever to help reduce development delays and to ensure that land sold is developed in a timely manner.

The government has announced significant changes to the EOT fee structure. The changes will effectively extend the time that a lessee has to develop land and to reduce fees, whilst maintaining the integrity of the EOT fee structure. These reforms seek to strike a balance for all parties involved. The new fee structure provides a predictable, clear and transparent fee moving forward that is able to be easily calculated by lessees. The changes will benefit those within the community trying to develop land where they have outstanding commitments against their crown lease. However, it takes into account the concerns of industry stakeholders as well as the community who want to ensure that blocks do not sit vacant indefinitely.

As part of the government's reform package, it was also announced that EOT fees relating to a period between 1 July 2012 and 31 March 2014 would be waived or refunded if fees had been paid. The government is aware of a number of projects with high EOT fees which have been dramatically reduced as part of this announcement. This will help stimulate development of these specific blocks but also encourage lessees to commence construction in a timely manner because the requirements now will be that the extension of time fees be paid annually rather than at the commencement of a development.

The lease variation charge was introduced in 2011 to replace the change of use charge, and this applies when an ACT leaseholder seeks to vary the provisions of their crown lease that results in an increase in the economic value of the land, a windfall gain in

other words. There can be significant economic windfall gains from varying a crown lease, through change of use through to an increase in dwelling yield or, for example, an increase in floor area. It is therefore entirely appropriate for the ACT government to share those economic gains with the community as a whole and not entirely privatise those windfall gains in the property development industry. This supports the delivery of critical infrastructure to support urban infill and the redevelopment of parcels of land for other purposes.

In order to continue to encourage higher value development of land in the territory, the recently announced reforms of the LVC fee regime, which include some reductions in the charge for a limited period, have been enacted at a time when the economy and, in particular, the building and construction industry face pressure from federal Liberal cuts. The government will monitor industry activity within the construction industry during this period to assess the impact of these measures.

In relation to the opposition's motion on LVC, the government indicated at that time it was considering LVC reform for stimulus purposes and that a further announcement would be made thereafter. The government has made that announcement.

It is worth reflecting on the effects of the government's efforts to foster economic growth in the territory. Protecting the livelihoods of working Canberrans is and will remain a core priority of the government, and this reform package is consistent with the government's long-term commitments to economic reform and fairness in our community.

The ongoing stability in employment and gross state product underlines the strength of the territory's economic fundamentals. In the latest ABS data, state final demand increased by 0.8 per cent over the 2013 calendar year. This compares to an increase of 0.9 per cent in the national equivalent domestic final demand.

As at February 2014, the territory had the lowest unemployment rate in the nation, at 3.4 per cent, and the second highest participation rate, at 71.4 per cent. At the same time, the level of residential building in greenfield and infill locations and the solid job growth in the overall construction sector is evidence of the robust growth of our economy and the broad policy settings. It is worth noting that, year on year to January 2014, the number of residential building approvals in the ACT in original terms increased by 29.3 per cent. This pick-up in building approvals is an indicator of dwelling investment in the short to medium term.

However, there is no doubt that the ACT's exposure to cuts in the public sector workforce and risks to both GST revenues and direct commonwealth funding require a policy response. It is not the intention of the government to wait until after the commonwealth budget and the mugging of our economy by the Liberal Party in order to act. The government has acted early, through the announcements of the Chief Minister, and we will continue to press ahead with the most important tax reform agenda in this territory's history and the most ambitious one in Australia.

The government is maintaining a robust land release program throughout this period. The current program does not include any new englobo developments or joint

ventures. However, this does not mean that the government has abandoned these development options. The current program includes releases of various sizes to the market which will create a range of opportunities for local builders. In order to ensure that we capture the needs of the widest possible range of players in the local construction industry, parcels will vary from small lots of three to 10 dwellings to mini englobo sites of around 300.

The Land Development Agency is establishing a taskforce to work with the MBA, the HIA and the Property Council to determine the most appropriate processes for future releases. The change in policy gives smaller and medium-sized building firms better access to work in the territory. The next such release will be for 500 dwellings in Moncrieff in the coming months. Blocks will be packaged into lots of between two and eight sites and offered by a restricted ballot. Blocks will be sold via put and call options, allowing builders to introduce individual purchasers to the LDA. This will support industry in managing demand and staff retention as well as providing alternative purchase options for home owners.

Turning now to portable long service leave levies, the government will not commit to putting on hold future increases to the construction industry portable long service leave levy. It is important to note that any decision to increase the levy is never taken lightly. The latest increase in the levy occurred last year and came at the recommendation to government from the Long Service Leave Authority Board and was based on full actuarial advice. The board is made up of independent members as well as members who represent both employer and employee organisations.

The government is certainly aware of, and is reluctant to impose, additional costs on industry through an increase in the levy. However, it is obliged to fully consider any recommendation made by the board, and in doing so needs to balance the competing interests of the industry with the viability of the scheme. It should be noted here that the portable long service leave levy is calculated on wages and not on the cost of building. The government is aware of the need to reduce red tape on business. However, adjusting the amount of the levy does not change the administrative requirements employers must comply with.

It is important to note that the levy is about protecting the rights of workers. The levy is an important measure to ensure hard-working staff in the construction sector enjoy the benefits of their long service to the industry, and it is very disappointing that once again the Canberra Liberals cannot accept this.

Turning now to the planning authority, the ACT is a national leader with respect to the time taken for decision-making under the development application assessment process. In the 2012-13 financial year, the Planning and Land Authority performed better than the accountability indicator of 75 per cent of development applications determined within time. During the same period, the median processing time for development applications was 30 working days. In councils in Sydney and Melbourne it is five and six times that period, 150 to 180 days for approvals. The authority only requests further information where it is necessary to make a decision for a development application.

It is worth noting that in the 2012-13 fiscal year the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal upheld the directorate's original decision on 16 of the 17 matters reviewed. This is a very good result that would not be achievable except for the carefully considered decisions made by the Planning and Land Authority on the basis of well-documented development applications. It is important that there is trust in the ability of the Planning and Land Authority to have its decisions considered by the tribunal and an assurance that the decisions are rigorous, robust and defensible.

Commencing on 1 July 2013, the Construction Occupations Registrar introduced an improved form for the minimum documentation requirements for building approval lodgement through classes 1 to 10 of residential development, confirming the minimum documentation requirements under legislation applicable for building approval lodgements for classes 1 and 10 residential dwellings. This form is in essence a completeness check for lodging building approval documents. Although the completeness check is relatively new, the evidence shows a dramatic improvement in the lodgement of required documents.

Prior to the check, audits of documentation were showing 85 per cent of building approvals failing. Since the introduction of the completeness check, the rate of compliance with documents required has greatly improved and is currently tracking at about 96 per cent compliance.

The review of the territory plan, through such tools as variation 306, is an ongoing process. It aims to balance the requirements for an easy to use planning document that provides clear guidance on development within the territory, whilst being comprehensive enough to cover all possible development types and forms. This includes stand-alone houses and multi-unit dwelling developments, community facilities, office block developments, industrial uses, parklands and mixed-use developments, all the way through to major infrastructure developments of the territory and policies and projects of national importance. The territory plan provides guidance on all of these things and more.

The changes introduced through variation 306 mean that it is better suited to responding to the needs of the community and industry today and into the future. Variation 306 responded to submissions received by industry and the community to ensure that the final variation balances the interests of all and provides for the needs of the users of the document.

So in closing, the government is committed to the strength and sustainability of the Canberra economy. The government has also committed to the construction sector. We work with industry and the community to get the balance right. Changes to policy are made to enhance the long-term prosperity and amenity of our city through the construction sector.

I move:

Omit all words after "That this Assembly", substitute:

"(1) notes that the ACT Government has introduced an economic stimulus package that is designed to:

- (a) provide confidence and economic stimulus for the ACT building and construction industry; and
 - (b) support local jobs and target areas by providing certainty to the business community;
- (2) notes the Government's leadership in developing a strategic and collaborative approach to the stimulus package through the construction industry, which is a significant driver of the ACT economy;
- (3) notes the strong support of the leadership taken by the ACT Government in developing the package by the Master Builders Association, Canberra Business Council, Property Council, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Housing Industry Association; and
- (4) calls on the Government to continue to work with all sectors of the community to grow the ACT economy under its business development strategy, red tape reduction, taxation reform and the Digital Canberra initiatives.”.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (12.16): I will not be supporting Mr Coe's motion today, just as I did not support the last motion Mr Coe put forward on this topic just three weeks ago. In fact, the “calls on” clauses of the two motions are word-for-word identical with the exception of the call to repeal variation 306, which has been left off the list this time. I understand the context of the motion today, which is in response to the government's two-year stimulus package the Chief Minister announced just two weeks ago, and I will address some of the specific matters raised in Mr Coe's motion and why I hold the view that I do.

When it comes to the lease variation charge, the Greens very much agree with the principle behind it and believe there should be a balance between commercial realities and achieving a fair return for the community. Since we last discussed the issue, the government announced its changes to the lease variation charge system, which will freeze all codified LVC fee and remission schedules at the current rate and remission level for the next two years. For non-codified variations, the remission rate will be increased from 25 per cent to 50 per cent for the next two years.

The Greens are pleased environmental remissions have also been included in the package, with a further 25 per cent remission available for developers who incorporate high standards of sustainable design and adaptable housing into their projects. We look forward to seeing more about the details of the environmental remissions package as they are brought forward.

Sustainability remissions are something we have long supported. It was Greens amendments to the 2011 Planning and Development (Lease Variation Charges) Amendment Bill that provided a framework for remissions to encourage sustainable design and development in strategic locations such as transport corridors.

Our amendments put forward five categories of LVC remission which can be used: environmental efficiency, location, community purpose, environmental remediation,

and heritage conservation. The Greens amendments also made the system clearer and easier for industry to apply in practice. The amendments ensured the scheme is open and transparent by requiring that all remissions and the values used to assess the charge are placed on the public register.

They required that the Treasurer must obtain and consider the advice of a valuer accredited by the Australian Property Institute in determining the amounts in the codes. The amendments required that improvements on the land are not taken into account in assessing the charge and, instead, any additional cost or market reality is addressed through the remission provisions. The amendments required a clearer legislative framework governing the operation of the scheme, 12 months' notice of the general rate of remission, and that no specific increases to the charge can be made without the approval of the Assembly.

The idea of sustainability remissions is to provide a real financial incentive for developers to design and deliver for good sustainability outcomes, to tip the balance in favour of sustainable projects so that we can start to see these kinds of innovative developments coming up around our city. I know there are developers working in the local industry who want to innovate and push the boundaries and experiment with new sustainable design and construction who would welcome a scheme which provides a real incentive to do so.

In the new package, the sustainability remissions are an addition to the other reductions. There is something of an incentive. However it remains to be seen how effective they will be over the course of the next two years given the other remissions in place that are aiming to stimulate development more generally.

Again, since we last debated the issue three weeks ago, the government has announced that it will be simplifying and significantly reducing the extension of time charges or commence and complete fees, depending on which way you describe them. From 1 April, extension of time fees will be applied on completion breaches only and not on commencement breaches. Fees will not be charged on the first four years of breach. From the fifth year, extension of time fees will be billed annually at one times the general rates bill.

Debts that have accrued since 1 July 2012 will be waived, and for debts occurring from 1 April this year the fee will be determined based on one times the general rates. People who have paid their extension of time fees during the waiver period will be entitled to a refund so that those who have and have not paid the fees during the period are treated equally under the reforms. I think this is a welcome move. The Greens agree that there were some issues with the scheme. It was intended to prevent land banking, but we have seen cases where developers have been legitimately delayed.

When we debated the issue of commence and complete fees in October 2013 in this place, I put forward an amendment calling on the government to review the scheme and to report to the Assembly by the end of this financial year. That amendment was agreed to. I am pleased the changes have been brought forward, and they seem like a sensible reform. Under the new scheme there is still a disincentive for developers to

delay completion of projects, and the fees that ensue are more appropriate, being commensurate with the annual rates charge.

When it comes to long service leave provisions, I do not support Mr Coe's call for a hold on any increases to the portable long service leave levy. I remain concerned that the Liberal Party continually fail to support the very notion of portable long service leave. They are on the record as attacking the concept of long service leave generally and also on the record as saying long service leave schemes are, "A pain to industry."

I am pleased to say the Greens support long service leave, and we also support portable long service leave in the industries that need it. These are industries that have high levels of brief employment and mobility. For example, someone working in Canberra as a cleaner might spend 20 years doing the same job but move between different employers. Usually these changes in employment would mean that they would not be able to receive long service leave entitlements. Portable long service leave ensures such persons still receive long service leave. In the territory we support portable long service leave schemes in the building and construction industry, the contract cleaning industry, the community sector industry and the security industry.

The schemes are managed well by the Long Service Leave Authority board. In fact, just last year we passed legislation to improve the administration of these schemes. The board uses actuarial data to recommend appropriate long service leave levies, and it also regularly reviews the levies applied to the various industries. Denying any increase to the levies, even though they may have been examined and recommended by the Long Service Leave Authority board, would simply take entitlements away from workers who deserve them. Why should we say that workers in the building and construction or cleaning or security or the community sectors should be denied appropriate long service leave?

This is an unreasonable suggestion that Mr Coe has put forward, and it comes at the expense of workers and families in the ACT who the Liberals regularly purport to understand and support. Perhaps the real motivation here is to support security or cleaning firms. I simply do not believe this levy is having a crippling impact on the employers in these sectors.

When it comes to the government monopoly of land supply that Mr Coe refers to in his motion, the clause refers to concerns about private sector access to profits from land development in the ACT. The government have recently indicated that in the current economic climate they will be managing land releases via the Land Development Agency rather than through large englobo releases or joint ventures. This model allows the government to control its land release program and secure revenue for the territory budget. Of course, all construction is done through the local building industry, so there are opportunities there for the private sector.

I understand that the government is also looking at various models for land release, such as small scale englobo to local developers and models where the private sector looks after the project management of a development but without equity in the project. I encourage the government to explore these options.

We need a mix of models for land development to provide opportunities for different parts of the industry and allow for innovation and sustainable design. Part of the stimulus package involves the bringing forward of civil works contracts at Moncrieff, which will bring forward construction activity that was originally scheduled over three to four years. That will provide opportunities for the construction industry certainly sooner than was otherwise planned.

When it comes to simplifying the territory plan, I agree with Mr Coe on the need to review the plan. That is why this policy was included in the 2012 Labor-Greens parliamentary agreement—that is, to ensure the plan is consistent with the 40 per cent greenhouse gas reduction target that we have set for ourselves in the ACT. I think it is important that our central planning document reflects those broader policy objectives the government has.

I will be supporting the amendment Mr Barr has moved because I support the recently announced stimulus package. I do not think a well-timed stimulus package should ever be underappreciated. Certainly the federal stimulus package from the Rudd government in 2009, which included substantial funding for public housing and school infrastructure, was crucial to keeping employment and our economy in a strong state while much of the rest of the western world struggled financially.

Of course, it also enabled investments in important areas which otherwise would have struggled to find funding. Many public housing developments for our ageing population came from this funding as well as so many schools across Canberra being able to build improvements such as libraries, school halls, extensions, science labs and playground equipment. Had this stimulus package not happened, I suspect Australia would be suffering from the high unemployment rates and low economic turnover we have seen in some other western economies.

For this reason the Australian Greens supported the federal stimulus package and ensured that all buildings were required to be built with energy efficiency in mind, with higher minimum energy efficiency standards for both the housing and the school buildings. This is something we can be proud of knowing that many more people across Australia are now living in houses that are cheaper to cool and heat and are being educated in schools that are more pleasant to learn in as well as being environmentally efficient.

The ACT Greens also supported the rollout of this stimulus package here in Canberra. We looked over the expediency regulations very carefully at the time before supporting the legislation to ensure that public consultation could be incorporated as much as possible in the processes.

The ACT Greens will be supporting this local 2014 series of measures designed to provide stimulus in the ACT. We cannot be exactly sure just yet what impact the change of federal government will have on the ACT, but we know jobs are already being lost in the federal public service and house prices are starting to dip in Canberra. For this reason we would like to see appropriate development, especially sustainable development, occur as a result of this stimulus package.

Bringing forward the work at Moncrieff will be a welcome boost to the construction sector, and I have already put forward my support for the changes to the commence and complete fees. The changes to the LVC fees will be welcomed by stakeholders in the industry. I understand why the government has reduced the fees as a way of stimulating development activity. I think it is appropriate this should be done for a limited period as it provides a window for the industry to take advantage of the changes and for the government to review the effectiveness of the reform at the end of two years.

I have also put forward my support for the environmental remissions. I look forward to more work being done to expand the remissions in the other categories that were put forward with the LVC scheme was set up. As I have said, the idea behind sustainability remissions is to tip the balance in favour of the kinds of projects we need to be prioritising for the future of our city.

These stimulus measures are certainly not a magic bullet, but they provide some practical steps to encourage activity in the ACT at a time when it appears we are going to need it. For those reasons I will be supporting the amendment Mr Barr has moved today.

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 12.29 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Health Directorate—infrastructure program management

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, changes have recently been announced concerning the high-level management of infrastructure and planning within the Health Directorate. Minister, what are those high-level changes in management in this area and what are the reasons for these changes?

MS GALLAGHER: The changes reflect the importance that the government places on the health infrastructure program. So there has been some work done looking at the current arrangements that have been in place using the projects that have been delivered to look at how we can improve on our processes, and the restructure of those positions is in line with the information provided through those reviews. Essentially, it will create a deputy director-general in charge of the health infrastructure program, reporting to the director-general.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, did this require any contracts to be paid out? If so, how much? Is it costing the government to pay those contracts out, and how much will it cost to fund the new deputy director-general?

MS GALLAGHER: The most senior position in the health infrastructure program at the moment is at the executive director level, so there has been a restructure and upgrading of that position. That position will be advertised. There will not be further supplementation sought to support that position. So it is being funded internally. In terms of arrangements around a restructure, that would depend on applicants for the job. I understand there is one individual who has left ACT Health through the restructuring of his position.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, what impact will these changes have on existing capital programs, if any?

MS GALLAGHER: They will not have any impact on existing capital programs. Really the work and the review that has been undertaken into the health infrastructure program and governance of it, which is something that Dr Brown and I have been working on, were to recognise the workload involved with the health infrastructure program and the fact that the leadership of it needs to be at a more senior level to drive that project from what was originally intended and also to relieve some of the workload of the existing Director General, to have a more senior position. But it will not affect any of the projects at all.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: What staffing, administrative and restructuring costs will be incurred in order to enable these changes?

MS GALLAGHER: The major change will be the upgrade of the position from executive director to deputy director-general status. But as I said, that will be funded internally. It is not expected that there will be other significant changes to staffing positions.

Housing—land rent scheme

MR SMYTH: My question is to the Minister for Economic Development. Minister, on 6 March 2014 an advertisement was posted on allhomes regarding an undeveloped block at 21 Dooley Binbin Street in Bonner for sale at \$35,000. The advertisement noted the following: the advertised price is to purchase the ACT land rent from the seller; doing so obliges the buyer to pay land rent to the ACT government, either at four per cent ULV each year or two per cent ULV each year depending on buyer circumstances.

Minister, can you clarify whether this is, in fact, a person selling the right to the land rent contract of an undeveloped block for profit?

MR BARR: I will need to take some advice on the nature of the contract in relation to that particular property, but certainly the provisions of the land rent scheme that I imagine would apply to that block, given the suburb it is in and the time frame in

which it would originally have been purchased, would allow the transfer of the lease either under the four or two per cent scheme, depending, as Mr Smyth has read out, on the circumstances of the buyer.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, can you clarify whether such an action would be permissible under the government's land rent scheme or is this a loophole? Is it permissible to sell the land rent lease at a profit?

MR BARR: The question of whether a profit is to be made would need to be determined based on different values of the land at the point of the original entry into the land rent scheme and then the point of the proposed exit. That may well reflect changes in the valuation of land over that period of time.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Treasurer, are you aware of any other cases of on-selling the contracts of undeveloped blocks under the land rent scheme?

MR BARR: I am aware that the scheme allows for the transfer of properties over time, that people are able to transfer their lease from the land rent scheme into a more traditional lease arrangement and that they are able to transfer leases on to other eligible purchasers. The scheme does allow for that.

MR COE: Supplementary.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Treasurer, would selling a land rent block attract stamp duty?

MR BARR: It would depend, of course, on the value of the particular property and the nature of the purchaser, because there are a range of concession schemes and thresholds that are applicable. It would be difficult to give a definitive answer on that question without knowing the nature of the block, the value of the block and the nature of the purchaser.

Economy—digital Canberra initiative

MS BERRY: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, as part of your address to the Canberra Business Council last week you announced the digital Canberra initiative. Can you inform the Assembly what digital Canberra is about and how this initiative will help grow the city as we enter into our second century?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Ms Berry for the question. The digital Canberra vision is for Canberra to become a leading digital city. Digital Canberra will promote Canberra as a city of digital opportunity, create digital networks and partnerships, accelerate the digital economy, build a city of innovation and connected communities and support the open government agenda, citizen engagement and better services.

Digital Canberra supports commitments aimed to diversify and grow Canberra's economic base and provide better government services across access through on-line delivery. It aims to promote Canberra as a city of digital opportunity, create digital networks and partnerships and accelerate the digital economy. The five key priority digital Canberra areas are the smart city, a digital economy, a connected community, open government and digital services. There are five priority projects to initiate and promote digital Canberra, the first one being free wi-fi; the second, the Garema Place digital space; the third one, the STEM internships, with an ICT focus; digital city capacity-building workshops in partnership with the Canberra Business Council; and the innovation pitch panel.

The digital Canberra action plan is the road map of how we are going to accelerate business engagement, promote Canberra as a modern, dynamic digital city, use technology to be more open in government and allow access to government data to give citizens greater choice in how and when they use services and to be more innovative in how we engage the community and local small businesses. This action plan is backed by a \$4 million investment which shows how we are going to accelerate our engagement with business, with the digital economy, and help business access new customers and markets.

In order to shape this vision and understanding of digital Canberra, I hosted an industry digital round table in July 2013 to facilitate discussion on key ideas, issues, challenges and opportunities for articulating a framework for digital Canberra for the benefit of the ACT. I wanted to get a clear picture of how government, business and the community could work together to drive improvements in innovation and services, using the latest thinking around digital technology.

We know quite a bit from some of the work that has been done. Deloitte Access Economics in April 2013 found that Australian small businesses with high digital engagement are twice as likely to be growing revenue, twice as likely to earn twice as much revenue per employee and are four times more likely to be hiring more staff.

To help boost ACT business engagement with the digital agenda, we are partnering with business and the Canberra Business Council this year to conduct ICT capacity-building workshops, with top-rated vendors, SMEs and not-for-profits. These workshops will be facilitated by the ACT government in partnership with the Canberra Business Council. They really are to drive the increased use of technology, to provide guidance on software and support, to increase a business's comfort with technology, to access training and advice, to improve dealings with new customers and new customer experience, and to facilitate partnerships between vendors and business.

So this is a very exciting action plan that the government is keen to really progress this year. We have been working through the Minister for Economic Development and the Chief Minister's Directorate to really get some tangible projects that we can push this year and help support some of the innovative IT and technology sectors here in the ACT. They are not just doing amazing things here; they are exporting and getting our name known all over the world. It is a very, I think, exciting opportunity,

with a small amount of money, to support some of those local innovators with some of those projects but also to open up technology right across the community through initiatives like free wi-fi.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Chief Minister, what are the main priorities of the digital Canberra action plan and how will the government deliver on its digital agenda?

MS GALLAGHER: One of the main projects is going to be the free wi-fi in our town centres, bus interchanges and a trial on selected buses. I understand there are some issues with wi-fi on buses and whether the 4G is a better system. The time frame to roll out free wi-fi to the ACT is for the second half of this year, with the first free wi-fi sites going live in the second half of 2014. Coverage will be published on the upcoming digital Canberra website, but the anticipated coverage for the ACT would be town centres such as Civic, Belconnen and Tuggeranong, public spaces such as Garema Place and Glebe park, and also bus interchanges.

The Garema Place digital space is an exciting proposal that has been put to the government. It has been generated by the innovative technology and business sector and is looking at how we can reinvigorate Civic as a focal point for innovation and creative industries and change some of the perceptions not only of people from outside Canberra but also of Canberrans looking at the town centre. It will have a screen which will form a central part of the Garema Place digital space, which aims to highlight Canberra as a digital city.

The development will also look at having curated support for that screen and also at the idea of a digital hub—a place where people can come and work, hold workshops and connect with the broader Canberra community on the work that is being done here in the ACT but which maybe is not as well known or obviously as seen as it could be in a place like Garema Place. We will work with landlords in these areas to see how we can support this and get this project up and running this year.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, what are some of the first things that the community will see as part of the digital Canberra work, and how will this assist in allowing the community to further engage with government?

MS GALLAGHER: One of the other areas that we are focusing on apart from the wi-fi and the digital space in Civic is looking at how we can transform our services and encourage the use of our data to generate things like apps. We have seen some of that with the mobile Canberra app, which I am sure every member has downloaded and has available on their phones. That has interesting data about public toilets and playgrounds and parks and public art. I know the opposition will have been scrutinising that part of the mobile Canberra app where you can find all the public art. It might be useful at the next election, Alastair, when you want to wrap it in some material or something like that. It is very handily available for people to have a look at.

The open data and the number of government datasets available to the community I think is a great way of giving information that is owned by the community and allowed to make new technology for the benefit of the community. We will also look at how much we can publish online. I think our open government website has been very well received. We will continue to look at ways to engage using social media which we know continues to grow as a way of citizens accessing their elected representatives and also their government services.

The Treasurer is very keen to look at ways in which we can drive efficiencies through the use of technology and our digital agenda. All of that is looking at ways to improve the customer experience and also drive efficiencies across government.

DR BOURKE: Supplementary.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Chief Minister, how will digital Canberra help in advancing your open government agenda?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Dr Bourke for the question. Open government is one of the five digital Canberra priorities. I think it will increase transparency and openness through greater use of online engagement; create innovative solutions to policy and service delivery problems; allow greater access by citizens to information; increase citizen engagement using the various media channels; and grow a dynamic open government developer community.

We will do a lot more work in this space. As I said, I think it has already shown, through the development of apps like mobile Canberra, that it can give people access to greater information in a way that is convenient to them. Also, there is data.act.gov.au, which gives data from over 230 freedom of information applications, cabinet summaries, reports and other government information; a whole-of-government policy on publishing data sets online; looking at extending creative commons licensing on dataACT to all government published information; continued support for the annual GovHack event, where developers create apps, mash-ups and data visualisations with government data; and partnering with industry to deliver social media workshops to boost usage by key sectors.

I think that overall it works very nicely with my open government agenda. I look forward to progressing it this year.

Civic—free wi-fi service

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Minister for Economic Development or, I presume, the Chief Minister. It is along the same lines of questioning as before on wi-fi. I am not quite sure which of you would like to take it.

MADAM SPEAKER: Perhaps you ask the question and then we can work it out.

MR DOSZPOT: I will ask the question. My question is to the Minister for Economic Development or the Chief Minister. As part of the digital Canberra action plan 2014-18, it was indicated that free wi-fi in town centres will be implemented within the next 12 months. What public areas have been earmarked for free wi-fi? I think you have already indicated Garema Place. Could you tell us what parts of Garema Place have been earmarked for the free wi-fi?

MADAM SPEAKER: I think that is a question to you, Chief Minister.

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Mr Doszpot for the question. As I said in my previous answer, the idea is that we would start with Civic as the first location and then we would look to roll it out into the town centres—Belconnen, Tuggeranong, Woden and then look at areas like public spaces within there—like Garema Place and Glebe Park, for example—and also bus interchanges.

There is a bit more work to do around whether or not this is the best technology for buses, but this is all subject to further negotiation and finalisation with the preferred vendor. All of those arrangements have not been finalised but our negotiating point is that this is where we would like it to start. If possible, if it is able to be delivered within the scope of those negotiations, it will be the largest public wi-fi network in Australia.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, what consideration has been given to the impact on businesses that already have installed wi-fi?

MS GALLAGHER: We have had some discussions about that. When you look around the world where you are increasingly seeing big public wi-fi networks, they are working alongside cafes and restaurants and places which provide their own wi-fi. It is certainly not an initiative that is designed directly to help business; this is an initiative designed to enable greater access to this technology for people as they conduct their everyday lives.

I do not think it will disadvantage any business; the idea behind a public wi-fi is not targeted as a business initiative. There are controls that can be put on the wi-fi arrangements. They are, again, subject to the negotiations with the vendor, but this is really about democratising access to technology and allowing people, particularly people on low incomes who cannot afford expensive download plans, the ability to access technology and download in a public space.

If you look at big companies, they quite often will have a day where they ask their employees not to come to work so they can go and use public wi-fi systems to do their work as a way of breaking down some of the more traditional ways we conduct our 9-to-5 lives. So this is a great enabler. I do not think there is any suggestion or any concern that has been raised by business that it is going to be harmful to businesses that have those arrangements in place.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Chief Minister, what steps will be taken to ensure that the bandwidth capacity is sufficient to deal with the uptake of free wi-fi?

MS GALLAGHER: That is subject, of course, to the negotiations with the vendor. There were some tender specs provided at the request for tender, and, with the preferred tender—as I understand it, that has been identified—that will be subject to those discussions. One of the risks when you implement a change like this is that the demand is so great that the downloads may be slow or frustrating. Of course, we do not want that to be people's experience. This is about enabling access to this technology. We do not want it to be frustrating, so that is certainly a matter that has been considered and is subject to those detailed discussions.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Chief Minister, what restrictions will exist with the free wi-fi? For example, will people be limited for the amount of download or will there be access time limits imposed?

MS GALLAGHER: Those details are being negotiated as well. In a general sense, my understanding is that the vendor can restrict and limit access if there are problems or people are sitting there downloading way too much. There are ways to control access while allowing people a general download capacity. That is, again, subject to those negotiations. When they are finalised, I will be more than happy to provide a detailed update to the Assembly that covers off all those areas.

Civic—free wi-fi service

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Economic Development. Minister, with the introduction of the free wi-fi commencing within the next 12 months, how can the public be sure that their personal information will not be captured or hacked in some way through the use of this free service?

MR BARR: Appropriate security safeguards can be put in place and are in place in other jurisdictions where similar services are offered.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, what mechanisms are being put in place to ensure business security over the wi-fi network?

MR BARR: I refer the member to my answer to the previous question.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, what services will you provide to the public to ensure that they are aware of the risks of using this service?

MR BARR: It is fairly standard for these sorts of networks to have a user agreement and acceptance before entering into the network. That will outline all of the requirements and obligations that go with use of the network and can provide information in relation to safeguards. It is important to note, though, in the context of Mr Doszpot's earlier question, that for anyone who accesses a free wi-fi network, whether it is provided by a government or by a business, whether you are accessing it at your local McDonald's, at the Canberra Airport or a variety of other places where there is a free wi-fi service available, there are security implications associated with that and people enter into those on a day-to-day basis when they join those networks. That is not unusual. I think people can come to terms with that. They have been, and are doing so, in other cities and in other parts of this city at the moment.

MR DOSZPOT: Supplementary.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, how will you ensure that this service will not be used for any illegal or inappropriate activity in these public places?

MR BARR: Aside from the temptation to keep certain people off the network, there are, of course, provisions in place in relation to the vendor, the provider of the service, just as there are for every other free wi-fi service that is available within this city, this country and indeed around the world. There are provisions in place in relation to internet security for those who have a particular worry in relation to national security matters and otherwise. I think we have a fairly well-resourced network within this city of government agencies and otherwise who closely monitor for illegal and criminal activity that occurs online.

Mr Hanson: What about inappropriate?

MR BARR: Inappropriate? One could argue that every time the leader of the opposition enters into the social media sphere, Madam Speaker, that could indeed be inappropriate. But I would not dream of making such an accusation.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think you already did, Mr Barr.

Economy—north Canberra infrastructure

MS PORTER: My question is to the Minister for Economic Development. Minister, could you outline the steps the government has taken to provide services, infrastructure and economic growth in north Canberra?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Porter for the question. There is no doubt that infrastructure is a critical element in determining how our local communities grow and develop. It certainly underpins a strong and robust economy and allows for the efficient delivery of essential services. The government has a longstanding commitment to and a very strong record of investing in high-quality, efficient and effective infrastructure for the territory in line with a long-term vision for the development of our city.

Our strategic approach to delivering infrastructure services and growth can be seen in the government's work to implement the master plan for Braddon's CZ3 services zone. The master plan aims to make a safer and more pleasant pedestrian environment and also extends paths and lighting through Haig Park to provide safer connections for pedestrians and cyclists moving between the northern side of Haig Park and the city.

Further north we are undertaking significant redevelopment of the former Downer primary school site. In addition to new housing, the Downer development, which we are progressing in close consultation with key local stakeholders, will provide a range of new services in the area, including commercial office space and much-needed childcare. Of course, this means more job creation and economic growth. The construction phase alone of this Downer project will contribute up to 100 new jobs through the construction phase.

The Watson neighbourhood oval restoration was completed this month and includes the installation of new turf and an amenities building, goal posts, a new synthetic cricket pitch and new cricket practice nets with synthetic run-ups. This restoration will provide further community access for all the football codes and cricket.

There have been a number of infrastructure improvements made at the Lyneham sports precinct, including roads, new car parking, new sportsground lighting, irrigation upgrades, development of a new sportsground and the Sullivans Creek culvert to unite the precinct. Works have improved the functionality and visual amenity of this important sporting asset, also opening it up for increased community access and recreation. These are high-quality facilities that will serve the residents of north Canberra for many years to come.

Another excellent example has been the Gungahlin leisure centre, which will open in a couple of months. It will be a major asset for the Gungahlin community. Similarly, the Gungahlin enclosed oval, which I will officially open later this month, will be of great benefit, again, to all of the football codes. Extensive car parking has been provided as part of the oval project to meet not only the needs of users of the oval but also to provide overflow car parking capacity for the leisure centre.

These two projects, along with the Gungahlin government office block, the Gungahlin college, the Gungahlin library and the Gungahlin town square all add to the significant investment in community infrastructure in the Gungahlin town centre, as well as adding to the vitality of that centre.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, how will the recent announcement about the new supermarkets in Dickson contribute to economic growth in north Canberra?

MR BARR: As I announced earlier this month, the Dickson group centre will be significantly expanded through the addition of new Coles and Aldi supermarkets. In addition to the new supermarkets, there will be specialty retail stores and residential apartments to be located on the car park that is adjacent to Antill and Badham streets.

This will undoubtedly bring short-term economic benefits in the construction phase as well as longer term benefits arising from the urban intensification and new retail activity in Dickson.

We estimate that the construction of the new Coles store will create around 200 jobs. Construction employment in the Coles site is likely to continue for at least a further two years as construction on the Tradies car park commences once the underground public parking is available on the supermarket site.

Once operating, the Coles supermarket will generate 120 full-time equivalent jobs. There will, of course, be further jobs created at the Aldi supermarket and in the specialty stores, bringing the total full-time equivalent jobs created closer to 200. It is also worth noting that the amount of car parking in the Dickson group centre will be doubled as a result of the redevelopment. We will go from about 200 places to nearly 500 on the particular site that will be redeveloped. In future phases of development as part of the Dickson master plan we will see significant urban renewal in this most important of group centres in north Canberra.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

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

MR BARR: There are certainly a range of projects that the government is promoting that will drive growth through north Canberra, from the central business district all the way to Gungahlin. The major project, clearly, is capital metro, which has the potential to unlock enormous growth opportunities along Northbourne Avenue, Flemington Road and into Gungahlin. The operation of light rail in this corridor will support increases in residential and commercial densities and will transform how the city develops, particularly its capacity to encourage sustainable economic activity.

As a key landholder and a land manager under the leasehold system, there is a unique opportunity for the ACT government to both directly and indirectly encourage urban renewal along the corridor. Those renewal opportunities include but are not limited to renewal of our public housing assets, greater focus on mixed use development and the location of ACT government offices along the transit corridor. As I mentioned earlier, the significant redevelopment that is occurring in Braddon as a result of the earlier planning changes certainly will be supported by the light rail project. The work that will occur in Dickson, both in the public and in the private sector, as a result of that being a key intersection and a key station in our public transport system is certainly going to provide significant economic development opportunities along the entire capital metro corridor. It will be a significant boost to the economy of north Canberra, and it is one that we look forward to delivering.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, why is it important that the ACT government boost growth and provide services not just in north Canberra but across regions in the territory?

MADAM SPEAKER: Let me think about that for a moment. I call the minister.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Of course our investment in north Canberra is consistent with our approach to investing in Canberra more broadly. We are committed to policies and programs that create jobs, drive economic growth and allow our community to continue to receive the world-class services that they currently do. We do this because this ultimately determines the standard of living of our residents.

We have some pleasing data from the Property Council, of all places, in relation to their recent nation-wide survey which found Canberra to be Australia's most liveable city. I am sure we all agree with that. We all agree with that, don't we? It might be the one thing that you might get bipartisan or tripartisan support for in this place. That does not happen by accident and it is certainly the result of a considerable policy focus, particularly since self-government.

The government is pursuing a range of strategies to stimulate the economy, to boost confidence and to attract new investment into north Canberra and into Canberra more broadly, some of which include the business development strategy; the facilitation of investment attraction through the release of investment proposal guidelines; promotion of the new Canberra brand, CBR; leveraging our land advantage and infrastructure to transform parts of the city into more dense, dynamic and creative areas as preferred locations for people to work, live and visit; to grow our export capability, including partnering with our universities to support their growth and international outreach; hosting and facilitating major events for the city; and upgrading significant sports events and event infrastructure to allow us to continue to host those major events—all of which contribute to growth and jobs in our community. (*Time expired.*)

Planning—city plan

MR COE: My question is for the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, the strategic plan for the government's city plan talks about 130 submissions, 1,110 exhibition comments, 500 stakeholder attendee meetings, 600 surveys and 10,000 open house exhibition attendees. However, in the Chief Minister's message you noted that the strongest message from the government's consultations was, "Just get on with it." In response to this you have released a 15-year-plus plan to investigate a convention centre, aquatic centre and theatre. Chief Minister, why are the convention centre, aquatic centre and theatre not considered important enough infrastructure projects to pursue now?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Mr Coe for the question. The city plan is essentially providing the overall spatial framework to guide the development of the city over the next 15 or so years. Anyone in this place would understand that the building up of all the significant infrastructure that will be required in the city will take place over a number of years.

In relation to the Australia forum, or the convention facility, that is a project I believe both sides of politics are pursuing at this point in time. We think it is a project we

could move with fairly quickly, although the next stage of that is actually to get support for funding to get it investment ready and get a final business plan in place, which is not in place yet. There is a bit of work. The last request I saw for that was for \$8 million to progress that work. That gets the business case to a point where it is investment ready.

The city plan and the work we have done with the community show that the community wants to see things happen and they want the city centre built. That is why you saw the announcement from the Treasurer on Monday around the city to the lake and starting with another project there. We have already got the design work around looking at Parkes Way boulevard. This will also do the next stage work that is needed for the design of West Basin. We have also got other priority projects, like capital metro, which again is one of those important projects for the city.

With a dose of understanding that this will take time to deliver on, this plan sets the framework in place, and it is a very clear statement from the government about where we would like to see development occur and where we think particular projects should be located, which then allows those projects to be facilitated. We are moving forward with it.

Mr Smyth: What? After 12 years?

MS GALLAGHER: I know Mr Smyth will try and take credit for it, as you are wont to do.

MADAM SPEAKER: Standing order 42, Chief Minister.

MS GALLAGHER: I am sure we all enjoyed reading an opinion piece. At least Mr Smyth has an opinion on it. That was welcome. But the city plan at its heart is a spatial framework document that sets the scene for what we would like to see happen in terms of transport and land use. Individual projects form a subset of that—projects like the capital metro and city to the lake, which are all being developed.

If we were inundated with investment and investors to build all that infrastructure in the next couple of years we would be ready for and welcoming of that. Indeed, that is the work that the Minister for Economic Development will be doing on his next overseas trade delegation and it is the work I will be doing when I go to China with the Prime Minister in early April to talk to investors around opportunities, particularly opportunities in the city.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Chief Minister, will Canberrans have to wait 15 years, or perhaps even more, for a convention centre, an aquatic centre or a theatre?

MS GALLAGHER: The government will take decisions about individual projects in accordance with the guidance provided by the city plan, as we do each and every year when we sit down to finalise our priorities. We already are putting our effort into two key projects under the city plan: capital metro and city to the lake. They are very clear

statements from this government around the projects we are going to develop. And we have also been doing a lot of work around attracting investment into the town—not just looking at the local capacity here but looking at national and international capacity. We think these projects provide exciting opportunities for Canberra’s economic development over the next few years.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Chief Minister, how many other plans will the government publish before any action is taken to pursue the priority infrastructure projects?

MS GALLAGHER: We implement all of our plans.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Chief Minister, are these infrastructure projects pushed out to 15 years or more because the government is spending all of its capital on the light rail?

MS GALLAGHER: If Mr Smyth thinks that the ACT government should and could fund the convention facility as the priority for our capital funds, I would argue that he does not have his priorities right. If you think the priority for \$350 million worth of ACT taxpayers’ funds is a convention facility as opposed to hospitals, schools, public transport and public amenity, which are all demands that the community want to see funded, I would argue that you have got your priorities wrong. However, the ACT government should be a partner and should support the facilitation of that project. If we can, we would look at areas where, for example, we could bring land to the negotiations. But we do not believe that we should be funding that entire project, and that is why we are lobbying the commonwealth—that is probably why Mr Seselja is lobbying the commonwealth; that is why he is lobbying his colleagues—to facilitate federal government interest in the project and hopefully some private sector investment.

Schools—My School data

MR GENTLEMAN: My question is to the minister for education and relates to the latest data on the My School website. Minister, what did this show about the performance of ACT schools?

MS BURCH: I thank Mr Gentleman for his interest. Recently the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority released the latest update of the My School website. I am pleased to advise that the information on the website shows that the ACT government’s significant investment in education is paying off in the strong results of our students.

My School provides the community with an opportunity to learn more about Australian schools and for schools to learn more about each other. ACT public schools are on average around 13 per cent per student better funded than the average Australian school. And we continue to invest in public education to ensure quality outcomes for all our students, irrespective of where they live, their circumstances or the school they attend.

In 2013, 90 per cent of ACT schools at year 3 and 91 per cent at year 9 had results for reading that were equivalent to or higher than the national average. Similar results were achieved in numeracy, with 83 per cent of schools at year 3 and 84 per cent of ACT schools at year 5 achieving results that were equivalent to or higher than the national average. Eighty-eight per cent of the 2011-13 ACT public school cohorts achieved growth in reading the same as or more than the growth of cohorts nationally with the same start scores. The ACT continues to provide our students with excellent senior secondary schooling. In 2013, My School results show that 4,385 students attained a year 12 certificate, 94 per cent of year 12 students.

We have a strong base when it comes to student outcomes, but we need to continue to raise the bar and to strive for improvement so that no student is left behind. A key to achieving this ambitious goal is to make sure that every student in every classroom every day has a quality teacher in front of them responding to their individual needs. This is why I want to see that all new teachers in our public school system are in the top 30 per cent nationally when it comes to literacy and numeracy. This is also why I am making moves to make English mandatory for students up to year 12 and have revised policies in areas such as gifted and talented education.

We will continue to ensure that every ACT student is given the opportunity to reach their full potential and be provided with quality education.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Gentleman?

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, what ACT schools have shown particular growth or improvement in their results and what is the government doing to lift the performance bar for all schools?

MS BURCH: The number of schools across the ACT achieving high-performance results is, indeed, very pleasing and a testament to the quality of our schools and their teachers. By way of illustration, nine of our schools had growth in at least one aspect of NAPLAN testing at a rate 50 per cent greater than the national average. These include schools such as Richardson and Ainslie primary schools and Alfred Deakin and the University of Canberra Kaleen high schools.

Wanniassa school is one school that achieved great results, outperforming similar schools, particularly in years 3, 5 and 7, across reading, writing, spelling, grammar and numeracy. The school achieved this by implementing a personalised learning approach focusing on literacy and numeracy activities. Strategies and interventions implemented at the school have resulted in improved student outcomes which the school is confident will see further improvements into the future. Other schools achieving above the average of similar schools include Calwell primary, Mawson primary and Jervis Bay.

ACT public schools have focused on a literacy and numeracy strategy to improve outcomes for all students. They continue to develop teaching and leadership capacity to deliver high-quality literacy and numeracy programs whilst implementing the full richness of the Australian curriculum. All public schools report on specific outcomes

relating to student progress, with specialist literacy and numeracy coordinators and field officers providing expert support in literacy and numeracy teaching and learning. And I am confident that these strategies will continue to see ACT schools leading the nation.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, why is it important that parents have access to this information about schools?

MS BURCH: I thank Ms Porter for her interest in this question. There is often interest from the community in the resources available to, and the achievements and performance of, individual schools. Ready access to this information empowers our parents to make informed choices about their children's schooling and to understand what is occurring at their school.

There is a lot of information available to help parents understand how individual schools are performing and what their strengths are. School websites and the My School website are valuable sources of information for parents and families. With the 2013 NAPLAN data added, My School now shows performance data since 2008, enabling parents and the community to see a particular school's performance over time and compare performance and progress with that of other similar schools. There is no substitute, however, for families visiting a school, speaking to the principal and teachers, observing students and talking with other parents.

NAPLAN test results are just one element of the My School website and provide teachers and parents with information about individual students in the skills of literacy and numeracy. It is important, however, to remember that schools teach many other things in addition to the basic "three Rs" in literacy and numeracy. I am very proud of the diversity of programs in schooling in the ACT and the extensive support that is available to students to assist them to stay engaged with schools and to reach their full potential.

The information provided by the My School website is a valuable tool for school leavers, school staff and, importantly, our school communities to bring about the best possible results for students in our schools.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, what other factors could parents use to determine the quality of schools in the ACT?

MS BURCH: I thank Ms Berry for her interest in our education system here. There are, indeed, a range of factors that parents can use to determine the quality of schools. A quality school is one in which effective teaching, learning and engagement are valued and nurtured. A quality school will have teachers who know their students and have a positive relationship with them and their families.

Quality schools have a plan for year-on-year improvement, developed in collaboration with the school board and the parents, and parents can access those plans and board

reports through the school websites. Quality schools will provide better support for and engagement with parents and families, including advice on how best to contribute to their children's learning at home.

There are other things that parents can look for when they visit a school and think about what school is best for their sons or daughters. They include school leadership. Does the principal ensure that good policies and practices are in place to engage with students and families? Does the school have high expectations about their staff and students? Does the school have strategies to strengthen and maximise student engagement? Is the school attractive, clean, well presented and have areas where staff and parents can talk and will want to be?

When I visit schools I can see that these questions are answered always in the positive and I have a great confidence in our ACT schools.

Canberra Hospital—stem cell treatment

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, recent media reports and constituent representations have highlighted issues concerning adult stem cell treatment at the Canberra Hospital for patients with MS. At some time in 2012 it was decided that the Canberra Hospital would not continue with this treatment for patients with MS. Instead, patients were referred interstate. Two reasons apparently given for stopping treatment in the ACT were that the procedure required multidisciplinary resources and that costs were too high. Minister, why was a patient in the ACT who was receiving potentially lifesaving treatment told they were not going to be treated because the cost was too high?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Ms Lawder for the question. Certainly the decision around not providing that treatment was not based on cost alone, although this is something more generally we have to look at across the health system. The volume was very low. Also, it is an experimental stage of that treatment. There are mixed views amongst the profession about that type of treatment and what particular type of patient that treatment might be suitable for. The treatment at Canberra Hospital was not provided with ethics approval, which is required under this type of early-stage treatment. I know there are doctors who were involved who have a different opinion to that. But the very strong advice from the research ethics committee was that this treatment should not be approved for Canberra Hospital.

I have to say that I do not think I am in a position to challenge the expert opinion of an ethics committee which makes these decisions very professionally with advice and support in areas of their own expertise and which has always acted with the public interest in mind.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, what were the changes that took place that meant the ACT no longer had appropriate teams or could not afford to treat our own patients when we had been doing so for some years?

MS GALLAGHER: It is my understanding that between 2009 and 2012 nine patients had stem cell harvest conducted, and eight patients with transplants were completed at Canberra Hospital. There was no ethics approval for this at that time either. It was not something that I knew of; it was not something that the Director-General of Health knew. When management were made aware of it, they were encouraged to seek ethics approval for their work, and that ethics approval was not granted.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, can you give an outline of what those ethical considerations were?

MS GALLAGHER: I can. It is quite detailed. I think, from the briefings I have had today, it was around certainly the numbers of people doing it and the nature of the patients. Patients with a particular type of MS were eligible for it, so there was an eligibility criterion for it. And research support for it. They were certainly two of the main criteria, but I can provide that to you, Mr Hanson. It was looked at at length, and they were two of the main issues that were not able to be covered off. Certainly the very clear advice from the ethics committee was that it should not be allowed to continue at Canberra Hospital.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: I ask firstly if you could table that advice and advise whether there will be any review of that decision in the future should this treatment become more established or more evidence come to light in terms of its effectiveness.

MS GALLAGHER: Yes, I can certainly table it. My understanding is that the ethics committee operates in accordance with the national statement on ethical conduct in human research ethical guidelines. These are established nationally. So I can certainly have a look at what I can provide further. My understanding was that the advice from the ethics committee to the professionals doing the treatment was that you can cover off these concerns and re-submit it for ethics approval, which at this point has not been done.

But I think members would understand that if a treatment is in experimental stage, if there are questions amongst the profession about the suitability of this treatment, particularly for certain eligible patients, and it is not granted ethics approval, it would be a very brave health minister who would override that decision and allow that treatment anyway. So as much as I have sympathy for the patients who would like to access that treatment, we have done what we can to provide them with connections to the hospital in Sydney that is undertaking a tightly-controlled, ethics-approved trial into this treatment.

Mr Coe: What about interstate?

MS GALLAGHER: That is where we have referred them, yes.

Cycling—injuries

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services. Minister, in the past year the Insurance Authority has paid three compensation payments on behalf of your directorate of \$45,000, \$90,000 and \$100,000 to cyclists injured on Canberra's cycle and roads network. What were the problems on the cycle paths and the roads network that led to these payments being made?

MR RATTENBURY: I thank Mr Wall for the question. As you rightly identify, there were three claims and they were for a range of matters. One of the matters was where somebody alleges that when she went alongside the track she hit a drain immediately adjacent to the bike track and was thrown from her bicycle. And there was no warning of that drain.

In the second matter, the claimant alleged that the complainant had been struck by several tree branches across the path and therefore lost control, resulting in injury. In the third case, the claimant claimed that the claimant was cycling along a road—I am not sure how much detail to go into here—and that the road was in a state of disrepair and the cyclist was unable to avoid the debris and gravel on the road and fell off the bicycle, again resulting in injury. They are three quite different matters in quite different parts of town.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, what actions are being taken to address known safety problems for cyclists throughout the network, such as obstructions caused by roadworks, for example, on Ginninderra Drive near Lawson?

MR RATTENBURY: There is a range of mechanisms in place to address safety concerns on the cycle network. They range, obviously, from things like Canberra Connect, where people can and do regularly report problems and they will be addressed by TAMS. They will be inspected and, depending on the nature of the issue, it may be that an area needs to be swept or may require repairs. There are certain footpaths, for example, as members will be aware, that will perhaps be ground in the first instance to remove a lip and then potentially replaced at a later point in time. There is obviously a more proactive program of upgrading parts of the network and seeking to remove breaks in the network, for want of a better term. There are areas, of course, where cycle infrastructure is still not as adequate as we would like it to be. So there is an ongoing program of investment to improve areas, and that is improving safety.

Perhaps the best way to describe it is that there are two elements. One is an element of being reactive, in response to issues and complaints that are raised. In that, I would also put issues indentified by TAMS staff as they go around in the course of their regular business. The second element is a proactive approach to improving the network.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, what agencies collect data regarding cyclist safety? If there is more than one, is that data collated to form a holistic view of cyclist safety in the territory?

MR RATTENBURY: It is probably best, given the specific nature of the question, that I take that on notice. Certainly TAMS will have information. I imagine the police do. Through the health department I imagine there are records from people who arrive as a result of injuries. The transport safety section of Justice and Community Safety Directorate may well, as would the transport planning section of ESDD. There would be a range of places in government where I imagine there are sources of data.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, are you aware of any on-road cycle paths that are not adequate and are in need of reform in some form or another?

MR RATTENBURY: I cannot think of anything specific at the moment. There are areas, of course, where cycle lanes come to an end. My personal view is that that is not adequate. But that reflects the program the government has pursued for a number of years now, which is that as a road is resurfaced, and where space is available, for example, a cycle lane will be marked down. That is where people will experience, in places, a lane simply coming to an end rather mysteriously. That reflects that program that has been going on for a number of years. There are other places where there may well be danger spots, but I am not aware of any being brought to my specific attention recently.

Roads—speed and red light cameras

DR BOURKE: My question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney, could you please explain the purpose of the ACT road safety camera evaluation you announced recently to the Assembly?

MR CORBELL: I thank Dr Bourke for the question. I am very pleased to inform the Assembly on the steps the government is taking. This is the first time any government has looked comprehensively at the operation of the road safety camera network. The road safety camera network has now been in operation for over a decade.

Mr Coe: Any government? New South Wales did it. Victoria did it.

MR CORBELL: The first time here in the ACT.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Have you got a point of order, Dr Bourke?

Dr Bourke: Yes, I am having difficulty hearing the minister speak.

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

Dr Bourke: Madam Speaker, I am having difficulty hearing the attorney answer my question.

MADAM SPEAKER: That is not a point of order, and it disrupts the minister's answer. The minister has the floor.

MR CORBELL: It was not the only thing disrupting my answer. Madam Speaker, the road safety camera network was, of course, first established by Mr Smyth when he was the Minister for Urban Services, but this is the first time an ACT government has looked comprehensively at the operation of the road safety camera network, which has developed over the last decade.

I have asked my directorate to commission a broad evaluation which will look at the performance of the road safety camera network as a whole, including its impacts on crashes and speeding as well as governance. The evaluation will review existing Australian and international research as well as evaluations of other road safety camera programs to assist in identifying opportunities for any improvements in either its strategic functions or in relation to operational management.

This is a timely step to take. It is important that we look closely at the operation of the road safety camera network. I believe the Auditor-General now has finalised her own audit into these matters, and her audit I am sure is a piece of work that will be very, very useful in informing the work of this broader review which the government has commissioned.

This is an important step forward as we look at the further development of the road safety camera network and its efficacy to date.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Attorney, how will cameras in the ACT be evaluated?

MR CORBELL: It is my intention that the evaluation will include an analysis of before and after data relating to crashes, speed and infringements for each of the different camera technologies. This analysis will assist in assessing to what extent the cameras have contributed to improving road safety. A review of existing Australian and international research will also be undertaken to assist in identifying opportunities for strategic or operational improvements.

The third component of the evaluation will involve a review of the existing governance arrangements to determine whether improvements can be made to the management and oversight of the program. The government wants the evaluation to identify any potential opportunities to gain improved road safety effectiveness from within existing resources and in relation to the overall oversight of the program. As I said before, this review will complement and build on the conclusions that the Auditor-General will provide when she brings down her report, which is focused on the strategic and operational management of the camera network. This will, I think, give the community reassurance that governance arrangements are appropriate, that

improvements will be made if they are identified as needing to be undertaken, and that the operation of the road safety camera network continues to improve road safety overall here in the territory.

MR COE: Supplementary question.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, why was the Federal Highway chosen as a site for a speed camera when, in the three years prior to installation, there was not a recorded accident at the site?

MR CORBELL: In relation to the Federal Highway—and in relation, indeed, to any site—a range of factors are taken into account. One is traffic volume. Another is accident rate. And, depending on which particular camera we are talking about, different weightings have been applied in relation to that methodology. There have been established methodologies at each stage of the development of the road safety camera network. That methodology has shifted over time as the ACT has developed and implemented more and different types of road safety camera technologies.

This is one of the issues that I am very keen to have independently reviewed. I think it is important that we do that. It is something that I anticipate the Auditor-General will make some observations on. That is why I think it is equally important that we commission outside independent expert review of these matters. That is why I have commissioned the University of New South Wales to undertake that work. I look forward to seeing their analysis.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Berry

MS BERRY: When will the evaluation take place?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Berry for her supplementary. The government has earlier this year issued a request for tender. I was pleased to confirm, as I mentioned earlier, that the University of New South Wales transport and road safety research group have been successful in securing that tender. They are highly experienced in evaluations of road safety programs.

A report detailing the findings of the evaluation is expected to be made available by the middle of this year. The evaluation will be used to identify any appropriate ongoing evaluation frameworks that are needed to support an ongoing, effective road safety camera network.

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

Supplementary answers to questions without notice University of Canberra—student accommodation

MS GALLAGHER: I have one matter from question time yesterday. Ms Lawder asked me a question about Arscott House. I have been in touch with the University of

Canberra on this specific matter. I also inquired in relation to the question by Mr Smyth. It was a supplementary about the vacancy rate across the University of Canberra's accommodation types.

I am advised by the University of Canberra that there will be no price increase or impacts for students in relation to the decision that is essentially a transfer of management of Arscott House from the student association to the university. The vacancy rate across the five different types of accommodation at the University of Canberra, which includes Weedon Lodge, Cooper Lodge, Arscott House and some other campus accommodation, is currently sitting at 27.5 per cent.

Planning—section 63 Energy—solar

MR CORBELL: Yesterday Mr Coe asked me a question in relation to section 63 in the city. First of all, Mr Coe asked me whether the leaseholders of section 63 are now liable to pay late fees or whether an extension had been provided. I can advise the Assembly that the lessee of section 63 is not in breach of the building completion covenant of the lease. Information regarding compliance by lessees is generally a matter between the territory and the lessee and not subject to public disclosure. However, the lessee is not in breach of the building completion covenant of the lease.

Mr Coe also asked me whether or not the lessee was paying late fees and, if they were, under what legislation or regulation would a waiver be made in relation to any late fees. I can advise the Assembly that the lessee is operating in accordance with their lease provisions and therefore there is no liability.

Also yesterday, Mr Wall asked me when did the concept of developing large-scale solar in the ACT first become government policy. It is a matter of public record that the government first decided to develop large-scale solar capacity in the ACT in September 2008 when the government decided to seek proposals from suitably qualified companies for a capital grant to construct a single 30-megawatt solar power plant in the territory.

Following an expression of interest process, which found that the capital grant would be inadequate to build and operate a single 30-megawatt large-scale solar facility, in September 2010 I announced that the government had decided that a reverse auction process would be used to award a feed-in tariff for 40 megawatts of large-scale solar capacity. This led to the development and subsequent passage of the Electricity Feed-in (Large-scale Renewable Energy Generation) Bill 2011.

Ms Lawder asked me in a supplementary when potential proponents of solar power facilities were first identified. I can advise the Assembly that the potential proponents of the large-scale solar auction held in 2012 and 2013 were first identified on 10 April 2012 when proposals closed for the pre-qualification stage of the solar auction. Forty-nine proposals were received in that stage, of which 22 were invited to submit proposals in stage 2 of the auction.

Construction industry—development conditions

Debate resumed.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (3.44): This is a very important motion. I thank Mr Coe for bringing it on today, because what it does is highlight the government's failure to plan properly for the economic future of the ACT and therefore employment in the ACT, prosperity in the ACT and the future of the city. It is because of government policy—for instance, the current formula for commence and complete fees which was introduced in 2008 and the introduction of the lease variation charge in 2011—that we have now seen the enormous backflip and the total embarrassment of the Treasurer because his reforms are not working.

As Mr Coe pointed out this morning, when asked about the lease variation charge Mr Barr said, "The lease variation charge is excellent public policy and will not be changed." Yet here we are today discussing the changes to this supposedly excellent piece of public policy. But what else did Mr Barr have to say about the lease variation charge? Again, in a public accounts committee meeting, I pointed out that the revenue had not been met in a single quarter, except for the first quarter where there was a holdover from the old system. I asked on 3 December last year:

Is it now not time to review the lease variation charge, its effectiveness and whether or not it is actually working with the intention the government put in place?

Mr Barr says:

Let us step through each of those. The LVC in principle is almost the most perfect tax that could be designed.

I say:

Perfect tax?

He responds:

Yes, perfect tax.

I said:

I am sure the property sector will be pleased to hear that.

It is interesting that the perfect tax is now not so perfect, that we have got a minister who is forced to come back into this place, through the Chief Minister in this case, and announce that they have set up a stimulus package. Let us look at the changes to the perfect tax and the winding back of the commence and complete fees and see what effect they will have. We have it from the Chief Minister's own words yesterday. I asked her about her comments from 2009, those immortal words that the ACT government was too small to stimulate the economy. The Chief Minister said:

I do use the word “stimulus” cautiously.

Then she goes on to say:

We hope that it does stimulate some activity.

She says, “Some activity”. She goes on to say:

We are being realistic about our role. That is why in the context of everything I say I call us a small but significant player. We hope that it does stimulate the building and construction industry. That is what it is targeted to do but I am not sitting here saying how many jobs it will create, how much it will deliver, because I think that is very, very hard to do.

Indeed, the government said they would do a review of these charges in the lead-up to the announcement of the stimulus package. I spoke with the Treasurer this morning and asked if I could have a copy of the review. He said, “No, we do not actually have a formal review or a written review. The cabinet did a review.” That is why I have proposed an amendment. I move:

Add new paragraph (5):

“(5) calls on the Government to table all documents produced to inform the Government’s review of commence and complete fees and lease variation charge by cob Thursday 20 March 2014.”.

This amendment to Mr Barr’s amendment to Mr Coe’s motion inserts a fifth clause that calls on the government to table all documents produced to inform the government’s review of commence and complete fees and the lease variation charge by close of business Thursday, 20 March 2014.

I think it is reasonable to ask what analysis they have done. We have seen the winding back of the perfect tax. We have seen the winding back of—what is it—the excellent public policy. I would like to know on what basis it has been wound back. There must have been something provided to cabinet. I thank the Chief Minister, who is still with us, when she referred in question time a number of times to the open government agenda. Let us have a little bit of affirmation of the open government agenda and let us see the documentation, all the papers that were produced, to tell cabinet that they should wind these taxes back, because I think it would make most interesting reading.

It is interesting on two levels. One, I think it would prove the points that the Liberal Party has been saying for a long, long time, that it should be wound back and it should be reviewed properly. Perhaps that is the subject of a future motion, that we instigate a proper review of both of these taxes, possibly by the Auditor-General. Who knows? But it is also about what decisions did they make. The Chief Minister talks about, again in her answer yesterday, why they are doing this. She goes on to say:

So I am not over-promising, Mr Smyth. I know you would like me to just so you can stand there and whinge and hope that I fail at it, that it does not do what we

want it to do. But we have set out to support employment in the territory to hopefully give some of those developments that are in that consideration stage, but which maybe have not crossed the line, the confidence that the government is listening to them, that the government is working with them. Where it adds up—that is, with the public interest test firmly at the front of our mind, the fairness test firmly at the front of our mind—we will work and we will intervene to help. That is what this package is about.

Let us run the public interest test over this and let us see the data that the government used that said that this will stimulate the economy. We have already got the admission that the Chief Minister will not tell us how many jobs it will create; so what is it that drove the government to make these changes? It would be interesting to know what data they used to inform their decision, or was this the public interest test where firmly in the front of their minds was the future of the government? There is a lot of doubt about these taxes in the community.

I am pleased Mr Rattenbury is still with us because LVC, Mr Rattenbury, is a tax on the environment. LVC is stopping density and pushing sprawl. I would have thought that that was against the Greens' policy. We have had the Greens in here for decades talking about the need to stop the urban sprawl. Yet if you cannot develop in the inner city, there is only one place you can go, and that is new developments.

So to bring forward the development of Moncrieff and say that we are stimulating the economy I would have thought would have been counter-intuitive for a Green who does not want further greenfield development but who ideally wants a more dense city. The LVC is the anti-city tax. That is what it is; it is the perfect tax against density. That is all it is perfect for. The LVC stops density.

We see this in Mr Coe's motion where he states:

the Government's "stimulus package" is an admission that their fiscal policies have failed;

Yes, they have. They have failed. Not only have they failed; we now cannot be told by the government what they will deliver because they just do not know. Either they have made these decisions without any data, without any input or without any review or they have got the review and they will not release it. I think it is very important that we get the data.

If we go back to the 2010-11 budget, the perfect tax, as Mr Barr described it, was to deliver \$22 million in 2011-12. It was to deliver \$25 million in 2012-13 and it was to deliver \$26 million in 2013-14. We then go to the 2013-14 budget and see what the expected outcome is: it is now \$17 million. It is \$17 million against an estimate of \$26 million. We can see that in the outyear 2014-15 it is now \$18 million; in 2015-16 it is \$19 million; in 2016-17 it is \$20 million, which does not even bring the perfect tax up to the level it was expected to reach for its first year of operation.

It is not a perfect tax, members. It is the perfect failure. Indeed, in the public accounts committee hearing I went on to say, after Mr Barr had said:

The lease variation charge is excellent public policy and will not be changed.

Even though we have now changed it. I asked:

Is it not becoming, for instance, your mining tax—

“No,” said Mr Barr; I went on:

in that it has lots of promise but fails to deliver?

“No,” says Mr Barr. Indeed, it has become Andrew Barr’s personal mining tax because he promised the world and he is not delivering it. He has got the Chief Minister now covering him by her announcing the stimulus package because he probably could not stand up with a straight face and say that this is good public policy because it is undermining his perfect tax.

You only have to look at some of the quarterly figures for the lease variation charge. In the December quarter of 2012, the budget was \$9.8 million. The actual was \$2 million. In the March quarter 2013, the budget was \$14.7 million. The actual was \$7 million. In the September quarter 2013, the budget was \$4.4 million and the actual was \$2.7 million. In the December quarter 2013, the budget was \$8.8 million and the actual was \$6 million.

This is an underachieving tax from an underachieving Treasurer. It is important that we get to the nub of the truth. It would be interesting I think for all people in the community to understand why the government has changed. I urge members to support my amendment that calls on the government to table all of these documents.

The Chief Minister, in her own words again in question time, talked about the open government agenda. Let us see how open the agenda is. Let us see how open a government it is that this Chief Minister runs. Indeed, in her first speech as Chief Minister she talked about the new era of openness and accountability. We know that Mr Rattenbury is favour of openness because we are going to get a new FOI bill from Mr Rattenbury at some stage. Members, I commend the amendment to you.

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) (3.54): The government will not be supporting Mr Smyth’s amendment. The Chief Minister is drafting an alternate amendment. I will take the opportunity to respond to some of the issues raised by the shadow treasurer.

The first and most obvious one that Mr Smyth overlooks in all his esteemed analysis of the housing market in the ACT is that there might be any economic downturn or cyclical impact upon that sector. That would not at all impact upon the levels of economic activity in an economy!

All transaction taxes will fluctuate based on levels of economic activity. The lease variation charge, like stamp duty and like many others, will, of course, fluctuate depending on the levels of economic activity. So the level of revenue collected will be impacted by the interaction of supply and demand in particular markets in the economy. That is the nature of this form of taxation. When it comes to the most efficient ways of raising revenue, we know that a tax on a windfall gain that has no deadweight loss—that is, the lease variation charge—is the most efficient way of raising tax.

What is perverse about Mr Smyth's position is that he prefers inefficient ways of raising tax. He wants to raise tax by the most inefficient and pernicious forms of taxation available. That is his preference. He wants to tax people when they divorce and they are forced to sell their property. He wants to whack a whopping great stamp duty on them. He does not support the abolition of stamp duty. He supports stamp duties being raised. He is opposing the reduction of stamp duty. He is opposing the reduction of insurance taxes. He and his cohort of economic ignoramuses are supporting the most inefficient taxes that it is possible for state and territory governments to levy.

This government, Madam Assistant Speaker, is moving away from those taxes to more efficient forms of taxation. The lease variation charge is one of those. It has been in existence in the territory in one form or another since the 1970s. A betterment tax is a principle that even you took to the last election. The tax that you believe is terrible you support.

Alternatively, Madam Assistant Speaker, the shadow treasurer needs to indicate where he would find \$20 million and more of lost income per annum—if he believes this tax should be abolished. If that is the position, be clear and indicate which other taxes you would raise in order to substitute for that lost revenue or indicate which \$20 million of expenditure on health, education, community services or TAMS—roads, resurfacing, those sorts of programs—you would cut. That fundamentally is the position of the shadow treasurer. He wants to walk both sides of the fence. The problem with those who walk both sides of the fence is that they get splinters in uncomfortable places. The shadow treasurer has a few splinters on this issue, it is very clear.

The important point to note throughout all of this is that the principles that underlie the lease variation charge are sound—sound in economic theory and sound in practice. We are providing a two-year stimulus—a two-year stimulus. We are not walking away from the principles of the lease variation charge. In fact, we are freezing the current arrangements. We are freezing the current arrangements in relation to the codification of the lease variation charge. That is exactly right—unchanged.

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MR BARR: We have made one change in the V1-V2 remission that applies to a very small proportion of uncoded areas. The bulk, the vast majority, of the territory has been codified, but a small proportion of properties are not. They are subject to a V1-

V2, before and after, valuation assessment. The remission on that has been increased from 25 per cent to 50 per cent for two years.

The fundamental principles of the lease variation charge remain unchanged. The legislative framework remains unchanged. That is fundamentally the case. What we have done is take the opportunity, through a number of elements of the lease variation charge legislation, to provide remissions for certain outcomes—improved environmental performance, universal design outcomes, and V1-V2 assessments for mixed use developments in uncodified areas. The schedules, the taxation arrangements and the remissions are frozen for a two-year period, providing certainty to the industry in relation to codification. There was certainty before on a sliding schedule, and we are being very clear now what is happening for the next two years.

If the shadow treasurer understood the basis of the lease variation charge, he would know that there is an assessment and a valuation, and updating of valuation schedules—a provision for that. What we have said is that we will freeze the current valuations in time for two years. That provides certainty for industry over the coming period.

Why are we doing this? Because the Liberal Party is going to mug this economy and we are going to have to hand back \$13 million worth of revenue, the community's revenue, to the construction sector to help them through. That is what this package does. It is about \$13 million worth of forgone revenue out of the community's benefit into the benefit of the private sector in order to stimulate activity. That is it. It is a \$13 million transfer out of the community's pocket into the pocket of developers to get an economic outcome. That is the nature of the changes—a \$13 million transfer. That is what the Chief Minister announced. That is what the government is proceeding with. That ought to allow a number of projects that were marginal, that probably would not have gone ahead in normal economic circumstances, to be pushed ahead.

Some \$13 million worth of benefit in profits has been transferred from the community to the private sector as a result of this package—\$13 million worth of benefit into the pockets of developers. No wonder they are happy, Madam Assistant Speaker.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education) (4.03): I move:

Omit paragraph (5), substitute:

“(5) calls on the Government to table all documents related to the changes announced by the ACT Government to commence and complete fees and lease variation charge by cob Thursday 20 March 2014.”.

This amendment is an amendment to Mr Smyth's proposed amendment to Mr Barr's proposed amendment to Mr Coe's motion. Have I cleared that up? The government is happy to assist members with information around the changes announced by us around commence and complete fees and the lease variation charge.

In relation to Mr Smyth's amendment on the tabling of documents produced to inform the government's review of the commence and complete fees, many of those would

be executive documents and cabinet in confidence documents. I am happy to go back and look at what information we can provide around the package that we have announced, to assist members, but, just to be clear, that would be around the changes as agreed by cabinet, not documents that were produced to inform the discussions of cabinet around changes.

Mr Smyth: So the open government agenda does not exist?

MS GALLAGHER: They are working documents used to inform policy decisions by the cabinet, and those are not normally released. I do not intend to start that practice, and you can be an open government without—

Mr Smyth: That is what an open government agenda means.

MS GALLAGHER: No. You can be an open government; that does not mean that you start releasing all executive documents and working documents used to inform those cabinet discussions. That is what I will not be doing. I am happy to look at the information that we can provide to assist members with information about the very sensible package agreed to by the cabinet after careful consideration of all the issues that had been raised by the industry. And, as I said yesterday, after overlaying a public interest and a community benefit on those changes, we agreed to certain changes around the lease variation charge and commence and complete fees.

I support the previous speech by the Deputy Chief Minister. The government remains committed to having in place fees and charges which return benefit to the community for assets granted from them. That is what both of these charges do.

I would be interested in a response from the Liberal Party about whether they actually believe that the lease variation charge is a charge they would support. It goes to the heart of the community's interest in our biggest asset, land, and the fact that, when land and development rights are granted, and those development rights bring with them not only risk to the developer but also benefits to the developer through the outcomes of that development, there should be some return to the community for that.

That is what this very legitimate charge is all about. We said it at the beginning. If anyone is responsible for the lease variation charge, it is me. It is the charge that I brought in when I was Treasurer—that I worked on through extensive reviews of the change of use charge. We always said at the time that it was a lever available to government to respond as economic conditions required. I remember saying that a number of times in this place: where we needed to change the levers, we would do so, and we would look to work with industry on them. This is a classic example of us doing exactly what we said we would do.

Amendment to Mr Smyth's proposed amendment agreed to.

Mr Smyth's amendment, as amended, to Mr Barr's proposed amendment agreed to.

Mr Barr's amendment, as amended, agreed to.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (4.08): Madam Assistant Speaker Lawder, that is what you call being pushed in the deep end as an assistant speaker, and I congratulate you on working through that.

I will clarify a couple of points. I have already done so in this chamber on many occasions, but I will do it again for the Chief Minister's benefit. The opposition supports codification of the lease variation charge. Obviously, it is right and proper that there is a payment at the time of varying a lease. However, the devil is in the detail. We cannot have a rate of LVC which in effect deters investment, which is exactly what the government has done. I am concerned that even putting the LVC on hold may not be enough for this economy at the moment.

The fact is that developments under the current LVC remission rates are not going ahead. They are actually pressing pause on the current economic situation, and the current remission levels may not be enough. In actual fact, the government may well have to go back to the 75 per cent remission levels to ensure that developments get off the ground. That is something that we will await.

The Chief Minister spoke about how it is appropriate for developers to give back to the community in the event of varying a lease. Yes, that is correct. And they do, by way of jobs, by way of unit creation, by way of investment in an area, by way of regeneration, and by way of future rates, future land tax and all the future social benefits that the new community will receive. I do not think it should be in the government's mindset that in effect developers are bad. That is, in effect, what the Chief Minister is saying: developers are bad, and the only way they can offset their behaviour is by paying more tax. We on this side do not accept that.

Let me go to the Treasurer's comments. He is getting into a mess by his own words. He is saying there are no changes to the LVC except for one change, yet the Chief Minister's own media release says:

The four elements to the package being announced today include ... changes to lease variation charges ...

It says "changes to lease variation charges". It is not unchanged; there are changes. And that is the very point of what the government is trying to sell. You can rest assured that when they front the Property Council's forum next week, when government representatives are there trying to explain this, they are going to say: "There are changes here. There are changes." Yet Mr Barr, in his stubbornness, will not accept that the government was forced to change the arrangements that Mr Barr put in place, because they were not working. They are not working, and I still fear that pressing pause on the current remission levels will not be enough to actually spark investment, especially in the inner areas.

Further to this, Mr Barr is on the record as saying that this is a perfect tax, that it is excellent public policy. But he said just four months ago, in December, at the public accounts committee:

This is the one tax that has no drag.

There is no drag? If it is a windfall tax and there is no drag, why does it need to be changed? Isn't this the perfect tax, as you have already said? Isn't this excellent public policy? Why did the Treasurer say on 3 December:

This is the one tax that has no drag.

The questioning continued. Mr Smyth says:

No drag?

Mr Barr says:

No drag.

Mr Smyth says:

No drag at all?

No, there is no drag here whatsoever, it seems—no drag whatsoever! It is a perfect tax, according to Mr Barr. He says that it is excellent public policy and there is no drag. You would think that, if it ticks all those boxes, you would not need to put out a press release saying, “We’re going to change it all.”

I am pleased that one of my motions is going to pass this place. I think it is only the second one ever, which is a very emotional moment for me. Self-indulgence is better than no indulgence at all. I am very pleased that there will be a unanimous passing of a motion that vaguely resembles what I put forward. I very much thank all who contributed to this debate.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Health—nurse-led walk-in centres

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (4.14): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) on 31 July 2012, Katy Gallagher said “What I will not do if I’m Chief Minister after 20 October is close the nurse-led Walk in Centre”;
- (b) that, in answer to a question in the Legislative Assembly on 27 February 2014, Katy Gallagher said that the Walk in Centre at The Canberra Hospital will close; and
- (c) that the Chief Minister, Katy Gallagher, was not honest with the community; and

- (2) calls on the Health Minister to apologise to the community for dishonestly hiding Labor's plans to close the Walk in Centre at The Canberra Hospital.

We will see whether I have as much success as Mr Coe did with his motion. I will be relying on the Greens to support this motion, which is always a tenuous activity. We will see whether Mr Rattenbury is going to ever hold a government to account and ever hold its ministers to account. Based on past experience, I think this might be another motion that I will lose today, but we shall see. I would like to be surprised.

I will start today by quoting from the Chief Minister in her speech on a vote of no-confidence that was moved on her in August 2012 when she was defending the data doctoring scandal:

When I entered this parliament back in 2001 I made a promise to myself and to the community I represent to always work hard, to work diligently, to always act in the best interests of the community, to act honestly, to act with decency and to act with integrity. I have stayed true to that promise, and I always will.

As she spoke those very words in August 2012 she was at that same time deliberately misleading the community about her intent with regard to the Canberra Hospital nurse-led walk-in centre. So Katy Gallagher was here saying she acts with integrity, she acts with honesty, she acts with decency.

I am sorry to say that she did not when it came to the ED scandal. And as I will show you today, she did not when it came to the Canberra Hospital nurse-led walk-in centre. At the same time as this minister was saying that she was going to keep that walk-in centre open, she knew that was not true. And that is not honest. At the same time as she said she always acts with decency, she was at the spearhead of a smear campaign against the Canberra Liberals for having the audacity to actually put an honest position on the table. And that was not decent. At the same time as she was saying that she always acts with integrity, she was misleading the community during an election campaign. And that is not acting with integrity.

But I do not suppose we should have been surprised because the minister has form. For those that have not been in this place as long as perhaps Mr Smyth, Mr Corbell or others, let me take you back to the 2004 election. In 2004 Katy Gallagher was the education minister and it was then that her spokesman—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Ms Lawder): Can you refer to her as Ms Gallagher.

MR HANSON: Sure, I will refer to her as Ms Gallagher. Her spokesman said, "There'll be no school closures. No school closures under Labor. No, we're not going to close any schools."

Ms Gallagher: This is a stump speech. It's your favourite!

MR HANSON: Yes, it is a stump speech. And it is worth reminding people of your form, is it not, so they are warned by—

Members interjecting—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order, members! Please do not speak across the chamber.

MR HANSON: But we know that immediately after the 2004 election they started the planning to close 23 schools.

Then, what happened in 2008? In 2008, in the lead-up to that election, 11 days before the election, Katy Gallagher went to the people of the ACT and said, “All our plans are on the table. They’re all on the table. Trust me. I’m honest Katy. They’re all on the table.” But again, straight after the election, what happened? “There’s a secret plan to buy Calvary and sell Clare Holland House. Forgot to tell you about that one.” That was a very advanced agreement. In actual fact, let me quote from a letter from the Chief Minister, I think it was, to the Little Company of Mary:

To enable further development of the proposal past the commencement of the caretaker period which takes effect on 12 September 2008, my preference is that the heads of agreement be signed by this date.

So they were in discussion about a heads of agreement for flogging off Clare Holland House and buying Calvary and did not tell the people. It was revealed after the election.

Government members interjecting—

MR HANSON: They are interjecting from the other side of the chamber, but does that sound like integrity to you, Madam Assistant Speaker? Does that sound decent? Does that sound honest?

Anyway, let us roll the clock forward to the last election and see what it was this time in Katy Gallagher’s greatest hits of honesty, integrity and decency. What do we have this time? I am enjoying this. I really am. Is it evident? I am enjoying this. So what she decided this time was that she was going to tell a little fib about the walk-in centre. Let me tell you what she said before the election. On 31 July 2012, in front of all the comrades at the Labor conference, there she was. Andrew Barr was there in his red T-shirt, I am sure. Mick Gentleman was cheering on. The placards were there, the red-hot fever pitch. Elias was in the front row.

This is what she said: “As a Labor government, there are things we will do and there are things we will not do if we win the October 2012 election. What I will not do if I’m the Chief Minister after October 20 is close the nurse-led walk-in centre.” And the faithful cheered her. Andrew Barr was cheering and clapping. Elias was saying, “That’s some good stuff, isn’t it, that we can put on Twitter.” And that is exactly what she said. Last sitting week I asked a question of the Chief Minister:

Minister, can you advise whether the walk-in centre at TCH will close once the centres in Belconnen and Tuggeranong are operational?

And what did she say? “Yes.” How do you reconcile that? I struggle with that. One is an unambiguous denial to the party faithful. “Only those nasty Liberals are going to close the walk-in centre at the Canberra Hospital,” but good old Katy will not. No, she will not. “What I will not do if I’m Chief Minister after October 20 is close the nurse-led walk-in centre.” You cannot reconcile them unless you realise that there is something dodgy going on.

Let me tell you what was happening. Basically the Chief Minister, as we saw with her actions in 2004 with school closures and with the sale of Calvary in 2008, decided that she will say what she needs to say in order to help her get elected. At the same time as she was boasting about her integrity, her decency and her honesty in that motion in the Assembly—and I remember it well; there she was: “I’m decent Katy, I’m honest Katy”—she was sitting back, tweeting away and letting the Labor Party machine smear poor old me, I would have to say. But more importantly—and I have broad shoulders; I can get over this sort of stuff—she was misleading the community, lying to the community and smearing the Canberra Liberals.

I have got quite a bit of stuff from the old pokie-funded Labor machine. There is no doubt that the Labor Party, funded by the pokies, can spew out a few pamphlets and can put some good products online. They are masters of it, aren’t they? They have got all the buckets of gold from the pokies. There is the website about the real Seselja Liberals. “The Liberal lies need to stop.” It is that simple. You were not telling a lie about the walk-in centre! “The Liberals oppose nurse-led walk-in centres.” There is all this terrible smear about us and the walk-in centre. Then there is some tweeting. I must say your tweet is better than Joy Burch’s.

Mr Wall: It is a bit cleaner.

MR HANSON: It is a bit a cleaner. It is a little more respectable. It is equally dishonest, I would have to say.

What did you say? There were no surprises on the 100th day countdown. “ACT Labor releases policy and Canberra Liberals threaten to close the free public health service.” “A hundred days to go in the election, and the Canberra Liberals use the occasion to criticise a popular—

Ms Gallagher: It was campaigning.

MR HANSON: Yes, it was campaigning. It was dishonest campaigning. It was dishonest. And that is the point. Whether you were going to close the walk-in centre or not—and clearly you were always going to close it—what we are getting to here, the nub of the issue, is whether you were honest, whether you were acting with integrity and whether you were acting with decency. I do not doubt the fact that it was a politically smart move, and your propensity is to smear and raise a bit of a fear campaign. No-one is questioning that. No-one is arguing that this was not good politics.

But the problem is that these things can come back to bite you. Remember Julia Gillard's "There will be no carbon tax under the government I lead"? Remember that one? It has a bit of that same sort of sense. "There will be no walk-in closures under the government I lead." I am sure that your mates in the Labor Party were pretty happy with this strategy and I imagine Elias sharing the honour. This would have given you lots of fodder for your pamphlets, but ultimately I believe that this was dishonest.

This is not a test of whether the Labor Party is politically opportunistic. It will say anything and do anything in an election. I think we have got that pretty well established. The criteria that we are judging you on today is whether you meet your own standards of always acting with integrity, honesty and decency. And when you look at those criteria it is very difficult—and I am judging you fairly—to say that you were behaving honestly.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, I have given you quite a degree of latitude but may I remind you, please, not to be unparliamentary and watch your language.

MR HANSON: Sure. There is a meeting going on opposite to stitch it up with the Greens. What did you give him? Did you give him more light rail tracks? I do not know what it was on this occasion but it could have been, "Don't vote for this one, Shane, and we'll give you more carbon emission targets." I do not know. Are we up to 50 or 60 per cent?

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Address your remarks to the chair.

MR HANSON: My apologies, Madam Assistant Speaker.

Ms Gallagher: Back on track; back to me.

MR HANSON: Back to you. The sad thing, when you actually go through the whole story, is that the Chief Minister knew exactly what she was doing. If you look at what she was saying in late 2011 and early in 2012 until it came close to the election and Elias saw the opportunity, she had a very different position. She had a very different position when she realised that the site for the Canberra Hospital walk-in centre was not working. And back in 2011 there were numerous comments from the Chief Minister and in the media that she was actually going to close the walk-in centre.

This was before the election campaign came on. In December 2011, it was there. "Government could shut hospital's walk-in clinic. Chief Minister and Health Minister Katy Gallagher wants to close the popular nurse-led walk-in centre at the Canberra Hospital when two more open at Belconnen and Tuggeranong." She was saying all that back in 2011, until she saw the political opportunism of completely reversing her position during the election campaign.

An ABC article from December 2011 stated, "ACT government backtracks on walk-in clinics." And then what did she say on 15 February, before she got into full-on election mode and decided to say whatever it takes? On 15 February she said in this place:

At some point it will have to move from where it is now because it is part of the hospital redevelopment site.

There are three definitive positions. What you have got is a minister saying, “Yes, we’re going to be closing this. We’re going to be moving it. It doesn’t work at the Canberra Hospital.” We know that. And I echoed that position. I said on 12 July, I think it was, “Yes, it’s not working at the Canberra Hospital.” We had a plan for urgent care clinics which essentially are a nurse-led clinic but with doctors. “They are better off in the community and you should shut it down at the Canberra Hospital when they are opened.” But when I said that, which was the right position, the government’s current position, this minister decided, “Right, here we go. It’s an election campaign. I’m going to completely backflip my position. I’m going to lie to the community for about three or four months to see whether I can run a bit of a fear campaign.”

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Hanson!

MR HANSON: She misled the community. I withdraw my comment “lied”. She misled the community. And what she said, amongst other things, to the faithful, was: “What I will not do if I’m Chief Minister after October 20 is close the nurse-led walk-in centre.”

What is beyond dispute is that the walk-in centre at the Canberra Hospital has been putting pressure on our ED, and there are numerous reports that have established that. I do not think that there is any dispute. So I am not being critical here today of the government’s decision to close that centre, and I want to make that clear. What I am being critical of is the fact that during the election campaign—knowing that that was the right decision to make, knowing that that was what she was going to do, having said previously that that was what she was going to do—she said something entirely different. She said she was not going to close it and she actively misled the community just for political advantage.

The Chief Minister can withdraw her previous comments made in this place that she always acts with decency or honesty or integrity. I think that would be useful. I have not moved a censure, I have not moved a vote of no confidence. I think the best way to put this behind you is to follow what I have asked you to do, which is to stand in this place and say, “Yes, I fibbed. Yes, I conned you all. Ha, ha, I’ve got myself into government. Now I have backflipped on that decision but I apologise.” And we will see this as a test of your honesty, Chief Minister. We will see this as a test of your decency and of your integrity.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education) (4.29): I have to say that that was one of the more enjoyable motions on private members’ day that I have sat through for some time. If there was a gala evening of Assembly performance awards, that would be right up there. You would get yourself a gold statue, Mr Hanson. It shows that it has been a while since Old Stumpy—the stump speech—has been pulled out. I kind of enjoyed it. It is like an old friend; it is like a series return that you watch on TV, like *Dr Who*. Old Stumpy comes back and you just add to it!

I am a bit confused about why the Liberal Party are pursuing this—every time they do it just reminds people that they wanted to shut down nurse-led walk-in centres while we are trying to open them up. Mr Hanson quoted from my speech to the comrades, to the party faithful. That is an important speech each year, as Mr Hanson would know when he addresses his party faithful. In fact, probably the most concerning element of today is how he has my speech. It is posted online or something, is it? It is open government.

Mr Hanson did not read the rest of the speech. When I think about the claims that have just been made in this place alleging dishonesty, I think of the selective use of certain elements of my speech and the failure to go on and read the next part of the speech—that is, I will not close the nurse-led walk-in centre service and I will double the funding for that service so we can open centres in Tuggeranong and Belconnen, which is exactly what we are doing.

Mr Hanson: So you were saying you were going to close the walk-in centre at Canberra Hospital, were you?

MS GALLAGHER: The walk-in centre is a service, and here is the policy.

Mr Hanson: You know what you did.

MS GALLAGHER: I do not accept your argument at all. I am happy to table the policy. Our first policy announced in the successful 2012 election campaign goes to this point exactly. It says:

We will open two walk-in centres in Belconnen and Tuggeranong to ensure that people on the north and south of Canberra have easy access to a highly skilled nursing service.

We allocated the funding in last year's budget, and both walk-in centres are due to open mid-year. It is interesting that when we look at the usage by geographic location, by far the most patients presenting at the walk-in centre are Tuggeranong residents—41.32 per cent in the 18 months to December last year were from Tuggeranong, followed by the next largest group, Woden. Areas like Belconnen and Gungahlin had much lower utilisation of it at 6.2 per cent and four per cent respectively.

The north side of Canberra, once you add it up, would get to about 19 per cent of presentations to the walk-in centres. We believe having one in Belconnen will give people on the north side of Canberra greater access. We know already from the evidence we have collected to date how Tuggeranong people do use it, want to use it and will continue to use it.

Mr Hanson has a glass jaw. Yes, a media release was put out when you went on radio and you said you would close the one at Woden, but you were not opening up other ones. An urgent care centre led by a doctor is not a nurse-led walk-in centre. It simply is not.

Mr Hanson: It is better.

MS GALLAGHER: We were talking about nurse-led walk-in centres. I said you would close the nurse-led walk-in centres, which is what you were doing. So there is honesty. I said I would not close the nurse-led walk-in centres—exactly right. I am not closing them; I am opening up two new ones. Doubling the funding and opening two—one in Tuggeranong and one in Belconnen. That is exactly what we are doing.

Any honest reading of my address to the party faithful and any honest reading of our policy which we took to the last election clearly outlines the agenda I had in relation to nurse-led walk-in centres and which I am fulfilling comprehensively and completely by the middle of this year to ensure they open for the benefit of their local areas. I am very happy to stand up here and provide that input into this unusual motion.

If there is anyone who is not telling the truth here it is you, Mr Hanson. I have been very clear about what I intended to do with the walk-in centres. We are delivering on that. More money is going into them. They will be very popular in the community. Yes, it gets them off the hospital site, which, for various reasons, was where the centre started, but it is not necessarily the best place for the centre to continue.

So nice try, Mr Hanson. My honesty, my integrity and my credibility remain fully intact despite repeated, consistent attempts by the Canberra Liberals to question it, to raise doubts about it, to run campaigns against me. Look at the campaign the Canberra Liberals ran against me in the last election campaign if you want to talk about attacks. You ran two-minute ads on me attacking my integrity, my credibility and my honesty. I put out one media release saying Mr Hanson said he was going to close the nurse-led walk-in centre, and we are still talking about it. Two years later we are still coming here talking about who was right and who was wrong. I merely reported what I heard on ABC radio, and now we are delivering on the commitments we took to the election.

As to everything else, despite repeated and consistent attempts to cast doubt on my integrity and my honesty, the Canberra Liberals over many years have failed to make a case, or the case has not been listened to by the community. The telling part of the last election campaign was the ad they started with, which was a two-minute attack ad on me, and then the ad they finished with, which was a nice, softly spoken female character saying, “You know what? I really like Katy Gallagher,” dot, dot, dot. Again, that showed exactly what your research was telling you, which was people think I act with integrity.

Mr Hanson: They believe your lies.

MS GALLAGHER: No, they believe I act with integrity, that I am an honest politician, despite repeated attempts to cast doubt upon that. This is another attempt to do that. It is an attempt that it is going to fail because the facts just do not add up.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (4.37): I am sure Mr Hanson would be well aware that this motion is misleading in that it only uses half the health minister’s quote on

the issue at the time, as the Chief Minister has just outlined. On that basis, I have reflected on this and I will not be able to support the motion today. The rest of the quote, as Ms Gallagher has already outlined, makes it clear that the Labor Party wanted to double the funding for walk-in centres and open two new centres in Tuggeranong and in Belconnen. It is clear the health minister was not declaring the closure of walk-in centres in Canberra. We now know the closure of the Woden centre will not be before the opening of the new centres, so I cannot see any way in which the plan was dishonest.

The Greens understood that the walk-in centre at the Canberra Hospital in Woden was going to be a first step—this goes back to the discussions from last term—and that it would be preferable to have walk-in centres further away from existing hospital emergency departments to help provide services for people needing urgent but not critical care, that is, people whose ailments could be dealt with by a nurse and did not necessarily need a doctor.

The decision to close the walk-in centre in Woden was informed in part by the recent review into its operations, which the health minister has just gone through in some detail. But the health minister's intention in this area of health, so far as the Greens have been aware, has always been to create new models based on the best evidence, and that need is clearly apparent in the south of Canberra. Although I think many of us in this place agree that it would have been preferable for the walk-in centre at Woden not to have been co-located with the Canberra Hospital, the Chief Minister has explained to us many times why this could not occur. That has been debated on numerous occasions in this place.

As I explained last August when we last debated the merits of the walk-in centre, I believe the minister looked through all the advice available at the time and made the best decision possible. Overall, the review showed there had been positive outcomes from this centre. I think Mr Hanson took a very selective view of the independent evaluation of the walk-in centre when we debated it last year. What is so frustrating about Mr Hanson's motion today is that Mr Hanson himself does not support the walk-in centre at Woden. I am interested in talking about the details of the walk-in centre, although I will come to the politics of this in a moment. It is important to spend some time simply reflecting on the merits of the issue.

Mr Hanson's own quotes on the walk-in centre from the election perhaps were a little pre-emptive and perhaps a little undercooked. Perhaps he was caught on the spot. That probably explains what happened when he was talking to Mark Parton on the radio and when asked if he would scrap the walk-in centre he said, "Probably." However, after hearing the huge support from the community for this much-used service and the backlash that his comments created, Mr Hanson was backtracking and said:

It would just be negligent, I think, when you've got information coming forward about things like walk-in centres, for us to be pre-emptive about our policy announcements.

That is exactly what the health minister is responding to—the evidence after four years of operation is that there is a need for walk-in centres to be relocated to best serve the people of Canberra.

I reiterate the Greens' support for nurse-led walk-in centres. We know they have been very successful overseas, particularly in the UK. It was even clear back in 2011 that the early success of the walk-in centre and the high level of consumer satisfaction showed that this model should be expanded in the ACT. In 2011, my colleague Amanda Bresnan was very supportive of the innovative new centre at Woden. However, she was also quite firm that the centre could achieve more if it were not located at the Canberra Hospital and if the nurses had greater scope of practice, given that they are highly qualified, and should be enabled to use their full qualifications, skills and training.

This is exactly what we are seeing occurring before our eyes here in Canberra—an expansion of the centres and a move away from the hospital. It is clear that both sides of the chamber seem to actually agree that the walk-in centre at the Canberra Hospital needs to move. Labor, Liberals and Greens all agree on something. Perhaps that is another moment today to add to Mr Coe's earlier moment of bonhomie. Mr Hanson has brought nothing to the real health debate today, rather he has just sought to selectively quote the Chief Minister and try to paint that in a way that does not match the way the discussion played out.

Last time this issue came up I prepared an amendment which called for the health minister to table implementation plans for the forthcoming walk-in centres at Tuggeranong and Belconnen, including consultation with key stakeholders. I am looking forward to the tabling of those documents in the near future. The minister has informed me that the last of the information to make those documents available has just been received and that we should see them tabled during upcoming sitting periods. I think they will be important documents for the Assembly to have a look at and to get a better understanding of the model that has been developed. That is the approach the Greens want to bring to this debate—that is, policy formulated on evidence, programs developed in consultation with key stakeholders and genuine consultation with the community.

That brings me to the approach Mr Hanson has taken today, which has been largely about politics and not so much about the merits or the operating model of the walk-in centre. It really raises questions around truth in campaigning, and I think that has been the essence of Mr Hanson's motion today.

Earlier today Mr Hanson and I had a good discussion about this, and I appreciated that. It was rather less colourful than the debate this afternoon. It was quite a serious conversation about the merits of both the motion and the way that the issues were discussed at the time. I listened very carefully to the points Mr Hanson made and I really reflected on what he said. I made a few points at the time of the conversation, but what it comes down to is thinking about the way that people seek to conduct political debate. The Liberals have certainly used many Greens' proposals and quotes against us in the same way over the years with selective quotation or, frankly, what I consider to be straight-out distortion of what they knew our position to be.

I took the opportunity since that earlier discussion to try to get a sense of how to form a final view on this matter today, and I found a couple of gems. There was Zed Seselja, the former Liberal leader, saying in the *City News* in October 2011, "The Greens even

tried banning the sale of puppies.” How terrible we are! If you read that sentence, you would probably go, “That’s a really awful thing to do.” But the truth of the matter was that the Greens introduced amendments to govern the breeding and sale of animals. That included licensing of breeders, limitations on selling cats and dogs except from approved sellers such as licensed breeders and animal welfare organisations, but also permitted pet stores to sell animals if they were facilitating the sale from an animal welfare organisation.

When you actually go to the detail of the matter you can see that we were seeking to eliminate some of the practices that had poor animal welfare outcomes for dogs. But as I have just described, there were quite a few channels through which dogs could still be sold. For Mr Seselja to go out there and say the Greens even tried banning the sale of puppies was, frankly, a complete distortion of the policy. Mr Seselja well knew it. As a lawyer, Mr Seselja well understood the difference. He may not have bothered to read the legislation, so perhaps he was just being ignorant. As he is not here to defend himself, I do not want to go too much into it, but it illustrates the point that the Liberal Party see no boundaries in the way they seek to misrepresent and distort other parties’ policies.

I have another example. In the last Assembly there was another special from Mr Seselja. He said:

Households who cannot afford solar panels will be slugged an extra \$225 a year to compensate those who can.

We know that under the feed-in tariff scheme that was running during the last Assembly, 30 megawatts of small and medium-scale solar in the ACT, which was what was permitted and passed through the ICRC pricing process, was costed at around \$27 per household per year. Yet I cannot count the number of times that Mr Seselja came to this chamber—I suspect some of his colleagues at the time aided and abetted him on this; I did not have the time to research all the occasions on which they used this—and issued numerous press releases saying, “Canberrans are being slugged \$225 a year to pay for this feed-in tariff scheme.” The truth of the matter was that, through ICRC price pass-throughs, the cost was \$27 a year, a complete distortion; a complete scare campaign and lacking in integrity in the way that real information should have been used. We can see that truth in campaigns has not been a high priority for the Canberra Liberals.

That brings us to the absolute classic from the last Assembly election—the triple your rates slogan. This was typical use of a partial sentence, something that is very much straight out of the playbook of the Canberra Liberal Party. Partial sentences, partial truths, casual distortion of a party policy, they are all no worries when it comes to the Canberra Liberals.

It seems inevitable that, over the course of times, rates will eventually be triple what they are today. At some point in the future that will inevitably be true. But what the Canberra Liberals sought to insinuate very clearly during the last election campaign was that that would happen in this four-year term. That was undoubtedly the message of their slogan, which was, “The Greens and Labor will triple your rates.” They clearly insinuated it was to be in this term of the Assembly. It was quite clear.

Mr Smyth: Now it's "insinuated". Tell the truth.

MR RATTENBURY: I chose my words very carefully, Mr Smyth. It was all about giving a clear impression that that was the intention. If we want to talk about how people portray policy positions, we can just look at these couple of examples I have had time to pull together in the couple of hours before this debate to show that our friends across the chamber have no boundaries whatsoever when it comes to their willingness to distort policies, to misrepresent them and to put them out in a way that simply leads the public to think something very different from what was intended by a policy position.

Coming back to this motion today, as I said, the Greens strongly support the government's plans for the construction of new centres at Belconnen and Tuggeranong. We are glad to see \$9 million in last year's budget for the expansion and enhancement of the Belconnen Community Health Centre and especially to co-locate a walk-in centre at Belconnen as well as open another one in Tuggeranong. We all appreciate the importance of these centres for their role in preventative healthcare and reducing emergency department pressure. These centres will be a great relief for both the north side of Canberra and residents in Tuggeranong.

With the two new walk-in centres at Tuggeranong and Belconnen we do not need to continue to maintain a third walk-in centre co-located with the Canberra Hospital when people can choose to go to one of two walk-in centres or one of two emergency departments, depending on the severity of the medical problem. I believe these two new walk-in centres will be of great benefit to the Canberra community.

As somebody who has made use of them, I think they are an excellent facility. They are ideal for a particular class of injury, and the statistics show they have been embraced by the Canberra community. From conversations I have with people in the street and in the course of business as we meet them, I know people really appreciate the centres as a particular service within the health spectrum. Having them in these new locations will be a great outcome for the community.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (4.50), in reply: Based on that speech, it would appear that I am not going to emulate Mr Coe's success with this motion. As I predicted, the Greens are not supporting this motion. I did think there might be a little bit of concern raised that, yes, we would like the Chief Minister to be a little bit more honest with her statements around the nurse-led walk in centre in the lead-up to elections. But, true to form, the Greens' Mr Rattenbury has decided to launch into a debate about puppies and rates—anything but the Chief Minister's honesty. It does appear that—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, could you resume your seat for a moment, please?

MR HANSON: Could you stop the clock, please?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, I will do that.

Mr Doszpot: It has not stopped yet.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is happening, Mr Doszpot. Mr Hanson, I think you need to be a little more careful in what you are saying. I think you are verging on impugning the reputation of the Chief Minister in what you are saying. I would ask you to withdraw the statement, “I hope that she would be a little bit more honest,” please.

MR HANSON: I will withdraw, Madam Deputy Speaker.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Mr Hanson, you may continue.

MR HANSON: I will be more careful in my language.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

Ms Gallagher: Like the Fonz.

MR HANSON: Like the Fonz?

Ms Gallagher: He could never say “sorry”.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Chief Minister!

MR HANSON: It is ironic that the Chief Minister is saying I can never say sorry, when the motion today calls on her to apologise and she is going to vote against it. It is quite ironic, isn't it, that the very person that is going to vote against a motion asking her to apologise has criticised me for not apologising!

It would appear that there is no threshold beyond which the Greens will not support this government. If you had a Liberal government and you had Shane Rattenbury on the crossbenches, I would have thought he would have been salivating over any number of these issues. You can look at the vote of no confidence moved against Minister Burch and some of that disgraceful behaviour that Shane Rattenbury defends, as he again defends the minister today.

I wonder which is the most pressing misleading statement this minister has made about the walk-in centres. When you look at it in its entirety, in 2008 there was a Labor statement on her policy on a website, in which the Labor Party said they were going to establish three walk-in centres. Do you remember that one from 2008? They broke that promise. “ACT Labor will establish three new walk-in centres.” No, not true. It was stated that the first one would be opening in 2010 to fill the gap—blah, blah, blah. So back in 2008 they said there would be three new walk-in centres.

Are there three? Are there ever going to be three? Have we got three? Where are they? No, not true. That was the first broken promise, the first misleading statement. You went to an election in 2008 saying, “We're going to do something,” and you did something entirely different.

The second point, of course, was that the Chief Minister went out there and said that this was going to relieve pressure on the ED. She went out there and said that this walk-in centre was going to relieve pressure on the ED. In case you do not believe me, Madam Deputy Speaker—and I am sure that would not be the case—let me quote from the following 2009 press release from the Chief Minister:

The Rudd government ... announced \$10 million to establish a walk-in centre at the Canberra Hospital to help take pressure off its busy emergency department.

On 12 May this was stated:

Substantial work has gone into developing this innovative model of care which aims to reduce pressures on other services such as emergency departments.

In December 2011 she was still going. We were told that it was “particularly positive and is helping alleviate the pressures on our busy public hospital emergency department”. The Chief Minister probably thought think at that stage that it was relieving pressure on the emergency department because, as we know, the results were being fabricated. But what is the actual truth? Was this ever going to reduce pressure? We know it was not, and we know that because her own experts told her it would not. In 2009 the ACT Health emergency department strategic plan—this is the strategic plan done by her department to tell the department how they are going to fix the EDs—said about the walk-in centre that it “is not expected to provide an improvement in performance”, was “likely to create demand”, and “should not be regarded as a strategy that will contribute to ED performance”.

That is what the department said in 2009. But in 2010, the minister, as I have just read, was repeatedly saying, “This is going to take pressure off the ED,” and “This has taken pressure off the ED.” As we know, that was not true. There were reviews conducted that showed how appallingly this was implemented. I quote from a report released in 2013, a review of the nurse-led walk-in centre:

Despite seeking out the evidence, this seems to have been used selectively and cautiously, at times misinterpreted, and largely influenced by the views of powerful interest groups.

The report stated:

A key rationale for establishing the ACT walk-in centre was to reduce pressure on the ED, despite the English evidence of no impact ...

So they went over to England to have a look at their system, and the evidence was, “No, it’s not going to help your ED.” But the Chief Minister was out there saying that it would. I will go further:

There was no evidence from the national evaluation of the NHS walk-in centres that co-located walk-in centres had ‘any effect on attendance rates, process, costs or outcome care’ of the EDs.

But this minister was saying the opposite. She was saying that it would. The report went on to say that “the location of the walk-in centre actually resulted in a net increase in ED activity”. There are plenty of media reports about that as well.

There are three elements to this. Firstly, this government promised three walk-in centres. That, whichever way you look at it, is a broken promise. That was not true—categorically. That cannot be in any way spun by this minister. Secondly, this minister was out there saying it would relieve pressure on our emergency department. She was repeatedly saying that, whereas her own department said, and the evidence showed, that it would have the opposite effect. And we know what then happened at our emergency departments. We know that they have the longest waiting times in the country. We know that that caused or contributed to the ED scandal of 2012. The third strike is that the Chief Minister was politically opportunistic during the last campaign. Knowing that this had not worked at the Canberra Hospital site and that it needed to be relocated, as we all did by that stage because we had read these reports, the honest position was that it needed to be closed down at the Canberra Hospital when walk-in centres were relocated to the suburbs. I supported that. The Chief Minister changed her tune because she saw that it was politically expedient to do so and misled the community in the lead-up to the 2012 election.

When you look at those three elements together, I think it is now time for the Chief Minister to stand up in this place and say, “Yes, I do apologise. I haven’t opened three walk-in centres like I promised I would. I apologise for that. No, it didn’t relieve pressure on the ED. I misled you about that, and I apologise.” And thirdly, “No, it is true that we are going to close the walk-in centre at the Canberra Hospital, despite the fact that I gave everybody the impression in the lead-up to the 2012 election that that was not so.”

I think that on those three counts—and the evidence is there in black and white—it is entirely reasonable to ask the Chief Minister to stand up and say, “Let’s draw a line in the sand.” She should stand up here and say, “Yes, we got it wrong. We did not open three. We said we would. I am sorry. No, this didn’t relieve the pressure on the ED, even though I said it would, repeatedly. And, yes, we are closing the walk-in centre at the Canberra Hospital, even though I said I wouldn’t.” I do not think it is unreasonable for me to ask, on behalf of the community, the Chief Minister to stand up in this place and say, “Yep, poor form; I apologise,” and then we can move on.

She does not like my stump speech; I appreciate that. But I am not going to step away from that, and I will continue to remind people about this story of the walk-in centres. I will continue to remind people of those three elements and of this minister’s willingness to say whatever it takes in order to get herself across the line at an election.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 9

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

Question so resolved in the negative.

Education—reform

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella) (5.04): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that the ACT Government signed an agreement with the Commonwealth Government on 30 May 2013 to give effect to the National Education Reform Agreement, a six year funding agreement for education in the ACT;
- (b) that the ACT Government is fully committed to implementing this agreement as stipulated in the Heads of Agreement signed by the Chief Minister and the Prime Minister;
- (c) that rolling out education reform, as planned through the National Education Reform Agreement, is the best way to provide for the future of the children of the ACT and Australia;
- (d) that the National Plan for School Improvement, as part of the National Education Reform Agreement, will improve Australian education through five areas of reform: quality teaching, quality learning, meeting student need, empowering school leadership, and transparency and accountability; and
- (e) the failure of the Commonwealth Government to provide funding certainty by guaranteeing the six years of funding set out in the agreement; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to continue to:

- (a) implement the National Education Reform Agreement and the National Plan for School Improvement, as agreed to with the Commonwealth, to achieve positive outcomes for the students of the ACT;
- (b) seek Commonwealth Government commitment to the full six years of funding agreed in the Heads of Agreement;

- (c) invest in education in the ACT to provide better opportunities for our children; and
- (d) work towards the continuing improvement of results for ACT students.

I move this motion on the national education reform agreement as the value of high-quality education for our children and young people is beyond question.

There are significant national debates occurring in Australia at this time about school funding reform and school performance, none more so than those debates generated by the new Australian government and its education minister. This means that at this time school funding reform and school improvement in Australia are a hotly contested topic, a topic that those with a strong belief in the value of quality education for our children and our young people must step up to argue and defend. It is not just about the future of the children and young people who attend our schools; it is also about the children and young people of the future who will attend those schools.

Given the significant national activity and debate on the future of our schools and the future of our children and young people, it is timely for the ACT government to clearly restate its commitment to a direction and approach to school improvement and school funding reform that are driven by student need.

No topic is more important in these debates than school funding reform based on the needs of our students. I have tabled this motion on the national education reform agreement, which the ACT government has signed with the Australian government, because we should all want an Australian school system where all Australian children and young people are entitled to receive an excellent education through the provision of a high-quality and appropriately funded school system—that is, access to quality education, irrespective of where they live, their circumstances or the school they attend.

The ACT government is clearly a strong believe in the value of quality education for our children and young people. There is a high level of commonality between the ACT government's goals and the national goals set out in "Better schools: a national plan for school improvement", which forms part of the national education reform agreement. On 30 May last year, the Australian government and the ACT government, through the Chief Minister and the then Prime Minister, signed a heads of agreement as a schedule to the national education reform agreement to fund and implement school funding reforms known as the Gonski reforms.

Then, last August, the previous Australian government education minister and Minister Burch, on behalf of the ACT government, signed the national plan for school improvement for the ACT, the implementation plan. This implementation plan for the ACT, with the heads of agreement, forms part of the Australian Capital Territory bilateral agreement for the national education reform agreement. The bilateral agreement details how the agreed implementation of the national school reform agenda will progress in the ACT.

The national agreement is a commitment by both the Australian government and the ACT government to school improvement and to school funding reform based on an individual student's need. Madam Deputy Speaker, let us not be mistaken: this is a six-year agreement, a six-year commitment, including a commitment to implement needs-based funding for our schools and our students.

It is widely accepted that implementing reform is never easy. It affects many stakeholders and, in many cases, requires stakeholders to set aside their vested interests for the greater good. In such circumstances, especially when involving significant funding, all parties should take account of the need for the long-term and sustained commitment to the proposed reforms. The approach to needs-based funding set out in the agreement is essential if all children and young people in the ACT, and for that matter across Australia, are to be equipped with the education and skills required to lead fulfilling and productive lives. Through this motion today, I call on all parties to abide by the terms of the national education reform agreement.

The best way to make a statement of good faith in the investment in quality education for our children and young people is through continued actions. The ACT is already implementing the schools reform agenda, including the funding reform in ACT government and non-government schools. It is well known by all that this government, through the leadership of the Chief Minister, is committed to a high quality and appropriately funded school system in the ACT. That is why, on 2 November 2012, as part of the parliamentary agreement for the Eighth Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory—the agreement between ACT Labor and the ACT Greens—the ACT government committed to the Gonski reforms for education funding.

The best way to provide high-quality education of excellence in the ACT is through a high-quality and appropriately funded school system delivered by the nation's best teachers in government schools, Catholic schools and independent schools. I note that the ACT government is committed to working collegiately with other school education sectors and jurisdictions, including the commonwealth, on the rollout of the national education reform agenda.

I look forward to Minister Burch speaking to the motion so that this parliament and, through this parliament, the community of the ACT can be reminded of why the implementation of the national plan for school improvement is so important and why all parties need to abide by the terms of the national education reform agreement for its full six years and understand the significant progress being made by the ACT for government and non-government schools in delivering quality education for our children and young people resourced through needs-based funding.

The national plan for school improvement, as agreed in August last year by the commonwealth and the ACT government, sets out a generational opportunity for a better and fairer schooling system. The plan focuses on five areas of reform: quality teaching, quality learning, empowered school leadership, meeting student needs, and transparency and accountability.

We know that the ACT already has one of the highest levels of education achievement of all Australian states and territories. This is something the ACT should be proud of, for all our children and our young people. But in the ACT and Australia we need to strive for even better outcomes in terms of education achievement for our children and young people.

In the 21st century, the Asian century, it is not just about how well the ACT is performing nationally. We should all want our children and our young people to rise up and meet the challenges, to participate in and to enjoy the benefits of the Asian century—including our children and young people that choose vocational pathways.

For example, manufacturing employs nearly one million Australians and remains one of the largest sectors of the Australian economy, currently accounting for 8.7 per cent of gross domestic product and 34.4 per cent of total exports. Our children and young people choosing vocational pathways in manufacturing will need the skills and abilities to contribute to the manufacturing of innovative, high value-added and high-performance goods and services.

The national plan for school improvement is to lift the performance of all schools and to make sure no child is left behind—that is, to not only increase the number of high performing students but also reduce the number of students who are not achieving and deliver an overall increase in the qualification levels of the ACT community.

For this to happen, we need a school system that is amongst the best in the world, that raises the aspirations of all our children and young people. We need a school system, in the ACT and Australia wide, with teachers who are among the best in the world. We need a school system—government and non-government—funded on the basis of meeting each individual student's needs.

To make our great schools here in the ACT even greater, we need to empower those at the fore of school operations who are best placed to make decisions that support the needs of students. It is also about students having the resources to reach their full potential, including through a strengthening of family and community engagement.

For certainty and security in implementing a significant school reform, the bilateral agreement between the Australian government and the ACT government sets out six years of funding—for 2014 right through to the end of 2019—for a needs-based school funding model for the ACT. It appears to me that the current Australian government has only committed to 3½ years of funding for the national education reform agreement. For certainty and security in implementing a significant school reform, the national education reform agreement sets out six years, as I have mentioned.

Of course, as I said in the beginning of the speech, there is quite a lot of debate. Yesterday, at Richardson primary, we heard from educators, P&C members and parents on the importance of needs-based funding for our education system. We also heard that Tony Abbott and Christopher Pyne are threatening to take an axe to the Gonski reforms. We heard that they have committed to less than four years and less than one-third of the total funding.

Of course, needs-based funding proponents are very anxious to see to what is going to occur in the May federal budget. The Australian Education Union has made a strong submission to the Senate select committee on the Gonski school funding arrangements. Along with 29 other detailed submissions, the AEU believes that the Gonski review was a watershed in Australian education and political history. It was undertaken by a panel of independent experts informed by a wealth of national and international empirical evidence, including independent research commissioned by the review. It involved extensive stakeholder and public consultation and received over 7,000 submissions. It established that as a nation we invest too little in education and that our funding arrangements are inequitable. They are also inefficient and failing too many children.

Driven largely by political accommodations rather than the needs of students and schools, this has resulted in achievement and educational attainment gaps between students from disadvantaged backgrounds and those from more advantaged backgrounds which are greater than any comparable nation. The review found that those most affected by the inadequacies in our funding system are the most vulnerable and disadvantaged students, including those with disabilities and special needs, and the schools that serve them, predominantly schools in the public sector, using the OECD definition of equity in education that every child should be able to achieve their potential regardless of social, cultural or economic background or their relationship to property, power or possession.

As its starting point, the review made a series of recommendations for long overdue major reform of our school funding arrangements. At the heart of these recommendations was the call for a national commitment to substantially increase investment in education and a fair and more equitable funding system. These two measures would help lift Australia's education achievement by ensuring that all schools have the resources they need to educate every student to a high standard, no matter what their background. The review finished the preliminary part by saying:

Australia needs to make a serious and systematic effort to reduce the disparities that exist at present between the educational performance of students from high and low socioeconomic backgrounds. All students should be able to access a high standard of education regardless of their background and where they live, and funding arrangements should provide them with the resources, support and opportunity for them to reach their full potential.

I urge all members to support this important motion.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (5.18): I welcome the opportunity to speak this afternoon on this motion moved by Mr Gentleman. As a precursor to other things that I want to say, I think it is instructive to hear the first 15 minutes of the debate on this motion. Most of the issues seem to reflect on the problems in education as being somebody else's problems, somebody else's fault. It is high time that this ACT government recognised the fact that they have had something like four ministers for education over the last 11 years. It is not exactly a very good start to have people who do not understand the portfolios they work in. These are four different people of different persuasions in many ways. How can education take this government seriously in respect of their dedication to education? I think this is something that we need to reflect on and this government needs to reflect on.

However, I do welcome the opportunity to speak on this motion that Mr Gentleman has brought forward. Given the range of informative and positive things one could debate in this chamber about the state of education across Australia and in the ACT, I find it interesting that the Labor Party has chosen to focus on the issue of the ACT government's actions in relation to signing up to Gonski last year. I say "interesting" because it was hardly a time of outstanding leadership by the ACT government. In short, they had signed up to a financial arrangement that had more "to be advised" notations to it than substance.

There were so many unknowns to the agreement—an agreement, I might remind the Assembly, that was rushed into by this government ahead of the rest of Australia. The Chief Minister enthusiastically signed up to the first offer on the table, unlike other states that hung out and that, history has shown, were able to negotiate a better deal. In her defence, the Chief Minister explained away her haste by saying that we had to accept that Canberra would always get less than the other jurisdictions in relative per capita terms because, she claimed, our schools were well resourced anyway.

For much of last year we on this side of the chamber sought repeatedly to get details from the ACT government about what it was they had actually signed up to, whether Catholic and non-government schools would be better or worse off and what was the total that the ACT had agreed to. There was good reason why we and the Catholic and non-government school sectors were nervous. It is well known that within the Greens, the Labor left and the Education Union that supports the ACT Labor government there is an ideological dislike for certain sections of the school community. We know that at one Labor conference there was a Labor left motion involving current ACT ministers that referred to non-government schools as "divisive in the community".

Over the period of the Gonski review process the ACT had three education ministers. Minister Bourke was very focused on assuring us and the ACT education community that he and the ACT government were committed to the essence of Gonski. What that meant we never really did find out from Dr Bourke. We also had a Chief Minister who, in response to one of the questions from this side of the chamber on the principles underpinning the schools resource standard, said, "The base amount in non-government schools would be discounted by the parents' capacity to pay non-government school fees."

This was an issue about which there was a lot of concern. The ACT opposition moved a motion that in part called on the Chief Minister to:

- (a) release the details of the funding offer or offers provided to ACT schools;
- (b) advise the Assembly what financial and any other implications acceptance of the offer will have for all schools in the ACT;
- (c) table the financial modeling that was required to determine the ACT Government's position, including the cost implications for the ACT Government in the forward years;
- (d) outline where the funding across the forward estimates will come from;

- (e) give a guarantee that indexation is included in any forward estimates, so that no school in the ACT, government or non-government, will lose a dollar in real terms as a result of these reforms; and
- (f) ensure that the ACT is not disadvantaged, comparative to other States.

The government did not want to debate any of that. It moved, with the support of their Greens ministerial colleague, to delete all of those clauses. In fact, we sought information frequently through the estimates and the annual reports processes and in the Assembly on what was included in years five and six of the agreement that the government had signed up to, but nothing was forthcoming.

We thought our motion contained logical questions and issues that we wanted to put to the government to make them accountable. They obviously did not want to be accountable. So we think it somewhat strange that they now want to highlight how important a six-year agreement is. Federally, Labor knew it had no ability and no intention of ever needing to honour any of their funding deals. They knew they would not be in office to do so. All of Australia knew they would not be around and, of course, so did the ACT government.

When the coalition came to government the federal Minister for Education met with all the state and territory education ministers. We know of course what our own esteemed minister for education thought of that meeting. She tweeted her feelings so eloquently, demonstrating a truly cultural appreciation of the English language.

In any event, the result of that and other meetings was that we now do have a genuinely national education agreement, one that is based on four years of known financial modelling, Ms Burch. It is one of known financial modelling. The ACT has a four-year funding agreement and it is one that I note groups such as the Association of Independent Schools have welcomed. As the Executive Director Andrew Wrigley said at the time:

The new funding model for independent schools rolls all the government funding directly to the individual schools. The commitment will allow the association ... to support member schools in the implementation of the national education reform.

What they sought was certainty, and now they have that. Signing up to a six-year agreement with a government that was in its last dying days was no certainty, and ACT Labor knew it at the time. ACT schools and, indeed, schools around Australia can now plan with some confidence. This is something worth celebrating, not criticising.

If we move to another section of Mr Gentleman's motion, he refers to the five areas of reform under the national education reform agenda. They are: quality teaching, quality learning, meeting student need, empowering school leadership, and transparency and accountability. I think discussion around quality teaching and quality learning is far more significant and relevant to educational outcomes than how much money is thrown at a school.

We only have to examine the recent NAPLAN scores and listen to the conversations about the influence and significance of the ICSEA scores to see that quality teaching is the critical factor in improving educational outcomes. In question time yesterday we tried to get Minister Burch to enunciate the basis for the changes that she was wanting to make to numeracy and literacy testing. We were keen to understand what her vision was for improving quality teaching and what research she was basing those changes on.

She tells us regularly that she wants our schools to be the best they can be. We agree that they should be. But she is unable or unwilling to tell us how she plans to go about it and what research and evidence she is using to base her judgement on. If it is only based on whether the federal government has signed up to a four or a six-year funding deal, I suspect there is not much more behind this rhetoric. The Australian Education Union has spent a lot of energy and I suspect a lot of union funds on their “give a Gonski” campaign. Whether this motion is intended to give new light to the campaign well past its use-by date is an interesting point to ponder.

I am not surprised that Mr Gentleman feels the need to be the AEU’s promotional spokesman. However, I am disappointed that he believes this is a sensible fiscal approach. The opposition will not be moving any amendments because, frankly, it would be futile to do so. This is a motion full of slogans, not substance. The substance of this motion is to ask a federal government to commit to expenditure outside the financial limits of a budget. How fiscally irresponsible is that? The reality is that the federal coalition government has given a commitment to a four-year funding agreement. It is a far more reliable commitment than any that previous labor governments—Rudd-Gillard-Rudd—have talked about.

The federal government’s position is a fiscally prudent arrangement to make, especially given the economic position it inherited. There is an agreement to the national education reform agenda. It is funded nationally for four years. During that time no doubt negotiations and adjustments will be made to meet the changing circumstances that in every probability will arise.

The ACT government would do very well to worry less about what impact the federal government might have on ACT schools and concentrate more on what effort the ACT government can make to improve the quality of our schools. We need a more honest evaluation of where the ACT is failing its students and not try to shift the focus and blame elsewhere. Based on that, we cannot support this motion that is full of slogans but which has no substance.

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability, Children and Young People, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Women, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Racing and Gaming) (5.29): I think that was a most telling few minutes from Mr Doszpot. He has no notion to support Mr Gentleman’s motion that calls on the Assembly to recognise this government’s agreement to the national education reform that provides certainty of funding for government schools but, importantly, also for the Catholic system and the independents. For Mr Doszpot to say that he is not going to support that, that he has no interest in supporting stable, secure funding for those three sectors that look after our kids in this community, is truly quite extraordinary.

Mr Doszpot said in his speech that now there is certainty. Now there is less certainty than ever before. There is less certainty than ever before. This government signed up to a six-year agreement with the previous government that supported government schools, Catholic schools and independent schools. It was a unity ticket, apparently, until November of last year at which time the federal government completely decimated the national education reform agenda. It has not given certainty. Indeed, it has given lack of clarity, lack of understanding and uncertainty in the outyears.

Our agreement would have given an extra \$60 million to the Catholic system here, an extra \$30 million to the independents and an extra \$100 million to our government schools. Mr Doszpot, by his statement today, is saying he has no interest nor care what funding will go to the Catholic system or to the independent system.

Now the biggest risk to funding for education in this city and across other jurisdictions is this federal government. They want to tear that agreement up and throw new arrangements into place. Mr Doszpot has already said that there is now a national agreement. Again, there could not be anything further from the truth. Those states, the early adopters so to speak, that signed up before the election had a clear commitment that the commonwealth would contribute to all systems. So the states had a commitment. The states—certainly this state—were happy to sign up to a commitment for government and non-government schools.

This so-called national agreement that Mr Doszpot refers to has no commitment from various state governments to provide a single extra cent to the Catholic schools and the independent schools. For Mr Doszpot to say now that everything is tidy and it is all clear cannot be further from the truth. I am not quite sure how often Mr Doszpot talks to the executives of the independent schools here or to the Catholic education system here, but I talk to them regularly. When I talk to them and I say, “I will continue to fight the fight for six years of funding,” they are on my side. They want me to fight for those six years of funding. They would be bitterly disappointed to hear—

Mr Doszpot: You’re rather verballing them, I think, but we’ll see.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot!

MS BURCH: I know I am not verballing them. I think they would be bitterly disappointed to find the shadow minister for education saying that money is not important, the best deal is to have the outyears ripped out of the Catholic and independents’ future planning for funding.

Schools do not fund a month in advance, a term in advance, a year in advance. They need to fund many years in advance. What you have done, Mr Doszpot, has completely—

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot!

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Resume your seat, please, Ms Burch. Stop the clock, please. Mr Doszpot, I have asked you to stop interjecting across the chamber several times.

Mr Doszpot: I am being taunted, Madam Deputy Speaker.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: I beg your pardon?

MR DOSZPOT: I am being taunted.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot, you were heard in silence when you—

Mr Doszpot: I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker. Thank you.

MS BURCH: Madam Deputy Speaker, can I continue?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Resume your seat. I am handling this. I do not need you to interrupt. Mr Doszpot, thank you for your apology. I will let you know that next time I will warn you if you interject again. Ms Burch has the floor.

MS BURCH: I am pleased that Mr Gentleman brought this motion on. It is an important motion; it is a motion that shows that this side of the chamber understands and values education, regardless of what school a child goes to. Whether it is a government school, a Catholic school or an independent school, and whether it is in Gungahlin, Garran or Gordon, it matters not, because the funding arrangements through Gonski—and I will use the word “Gonski” because everyone understands what that is—provided certainty and assurance that it was based on the children’s needs, not the postcode, not the location, not the sector of the school. It was based on students’ needs.

With respect to another comment, about what I am trying to do with quality teachers, I am very rightly wanting the best teachers that I can put in front of our kids in government schools. The notion of applying a test for those new recruits into the ACT public education system, so that they sit in the top 30 per cent on numeracy and literacy, is the right thing to do.

For members’ information, research papers produced by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership and the Grattan Institute back that up as being the absolutely right policy to go for. This government wants all children and young people in the ACT to have the education and skills required to live fulfilling and productive lives, and the best way to do that is to provide quality education regardless of the school that our children or young people attend.

In May of last year this government and the Australian government proudly signed a heads of agreement that made a clear statement that we understood that the national plan for school improvement was the right thing to do for our community. Together,

the national plan for school improvement ACT implementation plan and the heads of agreement form a commitment to improve school performance and to reform school funding so that all schools are publicly funded on a basis that meets students' individual needs.

It is well known that this government is committed to a high-quality and well-funded school system. We have invested in our education system over every budget that has been brought down. In implementing the funding model there has been extensive and productive consultation with the Association of Independent Schools and the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn Catholic education system.

To assist government schools in the transition to the new arrangements, the new funding model will be implemented over a six-year period. At the beginning of this year schools were provided with certainty on our funding arrangements and our commitments to them—that is, the Catholic and independent schools. It is only by working together that we can make sure that all students in the ACT are afforded the best opportunities that we can provide.

The ACT wants to work with the Australian government to deliver the national plan for school improvement. We recognise, as I hope that the commonwealth does, that this change to our system is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build a better and fairer schooling system. We want a schooling system that ensures not only funding equity between the systems but also equity between the states. ACT parents have a right to expect that, regardless of where their children go to school.

As Mr Gentleman has already referred to, the national plan has a key focus on meeting student need, on quality teaching, on quality learning, on empowered school leadership, on transparency and accountability. We here will develop an education system that prepares students to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

To make our great schools even greater, we will continue to invest and bring in different policy formulas and policy levers that make that difference. For example, we will ensure that our new recruits reach the top 30 per cent on literacy and numeracy. For example, we will make sure that we position our year 12 graduates in the best possible way—so by introducing mandatory English.

To ensure certainty and security in implementing this significant reform, it is important that the heads of agreement, the contract that we have with the Commonwealth of Australia, is for six years and that that six-year agreement is honoured.

It is important. I did not attend the Gonski bus arrival, but there would not be too many educators across the system that do not understand and value certainty of funding, reliability of funding, and no-one can deny that funding based on student need should be the aspiration of any government, any school and any educator in this country.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (5.40): I wholeheartedly support this motion today regarding the future of education funding for the ACT, and I appreciate Mr Gentleman's ongoing support for a better school system.

As the Assembly is aware, needs-based funding and the Gonski reforms, now called the national education reform agreement, or NERA, and the national plan for school improvement, are core issues for the ACT Greens and, I think I can safely say, for the Labor Party. They certainly form a central plank of the parliamentary agreement.

My former colleague Meredith Hunter campaigned strongly on the need for a fairer, needs-based and more transparent funding model for all of our school systems—and that is all of them. I am proud to be here today continuing those efforts. Recent months have seen a number of attacks by the federal government on the very basics of NERA—attacks that have led to backflips and broken promises.

I can only express disappointment and concern regarding the federal coalition's collapse on education funding reforms, and in particular the reversal of the agreement with the participating states regarding a six-year funding deal. This was a truly extraordinary double backflip with a twist for a new government to make in such a short time and represented a major breach of trust for the states and territories that had signed up to these important reforms.

Further, it was a breach of trust with the education sectors, government and non-government families and school communities that worked in a non-partisan way to take the petty politics out of the debate and focus on the actual needs of students.

The Gonski modelling, years in the making, provided Australia with a roadmap towards a fairer, more equitable funding model for all government and non-government schools. Yet Minister Pyne could not even be bothered to meet with the Gonski panel to gain an understanding of why it was so important.

The ACT government, with genuine and positive engagement from the Catholic, independent and public school systems, and in line with a key priority of the Labor-Greens parliamentary agreement, signed up in good faith to the new funding model. Now millions of dollars of funding is apparently up for grabs, signed contracts are ripped up and schools are unable to make plans for the future education of our city's children. The arrogant unilateral decision was staggering. The federal government needs to stop playing silly with school funding and get on with delivering what was promised.

There have been far too many distractions from the real issue of funding since the coalition came to power—captain's pick teams announced to review national curriculum, thought bubbles regarding independent public schools that are based on, at best, neutral evaluations of Western Australian schools, and most recently the creation of a teacher education ministerial advisory group, despite the current existing national plan for school improvement, for all of which alone there is surely some merit in having open discussion and genuine consultation. But at a time when the core issues of the day are so subject to change at the drop of a hat, these issues have some stakeholders wondering just what the hell the next thing will be.

We are lucky in the ACT to have a small, cohesive education sector, and the advantages of this cannot be overestimated. We have an almost unique opportunity

here to develop meaningful, lasting relationships with all sectors and really work out the best way to support all of our students, regardless of their social, economic or, for that matter, religious background.

Education is an issue that should be bringing people together. As mentioned, the “I give a Gonski” campaign recently finished its Australian tour with a breakfast here in Canberra at Richardson Primary School. It was great to be there with my federal colleague Senator Penny Wright, the Australian Education Union and my fellow MLAs Mr Gentleman and Ms Berry to hear again why the funding reforms are so needed, in particular the need for the full six years as agreed by the participating states and territories. As Dr Jim McMorroo stated in his recent report to the AEU:

Failure to implement the comprehensive reforms put forward by the Gonski panel and embedded in the architecture of the Australian Education Act will more than disappoint the large numbers of teachers, parents and students in our schools. It will also mean missing the once in a generation opportunity provided by the Gonski review to settle one of the country’s most intractable and divisive areas of public policy.

They are very powerful words. To actually get an outcome to a debate like this that has gone on for many years, done through the work of an independent panel like the Gonski review that was really focused on the needs of students, is an extraordinary opportunity, and to see it unpicked in such an ideological manner is very distressing.

Issues like numeracy and literacy, the basic building blocks of so much of our current curriculum, need dedicated and focused programs to really support those students who may, for a range of reasons, require an extra bit of help. Staffing profiles, workforce development and parental engagement are all issues that are best planned for in the long term.

Students’ needs should be defined in relation to their educational outcomes, the positive experience of learning, community inclusion and the gaining of the vital skills needed for their future adult life. These needs go far beyond NAPLAN tests, leagues tables and PISA scores. While it is indeed necessary to measure progress, a quality education is also about recognising each child as an individual that should be offered every chance to learn and grow to the best of their ability in a positive and enriching environment.

I am happy to support the motion here today in the ACT government’s ongoing implementation of the NERA, calling on the commonwealth to honour its agreements and striving to offer the best education we can to all ACT students. I think that is the objective we need to remain focused on. We need to try and step away from discussions about whether certain political parties have a vendetta against certain types of schooling systems. That is not what this is about. This is about getting a funding model that benefits all students in Australia and gives them all the opportunity to get the education they need.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (5.46): I will start by going to what the Gonski review was actually about. I know Mr Rattenbury touched on that a bit, but I am going to go to the web page, because there seems to be some confusion about the Gonski campaign. Saying that the Gonski campaign has gone way past its use-by date is

simply wrong. It is simply wrong to say that campaigning by teachers, parents, children and community supporters for funding for education to give our children the absolute best opportunities and the best start in their lives is wrong. It is completely unacceptable to make a statement like that in this place. Reading directly from the web page:

The Gonski Review was the most comprehensive investigation of the way our schools are funded in almost 40 years.

Headed by respected businessman David Gonski, it found that too many children were being denied the education they needed due to a lack of resources.

It warned that the link between disadvantage and poor outcomes in education was stronger in Australian than in any comparable nation and the situation would worsen without urgent action.

It goes on to talk about what agreeing to a Gonski level of resources in the schools means. It means the money would be used to improve student learning through more individual attention in the classroom, extra specialist teachers in the areas such as literacy and numeracy, greater support for children with disabilities or special needs, and additional training and classroom support for teachers.

Six years of Gonski funding agreements were signed up to, and those agreements specified the level of additional resources each government would contribute and require funding to be delivered according to student need. What we got, however, was the Abbott government only agreeing to provide less than one-third of that money under those agreements and saying it would commit only to funding until the middle of 2017. In addition, it then handed funding to states and territories that did not sign up to Gonski, with no requirement to match that funding or even distribute it to schools. So far not one dollar of that money has been allocated to schools in the states that did sign up to the agreement.

Again, saying that the Gonski campaign has gone way past its use-by date is simply wrong. We should always fight for our children's futures and our grandchildren's futures. It is the difference between our children succeeding and our children having to struggle through life. We should never, ever stop or falter in fighting for better educational outcomes for our children, and that is what the Gonski campaign is all about.

All Australian children and young people are entitled to receive an excellent education, and that should be provided through the provision of a high-quality and well-funded school system irrespective of where they live or their circumstances. We just talked about how the Australian and ACT governments committed to fund and implement school funding reforms known as the Gonski reforms under the national education reform agreement and that the bilateral agreement between the two governments includes an ACT implementation plan for the national plan for school improvement. This is all very welcome on this side of the chamber and in general by the ACT community, and that was clearly shown yesterday at Richardson Primary School, which was referred to by Mr Gentleman and Mr Rattenbury, where teachers, students and community supporters all got together with their union calling for a greater education model for their children.

Quality education for our children and young people requires us all to make that commitment, and not just for the short term. The ACT government we have heard has a six-year agreement with the commonwealth to deliver a national plan for school improvement and to move to needs-based school funding under the national education reform agreement. This approach to needs-based funding for schools is essential if children and young people in the ACT are to be equipped with the education skills required to lead fulfilling and productive lives.

Given the changes to enrolment numbers and student characteristics over the previous six years, the next six years to 2019 may significantly impact on the amount of needs-based school funding required of the Australian and ACT governments to respectively meet their commitments under the agreement. Providing greater certainty and security for the funding of the schooling agreements allows for funding to be changed to reflect both changes in enrolment numbers and student characteristics.

Given the importance of ensuring the national plan for school improvement is appropriately resourced, I am sure all parties will abide by the terms of the national education reform agreement, and I note the agreement provides for any amendments by written agreement between the Prime Minister of Australia and the Chief Minister of the ACT.

The ACT government has committed to the Gonski reforms for education funding. The ACT government has met its funding requirements under the agreement through the 2013-14 ACT budget ensuring all schools receive an increase in existing per capita funding levels of at least three per cent per annum. The ACT government has already taken a number of steps to implement and meet the commitments agreed by the Australian and ACT governments through the national education reform bilateral agreement.

To assist ACT government schools in the transition to new funding arrangements, the new school funding model will be implemented over the next six years. The national plan for school improvement sets out a once-in-a-generation opportunity for a better and fairer schooling system. It is a plan to make sure that every kid gets the most out of their time in the classroom and, just as importantly, the social development of the playground and the wealth of development opportunities offered by our schools.

We know the ACT has one of the highest levels of educational achievement of all the Australian states and territories. This is something the ACT can be proud of for all our children and young people. The ACT government provides a number of different school settings to the ACT community. In addition to primary and high schools, the ACT government provides educational settings in early childhood schools, P-10 schools, including middle years 6 to 8, and secondary schools years 11 and 12. This system produces greater educational outcomes for students attending ACT government schools, as evidenced by higher retention rates and the pride so many of our students have in their schools and their communities.

The ACT government is continuing to use the student-centred appraisal of need method for the allocation of a loading for students with disability consistent with the bilateral agreement. The student-centred appraisal of need provides a consistent

approach in determining educational needs of individual students so that additional resources to support students with a disability can be allocated to the schools on the basis of need.

For certainty and security in implementing the significant school reform, the bilateral agreement between the Australian and ACT governments sets out six years of funding, as I have said, for a needs-based school funding model in the ACT. In such circumstances, especially involving significant funding, all parties should take account of the need for long-term commitment to these proposed reforms.

It is important that we all abide by these terms for the full six years. It is about ensuring that all our children have the skills and get the experiences that prepare them to live lives fully engaged in our community. It is all about ensuring that all our kids, including those who choose academic pathways, benefit in the 21st century.

The national education reform reflects the commitment the Australian and ACT governments have given to meet and fund the future of Australia—its children and young people. All Australian children and young people are entitled to receive an excellent education through the provision of a high-quality and appropriately funded system. The fact is that some kids need more help and more resources to reach their full potential. The national education reform agreement ensures that this support can be provided irrespective of where they live or their circumstances, and it is a reform I am proud to support. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella) (5.56), in reply: I thank all members for taking part in this debate, especially those who are going to support my motion. I want to go to Mr Doszpot's comments first. He noted that the ACT government was the first to sign up to the Gonski reforms, and I think that was fairly well answered by Minister Burch when she said that those states that signed up, including the ACT, were provided with a guarantee of needs-based funding for six years providing security for the future for all schools—public, Catholic et al, no matter where those students come from or their position in society.

Mr Doszpot says I am a supporter of the AEU, and he is right—I am a supporter of that union and many other unions, but particularly this union and their thrust for these really important education reforms. I want to go back to the submission of the AEU. They said there was wide support for the thrust of the Gonski findings and recommendations from educators, parents, business leaders, community and welfare groups. Furthermore, there is now a widespread community expectation that our governments, led by the federal government, would commit to the funding and legislative reform necessary to implement the Gonski recommendations as a matter of urgency. They say the Australian Education Act 2013 enshrined in law the central Gonski recommendations for future funding arrangements based on the actual needs of Australian schools and school students to come into effect from 1 January this year.

The legislation commits the commonwealth to working with state and territory governments and non-government education authorities to implement a national plan for schools improvement as set out in the national education reform agreement with increased funding for government schools conditional on agreement to meet these obligations.

The act affirms the Melbourne declaration on education goals for young Australians 2008 and the fundamental responsibility of all governments—commonwealth, state and territory—as well as other partners involved in the provision of education in Australia to make a national commitment to cooperation and collaboration in ensuring high quality schooling for all Australian students regardless of their background, circumstances or where they live. It says that all students in all schools are entitled to an excellent education allowing each student to reach his or her full potential so that he or she can succeed, achieve his or her aspirations and contribute fully to his or her community now and into the future.

In closing, for certainty and security in implementing a significant school reform, the national education reform agreement sets out six years of funding from 2014 through to 2019. I am very disappointed that the Canberra Liberals have today said they do not support this funding for Catholic and private schools across the territory. All parties should take account of the need for the long-term commitment to the proposed reforms, especially on the commitment for funding for all schools.

I have said a significant debate is occurring in Australia at this time. But I am sure that all families across Australia want an Australian school system where all Australian children and young people are entitled to receive an excellent education through the provision of a high quality and appropriately funded school system, irrespective of where they live and where they attend.

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

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

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

Noes 8

Mr Coe	Ms Lawder
Mr Doszpot	Mr Smyth
Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall
Mr Hanson	
Mrs Jones	

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation

MR WALL (Brindabella) (6.05): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation provides a place to gather for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth and their families, along with numerous services and programs aimed at enhancing the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in the ACT;
- (b) that Gugan Gulwan has successfully provided drop in services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth for many years;
- (c) that changes made by the ACT Government to the delivery of the youth support program in 2012 resulted in the closure of a number of youth drop in centres across the ACT;
- (d) that these closures resulted in an increase in demand for services at Gugan Gulwan from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth; and
- (e) the current Gugan Gulwan premises at Wanniasa is unable to cope with the increase in demand for services due to insufficient physical space; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to investigate options for providing additional space for the Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation and report on the results of this investigation to the Assembly by the end of April 2014.

I move this motion today in an attempt to ensure essential support for outreach services for Canberra's Indigenous people so that they are able to continue to operate effectively, particularly those services provided by Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation. Gugan Gulwan is an Aboriginal youth centre located in my electorate in the suburb of Wanniasa, in the Erindale precinct. It works with its clients through a range of programs that go well beyond the services provided by most youth centres. They include drug and alcohol programs, a child, youth and family support program and a reconnect program to support young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Gugan Gulwan gives support to parents and the family unit, focusing on skills and development for young people.

Gugan Gulwan operate a number of services from their centre in Erindale, including a drop-in centre for Indigenous youth where a safe and positive environment is provided to ensure youths have a refuge to seek support and simply engage in recreational activities. This service alone caters for up to 200 youths per week. They also offer a beginners music program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who have an interest in or passion for music; a lunch program which operates daily and seeks to target alcohol and tobacco or other drug-affected clients and promotes healthier eating and healthier lifestyles. They offer a young men's drug and alcohol group, aiming to engage young men in a range of activities, primarily targeting those who do not attend school, addressing issues such as drug and alcohol abuse, mental health, domestic violence, family planning, living skills, identity, health, education and training.

A young women's group is also a service provided by Gugan Gulwan, designed to assist and prepare participants by providing learning skills, living skills which ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young women are educated and well informed and ensure the best personal development outcome possible. A young mother's group is also a program that has been successfully provided in the past. It provides education and living skills to young mothers through a network of partnerships and alliances with a range of agencies to ensure that these new mothers and their children are given the best opportunities in life. Currently, this program has been suspended as it has become too challenging to ensure that safe space is available in the existing facilities at the site in Erindale which Gugan Gulwan currently operate out of and, in part, is the reason for my motion today.

In addition to the services provided in-house by Gugan Gulwan, there are a number of off-site services that are provided such as an arts program at the Bimberi detention centre, the lunch program that complements the in-house program but also aims at reaching those in need at various locations across the ACT. The street beat program is also an innovative approach and operates three nights per week. The street beat program is an outreach operation targeting under-18s, with the intent of reducing the instances of young people appearing before the justice system, and also has a focus on preventing binge drinking and promoting sexual and reproductive health and management of smoking and other drug-related issues. All in all, Gugan Gulwan are reaching in excess of 300 Indigenous young people on a weekly basis.

In order for Gugan Gulwan to continue to provide these services and reinstate the young mum's group and also with a view on the horizon to expanding the suite and scope of existing services, they are in desperate need of more space. Ideally, to maintain the cost-effectiveness of the current programs, the new centre would operate as an annexe to the existing site, that is, the new site would also be able to offer a safe and secure space for meeting room facilities, a fenced outdoor area for young children to play in as well cooking facilities for the provision of a healthy lunch.

Providing services that are focused on assisting the territory's Indigenous residents in a culturally appropriate manner is critical to ensuring that the continuing trend of Indigenous disadvantage ends. Programs and services targeting youth provide an opportunity to break the cycle of the disadvantaged that often runs through generations.

Whilst I do acknowledge that there are often a number of demands on community space that is available within the territory, these priorities do need to be managed. Organisations need to be given some indications of the options and opportunities that may be on the horizon with regard to space becoming available. Simply adding an organisation to a wait list, with no assurance of facilities ever becoming available, erodes confidence and creates uncertainty not only with the organisation itself but also with those people they do support. In an era of one government, collaboration between directorates to locate and identify suitable accommodation for community organisations should not be as complex as it is proving to be in the case of Gugan Gulwan.

The motion here simply seeks to provide a list of potential options that would allow Gugan Gulwan to continue to provide valuable support and mentoring to Indigenous youth in the ACT. I urge all members of this place to support it today.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for Ageing) (6.10): I will be supporting Mr Wall's motion today, although subject to the amendment that Ms Burch is going to move, which I will also be supporting. Gugan Gulwan is a highly respected professional youth service that, indeed, deserves bipartisan support in this place.

I made it a priority to visit Gugan Gulwan in Erindale when I was made Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and had a great visit with Kim Davison, the CEO of Gugan, and her staff. It was great to see Gugan first hand, and it is clear that it operates a vibrant, welcoming service for young people in the region.

As Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, I have actively been advocating for alternative accommodation for Gugan in recent months and will continue to do so. The services provided by Gugan Gulwan have evolved from its inception as a youth service in 1992 to providing a broader range of support for children, young people and their families. They have been operating out of the Erindale centre in Wanniasa since 2001.

Gugan Gulwan use a culturally appropriate approach that is founded on principles of self-determination, and that is valued by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people and their families that visit. Gugan Gulwan have advised that there is now a need for other programs such as young women and mothers, young men and arts therapy, to be run from the centre, and more space is needed to run these programs. Apart from additional indoor space, outdoor space is required as young children also participate in the programs. It is a testament to the success of Gugan Gulwan that they have outgrown their premises, and I see it as a positive that they are running much-needed and effective programs.

While I welcome Mr Wall raising this matter in the Assembly and acknowledge what I know is his genuine interest in and support for Gugan, I was a little surprised to see this matter raised as a motion on the notice paper, without his office having first either written to me or sought a briefing. Having said that, I can understand there has been some frustration on Gugan's part with the delays to date, and I will go to some of those and provide some of that information to the Assembly so that the Assembly has a full appreciation of the situation.

I appreciate the tone of Mr Wall's motion. It is designed to raise the matter in such a way as to ensure a good outcome for the service. Since Ms Davison contacted my office in January this year to seek greater support—she felt that that might be a way of helping to resolve some of the issues that had arisen—I have asked for regular updates and have the matter listed as a standing agenda item in my weekly meetings with the directorate. This is a way of my ensuring that the matter has received a level of focus and is being progressed in a timely manner.

The matter of finding accommodation for community service providers requires some time and occasionally creative thinking as obviously not all of the ACT government assets are fit for purpose. I have been advised that the Community Services Directorate has been working with the ACT Property Group in the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate and the Education and Training Directorate to find accommodation that will best meet the needs of Gugan Gulwan.

Gugan has been offered accommodation in several alternative locations, both in Tuggeranong and outside the area. However, the accommodation that has been offered to date has not been suitable for the specific programs that they wish to provide. We had thought last year that a childcare premises would become vacant but unfortunately, in the end, the organisation running the childcare centre decided to keep the centre open as they had enough demand to operate two childcare centres. Gugan Gulwan missed out on that accommodation. I think members will appreciate that is a fairly frustrating thing. The agencies felt they had found a suitable location. I think everyone thought it was the right location, but then the tenant who was there and whom we thought was going to move out did not move out. That, of course, is disappointing for Gugan, but there is not much that can be done about that.

While there are some facilities that might be suitable for Gugan Gulwan, they would need to share these facilities. And Gugan Gulwan has advised that it would prefer to have single use of any additional space rather than co-locate with another group. Considering the breadth of programs offered and some of the young people particularly who are attending their programs and their facilities, I can quite understand that. But again, it highlights the difficulty in finding a suitable location. Locations that might have been suitable have been identified but ultimately have not been.

So I do just want to reflect the fact that whilst I share both Gugan Gulwan's frustration and clearly Mr Wall's frustration that we have not yet found a suitable solution, I would like the Assembly to be assured that finding additional accommodation space for Gugan Gulwan is of utmost importance to the government and we will continue to work to ensure that this happens as soon as possible.

That said, there is, as members I am sure are well aware, a great deal of demand of government for community space. Certainly I know that within government at the moment we are having discussions on ways to improve the system generally to make it clearer for community organisations how to go on the list to seek government accommodation and to try to improve the coordination between directorates. I think there is a good level of coordination, but it relies very much on individual effort at the moment. I think we can make some system improvements there. I know, between the various parts of government, there are some good discussions going on to improve that at the moment.

But as to the immediate matter of Gugan, as I say, I can assure both Mr Wall and the rest of the Assembly that this is very much on my radar. I know it is on the radar of three directorates who all are endeavouring to find a solution to this. And it is just a matter now of finding that very practical solution of our getting a space that is vacant and one that Gugan Gulwan feel is appropriate for the programs they want to offer and for the clients that are coming to their services.

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability, Children and Young People, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Women, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Racing and Gaming) (6.16): I seek leave to move the amendments circulated in my name together.

Leave granted.

MS BURCH: I move:

(1) Omit paragraph (1)(c).

(2) Omit paragraph (1)(d), substitute:

“(d) the increase in demand for services at Gugan Gulwan from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth; and”.

(3) Omit paragraph (2), substitute:

“(2) calls on the ACT Government to continue to investigate options for providing additional space for the Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation and report on the results of this investigation to the Assembly by the end of April 2014.”.

I think there is general agreement in here of the worthiness of Gugan Gulwan as an organisation, the work they do and their requirements for additional space. The amendments to this motion clarify what, hopefully, was not an outright negative political statement around the youth programs. That was what prompted me to move these amendments.

In regard to the youth support provision, in 2011-12 the focus of youth support in the ACT was, indeed, changed. But the youth services were not withdrawn; rather, these changes resulted in the delivery of more purposeful services for vulnerable young people in our community, those who have the greatest need for service providers.

Under the new child, youth and family service program, funding was provided for youth engagement with the explicit intent of expanding the number of youth workers across the sector to ensure that sufficient drop-in hours were available. Additional funding of \$1.2 million was committed to support youth engagement and programs in the ACT. This is the government delivering on its election commitments and on our parliamentary agreement.

Under the new child, youth and family support framework implemented from March of 2012, the majority of youth centres continue to operate in some capacity and provide targeted programs for vulnerable young people. The youth engagement services are being delivered to vulnerable young people who are disengaged or at risk of disengaging from families and other services, including education.

Those services are provided across the four network areas and are run by the Woden Community Service, Southside Community Services, Anglicare ACT, the Belconnen

Community Service and the YWCA of Canberra. The key features of the youth engagement services are the street outreach on Friday and Saturday evenings, open access or drop-in activities in safe places that are appropriate and accessible for young people, late night program or recreational activities where young people are likely to congregate, and brokerage funding to support engagement and connections with families or other services such as phone cards, bus tickets, meals and family outings.

A highlight for youth engagement over the year is the growing number of young people attending the Lanyon drop-in centre down in the electorate of Brindabella. With increased opening hours, more structured activities and more staffing, the average monthly attendance has increased sixfold in Lanyon. The highest number of young people who have attended the drop-in at Mura Lanyon Youth and Community Centre in a given month was 350 young people. I believe that this is a ringing endorsement of the reforms that were put in place on youth engagement.

The ACT government provides Gugan Gulwan funding under the child, youth and family service program to provide case management, group-based programs, youth engagement, and therapeutic services for the vulnerable and in-need Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families. Much has been said already about the various programs that operate through the centre.

In the 2013-14 year, Gugan Gulwan will be provided with \$585,000 from the child, youth and family support program. This is an increase on past funding. This additional funding has allowed Gugan to employ an additional youth and engagement officer to expand existing programs for case management, drop-in, tutoring and music programs, and a mothers group. One could make a logical connection from increased funding and increased staffing resources to the obvious need for them to expand their physical footprint and to have access to more areas.

Gugan Gulwan is a well respected service provider. They do a great job. They are actively engaged in supporting some of our most vulnerable young people. Gugan Gulwan support young people in custody, focusing on their reintegration into the community and participation in cultural programs. Staff from Gugan Gulwan attend Bimberi on a weekly basis to conduct an art program with young Indigenous people and also attend various cultural events and ceremonies at Bimberi. I have recently reported in this place on the successful outcomes for the young folk at Bimberi. I am confident that having this link between Bimberi and Gugan Gulwan has made a difference.

The youth justice case management staff have continued to refer young people to Gugan Gulwan and have a number of clients in common. It is worth noting that the collaboration between youth justice and Gugan Gulwan has ensured that there have been no delays in response to these referrals from Gugan since the changes to the CYFSP were introduced.

I can assure the Assembly and Mr Wall that all arms of government are working together to find new accommodation to meet the physical needs of Gugan Gulwan. As Mr Rattenbury touched on, there is an across-government approach to this. I absolutely understand the organisation's frustration in not finding a suitable place that

is appropriate to their needs. But we are doing all we can. Mr Rattenbury made mention of the childcare centre in Kambah. Communities@Work managed that centre. They have also managed the expanded childcare centre at Taylor Primary School. That is now 65 places. But they saw a need for local families to continue their tenancy and for the provision of children's services in that existing site in Kambah. That has been a disappointment to Gugan.

I know that the Education and Training Directorate is working with the Community Services Directorate in looking at this. And on a broader policy issue, the Education and Training Directorate is doing some work, at my direction, about how, if we are serious about schools being at the centre of the community, we can enhance that connection. That could be a reflection of having community organisations within the school precinct.

The notion of supporting Gugan to find appropriate accommodation is absolutely supported, but the amendments that I have moved tidy up any possible misinformation or misunderstanding about what is driving their demand. Their demand for services is based on the fact that they do such a good job. I commend my amendments to the Assembly. I will be supporting the motion, with those amendments.

Amendments agreed to.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (6.24): I will just speak very briefly, Madam Speaker. I thank all members for their intended support for the amended motion. I think it will give a great result for Gugan Gulwan and ensure that they can continue to provide with confidence the services that they are doing such an excellent job with. I hope that in the not-too-distant future suitable accommodation will be found for them. I look forward to seeing the list of options come the end of next month.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Adjournment

Motion by **Ms Burch** proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Commonwealth Day

MR COE (Ginninderra) (6.24): Madam Speaker, I rise to commend you for your marking of Commonwealth Day at the Legislative Assembly on 18 March. Commonwealth Day, as we now know it, was established in 1958 and is celebrated on the second Monday in March. The day has a different theme each year. This year's theme is "Team Commonwealth". In recent years, the themes have been "Opportunity through Enterprise"; "Connecting Cultures"; "Women as Agents of Change"; "Science, Technology and Society"; "Commonwealth@60—Serving a New Generation"; "The Environment, Our Future"; "Respecting Difference, Promoting Understanding"; "Health and Vitality"; and "Education—Creating Opportunity, Realising Potential".

Madam Speaker, your event was funded by the ACT branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and featured guests from the Assembly, high commissions and schools from across Canberra. Participating schools included St Francis Xavier, St Mary MacKillop, Merici College, Orana, Daramalan College, Brindabella Christian College and Canberra Girls Grammar School. At the event, Phyllida Behm from Canberra Girls Grammar School read the Queen's Commonwealth Day message. The message included the following remarks, beginning with a reference to the Commonwealth Games:

While national teams will be concentrating on the competition in August, Team Commonwealth will have a longer focus, working together to achieve a more enduring success.

Experiences of life differ widely throughout the Commonwealth, and we each make contributions from sometimes very different viewpoints. But we are committed to the same goals. Together we offer each other encouragement and draw strength from this mutual support.

Madam Speaker's remarks included a good description of the modern-day commonwealth:

The 53 countries of the Commonwealth have joined together over the past week to celebrate the spirit of teamwork that helps us work together.

It has been an opportunity to celebrate the strong bonds, shared values, and principles that unite us.

The independent countries belonging to the Commonwealth span six continents and oceans from Africa to Asia, the Americas, the Caribbean, Europe, and Australasia.

The Commonwealth represents 30 per cent of the world's population and straddles wide ethnic and cultural differences.

Commonwealth member countries include some of the world's largest and smallest, richest and poorest countries.

We acknowledge all faiths and ethnicities.

Over half of the Commonwealth's people are aged 25 or under.

The attendees at the celebration also heard His Excellency Mr Molosiwa Selepeng, High Commissioner for the Republic of Botswana, respond on behalf of the commonwealth nations represented in Australia through their missions in Canberra.

I believe the commonwealth is highly relevant to Australia and to the world. We in Canberra will be fortunate to host Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince George next month at an event which I am sure will attract considerable media attention around the world and excite many Canberrans.

In conclusion, I congratulate Speaker Dunne, the Speaker's office and the staff of the Office of the Legislative Assembly for marking Commonwealth Day in the territory.

National Capital Rally

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella) (6.27): I rise tonight to put on the record my congratulations to all of those involved in the recent successful event held in Canberra's forests, the National Capital Rally. Over the weekend of 28 February to 2 March, 59 competitive rally teams took to the forests in what were some very exciting times. Through the highs and lows, spectators were able to view the sights from several locations, including that of the main service hub on Coppins Crossing Road, making spectating more accessible for Canberra locals.

I take this moment to congratulate the Canberra competitors and their teams, and some of the others involved. Firstly, there is my team from Techworkz, Michael Harding and Julie Boorman. Then I mention Neil Bates, Coral Taylor, Brett Stephens, Tony Brandon, Trevor Stilling, Nigel Walters, Stuart MacLachlan, David Stephens, Mick Patton, Bernie Webb, Adrian Coppin, Tim Batten, Rhys Pinter, Jim Gleeson, Ritchie Dalton, Gerald Schofield, Ray Baker, Doug Wright, Jon Hall, Tristan Kent, Russell Hanna, Mike Behnke, Brett Southwell, Russell Winks, Steve Hodgkin, Stuart Collison, Jason Burgemeister, Meng Chung, James Thornburn, Blake Stevens, Amy Stevens, Denis Stevens, Frank Brookhouse, Michael Taylor, Fro Horobin, David Wright, Mathew Boorman, Mel McMinn, Tim Baxter, Kim Day, Alison Lawarik, Leigh Pierce, Roland Schmitz and Sally-Anne Schmitz. If I have some time later on, I will try and mention some of the ARC teams.

This event would not be possible without people working behind the scenes to make this sport happen. The ACT government have had several people work with the Brindabella Motor Sport Club to ensure the event went ahead. These especially need to be noted: Neal Guthrie, of course, from stadiums and events; John Leahy; Nikki Toohey; and the TAMS team.

I would also like to congratulate the large team of volunteers working to make this event possible. Adrian Dudok, as clerk of course, put in a tremendous amount of time working to make sure this event went ahead, and I would like to personally thank him as an avid motorsport enthusiast. He was backed by a tremendous team, including Wayne Kenny, Julie Lucas, Jane Ward, Ian Bigg, Marty Holberton, Dr Matthew Croxford, Gary Searle, Allan Greenough, Phil Longworth, John Buckley, Chris Clark, Dave Vaughan, Tony Harris, Peter Marcovich, Laurie Cunningham and Robert Easton.

Unfortunately, one official and loyal motorsport enthusiast did not make it to the rally. He tragically and suddenly passed away just a couple of days before the event began. I wish to note my condolences in regard to his death. He was a friend of mine and a co-competitor, Mike Bell, who had been involved in the rallying scene in Canberra for about 30 years, having been clerk of course for this main event in most of those. I wish to pass on my thoughts to his wife, Sarah Manuel, and the family.

Another highlight of this motorsport themed weekend was the annual rally hall of fame dinner with a special appearance from the one and only former world champion Ari Vatanen from Finland. Ari was a spectacular addition to this dinner and made many appearances over the weekend. He was more than happy to voice his personal enjoyment of Canberra forests and promote the ACT back in his home country. I would like to take this moment to congratulate the 10 new inductees to the hall of fame: Colin Bond, Barry Ferguson, Evan Green, Fred Gocentas, Graham Hoinville, Frank Kilfoyle, David Officer, Kate Officer, Ed Ordynski and Jim Reddiex. I would also like to take this moment to thank Coral Taylor, the executive officer of the hall of fame, and her band of helpers for assisting in making this event possible.

In the short time that I have left, I will go through the Australian rally competitors for the event who were sponsored by East Coast Bullbars: Eli Evans; Glen Weston; Scott Pedder; Dale Moscott; Brendan Reeves; Rhianon Gelsomino; Michael Boaden; Helen Cheers; Tony Sullens; Julie Barkley; Steven Mackenzie; Brent Mackenzie; Nathan Quinn; David Calder; Guy Tyler; Steve Fisher; Mick Patton, Adrian Coppin and their team, who I have mentioned; Waylon Sims; Jobe Sims; Alan Roe; Ben Searcy; Rhys Pinter; and Jim Gleeson.

Thank you to all who took part. It was a wonderful way of promoting the ACT.

Australia New Zealand Forensic Science Society—seminar

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (6.32): Last week I attended a forensic science seminar at the University of Canberra conducted by the ACT branch of the Australia New Zealand Forensic Science Society. I congratulate the society on hosting the seminar, which featured the work of Dr Jennifer Pilgrim. Dr Pilgrim is a research fellow in the Department of Forensic Medicine at Monash University, and she works at the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine.

Dr Pilgrim's presentation was based upon her study, "King hit fatalities in Australia, 2000-2012," published last year in *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, a well-regarded international journal. The study utilised the Australian and New Zealand national coronial information system, which is a data storage, retrieval, analysis, interpretation and dissemination system that contains data about deaths reported to an Australian coroner from July 2000 and to a New Zealand coroner from July 2007.

In the 12 years studied, 90 fatalities, of which four were female, were identified, with a median age of 33 years. Most cases occurred in New South Wales, followed by Victoria and Queensland, which mirrors the Australian population distribution. Forty-nine cases involved the use of alcohol, 10 cases involved illicit drugs, of which most involved cannabis, and there were three cases involving pharmaceutical drugs.

These figures indicate that, contrary to claims made by the liquor industry, abuse of alcohol is much more strongly linked to violence than other drugs. Alcohol not only increases the risk of aggressive offending but also the risk of victimisation. The perpetrator was unknown to the victim in over a third of these cases.

Individual factors show that perpetrators and victims are overwhelmingly male. Studies on behaviour reveal that people suffering from personality and behaviour disorders are more likely to be aggressive when intoxicated. According to Dr Caldicott, emergency medicine consultant at the Calvary hospital, personality is a key element that separates aggressive drunks from others. He says:

I think the reality is that the sort of people who are going out and hitting other people when drunk are the sort of people who could go out and hit other people when sober.

Intoxication is often the objective for many people during a night out. Dr Pilgrim argues that policies aiming to prevent the intention to get drunk may realistically not be as effective as strategies to manage the drinking environment. The World Health Organisation also notes that drinking venues that are poorly managed are associated with higher levels of violence. Here in the ACT we have made good steps to tackle the problem. The liquor reforms in 2010 changed liquor licence fees to reflect a venue's risk to community safety. The ACT criminal justice statistical profile of September 2013 shows a downward trend in the number of assaults since 2010.

But these drunk young men crippling or killing other young men on our streets are the tip of the iceberg of alcohol violence. The 2012 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report, *Australia's health 2012*, estimates that 70,000 Australians a year were victims of alcohol violence and that 24,000 people were victims of alcohol-related domestic violence. The report goes on to look at child abuse related to alcohol and states that almost 20,000 children were victims of alcohol-related child abuse in 2006-07. In homes and communities across our nation, alcohol violence is harming many women and children every day.

The report also tells us that 20 per cent of Australians drink harmful levels of alcohol and estimates that two per cent of the national disease burden is alcohol related. The cost of social problems caused by alcohol is estimated at \$15.3 billion. The National Health and Medical Research Council has stated that alcohol is second only to tobacco as a preventable cause of drug-related death and hospitalisation in Australia.

What needs to be done? Let us start with the current inconsistent tax on alcohol which makes cheap alcohol available. This needs to be reformed by the federal government by bringing in volumetric alcohol pricing. Furthermore, the promotion, advertising and marketing of alcohol, particularly through sport and entertainment and especially targeting young people, requires greater control. These are the kind of measures which have been so effective in managing tobacco and they now need to be applied to alcohol.

Anthony Wedgwood Benn—death

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (6.36): I rise tonight to celebrate the life of the great socialist and British Labour politician Tony Benn, who passed away on Friday aged 88. Tony Benn was a member of parliament between 1950 and 2001, a 47-year parliamentary career that was only interrupted when his father died, forcing him to take up a peerage in the House of Lords.

As hinted at above, Benn was born into a life of privilege. He was the son and grandson of Liberal MPs, but clearly this did not sit well with him, as he became the first member of parliament to renounce his peerage, opening up the House of Lords to much-needed reform.

A tireless fighter for workers, the poor and for peace, Tony Benn was an example to all of us on the left of what you can achieve when you stick to your principles and never bow down to the rich and powerful.

He believed in the power of movements and of mobilising people to fight for the causes that he cared about. As UK Labour leader Ed Miliband said of Tony Benn, “In a world of politics that is often too small, he thought big about our country and our world.”

Tony Benn was a man who believed that if we can find the money to fight wars and kill people then we can find the money to help people. It is hard to argue with that logic, Madam Speaker.

Benn’s life was an interesting one, not just because he had a long parliamentary career or because he was known as a great socialist but because he was one of the few people who saw the world for what it was and, as such, became more radical with old age—something I hope many of us can do as we get older, Madam Speaker.

In retirement Benn became a full-time activist. He would travel the UK talking to communities, to young people and to Labour branches about many things, including opposing the invasion of Iraq, the importance of the public health system and of fighting austerity.

I want to finish by quoting one lesson that Tony Benn taught throughout much of his later life:

In the course of my life I have developed five little democratic questions. If one meets a powerful person ask them five questions:

What power have you got?

Where did you get it from?

In whose interests do you exercise it?

To whom are you accountable?

And how can we get rid of you?

If you cannot get rid of the people who govern you, you do not live in a democratic system.

Although he has passed away, Tony Benn will remain an inspiration to anyone who believes that an alternative world is possible. At a time when the ideas of the conservatives are increasingly dominant, we can look to Tony Benn to see that a fair, just and equal world is possible.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.40 pm.