



# Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

**EIGHTH ASSEMBLY**

**7 MAY 2014**

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**Wednesday, 7 May 2014**

**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.

### **Canberra—priority issues**

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.02): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes the Opposition's ongoing engagement with Canberrans, community groups and business raises the following issues as priorities:
  - (a) the state of disrepair of basic suburban amenities;
  - (b) dysfunctional planning that is stifling city centres and failing to protect suburban character;
  - (c) housing availability, affordability and rates;
  - (d) access to health care, in particular waiting times;
  - (e) education choice and standards, especially culture and behaviour;
  - (f) lack of support for business, especially small business;
  - (g) the continued low priority of road transport infrastructure, traffic safety and car parking;
  - (h) failures in our justice system;
  - (i) support for those facing genuine hardship; and
  - (j) management of the economy; and
- (2) calls on the Government to focus on Canberra's real priorities.

It is clear, and it is clear through the debates that we have been having in this place as recently as yesterday, that as a Liberal Party we have very different priorities to the Labor Party and the Greens. And first and foremost we remember that we are not here to serve ourselves or those who keep us in power in this place. We are here to serve the people of Canberra, and that is all the people of Canberra. Going back in history, in 1942, in his forgotten people speech, Menzies spoke of the people who had made Australia the great nation that it had become but had been left behind by the social elites and the Labor Party. John Howard reached out to those same people.

Here the Canberra Liberals are doing the same. In the forgotten suburbs across Canberra—in Tuggeranong, Belconnen, Weston Creek, Woden and Gungahlin—

people are busy paying off mortgages, getting to work and raising their families. The builders, the tradies, the small business owners, the nurses and the teachers, the public servants and the retirees, the parents and the families are all working hard to get ahead, treasuring their homes and their communities—all deserving respect but often feeling neglected by their government. That is why our plans, the Canberra Liberals' plans, will be unashamedly focused on improving the livelihoods of the great majority of Canberrans who live across our suburbs and not integrating ourselves, just as a small minority who hold the balance of power in this place.

The Canberra Liberals' vision, as my motion outlines, is focused on addressing the real concerns of Canberrans. What people tell us, when we hold our mobile offices, when we doorknock throughout those forgotten suburbs, when we meet community groups and attend events, is a very different set of priorities. This has led to the development of several clear priority areas that have been neglected by this government, just as the people in the suburbs of Canberra have been neglected.

First, we will unashamedly pursue economic prosperity for all Canberrans. For us, prosperity is to be pursued, not derided. And to start with, we will pursue a Canberra with a true city heart, with vibrant town centres, while ensuring that the suburbs where we live keep their character. We will improve our planning laws—and I think that is relevant to the debate we were certainly having yesterday—and we will fix the ridiculous system that is driving development in this city to a halt. For all the glossy brochures and the grand plans, the fact is that this government has not developed the city or the town centres.

Concurrently we will also protect the character of our suburbs because it is where we live, it is where we raise our families, and accordingly we will do all that we can to make Canberra a city where home ownership is attainable, is encouraged and, importantly, is respected. We share the belief of a great majority of Canberrans in the importance of their homes, because if family is the most important thing in most people's lives, no matter what that composition of your family is, your home is where you build that family.

But under Labor, based on their published plans—and these were the plans that were published, put in this place by Andrew Barr as a result of a motion of this Assembly—homeowners in Canberra will be slugged an extra billion dollars a year in rates by 2031. I will say that again: an extra billion dollars in rates by 2031. The Labor Party talked about their progressive tax reform. That is not progressive, that is punishing.

Another great challenge must be to fix our health system and, with the outstanding quality of our Canberra doctors, our nurses and our other health professionals, we should not just be aiming to make the health system better. We should be aiming, and we will aim, to make, and we will make, our health system the best health system in Australia, as it was when the Liberals were last in government.

Under the ACT Labor government, health planning has been chaotic and our hospitals are full. Literally, tens of thousands of Canberrans have waited longer for surgery and access to emergency treatment than they should have. And in many cases they have waited longer than anybody else in Australia, over the last 12 or 13 years, because of

the policies and failure in planning of this government. I need not remind members here of the shameful episode of the falsification of 12,000 emergency department records.

Now we hear that the Chief Minister is going to slow down health spending, she is going to reduce health spending after the next election. And she needs to do this to pay for Labor's other priorities. We will build a better culture in our health system and we will make much-needed changes. We will not allow a situation where there is bullying that results in—I think it was 13 doctors finally—13 doctors resigning because of a war in obstetrics. And we still do not have access to the culture survey. I get many nurses coming to me saying, "Wow, you can see the comments that I've written and I know that my friends have written." But still this open and accountable government—that is irony, for the sake of *Hansard*—will not release it.

We will create a greater emphasis on prevention and care in our community and we will provide better coordination of healthcare, including the involvement of public and private health service providers, community groups and patients. And we will ensure the capacity of our public hospital system is sufficient to meet future demand and that the use of our private hospitals is increased.

Equally important, we should have the best education in Australia, be that in our primary schools, in our secondary schools, PhDs or, importantly, in trade education. And we will build excellence and capacity across all our schools, be they public or independent schools, and will encourage choice for parents across our school system. We will support our teachers and principals with increased autonomy and a broader range of educational outcomes and we will encourage good behaviour. The culture in our schools will be a priority and we will make sure that school parents and communities have a genuine say in their children's education. And we will put our kids first and our schools first.

In 2013, Madam Speaker, you will recall, the Chief Minister signed a deal with the then Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, that reduced the amount of federal funding coming into ACT schools by \$30 million. Why did she do that? I think we know. It was to protect her from Kevin Rudd, who was coming at her pretty hard. And just like Jon Stanhope was the first to sign up for the dodgy health agreement that fell over, Katy Gallagher knew that she had to support her left faction colleague by getting in there and signing up for the deal. At the same time, the state premiers fought for every single dollar and got millions in extra funding for their schools. I will never sell our children short.

Another key difference is that we are strong supporters of the business sector, in particular small business, and we know that the Labor Party really are the patsies of the unions. And I will unashamedly say that we will always be the friend of hardworking, honest business owners across the city who create the jobs, who create wealth and who drive the economic prosperity of our great city. And let me be clear: we will do everything we can to make Canberra a place where people want to do business. We will remove unnecessary regulation duplication, which is strangling businesses across our city and restricting employment growth.

When people travel in our city to work or to do business or to visit friends and family, they want to be connected by the best road system in Australia. And we want that too. We want to make it easier to drive and park your car, while Labor is deliberately trying to make it harder. The Labor government and their Green ally have not made the case for light rail. And Mr Coe will expand on this argument in detail in his motion later today but, put simply, the \$614 million that is the proposed expenditure, as I understand it, at the moment for light rail is the price that the Labor Party has put on securing Shane Rattenbury's support to form government and is a debt that Canberra families will be paying off for generations. Our transport plans will be focused on making it easier to get around Canberra, not on an ideological and unaffordable indulgence.

Because Canberrans are a caring and generous people, they want us to ensure Canberra is a safe and compassionate community. We will work to expand and enhance existing partnerships with the community sector in delivering services for the most vulnerable in our society. We will restore the balance of justice in Canberra to make sure that victims are not let down, so that the police and DPP are properly resourced and empowered, so that delays are reduced in our courts and so that violent and repeat offenders are properly punished and bail is not simply a revolving door. We will not let police numbers dwindle in our city to a point where front-line police officers become so concerned for their own safety that they are forced to submit Comcare reports after their pleas for more staff are repeatedly ignored by this government.

Improving the quality of life in our city is not only about the front-line services that the government delivers, it is also about how we live our lives. Together with local communities, we will support and promote cultural, sporting and recreational opportunities that are so important to our way of life. Our focus will be local—local sporting groups, local community groups and local artists.

Lastly, if we are to deliver on all that great promise that Canberra has to offer, we must give this territory better economic management. The Labor government and the Greens proudly say that they want to be the most extreme government in the country in terms of environmental and social policy. However, our conversations with Canberrans suggest that they reject extremism and would rather a government that would interfere less in their lives and focus more on the services, especially the cost of those services.

Canberrans are generous people but they are also smart, and they understand that no government can continue to spend beyond its means without long-term consequences. This is already the highest taxing government per capita anywhere in the country. The borrowings of this government, already \$2.7 billion, rise to \$3.5 billion in the next three years. The accumulated interest bill in the current budget totals over \$650 million.

The hundreds of millions of dollars wasted in decades of delay on major capital projects has been a disgrace. The GDE took longer than the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The jail blew out by tens of millions, was late, is already full and is now costing

\$54 million to extend. The emergency services headquarters, originally budgeted for \$13 million, blew out to \$76 million; the Canberra Hospital car park, from \$23 million to \$45 million; the secure mental health facility, from \$11 million to \$25 million—although the government and this minister promised it would be open three years ago, work has not even started—the Cotter dam, from \$120 million to \$400 million; and the Majura Parkway is, and I quote, “in turmoil”.

On top of that, the Greens and Labor now want to spend \$614 million on just the first phase of their multi-billion dollar train system, and they cannot even tell us how many millions of dollars a year it would cost to operate. We will invest tax money more responsibly because we are Liberals and it is in our DNA. It is what we do.

Like many others, I have come to this city from somewhere else, and I came here because Canberra has so much to offer. My team and I are working hard to give this city the government that it deserves. The ACT Labor government have been in power for 13 long years and like, many old governments, they tend to focus on the things they care about but that lead them further and further away from the people that they are supposed to represent.

Our priorities are unashamedly different from those of Labor and the Greens. And those Liberal values have shaped some of the best governments that this country has seen. They are about remembering to work for all the people, all those people across those forgotten suburbs, that this very bad Labor government and their Green ally have forgotten.

**MS GALLAGHER** (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education) (10.17): I move the amendment circulated in my name:

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

“(1) notes:

- (a) the importance for on-going engagement with Canberrans, including community groups and local businesses to progress the following priorities:
  - (i) a sustainable, stable and progressive taxation system;
  - (ii) a high quality and responsive health system;
  - (iii) a high performing, fair and equitable education system for all children and young people;
  - (iv) the continued provision of land and a range of housing options for Canberrans, including affordable housing, for people at all stages of life from first home buyers to downsizers;
  - (v) increase and maintain the amenity of our city including ongoing road maintenance programs, shopping centre upgrades, protection of our urban forest and community and sporting facilities;

- (vi) support to the most vulnerable in our community through policies and programs such as Common Ground and other innovative models for social housing;
  - (vii) implementing sustainable transport policies including appropriate road infrastructure, car parking, public transport and measures to encourage walking and cycling across the city to achieve mode shift targets at least equal to those in the Transport for Canberra Plan;
  - (viii) promoting the uptake of renewable energy and adopting energy efficient measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
  - (ix) implementing the Business Diversification Strategy to support local business including small business;
  - (x) a strong and independent planning authority with appropriate community involvement; and
  - (xi) a fair, efficient and effective judicial system including initiatives such as Justice Reinvestment and Through Care;
- (b) the strong signals coming from the Federal Government indicating that the ACT economy may be entering a period of savage austerity;
  - (c) the ongoing need for the ACT Government to provide strong leadership and prudent economic management of our budget;
  - (d) the recent Government announcement of a two year stimulus program for the building and construction industry;
  - (e) the Government's strong commitment to economic reform including important new city-building infrastructure including the City Plan, Capital Metro, University of Canberra Public Hospital and Digital Canberra;
  - (f) the ACT Government's ongoing efforts to diversify our economy by strengthening higher education, IT industry and regional tourism;
  - (g) the ACT Government's commitment to protecting the most vulnerable in our community through initiatives such as the HIP, transitioning to the NDIS, increasing school resourcing and Healthy Weight Initiative; and
  - (h) the importance of the natural environment in sustaining our community, and the need to protect it for current and future generations; and
- (2) calls on the Government to work with various stakeholders, including the Opposition members, to promote the interests of our community through a strong and unified focus on matters of substance and importance to our future."

I welcome the opportunity to talk about priorities for Canberrans today and, as members will see, I have moved a minor amendment to Mr Hanson's motion. But in fact there is some—



*Mrs Jones interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mrs Jones, could you withdraw that, please?

**Mrs Jones:** I withdraw.

**MS GALLAGHER:** significant crossover in the motion from Mr Hanson that we are debating and the amendment that I have moved. Mr Hanson would have you believe that the Liberal Party are the only party that communicates with the local constituents across Canberra, which is simply not the case. He would like to perpetuate the divide, or encourage a divide, across suburbs within Canberra, which is something that I do not support at all.

All members in this place, all 17 of us, have contact, extensive contact—perhaps more contact than any government, any parliament in the country—with our local constituencies. That is one of the strengths of the ACT Assembly. So all 17 members, I think, are probably kept pretty well-informed about what Canberrans are saying and thinking, and how they feel the Assembly represents them.

That is why I think there are some genuine crossovers in my amendment and Mr Hanson's motion. I do not disagree that local municipal services are important, that a progressive, stable taxation system with a strong, stable revenue base is important to Canberrans, that a high quality and responsive health system is important to Canberrans, that an education system that meets all the needs of all children regardless of what sector they have their schooling in is important to Canberrans, as is affordable housing, as is sustainable transport, whether it be through appropriate road infrastructure, whether it be through the provision of public transport, whether it be through the provision of appropriate car parking or, indeed, improving our pedestrian and cycling facilities. All of that is important to Canberrans.

Canberrans also care about their environment and making sure that we do have a planet left for the generations to come that is not significantly disadvantaged and changed, that our climate has changed for my children, their children and Mr Hanson's children. So they support action on climate change. That remains a priority of this government, as does supporting the business community.

We have very good relations with our business community, with the industry groups and with individual businesses across the territory. Where there is a problem, where there are concerns, let me assure you that those concerns find their way into our ear often through meetings with industry groups but with individual business holders as well. Where we can work with those we do. I think that the work that the Minister for Economic Development has been doing over the last two years in promoting Canberra as a business destination, in promoting Canberra outside Canberra's borders, both nationally and internationally as a great place to do business, is starting to pay dividends.

We also believe, like Mr Hanson, in a strong and independent planning authority that balances the needs of community with the laws that are passed through this parliament.

That has always been an important part of Labor's record on planning. Let us not forget that the Liberal Party would have us believe that there was a planning utopia in the days before this government was elected. We know that that simply was not the case and that Mr Corbell and other colleagues came in and significantly reformed the planning system. We do have an independent planning system. That is there. That is the hallmark of this government. It is important. It will remain and Canberrans support it.

That does not mean that there are not decisions people will disagree with. There will always be that in planning but we have the framework as it is now and we are looking at ways to strengthen that and allow appropriate community involvement that we can balance with the needs of a city that needs to be built, that is only half built and that needs to be built further. We heard the lectures from Mr Smyth yesterday about developing Canberra and growing Canberra. That is a balancing act when you listen to the voices of people who would like to see minimal change to the way the city has been built and the way it is going to be built in the future.

We also believe in a fair, efficient and effective judicial system which is, again, looking at the needs of all involved in court processes, trying to look at ways to improve the lives of vulnerable Canberrans and disadvantaged Canberrans who find themselves before the courts. There is some big work underway with the justice reinvestment program and also with throughcare which is showing some early but very promising results to date. That is something, I think, that the government would like to see continue and be built upon. Indeed, it is part of the work that Minister Rattenbury and the Attorney-General will be doing. We will have more to say around justice reform and justice reinvestment in the coming months.

I agree that priorities are important for Canberrans and that the key priorities are around local government services. They are around health, around education, around community services. They are around fair funding for all our schools. It is around providing people with a disability with the support and the resources they need to live independent lives with dignity and respect from other members of the community. There is also a very important role for government to encourage fairness and equity across the city to make sure that whilst we are addressing areas of importance to all Canberrans, we are also taking care of those that need an extra helping hand. We have also got more to do there.

Against that backdrop we need to make sure that we are looking at the future, and that does involve big projects like public transport, like capital metro. It does involve looking at development across the city and building up the city centre through projects like city to the lake. It does involve continuing to build our health system in stages over time with developments like the University of Canberra public hospital, like facilities such as the secure mental health unit, which I look forward to the support of the Assembly to progress quickly through the legislation we brought to the Assembly.

**Mr Coe:** Or just do a territory plan variation.

**MS GALLAGHER:** The Assembly has already passed its view on the secure unit and has given the authority to proceed with that as soon as we possibly can through our legislative framework and we will be pursuing that.

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Coe, order, please!

**MS GALLAGHER:** It is about all of those things, Madam Speaker. The government has some very clear plans and priorities that we are working through. We are entering a time, I think, of some uncertainty for the city. I think last week's release of the Commission of Audit report probably set the environment for the decisions that will be handed down next week. Then those priorities, and protecting those priorities and making sure we can afford the priorities of Canberrans, become even more important against a backdrop of reduced spending in this city.

This government will continue on the path that we are heading down. We have sought the support of the Canberra community for that agenda. We were endorsed to proceed with that agenda and we intend to do that. We are delivering on our election commitments that we made to the people of the ACT. We are doing that in a fairly tough fiscal environment, not just within our own budget but within the broader context of the ACT economy. But we believe that with appropriate staging and appropriate management those commitments can be delivered upon.

At the same time, we are busy out there promoting Canberra, talking Canberra up. I have been doing some work with overseas investors, as has Minister Barr, the Deputy Chief Minister, to talk up the credentials of our city. I must say that it would help if we had a unified voice on some of those approaches rather than talking down the economy and talking down the plans for Canberra. Surely there are some projects within our agenda that cross over with some of the priorities of the opposition. Wouldn't it be fantastic if we could identify what those were?

Instead, we get speeches largely containing motherhood statements—"We will do this; we will do that"—without any actual plan or idea. Everyone can stand up and give motherhood statements about liking to see this and that. It becomes much harder when you actually have to articulate what you would do, how much you would spend, where you would find that funding, where else you could cut, how you balance up those priorities. But we never ever hear that part of the discussion.

I call on the opposition today. Of all the work we are doing around Canberra—the city plan, capital metro, the university public hospital, digital Canberra, the business diversification strategy, invest Canberra—surely there is one that you think might be good for the city, that you might be able to support and that you might be able to show a unified voice on.

What about NDIS? Is that something you support? What about better funding for schools going into the budget, delivering on our commitments under the NERA arrangement? Do you support that? There is much more funding for independent schools, for Catholic schools. Do you support that? But we never ever hear about the things that you do think are worth while pursuing over the next few years because you are not going to be in government for two years. It is going to be a minimum of two years. No-one can actually see a time when you will be in government but for the next two years the people of the ACT have voted and you are not in government.

During what will be a reasonably difficult time for this city, how about it? How about this: the challenge is that there is a unified voice on just one project? Just one! Is it digital Canberra? Is it NDIS? Is it better schools? Is it the work we are doing around renewable energy? Do you care about the environment? Do you worry about the environment that your kids are going to grow up in?

**Mr Smyth:** Let's talk about Uriarra.

**MS GALLAHER:** Let us talk about Uriarra. Fine, I am happy to talk about Uriarra. It is very easy to play some of the local politics. It is much harder to talk about whether you actually support investment in renewable energy. You take the easy road every single time but you avoid the big issues for this city. The big issues for this city are: how do we maintain the services that we currently provide to the community whilst the city grows against a revenue base that is not growing at the speed of our city? How do we manage that whilst we build the other half of this city because the commonwealth sure is not going come and do it, which is what happened in the first part of this city's history. We are not going to get that generosity coming from the commonwealth government; so how do we do it? How do we manage all of those competing priorities?

*Mr Smyth interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Smyth, you will get the opportunity to speak in this debate I am sure.

**MS GALLAGHER:** They are the big issues for this city, not the easy path that is always chosen by the opposition, which is to pounce on local discontent, which is valid. It is part of the democratic process, but it is much harder to rise above and actually see the big challenges and engage in that debate, the big challenges that form part of that debate.

**Mr Hanson:** Oh, right! Ignore the people and support the Labor Party; is that the message?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I am not saying that. Mr Hanson, you take over from Gary Humphries. We used to have a saying in this chamber: you are being Gary-ed. That is exactly what you do now. Someone says something and then you turn it into something much different and usually negative.

We understand the priorities of Canberrans. We are Canberrans. I notice Mr Hanson does not believe that people who live in inner-north or inner-south Canberra actually have mortgages or children to bring up. They were noticeably absent in his speech. We are Canberrans. We live across this city. We grew up in this city. We care about this city. Our children are the future of this city. We are everyday Canberrans who live, shop, go to the schools, take part in school functions, who are enrolled in after-school activities, who do the local shopping centres, who do their shopping, who talk to people all the time. All of us do that.

We understand what the priorities are. We understand what the challenges are. We understand what the challenges are. We understand where people might not be happy with the government and where they are not we look at how we can fix that. But the challenge for the opposition is to remain relevant in the next two years of this city. That is your challenge and part of it will be working with us to deliver for this city.

**MR COE** (Ginninderra) (10.32): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to speak in this chamber in support of Mr Hanson's very worthy motion about ensuring that the Assembly concentrates on the things that really matter for Canberrans. We have a government at the moment that gets sidetracked with pet projects and allows ministers' personal egos to run their agendas and therefore run the government and therefore abuse taxpayers' funds.

I have a particular interest in numerous aspects of Mr Hanson's motion, including dysfunctional planning, housing availability and a few of the other important ones such as road transport. However, a couple of points are worth making in response to the Chief Minister's delusional rant about how good this government is with regard to consultation.

Nobody in Canberra outside those eight members opposite would say that the government is doing a good job when it comes to consulting with Canberrans. In fact, we saw this in black and white through the submissions that came to the planning committee over the last month and witnesses who presented to that committee. Someone who used to be in this chamber spoke about the government's consultation. Ms Caroline Le Couteur notably said:

I do not think there has been sufficient public consultation on this bill ... It is unfortunate as in the public mind it could well be taken as indicating how much attention ... the government intends to pay to any public consultation about planning issues

Let us take the President of the Institute of Architects:

Taking account of the Easter and ANZAC Day public holidays there are only 11 working days between today and 6 May. In addition, the ACT School holidays occurred during this period (from Saturday 12 to Sunday 27 April) adding to the many Canberra residents who will be out of town.

For public input to be sought, the Committee must call for submissions, hear and consider evidence, and prepare its report all in a period of 11 working days. Given the importance of this matter, and the magnitude and complexity of draft legislation ... this timeframe appears to be grossly inadequate.

A failure by the Committee to allow appropriate time for the preparation of submissions from interested parties makes the whole purpose of referring the matters to the Committee ingenuous and, engaging in public consultation impossible.

Mr Sinclair from the Planning Institute, the peak body in this space, said:

Again, our concern here is that what we consider to be a significant piece of legislation was not communicated and was not consulted on. As a peak body with an interest in planning we would have hoped that someone might have thought that perhaps we should be consulted.

I asked:

So the media got to you before the government?

The response was:

Yes, they did.

Madam Speaker, what about Dr Kwiatkowski, another person who presented to the committee as a witness. He said last week:

... I just want to add that I am very disappointed at the lack of consultation around this bill. It is good that now there is a process in place, but originally the government did not let the community and stakeholders know this was happening until the very last minute. This is important legislation and I think it should be looked at very carefully before it is voted on.

Mr Anderson from the Weston Creek Community Council said:

I would say that the bill has been brought in with what I would term almost obscene haste. There has been no effective consultation on it. I think this hearing has been an afterthought after public criticism was raised by the community through a number of associations.

Mr Edquist said:

If it was the executive's intention to make things difficult, they have succeeded at least in part. But I would note that community consultation where the community does not get the opportunity to express its views is not really consultation. I think it is a pity in a way, because I do not think it enhances the dignity of the Assembly that the executive is using it in this way. It is not really appropriate.

And there are more and more. The National Trust gave its comments about the consultation, as did Ms Margaret Fanning, Ms Forrest, Ms Price and many, many others. This government has a terrible track record when it comes to consulting with the community, yet we get a delusional response to the motion from the Chief Minister about how good this government is when it comes to consultation. Well, this government is absolutely appalling when it comes to consultation.

Some people in this chamber may have received a letter from a Sydney company requesting a score on how TAMS is going with regard to parks, conservation and land. The interesting thing is that if you filled out the survey and mailed it back to Sydney they gave you a scratchie. We have the ACT government rewarding people who fill out a survey by giving them a \$2 scratchie in return. That raises several questions:

how did this survey company get individuals' names, such as mine? How was it that I was selected? Was it appropriate for a Sydney company working on behalf of the ACT government to be mailing out scratchie tickets to Canberrans? They are very serious questions, and I hope Mr Rattenbury and the Chief Minister respond to this concern. It is a real concern when the ACT government is, in effect, funding scratchie tickets, lottery tickets, to be mailed to Canberrans. There is a real concern with that, and it is not something I think represents the best of this Legislative Assembly.

As to planning, the planning system in the ACT is dysfunctional. It is fascinating to go through Mr Corbell's comments from 1998, 1999 and 2000 when he was a community activist, a passionate advocate for the community for local issues. It is funny the Chief Minister should say that we should not be talking about local issues in effect. What we had in 1998, 1999 and 2000 was Mr Corbell trying to be the local activist. He was saying, "We need to empower locals. We need to empower the community to make decisions." Well, what is he doing now? He is going over the heads of every one of the constituents he supposedly represents.

With regard to planning we have seen real concerns with DV306. We see shifting goal posts all the time. We see preference to interstate or even international companies rather than our local ones. We see the government trying to ram through this place the project facilitation bill. We see an inability for builders in Canberra to secure land. We see rates skyrocketing out of control. We see extension of time fees contrary to the stated intentions of this government. We see a lease variation charge which puts a tax on density, the very thing the government say they are trying to achieve.

This government has put in place so many counterintuitive policies that are hurting Canberrans, the people who are subsidising this rabble across the chamber. It is not acceptable for the government to continue to spend the \$4.5 billion territory budget in the way it is. There comes a point when the government needs to genuinely be responsive, consultative and reflect the will of the people it is supposedly representing. I commend Mr Hanson's motion to the Assembly. I think it describes very clearly what the priorities of this place should be, and I urge all members to support it.

**MR BARR** (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Community Services) (10.41): I thank Mr Hanson for reading his press club speech to us. We did not have to pay for it, and that was the great benefit of hearing it all again this morning. It was exactly the same speech. You cannot plagiarise yourself, and credit where it is due for your recycling policy, Mr Hanson, of continually using the same tired rhetoric, rerunning the 2012, 2008, 2004, and 2001 election campaigns, as successful as they were for the Liberal Party.

Whilst Mr Hanson is busy off in fantasy land delivering in this place the exact same speech he tried to rally the Liberal Party faithful with around his crumbling leadership of the opposition, the government is committed to ensuring that our economy is well placed to tackle the challenges of the future. That is why the government has undertaken nation-leading and far-sighted taxation reforms. It is why we continue to engage closely with local business and the local community to ensure our economy continues to grow. It is why we have supported this community by prioritising jobs

growth and the provision of services to the community. It is why we are managing our budget prudently while we are delivering a stimulus policy aimed at providing targeted assistance, particularly to the property and construction sector through the next few years.

These important policies will put the territory in the best possible position to withstand the mugging of our economy by these guys and their Liberal colleagues on the hill and the significant cuts that are coming our way under the federal Liberal government. That goes to reinforce the basic point that every Canberran knows deep down in their guts that this city does better under Labor governments. What we are about to experience from the Liberals is havoc on our economy. That is the challenge we face: to respond to the economic downturn that will be brought upon this city by the Liberal Party.

Fortunately, we have begun a program of significant economic reform in the territory. In the 2012-13 budget we began a long-term plan to make the territory's taxation system fairer, simpler and more efficient. While all governments around the country and everyone who has looked at the Australian taxation system for the last three decades have recognised the importance of taxation reform—that is why we are having another white paper at the national level—the ACT is the only jurisdiction to have taken significant steps to implement meaningful tax reform. These reforms put our revenues on a more sustainable footing for the future. They continue to see the abolition of the most inefficient and economy-distorting taxes that state and territory governments levy.

The abolition of tax on insurance, the phasing out of stamp duty taxes and the cuts to payroll tax have all been targeted at improving the economic efficiency of our economy and boosting our economy, allowing resources to flow to their most productive use. Our reforms picked up pace in the last budget, including slashing the top level of stamp duty to a flat rate of 5.5 per cent for all properties valued over \$1.65 million. Every single property in the Australian Capital Territory has received a stamp duty cut and will continue to receive stamp duty cuts as we abolish these inefficient and unfair taxes that every credible economist recognises need to be abolished.

I can guarantee you now that a recommendation that emerges from the next and any subsequent review of taxation in this country will be that these are the worst taxes levied by governments across Australia and that they need to be abolished. This government is getting on with that task. By 1 July 2016 we will have abolished all taxation on insurance in the territory. That will be a fantastic achievement and an important signal about the value of tax reform.

It is important also in reforming taxation that the government continues to provide strong leadership on budget management. During the boom times in the last decade the government delivered a sustained period of surpluses. We put money aside for more difficult times, and these times are upon us now. While the government will continue to maintain a prudent approach to the budget, we need to have flexibility in responding to the negative decisions for Canberra that will be made by the Liberal Party. While remaining committed to returning the budget to balance in the longer



term, there is no doubt that the uncertain economic outlook and the Liberal Party's cuts to Canberra will demand a short-term focus on supporting the territory economy by generating jobs and providing opportunities for new investment in our city.

An important principle of the government's response has been to continue to provide services that our community deserves and expects. Our approach is in stark contrast to what you see in other states and territories where there has been slash-and-burn budgeting, a significant cut to the level of public services in conservative states, needlessly and unnecessarily cutting vital support to the most vulnerable in our community. Our approach is different; we are supporting the community through a range of programs, especially programs targeted at supporting our most vulnerable citizens.

We have also been getting on with the job of delivering new jobs into this economy through our business development strategy. The strategy outlines a vision for growth in the ACT economy, building on a long-term commitment from the government to continue to support the private sector to create jobs. The business development strategy was developed in close consultation with the local business community and has resulted in a number of actions that improve engagement between government and business even further. We continue our work in red tape reduction and in supporting local, small and medium size enterprises by giving them a positive weighting when tendering for government contracts. We have continued to cut payroll tax, making the territory the lowest taxing jurisdiction in the country for small and medium-sized businesses.

The government has also been proactively working in partnership with key sectors of the economy—most particularly the Chief Minister's work in the higher education portfolio, in ITC and in tourism development. We have established the Canberra innovation network. Through the 2020 tourism strategy, Visit Canberra is working to a target of an economic contribution of \$2.5 billion from the tourism industry into the ACT economy by 2020.

The work the Chief Minister has undertaken with the higher education institutions in the study Canberra initiative continues to build on the significant export growth that we are seeing in our higher education sector.

Jobs growth has been strong over the past decade. The territory had the lowest unemployment rate in the country at 3.4 per cent. Our participation rate is the second highest in the nation. We currently have an all-time record number of people in employment in the territory—more than 215,000. Over the last decade 35,800 new jobs have been added in our economy. So, on average, 10 new jobs have been created every day in Canberra for 10 years—10 new jobs every day for 10 years. More than 6,000 of those new jobs have been created in the education, the science and technology and the ICT sectors, which now employ more than 43,000 people.

We have a strong and growing tourism sector. Employment in the sector is growing faster than the national rate. Over the last decade 3,000 new jobs have been added there, an annual growth rate of 2.3 per cent. The sector is growing at more than twice the national rate and now directly employs nearly 15,000 Canberrans.

We have significantly diversified this economy, and the economy has grown significantly in the last decade. In spite of that, the commonwealth is and will always be a major player in the economy. That is the reason this city exists. The question is how the policies of the federal government will impact upon Canberra. This is where it comes down to a fundamental point: Canberra does better under Labor governments. Full stop. Everyone knows it.

The Liberal Party are about to wreak havoc upon this economy. We know it; they know it; the people of Canberra know it. The question is: do this mob opposite have the courage to stand up for this city and to stand up for economic development opportunities? Every indication from what we have heard this morning and what we have heard in the past few weeks is that, no, their preference is to sit on the sidelines, poke sticks at people, but make no meaningful contribution to the economic development prospects of this city.

This government will continue our focus on attracting new investment into the economy. It is more important now than it has been at any point in the last decade because the commonwealth will not be driving growth in this economy. (*Time expired.*)

**MR DOSZPOT** (Molonglo) (10.51): It is with pleasure that I rise to support the motion brought on for debate by Mr Hanson—namely, that the Assembly notes the opposition's ongoing engagement with Canberrans, community groups and businesses, and which then raises issues as priorities.

The motion lists a number of examples which we know are important: the state of disrepair of basic urban amenities—and this is one I get calls on every day, as do all of my colleagues; dysfunctional planning that is stifling city centres and doing little to protect our suburbs; housing availability and affordability; lack of support for business; the failures in our justice system; the slow access to health care, especially in emergency and surgery; and poor management of the economy. We know these issues are important because we are out every day talking to our constituents, talking to families, listening to their concerns and understanding their worries.

Of particular interest to me is that aspect of the motion that highlights education choice and standards, especially culture and behaviour. One could be excused for thinking this government's sole focus is only on those issues that are critical to ensuring the support of their Greens colleague. We debate at length the merits of solar and light rail. We want everyone else to pay for and accept the impact of wind farms so that Canberrans can tick a renewable energy target that some Canberrans have decided is important to them. We have legislation to ban piggeries, even though we do not have any. We only allow barn eggs to be laid in the territory. And it would come as no surprise to me to see a motion banning whaling on Lake Burley Griffin if that became a focus of interest to the Greens in this community.

We know this government will do anything to stay in power, and the Green will do and agree to anything to stay in the ministry.

**Mr Wall:** What about yesterday?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Exactly. Unfortunately, the victims of that self-centred indulgence are ordinary Canberrans who, week after week, see debate on light rail and wind farms, on piggeries and other things that do not matter, when all they want is good schools, reliable transport systems, good and reliable garbage services, clean streets, safe footpaths and affordable rates.

Only last Friday in a community consultation I received a number of examples and complaints from a constituent who was very concerned about the national and international issues that are taking up the time of this Assembly. She believed strongly that they should not be taking up the time of the Assembly, and she is right. Rather, I think our focus in the Assembly should be on the things that matter to the community in Canberra, and on things on which we can make a difference in this Assembly.

One of those, of course, is education, because good education is so much a fundamental building stone to life. Success in life starts with access to and availability of quality education. With quality education comes wider life choices.

In Canberra, we are blessed with a range of school systems. Parents have choices in what they wish for their children, and they clearly appreciate that. Only last week I was honoured to attend the opening of our newest non-government school, John Paul College. It was a great day and a joyous occasion. I know for those involved it was the culmination of a lot of hard work and persistence, and it is testament to the dedication and commitment of those who believe educational choice is important for Canberra families.

For those who are not aware, John Paul College faced enormous challenges when poor planning, slack environmental process and obfuscating bureaucracy resulted in unnecessary additional and substantial amounts of money. And who knows? It might be the last non-government school that actually gets to full operational mode, given the carry-on last year from certain sections when the minister exercised her rights as minister for education and approved three new non-government schools.

I can never understand why people who are so fervently supportive of public schools are so fervently opposed to any growth in non-government schools. Apart from the financial benefits of having a non-government school sector—and they are considerable, when you look at the amounts of money that go to each—it is about delivering what parents want, and that should be the focus of any government, irrespective of political persuasion.

In Canberra, more than any other jurisdiction in Australia, parents want choice. It is not uncommon for parents to choose a non-government preschool, a public primary school, a non-government high and a government college education. That is the strength of the ACT education system, and it is something that should be welcomed and promoted. Instead we see the minister, in my view unnecessarily, having to defer to new approval processes and seek support from groups like the ACT AEU and Save Our Schools. None of those groups, I would suggest, can have any claim to any particular knowledge of non-government schooling, but they have taken it upon themselves to demand that they be the arbiters of what options parents should have.

With the rapid growth in the Gungahlin region and with many public schools at or near capacity, I suggest that in years to come the ACT government will be relieved to have additional non-government schools like John Paul College, the expanding Burgmann college and others that are in the planning stages.

But that does not mean our government schools will lie dormant and neglected, because while we have many of our non-government schools at capacity, and with waiting lists even at the primary school level, we have similar situations in some of our public schools. I have visited and I have been approached, as has the minister, by parents about some schools with class sizes that are getting up above 25 consistently throughout the school. There are other schools, some geographically close to these at-capacity schools, that by comparison have much lower numbers, but parents choose not to send their child there.

It comes to parent choice and what parents feel is best for their child. That parental choice and range of key elements that go to the parents deciding the school for their child applies to both government and non-government schools. And what are the important factors for parents? Parents want to ensure, first and foremost, that their children will be educated in a safe and caring environment. It is not about which school has the most modern buildings or the biggest playground, or whether the playing area has a picket fence. They want to know that the school is a safe and caring environment. They want to know that the teachers are well trained, well supported and are able to continuously update and upskill their knowledge.

Parents want true engagement with the school community, not just a newsletter sent home in the schoolbag and a once-a-year parent-teacher interview lasting minutes, if the parent is lucky. They want a true partnership where the school community and the parent community are integrated and each supports the other.

When students move into high school, parents want to know that discipline will be there for those students who require it, and that the school community will be a tolerant community, but not at the expense of those students who want to learn. Why do we know this? Because parents tell us, and school census data supports that.

We see children in families moving in and out of the government and non-government sectors throughout the schooling, but the highest movement is for the first four years of high school. Here in Canberra we have the largest percentage of students of any jurisdiction in non-government schools, and it is discipline and school values that determine that choice.

That was no better demonstrated than several years ago, when the principal of one of our southern suburban public schools, who knew the importance of discipline, tried to enforce it. He had students who were cutting classes, leaving the school ground and going to local shops. He spoke to the local shopkeepers and got their support to not serve these students during school hours. That principal understood the importance of discipline and establishing an appropriate, respectful school culture. But those on the other side of the chamber did not, and claimed what the principal was trying to do breached the human rights of the students.

We asked of this government at the time: what about the rights of students to get an education? The government did not respond. So the human rights of students to be absent from school were endorsed by the minister of the day but the human rights of students to get an education were not. What hope did that principal have and what hope did parents of students at that school have in wanting their sons and daughters taught the importance of rules, the need to respect their school, when the government actively worked against him? Where was the support for that principal from his directorate? It was not there.

Those who rally against non-government schools need to remember that all the attributes and qualities that attract parents to choose a non-government school can be available at a government school, if only the government let them.

I have met some amazing teachers doing outstanding things in exceptional schools in the ACT. Some are in old, almost dysfunctional buildings; some are in land-locked, cramped settings; some are in sparkling new, state-of-the-art architectural showpieces. Some of these schools are in the government sector and some are in the non-government sector. (*Time expired.*)

**MR WALL** (Brindabella) (11.01): I am very pleased to speak to Mr Hanson's motion and also to address some of the issues regarding the amendment which has been put forward to this motion today.

The original motion, as it was presented this morning, I think represents the views of the majority of Canberrans that I speak to on a daily basis. Thirteen years is an exceptionally long time for any one party to be in government. What it does give, though, is the opportunity for that party to learn, listen and take heed of the issues that are facing Canberrans. The question that needs to be asked, however, is: what has changed over 13 years? I think it is safe to say now that every time this government comes out with an announcement to address an issue or an initiative to fix a problem that exists within the ACT, the issue is of their own creation.

Today I would like to put some focus on, particularly, the impact that 13 years of this Labor and Greens government has had on the small and medium business sector, the impact this government has had on small and medium business operators. These business operators in the ACT face a maze of red tape and bureaucracy before they can even open their doors and begin trading. Despite the rhetoric of this government, the red tape has not reduced; it seems to be increasing.

In 2012 PricewaterhouseCoopers undertook a survey of business which showed that 44 per cent of businesses spend between one and five hours completing and complying with government regulatory requirements. Seventy-two per cent of businesses say that the time that they are spending on red tape has increased in the past two years. Some 42.2 per cent estimated that they spent more than \$10,000 complying with government regulations in the previous 12 months. Some 59.7 per cent said that red tape had a moderate to major impact on their businesses and 54.3 per cent said that complying with government regulations has prevented them from making changes or growing or extending their businesses. That means jobs.

To put that into a local context, a residential builder in the ACT needs to have seven licences at a commonwealth level in order to operate a business in the construction industry. The state-based or territory-based regulation and licensing burden is 40 pieces of licensing and registration—40. That is one of the highest in the country. It shows just how prohibitive it can be to operate a business in the ACT.

Just yesterday we saw this government attempt to substantially increase the red tape and administrative burden on builders in the ACT by removing some of the exempt provisions when it comes to amendments to plans with a development application. For a government that continues to claim to be reducing the red tape burden on businesses, particularly in the construction industry, yesterday's attempt to pass the planning and development bill was simply an opportunity to whack it all back on—and then some.

The difficulties that exist within the construction industry are well known and have been well articulated in this place on numerous occasions. More broadly, small and medium business operators are sick and tired of the hurdles the government places in the way of them owning and operating their businesses, creating employment and creating opportunities.

Let me just highlight some of the difficulties from this term alone and issues that I have been involved in. We have the instance where ACT NOWaste sought to prevent businesses from opening an account at the tip. This places an administrative burden on businesses as far as their cash management goes, and there is a need to ensure that, should a driver or an employee of the business turn up at the tip to dispose of rubbish, cash or a credit card facility is made available to that individual to be able to dispose of rubbish at a government facility. Previously it had been a fairly straightforward and easy to operate system where you could open an account, as you would for any supplier or service, in the way that is generally undertaken in business, and get a monthly invoice. One simple payment to one organisation once a month is a much more commonsense approach to dealing with businesses in the territory.

Recently I have had businesses raise the issue of roadworks, which are often delayed and take considerable time to be undertaken. When they are conducted in business areas such as Fyshwick, the example that I am going to highlight, along Canberra Avenue, it can be exceptionally difficult for passers-by's vehicles to access parking in the area businesses operate from. There is an impact that the roadworks and road closures, as they have occurred on a rolling basis, have had for the turnover of these businesses. It means that cash flow is tightened and jobs are potentially lost. The government's response is: "We will delay completing the roadworks till later in the year so you can open your doors again." It does not stop the pain; it just moves it.

Recently I had a constituent raise the issue of commercial rates. Andrew Barr was very quick to say they were removing ineffective taxes. I am going to speak here of an instance in Braddon where a constituent owns a unit in a commercial complex. It has no electricity and no water or sewerage connections. It is not eligible for a garbage collection service. In fact, in size it is only 2.4 metres by about 5.4 metres—big enough to, say, park a car on. It is merely a space of concrete in the basement of a building; yet it is being levied almost \$1,900 a year in rates and charges—because it is

an efficient way of levying taxes! When you break that down to a per day basis, a per business day basis, that individual is paying \$8 a day in government rates simply for a car parking space. It is not that much dearer on the street. Where is the incentive for a business to do the right thing by their clients and by the community, and purchase their own car parking space for their clients—

**Mr Corbell:** Are you saying it does not have a value? Are you saying the car park does not have a value?

**MR WALL:** Of course it has, and the value is undertaken by the owner. They are paying mortgage fees on it.

*Mr Corbell interjecting—*

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Mr Corbell, you may speak later.

**MR WALL:** Mr Corbell is interjecting that the car park does not have value. Of course it has value.

**Mr Hanson:** Don't mislead us.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson!

*Mr Corbell interjecting—*

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Mr Corbell!

**Mr Hanson:** Madam Deputy Speaker, you just asked Mr Corbell not to interject. He is continuing to interject, but you are calling me out. I would ask that you apply that.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson, I do not need you to tell me how to manage affairs from the Speaker's chair and I would have you not call across the chamber that Mr Corbell is misleading.

**MR WALL:** Can we stop the clock, please.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Stop the clock. I did, in fact, ask Mr Corbell twice not to interject.

**Mr Hanson:** And he ignored you.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Do not call across the chamber that someone is misleading. I would like you to withdraw that implication, Mr Hanson. I would like you to withdraw that implication that Mr Corbell is misleading.

**Mr Hanson:** There was no implication; what I said is, "Don't mislead us."

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** That is an implication for the character of the member. I would like you to withdraw.

**Mr Hanson:** I withdraw.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you.

**MR WALL:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. And in response to Mr Corbell's interjection: of course the car parking space has got value. It is a value that the purchaser of it is paying—obviously, interest to the bank. The unimproved value that the government recognises, though, is only \$4,000. To be levied almost 50 per cent of the unimproved capital value of that space in rates in one year is simply unconscionable.

One of the biggest issues affecting the ACT economy is the attraction of new business and investment into the territory. We are all too familiar with the issues surrounding the swim school at Calwell, Kingswim, where this government stood in the way by imposing a six-figure fine on the landholder, preventing him from investing out of his own pocket into community infrastructure that will only benefit residents of Tuggeranong. It is beyond all doubt that this government simply does not understand the way to attract investment into this territory.

Just this week I was talking to a constituent who is opening a go-kart facility in Fyshwick. They have been going through regulatory hurdle after hurdle for the last 18 months trying to get this facility open. It is a massive investment coming into Canberra by local business people at a time when the Treasurer says, "Canberra business owners are not willing to step up to the plate with investment." These individuals have made an investment in excess of \$1 million in opening a facility, yet the government has continued to stand in their way, as far as shop fit-out approvals, refit and rezoning have been concerned, in getting this business to operate.

I will close off just very quickly by highlighting an article in today's paper. There is an announcement that IKEA is coming to Canberra. Whilst I, like many people, share the joy and excitement that such a large and versatile retailer is coming into Canberra, we also need to take note and consider the implication that such a large-box multinational will have on small, locally owned family businesses in the ACT that operate in the existing space. You only need to drive through Fyshwick or Mitchell to see the furniture retailers that we have here, not to mention the soft furnishings and home decorating businesses that are all going to be significantly impacted, at a time when the economy is very tough, simply by having a behemoth move in with a tax grant or a waiver. Where is the assistance for the small operator in this town?

**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) (11.11): I am very pleased to speak to the amendment proposed by my colleague the Chief Minister because it gives me the opportunity to highlight the big picture challenges that we face as a community and that, I will argue, the government has taken substantive steps to address.

The biggest challenge is, of course, our growing population. Our city continues to grow. Even if there is an impact, which undoubtedly there will be, from the vicious



and regressive budget that is now being put to bed by Tony Abbott and the Liberals, we know that our population, because of its size and the level of births that are occurring in our city, will continue to grow. And other factors, such as household formation, will drive demand for more housing, more services and more facilities.

This is a big challenge for us as a government. As a responsive government, we are acting, placing them at the forefront of our policy agenda and addressing these challenges to strategic and statutory planning action and investments for the future. Planning has a critical role to play in helping our city to develop as a prosperous, healthy, safe and sustainable place. Our centres and our suburbs, and the social and economic infrastructure that underpins them, are an important focus for everyone in Canberra.

That is why we, as a government, have put in place a comprehensive policy setting to respond to these issues and to address and guide our decision-making on these important challenges of population growth and the demands that come with it. There are documents like the *ACT planning strategy*; the implementation of the city plan; transport for Canberra; and action plan 2, which outlines our response to the greenhouse gas profile of our city. All of these are critical policy frameworks established by this government to meet the challenges and needs of the future.

Community involvement is important for good urban integrated planning. The government has a comprehensive consultation regime through which various planning proposals are assessed—as well as individual development proposals, of course. The government engages with key stakeholders—individually, face to face, as well as through forums such as the Planning and Development Forum and peak industry and professional groups.

The *Planning strategy* itself is the overarching policy document to guide the future development of our city. It focuses on a more sustainable pattern of growth. As our city grows in terms of population, the urban area faces pressures. We can either grow in a smart way or we can grow in a dumb way. We can either simply continue to push more and more suburbs out onto the urban edge—with all the challenges and problems that presents, environmentally, socially and economically—or we can focus on more growth and more housing being accommodated in existing centres; we can do it the smart way. We can have smart growth in our centres, which means there are more people on the street, more people walking and cycling, more people using public transport, and greater convenience for citizens, so they are close to their jobs, closer to their shops and services, closer to cultural activities and able to spend more time in the active life of the city, rather than being stuck in the car doing the commute.

Those are the challenges for our city, and we have a comprehensive framework to address it—none more so, perhaps, than the city plan document itself, which delivers on a key objective of the *ACT planning strategy* to create a more vibrant, active and 24-hour city centre. It is designed to bring new life and impetus to the city centre, and to drive and inform individual policy decisions about new facilities, new services, new development and better public spaces.

The plan identifies five priority projects for immediate commencement.

There is a transport and movement study to develop options to reduce through-traffic in the city centre. That is one of the problems with our city centre. It is cut in half by a six-lane freeway. That presents real challenges and problems—for the unity of the city, for the liveability and walkability of the city, and for life on the street in the city centre.

There is an urban design framework to guide high quality buildings and capital works across the city, particularly gateway sites around City Hill and the iconic Sydney and Melbourne buildings. Projects like capital metro, which I will come to shortly, also give us a great opportunity to galvanise and drive change in precincts like the Sydney and Melbourne buildings area.

There is an economic development analysis to underpin development, redevelopment and reuse options in the city centre.

There is the big redevelopment of the Allawah, Bega and Currong flats, to provide more homes, more accommodation, close to the heart of the city centre—close to great public spaces like Glebe Park, close to jobs, close to services like theatres and cinemas, close to cultural facilities and restaurants. And there are big projects like city to the lake to better connect the city to its best address, Lake Burley Griffin, and to provide potentially for new facilities, such as convention and aquatic facilities, Canberra Theatre Centre facilities and potentially a new city stadium.

This highlights the long-term planning this government is putting in place to drive and accommodate growth, with more people and more housing, and ask how we do that in a sustainable manner and in a manner that creates a better city for everyone.

The government is also strongly focused on transport and integrating transport with land use planning. Transport for Canberra integrates land use planning with transport planning, with the objective of creating a more compact city where we see more cycling, more walking, more public transport and better service delivery so that people do not have to be locked into a two, three or even four-car household. This is costly for households.

We hear those opposite criticise the government about not being focused on cost of living. One of the biggest savings that you could make for households is to reduce their reliance on the private motor vehicle. The up-front costs, the fuel costs, the registration costs and the maintenance costs all of those things are a big impost on families. If we can reduce the number of cars that families need to have, if there are better alternatives so that not every journey has to be undertaken by car, that saves households money. It also saves the environment, by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and it means that potentially more people are on the street, creating a more active, more vibrant street life in the type of city centre that I think everyone here aspires to.

I turn to the issue of sustainability. The Chief Minister's amendment highlights that the government has a strong program to create a more sustainable city. I have talked about that in the context of land use and transport planning, but this government is also showing leadership on the issue of climate change adaptation and mitigation. Our policies have the support of over 80 per cent of households surveyed.

We know that Canberrans expect this government, the ACT government, regardless of its political colour, to take action on climate change, to mitigate the impacts of our city's emissions on the environment and also to make sure our city is adapting to a change in climate. Over 80 per cent of households support that. The only people who do not support that would appear to be those on the other side of this chamber. We know that it has the overwhelming support of Canberrans. They support strong action on climate change; they support the ACT government taking action; and they support programs like the government's large-scale renewable energy plans.

The government is focused on reducing household costs through schemes like the energy efficiency improvement scheme, a scheme opposed by those opposite but a scheme that delivers savings to households of around \$200 to \$300 over the life of the scheme. How is it that those opposite oppose laws that save households money on their energy costs? It is simply extraordinary. It shows that they just do not know, do not understand or do not care about the issue of helping households to reduce their energy costs through schemes like the energy efficiency scheme as well as supporting reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

Then there are projects like our large-scale renewable energy projects—supporting large-scale solar, helping to develop large-scale wind, helping to develop waste-to-energy facilities. All of these drive a program that shifts our city to renewable energy for its future, reducing its exposure to costs and reducing our greenhouse gas emissions.

These are the plans and opportunities that this government is driving, and I commend the amendment to the Assembly.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for Ageing) (11.21): I am very pleased to have the opportunity to discuss in the Assembly today Canberra's real priorities, courtesy of the motion of Mr Hanson. What I do know from the many Canberrans that I talk to, as we all do—this is not exclusively the domain of the Liberal Party; we all speak to many of our constituents right across the city on a regular basis—is that we have a very diverse community with a range of priorities. I think that to make generalisations about the inner and outer suburbs and priorities is a terrible generalisation. What I find is an incredible level of diversity. When one goes into suburban shopping centres or doorknocking in the suburbs, you come across the full spectrum of issues. You are never quite sure what issues are going to come up when you chat to Canberrans across the spectrum.

Certainly, my priorities are ensuring that we have a sustainable and fair city, and that is sustainable and fair economically, environmentally and socially. What that means is that there are a whole range of areas that we need to address, and that is the nature of the ACT government. We need to deliver on day-to-day services, the basic municipal services that a local council delivers on, as well as being able to tackle the bigger picture policies—the larger scale issues and some of the social issues that are important to members of our community, and that is a full spectrum of issues. I have

no qualms with the fact that the government that I am a part of actually seeks to address that full spectrum of issues—from the work that I know TAMS staff are out there doing on the ground every single day through to the larger scale policy issues of tackling climate change, playing our part in the Murray-Darling Basin and a range of other significant social, economic and environmental issues.

While I appreciate the scrutiny role that the opposition have rightly cast for themselves, what I do not appreciate is the constant disparaging of our city that we see coming from members on the opposition benches. Certainly, if you go to the text of Mr Hanson's motion it is an extraordinarily long list of negatives. I think that Mr Hanson's complaints about the disrepair of our city simply do not stack up to the reality of our town.

I have little doubt that Mr Hanson and his colleagues are out there doing their best to tell Canberrans how terrible things are. While I do not pretend that every last street corner in this town is spit polished, anyone who has travelled outside this fair city will know that Canberra is one of the cleanest, safest and easiest places to live in the world. We are a special city, a planned city, a bush capital and a city that has just celebrated our centenary. There will inevitably be some growing pains, but with vision and commitment I believe we can help steer Canberra into a prosperous and sustainable second century.

There are a whole range of areas that are raised in Mr Hanson's motion and in the Chief Minister's amendment. I would just like to speak to a few of them. When it comes to urban amenity and city services, the TAMS Directorate, for which I am responsible, plays a significant part in looking after the amenity and the feel of this city. TAMS city services are responsible for a range of core municipal and territory services, including city-wide cleaning and the management of our trees and green spaces. They have a whole range of work, whether it is looking after the skate parks across the city, the shopping centres, the playgrounds, the urban forest or mowing. All of these things are on the daily work list of those staff.

What I do know is that city services do a fantastic job delivering the kind of clean, green, liveable city that Canberrans are rightly proud of and love to live in. I also know that these staff have real pride in our city. I know, from talking to them, that they really want Canberra to be in as good a state as it can be. Now, does that mean there are not maintenance problems from time to time? Of course there are. We live in a sprawling city with a great level of infrastructure and things break; things get overgrown. That is why the government has put in place things like fix my street on Canberra Connect and mobile apps where people can report things from the very location the problem exists so that we can send staff out to fix them. As the letters I get regularly from my constituents underline, when problems get drawn to the government's attention they get fixed, and that is as it should be.

Transport came up in a number of the discussions today, and I would like to spend a bit of time on that. Canberrans enjoy access to over 2,200 kilometres of footpaths as they walk around our beautiful city. In the last year TAMS maintained over 56,000 square metres of footpath, delivering what is, I think, on the whole, a high quality urban infrastructure for Canberra's population.

Mr Hanson talked about “the forgotten suburbs”. He was very conspicuous, in rattling off his list of the suburbs that matter, in leaving out the inner north and the inner south, as if they are not real parts of Canberra and the people who live in those suburbs do not go to school, catch the bus or have broken footpaths. Interestingly, though, Mr Doszpot put a motion on the notice paper today—it did not make the cut of Liberal Party business, but he did put it on the notice paper—about the state of footpaths in Canberra’s older suburbs. He put the view that some of them have cracks and uneven surfaces, and that is undoubtedly the case. Right across the city footpaths are affected by vehicles driving on them, often private residents driving on them, and tree roots having an impact on them. This is the job that TAMS is doing, and that is why there is an extensive program of works.

Mr Doszpot then goes on to call on the government to urgently prioritise the older suburbs for improvements. So which is it? Is it the forgotten suburbs that Mr Hanson cares about or the inner suburbs that Mr Doszpot cares about? Which bit of parochialism are we meant to respond to here? I can assure the chamber that the government is here for all of Canberra, whether it is Conder, Crace, Bonython, Banks or Bruce. You name the suburb. It does not matter from where you send in a complaint to the government; the government will go out and fix it—not just in the parochial areas and the ones that Liberal Party members have decided to focus on today. I think the Liberal Party need to have a little party room discussion about whether it is the inner suburbs or the outer suburbs that they want to focus on and which of their motions they are going to bring forward to try and be parochial about and claim a political score. In the meantime, the government will get on with looking after all of Canberra.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson, that is entirely inappropriate.

**MR RATTENBURY:** When it comes to cyclepaths, Canberrans enjoy almost 800 kilometres of on and off-road cyclepaths that allow easy access right across the city. Again, we are working to improve that network of both footpaths and cycleways because the environmental and physical health benefits of cycling and walking are well known and much appreciated by people in this city. I certainly receive many representations from people about these things, and that is why we have that program of improvement.

When it comes to roads, it is important to put our road network in its full context. Firstly, despite the claims that the opposition sometimes promote, the ACT has an excellent road network. It is widely regarded as the best road network in any Australian jurisdiction, a fact confirmed by a recent Engineers Australia report which ranked our road network more highly than those of any other state or territory. We have a lot of roads, we have wide and largely uncongested roads, and we have good quality roads.

In the last financial year TAMS resurfaced 610,000 square metres of road. TAMS will continue to roll out that program of road maintenance year on year. In fact, the agency

will spend around \$14 million maintaining roads and car parks this financial year alone, not to mention the money that is being spent rolling out capital upgrades such as the Belconnen to city transit way, the Parkes Way widening and the Cotter Road duplication.

When it comes to housing and housing affordability, as part of our parliamentary agreement ACT Labor and the Greens are currently constructing common ground—a new housing model for the most vulnerable people experiencing homelessness in the ACT, providing 20 new permanent homes for people currently experiencing primary homelessness, as well as 20 new affordable rental homes. On top of this, there are a range of other measures through the affordable housing action plan. Just recently I have been able to implement changes to the affordable rental scheme to particularly acknowledge the vulnerability of older women in our community who often find themselves, later in life, with very limited assets and with limited income and find themselves particularly vulnerable in the rental market.

Again, we are looking at very practical day-to-day issues. Under the scheme we had and the way it had played out, tenants found that through changes in the rental market they were being unfairly squeezed. The government has responded to that by providing a new tiered rent system that meets those cost of living and affordability issues that some of our more vulnerable Canberrans are facing.

There are a whole range of other areas that are addressed in the motion. We have talked a lot in recent days about corrections and the Alexander Maconochie Centre. As part of that and as part of that announcement I have been very clear that the government will be actively working to not just deliver bricks and mortar at the prison, as necessary as that is. There is also the work that we will undertake to keep our community safer through reduced crime. This will take shape in the coming months as the Attorney-General and I develop a new justice reform strategy aimed at reducing reoffending and keeping the community safe.

The strategy will seek to provide a more comprehensive framework to the good programs already underway, such as through-care, restorative justice, drug and alcohol diversion programs and more intensive community-based supervision orders. Basically, we are committed to ensuring that we are not just investing in the necessary infrastructure at the prison but working hard to ensure that as few people as possible are going to jail, which, of course, has a benefit for the rest of the community, by minimising the crime rate.

What I found particularly stood out in Mr Hanson's motion, and it was a glaring omission, was that he made absolutely no reference to the natural environment as a priority. The ecosystem, which we all rely on to provide fresh air to breathe, fresh water to drink and fresh food to eat, did not rate a mention at all in his list of priorities. That really is an incredible oversight that is not in tune with the attitude of Canberrans. They know that we need to take responsibility for sustainability and for ensuring that we protect our environment, and not just all the things that were listed in Mr Hanson's motion.

The areas that Mr Hanson listed are important, but a government needs to be able to undertake more than just 10 priorities. It needs to be able work on a range of areas and

deliver right across the city. Things like urban amenity, housing, health care, education, business, transport, justice, community services and the economy are all dependent on the natural environment; all human endeavour is underwritten by the natural world. As has been said by me and others in this place, without an environment, there is no economy, there is no amenity and there is no list of priorities.

The ACT has one of the only greenhouse targets that are consistent with the science, the science that tells us how the planet needs to transition to renewable energy. I am actually very proud of the work that has been done over the past five years to ensure that the ACT has good climate change policies—the 2008 parliamentary agreement, the Assembly work in the last term, the legislation that has been passed to deliver us the large scale feed-in tariff scheme and our greenhouse gas reduction target so that we can play our part as citizens of Canberra and also as citizens of this planet to ensure that we hand over to our children and our children's children an environment equally as good as the one that we have been fortunate enough to live in.

The 90 per cent renewable energy target will deliver. Mr Doszpot stood up before and said we are happy just to ship wind turbines across the border. There is no wind resource in the ACT, so that is where they go, but where does Mr Doszpot think his energy comes from? It comes from the Latrobe Valley or the Hunter region where coal-fired power stations are pumping out pollution at a rate of knots. We saw a fire break out at the Morwell coal-fired power station this year. It had an incredible impact on the community. Energy comes from somewhere. That lazy analysis that Mr Doszpot just stood up and gave really demeans his own presentation in this place.

I will not be supporting Mr Hanson's motion today. I will be supporting the amendment put forward by the Chief Minister. I think it paints a more rounded picture of the role that the ACT government—any ACT government of any political persuasion—must play. I think it presents a more honest picture of the way this government is seeking to approach that full set of priorities, trying to deliver for all Canberrans, recognising the vast array of interests, priorities and different views that this community holds and delivering services for everybody in this city—not just in Mr Hanson's so-called forgotten suburbs but every suburb in this city; every suburb in this city that enjoys bus services, parks, open spaces, garbage collection, the work of Parks and City Services, the rangers and the health services. The government is committed to delivering and doing the best job we can for the residents of Canberra.

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (11.36): I rise today to support Mr Hanson's motion and support his call for the government to focus on the priorities that truly matter to the residents of Canberra. I spend a lot of my time engaging with members of the community, talking with constituents in my electorate and throughout Canberra one on one or at public meetings and fora, listening to them and their concerns. Today I want to share with you a little bit about what I have found during these consultations.

It has been made clear to me by my constituents that the government have some of their priorities wrong. Families in Tuggeranong are not interested in having the highest renewable energy targets in the country, nor are they concerned about the desire some ministers have to be the most progressive green government in the country. These people are working mothers and fathers, self-funded retirees, single parents, young people and people with disability. They are people who work hard to

get ahead and just want the simple things done well. They want to be able to be able to push a pram down the footpath without it getting stuck in a hole and to drive their car on a road without having to avoid potholes. They want to drive through their suburb and find it clean and tidy, the grass mown and maintenance up-kept.

Canberrans want their suburbs to be clean and safe. They want to be able to get to work without too much hassle and without the bulk of their pay cheque going in parking and child care. They want houses to be more affordable and for the increasing rate of homelessness to be addressed. One of the ways to do that is by decreasing housing stress. They want the government to focus on delivering these basics. They want public transport to be reasonable and accessible, but the people I have spoken to, in the main, do not want us to spend over \$600 million on light rail which will not service even 15 per cent of our territory.

As the shadow minister for housing, I have been listening to the concerns our citizens have for housing in the ACT. Just last week the housing affordability snapshot was released, which showed that there were practically no affordable rental options for people in the ACT or Queanbeyan on low incomes. That is our students, our pensioners, those who work for the minimum wage, those who are on disability pensions or Newstart. All of the people in this low income category are under enormous housing stress in the ACT private rental market and they want some of the pressure relieved.

The ACT has the second highest rate of homelessness in Australia, second only to the Northern Territory. This sad situation is a flow-on effect of housing being just so out of reach and unaffordable for low income earners. Then, of course, there needs to be serious consideration given to the impact of the rates increases which the government are implementing. How is a self-funded retiree or pensioner on a fixed income going to be able to make these increasing rates payments in the future?

It is true that we have high average incomes in the ACT, but there are also a lot of people in our community facing extreme hardship. They need support and strong, reliable assistance from the government. Instead, the government is focusing on policies that are not making life easier for those struggling in our suburbs. Residents want things like the water quality in Lake Tuggeranong improved, not monitored for another two years, because monitoring has already been happening for around 10 years. They would actually like to see some action taking place to improve the water quality of the lake, or at least a definite commitment that it will be improved soon; whereas currently they are left hanging as to whether improvements to the water quality will take place at all.

Residents and business owners want the Tuggeranong and Lanyon town centres improved, updated and beautified. Residents support recycling and, to enhance that, they want green bins. They want their footpaths and parks improved. This is, I acknowledge, a constant balancing act for directorates such as TAMS, and I must acknowledge their responsiveness to many of the issues I have raised through the minister. But residents do have a reasonable expectation of provision of services in return for their rising rates bills. Residents do want to look at renewable energy sources—I agree with Minister Corbell on this—but not at any cost and not when it actually reduces their amenity.



Residents that I speak to appreciate and acknowledge our beautiful natural environment. Many of them play their own part in improving and maintaining the environment and good environmental policies. But, as I have said before in this place, environmental, social and economic policies must be equally balanced to ensure our communities are sustainable.

In short, the residents of Tuggeranong, Lanyon and south Woden, not to mention rural areas such as Tharwa and Uriarra, feel that their areas, their issues, are being and have been neglected or ignored by this government. To me, based on feedback from residents, these are the types of important issues that really make a difference to members of our community.

The government should be focusing on the issues which affect families every day, the families—whether they are in Tuggeranong, Woden, Belconnen, Gungahlin; anywhere in the ACT—who are working hard, yet feel like they simply cannot get ahead. The residents of Canberra want the government to make this the best place to raise a family, earn a living and get ahead.

Today I support Mr Hanson's call for the government to focus on the real priorities, the things that would make life easier day to day for the hardworking families in the suburbs. I, along with my colleagues, ask the government to reassess what they are focusing on and start to focus on what matters to our city and its citizens.

**MRS JONES** (Molonglo) (11.42): I am pleased to add my voice to support Mr Hanson's motion on Canberra's real priorities—priorities that have been not only forgotten but neglected by this government. Despite what the Chief Minister says, we are not here to support you, the government; we are here to represent Canberrans and another way of governing, to ensure that there is proper process, to ward off mistruths, Orwellian newspeak, and to ward off any corruption which could occur. That is our role on this side of the chamber. It is not to be belittled or dismissed. It is a tough job which we are committed to.

Mr Hanson, Mr Coe and the other members of this team have already spoken about their concerns for Canberra—concerns about the way basic services are being ignored, concerns about the increasing cost of living in our city, concerns about the lack of affordable housing across Canberra and concerns about waiting times for people in our medical facilities.

This government have taken their eyes off some of the most important priorities for Canberra, the things that affect us as we work to have a home, to build a family and to get ahead in life. As a local member for Molonglo, I spend a lot of time talking to people across my diverse and varied electorate, from the most northern and newer suburbs in Gungahlin to the more established areas of the inner north, south, Narrabundah, Woden and Weston Creek. There are several key issues people continually raise with me.

First, some parts of Canberra are in a state of disrepair. The local shops should be the heart of any suburban community, a place where people can meet, do their shopping

and build community. Instead many of these local shops have been allowed to run down and become something of an eyesore for the community. They should be a place which people want to repaint and revamp. They should be at the heart of a vibrant community. As a smart community we should look at those shops and see real potential for a stronger, better and more positive local shopping zone where children can play and parents and the elderly can meet and experience community.

These areas in some cases are in need of basic maintenance and certainly attention. These local shops should be a community hub. There should be an environment in which people are happy to gather. Instead people have told me that they feel embarrassed and stressed and they do not want to visit their local shops, which is hardly helpful for local small business owners struggling to survive.

Then there is the ongoing problem of derelict petrol station sites. Thirteen unlucky suburbs have fenced-off and boarded-up sites that once housed a petrol station. Many of these sites have been left derelict for over a decade, whilst this government continues to collect money from ratepayers who have no choice but to live alongside sites that look like downtown Detroit. There should have been action years ago. These sites could have been landscaped, even without building on them. It does not have to be an expensive matter. There are solutions. But a government has to try to find them in order to do so.

Local children's playgrounds in the suburbs are also somewhat lacking. The minister stated in November last year that TAMS has a regular program of playground safety inspections which incorporates assessing maintenance, vandalism or cleanliness across the 507 playgrounds. I do not dispute that, but no effort is put into ensuring that equipment is age appropriate or that there are some fenced parts to ensure the safety of children and the mental health of parents and carers.

Many people speak to me about their concerns about graffiti. Up and down Hindmarsh Drive, for example, on fences, on the sides of buildings, even on the cliff-like rock faces, there is graffiti. It seems never to be removed by the government, and there is not even a policy to reduce the attractiveness of graffiti, as far as I can find. Many residents in Weston Creek tell me how they have worked to be able to buy a home in the area, only to find that they are facing, out their front door, fences covered in graffiti, or they have to drive past large sections of the suburb that have been spray-painted and are never cleaned up.

People have given up on this government being able to do better in this area. But I still say to them that I believe that governments can. I believe that there should be systems which encourage cleaning up graffiti, even if there are community groups involved. I do not believe that community groups would mind being involved. But it needs to be addressed.

The government have a dysfunctional approach to planning as well. This government are so focused on city to the lake and their grand plan that they are continually forgetting the front door to the bus stop or the front door to the local shops.

While we are talking about what could be done better, some older residents are suffering in my electorate from a green ideology which now controls TAMS decisions.

If an elderly couple lives in fear of limbs falling on them from ageing trees or have what should be their peaceful years ruined by the constant drop of nuts falling on their roof from older trees then flexibility should be applied to their applications to have trees pruned. If a green solution is a top priority, there should be an option for them to replace an old tree with a new tree in another location, or even two new trees. The mental health of Canberrans suffering because of ageing trees should be a high priority for this government.

Need I raise the Narrabundah tyre slasher? Residents of Narrabundah should be served by a police minister who is there to protect them from such harassment and intimidation, exerted upon them over decades. More can be done. More should be done.

On education, I am a big supporter of parents' choice. I support parents being free to instil their values into the next generation. I believe the Canberra Liberals respect that right as a higher right than the right to force popular political ideology onto children. It is very important to me, and to many who have supported me in this place.

I support this motion. Far from theories or platitudes, it is a blueprint for a Liberal government for Canberra and it will serve Canberra well. I commend Jeremy for his statements last week, for his motion today and for the service he does to our community as a warrior for another kind of government for our city.

**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) (11.49): Can I say at the start that we will not be supporting Mr Hanson's motion.

**Mr Hanson:** That is why you have moved an amendment, minister.

**MS BURCH:** And a solid, sound amendment it is too. This motion reminds me of this quote made earlier this year:

Oppositions complain: governments decide. It's much easier to complain than it is to decide.

I think that quote resonates very succinctly and represents the tone of Mr Hanson's motion. Governments decide, and that is what we are doing. We are getting on with the business of making this city better, to improve the lives of ACT residents and to ensure that we leave this place better than we found it.

It was interesting that Mr Hanson started his comments by referring to Menzies. I am surprised he made that reference to Menzies. The Canberra Liberals hold Mr Menzies in such high regard that not one of them attended the unveiling of the statue of Menzies that this government commissioned. It was on purely ideological grounds that they did not attend, as they oppose all public art. Their obsession with opposition to public art was too great for them to even tip their hat to Menzies. I find it quite extraordinary that they hold him in such high regard that it is a matter of, "Please don't let me be found standing next to a statue."

Let me reject outright the contention in Mr Hanson's motion that the ACT lacks choice in education, that education standards are slipping or that this government is not keenly aware of supporting those in our community. In fact, I thought the Liberals had agreed with me when Mr Doszpot said that ACT education enjoys a favourable reputation around Australia, and that that is well deserved.

Mr Hanson's motion makes reference to choice in schooling, much like the previous motion that was brought to this place. Those opposite seem very concerned about ensuring that Canberra families have choice in education—and I support choice in education, absolutely. Indeed the ACT government is committed to ensuring that all students in the ACT have the best chance in life through a quality education, regardless of which school they attend and regardless of what sector that school is in.

However, there is one big obstacle to making sure that all children get a chance to succeed, and I believe that is the Liberal Party, represented here by the Liberal opposition and nationally by the federal government. If those opposite want to support the choice made by families for education then they would get behind the national education reform agenda. They would support NERA, which ensures support for all students. NERA recognises and supports choice. It recognises and supports those most in need. Yet there is only one group in this place that has consistently voted against support of choice and supporting need, and that is the Canberra Liberals.

The ACT government does support choice. ACT families have the option of a number of engaging learning settings to meet a wide variety of needs. Parents can choose a small school, a larger school, a school devoted to early education or a school which caters for students from P to 10, special education schools, single-sex schools, religious schools, and, our ACT success story, the separate colleges for our year 11 and 12 students. This extensive choice places students and their families at the centre of our education system and is designed to produce successful outcomes for all students attending ACT schools.

Our children deserve access to quality education that welcomes parents in learning. We also recognise that all schools, regardless of what suburb or sector they belong to, deserve to be supported. As I said, the biggest hurdle for that in the ACT is the Canberra Liberals.

Let me refer to a motion that Mr Gentleman brought to this place in March. In his motion he noted the failure of the commonwealth government to provide funding certainty by guaranteeing the six years of funding set out in the NERA. The motion called on the government to continue to implement the NERA to achieve a positive outcome for students in the ACT, sought the commonwealth government's commitment to the full six years of funding, and called on the government to invest in education in the ACT to provide better opportunities and outcomes for our children and to work towards the continuing improvement of results for ACT students.

You would think, having listened to all of them this morning, that that motion would have been unanimously supported. Indeed everyone on that side—Mr Coe; Mr Doszpot, and the opposition was led by Mr Doszpot in that debate; Mrs Dunne;

Mr Hanson; Mrs Jones; Ms Lawder; Mr Smyth; and Mr Wall—voted that down. So the Canberra Liberals do not support this government working towards continuing improvement of results for students. They do not support a motion that calls on this government to invest in education in the ACT to provide better opportunities for students. That was indeed a telling moment when the Canberra Liberals, with Mr Doszpot getting the first call, said no.

There has also been talk by those opposite about our children deserving access to a quality education and having parents and children at the centre of our school system. Indeed that is something that I have stood for since I took this position some 15, 16 or 18 months ago. Children and families should be at the centre of education. My goal is to recognise the importance of families' involvement in their children's education and to continue to improve engagement options with parents and carers.

That goes to a project that I announced earlier this year. The government is partnering with the non-profit Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, ARACY, in a two-year project progressing parental engagement in the ACT across our public, Catholic and independent schools. This project is a collaboration between the ACT Education and Training Directorate, the Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools.

It will be delivered in two phases—firstly, defining parental engagement and key indications of positive parental engagement and, secondly, testing across selected schools and coming up with some real tools, some real, live information and tools, to help families. So I do support choice made by families, and I again call on the Canberra Liberals to do the same and to support NERA.

There was mention of the issue of standards. I do not quite know where they are getting this information from because our standards are high. The ACT is the highest performing jurisdiction in the country and our performance continues to improve. We lead the nation and our NAPLAN results show that.

Also, there was much commentary around the culture in schools. The statistics for public schools regarding our approach to reducing suspensions, for example, show an improvement. In 2013, compared to 2012, the number of suspensions decreased by 8.5 per cent. The number of suspension days decreased by 13.7 per cent. The number of students suspended decreased by 12.7 per cent.

Just this week, in relation to our gifted and talented policy, the fact sheets were launched. The Gifted and Talented Support Group said:

This initiative combined with other initiatives under the ... Gifted and Talented Policy will lead to improved learning outcomes for gifted students enrolled in ACT public schools.

The CEO of the Catholic Education Office, in terms of parental engagement, said that the project would “provide research and practical engagement strategies that will ultimately benefit all children—no matter where they go to school in the ACT”. In relation to the other announcement, about having the best teachers in our schools with the recruitment of teachers in the top 30 per cent, Glenn Fowler of the AEU said:

Now ACT public school teachers when this goes ahead will be the best qualified in the country, will they be the best teacher in the country—we don't know that yet, but we do know they will be the best qualified in the country and that's an ambition we support.

I would like to go on but I am sure I will be cut off in the next 10 seconds. This is clearly a state that invests in education across the sector. All the statistics that we can bring to this place show that we perform well, that suspensions are decreasing and that our families are involved. *(Time expired.)*

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella) (11.59): I rise this morning to support the amendment, but I will not be supporting Mr Hanson's original motion. However, it was really interesting to hear Mr Hanson's opening speech. He said that he is in power because of the people that put him here. I would remind the Assembly that while he has been elected, the Canberra Liberals are not in power. Why is that the case? It is because Canberrans know what it is like to have the Liberals in power.

It was also interesting to hear that he reflected on Mr Howard and Mr Menzies. Mr Menzies, of course, was the Liberal prime minister that introduced conscription and who also sent our troops to Vietnam. I can remember the demonstrations here in Canberra very clearly. Mr Howard, of course, was the one that brought Canberra into a recession. He sacked 24,000 public servants—

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson, you are going to have ample opportunity very shortly to be able to respond to the various comments that members have made when they have been on their feet. I ask you to respect that and to listen to Mr Gentleman in silence. Mr Gentleman.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I reiterate: John Howard sacked 24,000 public servants and brought the ACT into recession. It is the first time—

*Mr Wall interjecting—*

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Stop the clock, please. Sit down, Mr Gentleman. Mr Wall, I have just finished asking that members respect the fact that Mr Gentleman is on his feet. Allow him to speak without interruption. As soon as he started to talk again, you interrupted. I do not want to have to warn people.

As Madam Speaker said yesterday, we do not want to have to continually warn people, hopefully, but in the very short time I have got left in this chair I might have to. Mr Gentleman, you may continue. You may want to reiterate your points again.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I will reiterate. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. John Howard sacked 24,000 public servants and brought the ACT into recession. Under the Liberals, house price in Canberra dropped for the first time in decades. It was an incredibly difficult time. I remember it well.

There was an article about the Liberal Party in power from Noel Towell in the *Canberra Times*. He says, “Planned coalition cuts to the public service could plunge Canberra into an economic nightmare worse than the downturn of the mid-1990s.” According to the Australia Institute, even the best-case scenario of the coalition’s intentions to downsize the bureaucracy “carries a high likelihood of pitching the capital into recession with knock off job losses felt through the local economy”. Dr Denniss calculates that as many as 5,500 non-public servants would join the dole queue. He says that the city would bear the full brunt of the public service job cuts—12,000, he says. That was repeated by the shadow treasurer at the time, Joe Hockey, who is now the Treasurer and who will bring down the budget next week.

According to Dr Denniss, the worst-case scenario would see \$694 million ripped out of household spending each year in the capital. This would include \$79 million less spent on groceries, \$33 million less on furnishings and appliances, \$35 million less in cafes, restaurants—these are the people that the Canberra Liberals want to help, of course: cafes and restaurants and small business owners—and \$7 million less on repairs by tradespeople.

The institute says that the reduced spending would see 11,000 jobs lost in local shops and 337 jobs lost in hospitality, cafes and takeaways. Reduced demand for services from the public service would see 506 fewer jobs in professional services, 376 fewer jobs in IT, 225 fewer jobs in office services and 137 fewer jobs in property services. “Cuts on this scale would very likely cause a local recession,” the economist wrote. “Even the best case scenario for Canberra would wipe out most growth in Canberra’s economy and combined with existing cuts could cause a recession,” he said.

He goes on to talk about the time that I mentioned earlier on under John Howard. He says, “House prices fell and it took six years to recover, by which time they were 30 per cent behind national prices.” I think that stands in stark contrast to how this Labor government is supporting Canberrans. The ACT government provides a broad range of supports to members of the community facing genuine hardship. It is impossible to capture all of that in just a short space of time but I will give you a summary, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I will briefly discuss concessions, other assistance and various related initiatives. On the concessions front, the ACT government offers around 31 different concessions delivered by six directorates in the areas of housing, utilities, transport, health and disabilities. They include rebates, discounts and waivers on the cost of services. The total value of the ACT concessions program in 2013-2014 is estimated at over \$42 million.

The type of concessions and the eligibility for them are quite consistent across jurisdictions. This is aided by the national partnership agreement in respect of certain concessions of which the ACT is a signatory. Eligibility for concessions is related to criteria such as income, health or disability. Income targeting is usually determined by the possession of a commonwealth government concession card, such as the pensioner concession card, while health and disability eligibility generally requires a medical certificate.

Concessions in 2012-13 included over 17,000 pensioners receiving an average general rebate of \$439 each. Over 15,000 residents received an average rebate of \$402 on their water and waste water account. 25,000 residents received the energy concession, with an average rebate of \$374 on their electricity account. Concession travel on ACTION buses costs over \$7 million. Over 45,000 people received an average discount of \$150 on their vehicle registration. Over 3,000 members of the taxi subsidy scheme were provided with financial assistance at a cost of over \$1 million. Over 500 students with special needs and 1,500 students from low income families were provided with free transport to school.

Over 11,000 public housing tenancies were assisted in 2012-13, with over \$110 million in forgone revenue. These figures increased in 2013-2014 to \$130 million for 12,000 public housing tenancies. There are also other supports such as the first home owners scheme, the homebuyer concession on conveyance duty, driver's licence concessions and various health concessions. The 2013-14 budget also included \$377,000 to extend the administration of the energy efficiency scheme, which helped 2,000 vulnerable households since January 2013 to reduce their energy costs.

Self-funded retirees with medical conditions are able to access the spectacle subsidy scheme and the taxi subsidy scheme. The reduction of the qualifying age for the ACTION seniors gold card from 75 to 70 years introduced in the 2013-14 budget provides free bus travel for nearly 9,000 additional older members of our community. There is a difference here. We brought down the age to support retirees in the ACT rather than raise the age. Seniors cardholders are entitled to 10 per cent concession on their motor vehicle rego.

The targeted assistance strategy led to administrative reforms such as flexible payment options for parking and traffic infringements, including extension of time to pay—up to six months—payment by instalment, work and development orders and the possibility of waivers of penalties relating to traffic and parking infringements. This allows people to enter into regular fortnightly payments or other payment arrangements in circumstances where payment of the fine would be difficult.

Other support from the government for people facing genuine hardship includes emergency material and financial aid. The government provides funding of \$1.169 million in 2013-14—GST exclusive—to the energy, material and financial aid program. Funding is provided to three organisations for that program: the Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul and Uniting Care Kippax. They do a fantastic job for Canberrans.

The Rotary Club of Canberra is funded by \$78,582 per annum for the transport and distribution of Foodbank goods in the ACT. Foodbank, of course, is a not-for-profit national organisation that sources and distributes food and grocery industry donations to welfare agencies that provide food assistance to people in need.

There are some other related initiatives. People with a disability experience genuine considerable hardship. The introduction of the national disability insurance scheme sees the ACT government directing significant resources to this important area. But



that is not the total expenditure in disability. The 2013-14 budget provides \$5.5 million over two years for enhanced services to prepare the ACT for the full rollout of the NDIS by 2014.

On top of the \$10.6 million from the commonwealth, other funding includes \$1.6 million to support transport for students and \$1.3 million for additional support for students with complex needs. As you can see, there is a direct, and I think very important, difference between what the ACT Liberals would provide and what Labor is providing. (*Time expired.*)

**MS PORTER** (Ginninderra) (12.10): I rise also to support Ms Gallagher's amendment and to highlight some of the government's infrastructure priorities. I have on many occasions said in this place that a good government does not pursue policies that have been shown to fail and which destroy businesses, families and communities. We fear that we will see this from the coalition in the next week's federal budget.

This Labor government has known for many years that we need to work closely with the Canberra community to identify priorities and to implement policies that will make Canberra continue to be the most vibrant, liveable city in Australia and to help it continue to grow and to change to meet the challenges and opportunities of the future.

Every year this government is investing record levels of funding in our community, building a stronger local health system, investing in better schools and teachers, maintaining a strong local economy and creating more local jobs than ever before. We have consistently seen this in successive budgets of this government, which continue to deliver on important transformational infrastructure projects and lay the foundations for growth.

I will not speak on the major projects like the city plan and capital metro, as my colleagues have touched on them. Instead, I will look at the work we are doing on the overall amenity of our city and our suburbs, particularly in Ginninderra. Successive budgets of this government have seen significant increases in funding for upgraded shopping centres, including publicly owned spaces around local centres, to improve safety and accessibility and to improve lighting, street furniture and landscaping.

Priorities for shopping centre upgrades are planned and considered through, for instance, a comprehensive audit program which was developed and completed in 2012 to determine what work was required at local shopping centres. The audit did consider future needs such as furniture, seats, tables, bins, toilets, the state of shrub beds, fences and drinking fountains. Shopping centres in my electorate that have benefited, or that are earmarked to benefit, from this increased funding include centres such as Evatt, Florey, Kaleen, Fraser, Spence and Macquarie. This work will continue and will progressively ensure that we maintain our local centres, which are an integral part of the Canberra lifestyle.

I know many members who preceded me in the debate, including Mr Rattenbury, have mentioned footpaths. These are important. Ever since I became a member of this place I have routinely highlighted such matters. Through my mobile offices and my contact with my constituents, I have been able to make many successful representations on their behalf.

However, people do also talk to me and write to me about other things that we would consider big picture issues which are also crucial to their wellbeing. I cite as an example their health. ACT Labor has been building our health service right across the ACT with new services, new infrastructure, such as community health centres and walk-in centres, more doctors and nurses, and more allied health.

Each year this ACT Labor government invests more and more in our ACT health system, making it even stronger and delivering high-class health care where and when it is needed. The health infrastructure program is a 10-year \$1 billion-plus infrastructure program designed to completely overhaul our health system and deliver new exciting health facilities, new services and new ways of providing care to patients.

During the 2012 election we committed to finalise and complete a range of projects, including several in my electorate, such as the now-completed Belconnen Community Health Centre, to provide a high level of community-based services as well as important services normally only accessible from hospital. We committed to emergency department expansions at both Canberra Hospital and Calvary public hospital; expanding the nurse-led walk-in centre model to community locations, including one in Belconnen; progressing the University of Canberra public hospital; fitting out new wards and facilities to house additional beds and services at Calvary hospital; and providing additional inpatient beds at Canberra Hospital.

I have also on previous occasions stated that this Labor government recognises the diverse opportunities that quality education presents to our children and young people. As Ms Burch has already said this morning, over the years this government has endeavoured to ensure that all ACT children, notwithstanding their circumstances, not only have access to quality education facilities, but also have access to quality teaching so they can reach their potential.

As you are aware, Madam Speaker, the 2013-14 budget included funding for a national education reform agreement, which will focus on further improving students' learning and strengthening teaching, school leadership, transparency and accountability. No doubt many of my Ginninderra constituents will benefit greatly from this agreement.

This will serve to advance our already good record that Ms Burch has just referred to, where the ACT continues to top the country in NAPLAN results, ranking first or equal first for grammar, punctuation and numeracy in all levels since 2009. I have not had time to comment on all the initiatives that are being currently undertaken and that will be undertaken by this government aimed at providing and enhancing the learning environments for students. Several schools in my electorate continue to benefit from this funding, including funding for the commencement of Belconnen High School upgrades.

Madam Speaker, these are but a few reasons why I strongly support the amendment put forward by the Chief Minister, and I urge all members of this place to do the same.

**MR SMYTH** (Brindabella) (12.16): It is very interesting that yet again we have an amendment from the Chief Minister to simply wipe out Mr Hanson's motion. I think it embarrasses them. If we go back to the early days of the formation of Canberra, you have to ask the question: what sort of city was envisaged? Burley Griffin and his wife, Mary Mahony, said they had planned a city not like any other city in the world, an ideal city, a city that meets "our ideal of the city of the future". And indeed, the day Canberra was named, the then Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher, said he anticipated a city where the best thoughts of Australia would be expressed, a seat of learning as well as of politics and home of the arts. The Governor-General said that he thought it should be the finest and noblest in the national life of the country, "a city bearing perhaps some semblance to the city beautiful of our dreams". If you judge it even against those starting commentaries about what Canberra should be, this government clearly fails.

I think the list that Mr Hanson has put together is a succinct summary of the key areas of their failure, and it is a list that none of those opposite have put up any credible alternative to or have debunked. I do not know anyone who does not think that their neighbourhood amenity has declined in the last decade, whether it be broken footpaths or gutters that have not been swept, whether it be limbs fallen from trees that are not cleaned up, whether it be the verges that are not mowed. It is an important thing about how you see your city, the look and feel of the place. And what we do not get is a look and feel of a city that is going forward.

We have got that extraordinary quote that Mr Barr or some of his officers worked up and that they are going to peddle, the line that everybody knows that this city does better under Labor governments. I would look back to the late 1990s through to 2007. This city did incredibly well. Yes, the first couple of years of the Howard government were tough on Canberra, but it was tough medicine, unfortunately that we paid a price for, after the economic failures of the Hawke-Keating years and the Follett government.

We do not often mention that in 1993 and 1994 the Follett government flooded the land release market in this city and destroyed the price of land in an attempt to balance their budgets. And we see Mr Barr doing it now. They are ramping up land release because they have failed so spectacularly over the years. If land prices are softening, you have to ask the question why the government's land release policy fails. We had that example I mentioned yesterday where a builder bought a block of land, and a couple of months later the government released the block next door with a much lower reserve. This is a government that does not do the economy very well.

But let us go to this contention from Mr Barr that the city does better under Labor governments. This city languished under Labor governments, and it was not until Menzies put in place the NCDC in 1956 and laid down the foundation for the great city we have today that things started to move in this city. It was not until people like Malcolm Fraser decided to go ahead and replace the temporary parliament building with the fantastic structure that we have now that lies really at the epicentre of politics in this country. That is an amazing landmark for the people of the ACT.

I do not think I heard anybody on the Labor side of this house or Mr Rattenbury mention the two words “Gillard” and “Rudd”. There are these missing years, the missing years from 2007 to 2013, where, of course, nothing was happening in Canberra. We had indecision. We had abuse of the public service, for which former Prime Minister Rudd was legendary. We certainly got very little in the way of capital works or significant spending. They could not even get out of their Labor colleagues money for capital metro. They were told to go away and do their numbers again because the numbers did not stack up. So there was not much of a build going on from 2007 to 2013.

But if you look at the Howard years, yes, the start was tough but after that we got the National Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, the upgrade to the Federal Highway, the upgrade to the Barton Highway. We got several works done at the War Memorial, a number of new monuments. We got the upgrade of the Mint. The list goes on and on—building the cultural and the artistic infrastructure of this city, something Labor did not do.

It is interesting that they all ignore Rudd and Gillard because it is perhaps the number 14,457 that they are most afraid of, and that is the jobs that went under Gillard and Rudd, something that the federal Labor members have never acknowledged. In fact, they have denied that there were any job cuts. Many of the problems that this city faces today had their genesis in the mismanagement and the style of government of Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard, and there is never a single acknowledgement from those opposite of their failings.

In fact, Andrew Barr, the chief cheerleader, thought some of the Rudd cuts were good. He thought cuts to the travelling programs of the cultural institutions were a good thing, and he said so, because he thought somehow that that would mean more people would come to Canberra. Senator Kate Lundy bought that one. But that is the problem with this debate. Those opposite fail to acknowledge the failures of their side. This is the only party, the Canberra Liberals, that will stand up to both sides when they attack the ACT because that is our job and we will do it well. We have understanding for the problems that Mr Abbott faces. They are problems created by the Labor Party, and it is unfortunate that the clean-up has to come.

It is interesting that we talk about the grand plans. In particular, Mr Corbell recited a litany of plans. None of them will amount to anything if you do not deliver them. And I simply point out, in regard to his *City Hill: a concept for the future*, none of it has been delivered a decade later. And, of course, Mr Corbell was responsible for the GDE debacle. When we talk about delivery, it was, what, five years late and double the price—double the time taken, and the original budget was \$55 million but it was probably closer to \$200 million on completion. It was four times the cost—an absolute failure. Then, of course, there is the prison debacle. Yes, you can have all the plans and all the glossies that you want in the world, but if you do not deliver—and people know that you do not deliver and the Auditor-General’s report says you do not deliver—then that is the problem. And that is why Mr Hanson’s motion today is important.

Mr Barr also talked about all the surpluses they delivered. If memory serves me right, ACT Labor in government have only budgeted for two surpluses. So at the height of the economic boom, at the height of the property boom, at the height of the mining boom, at the height of the growth of the public service under Howard, they only managed to budget for two surpluses because they cannot control their spending. It is preposterous and it is ridiculous, and that is why this motion is important today.

This motion looks at the state of disrepair of basic suburban amenity. Any time I go out into the community, that is the thing that people talk about. They talk about the dysfunctional planning that is stifling city centres and failing to protect suburban character. It is correct, because we know that this government, through failed Minister Corbell, want to have their priority projects bill. It is because they cannot deliver on time. It is because they cannot do appropriate planning and they cannot carry through.

We know from what Ms Lawder had to say that housing affordability and affordability of rates is appalling in this city, absolutely appalling in this city, and the UDIA said that in a city where the government controls the land and controls the planning it should be better, it should be easier. It is not—a fail.

We talk about access to health care, in particular waiting times. Again, the AIHW's recent report clearly points out that we fail in delivering appropriate health care, despite the best efforts of all the staff that do a great job in our hospital and health system.

One of the priorities listed in the motion is education choice and standards, especially culture and behaviour. Yes, we do often sit at the top of the tree. And so we should, given the money that we spend on it and the relative youth of our education system. But what Brian Schmidt, a Nobel Laureate, said at a recent Canberra Business Council lunch was that we should be doing so much better for the money that we spend. We do not. And that is mismanagement and that is laid right at the feet of the minister who fails to lead in these areas.

Mr Wall covered the lack of support for business, especially small business in the areas that they feel let down in. They are numerous and they are not being listened to. And we saw it yesterday in the debate on the extension of time.

Another point in the motion is the continued low priority of road transport infrastructure, traffic safety and car parking. Churchill said it incredibly well when he said, "First we shape buildings, then they shape us." In our case, it is: first we shape the city, now the city shapes us. And whether you like it or not, the Y-plan in the 60s made us a car city. We perhaps need to modify our use of the car, but what we should not be forced to do is abandon the tool that allows us to be the fittest, most participative city in the world when we get to events, when we get involved in culture and when we get involved in volunteering.

The rest of the list is self-evident. This government has failed. They need to reorganise their priorities. (*Time expired*).

*Debate interrupted in accordance with standing order 74 and the resumption of the debate made an order of the day for a later hour.*

**Sitting suspended from 12.27 to 2.30 pm.**

**Questions without notice**

**Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development—motion of no confidence**

**MR HANSON:** My question is to the Chief Minister. In yesterday's debate about the distribution and knowledge of committee information, Mr Rattenbury said:

There is some—I am searching for the right word—murkiness about the rest of it. I think probably the Chief Minister has given the truest account of what actually happened in the situation here.

Your account in the debate included:

... but this is what happened this morning. It is not as exciting as you would have it believed, but it is what happened. We had a discussion about how the committees are working, or not working. We wanted to get a copy of the report, so we resolved to move a motion.

That was a discussion about what happened in your party room or caucus. However, in answer to a question, Mr Gentleman said:

The caucus discusses many items of the planning and environment committee work—but no detailed items about this particular inquiry.

Chief Minister, do you stand by your account of how Mr Corbell found out about detailed, confidential information about the opposition's voting patterns in the committee or is Mr Gentleman's account correct?

**MS GALLAGHER:** There is no inconsistency in the answer that I gave or the one that Mr Gentleman gave.

**MR COE:** Supplementary, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** It is a supplementary question for Mr Hanson, I think.

**MR HANSON:** He is very eager. It is an important issue; we can all agree on that. Chief Minister, did you hear in your caucus anyone say that opposition members supported individual clauses of the committee report?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I provided a thorough explanation yesterday in my answer to the motion, and I think I have covered off all of the issues. In relation to what goes on in our party room, that is a matter for the party room; it is confidential, just as matters in your party room are confidential. In relation to the matter—

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, Mr Hanson! You have asked your question.

**MS GALLAGHER:** In relation to the matter examined by the Assembly yesterday, I gave a full answer, and I stand by that answer.

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

**MR COE:** Chief Minister, did you hear anyone, prior to yesterday's debate about the planning committee's report, say that opposition members supported individual clauses of the committee report?

**Mr Corbell:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker, given that this line of questioning would appear to be continuing from the opposition, I would seek your guidance as to whether or not the Chief Minister can be asked a question about matters that relate to discussions in the party rooms of either the Labor Party or, for that matter, the other party.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The question that Mr Coe asks, if I am right, said: did you hear anyone, prior to the debate, say a particular thing. It was not about the party room.

**Mr Corbell:** It is alluding to party room discussions.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** No, it is not. There was a question about what happened in the caucus. This is a different line of questioning. I will allow the question. Chief Minister.

**MS GALLAGHER:** As I said yesterday, the caucus has discussed ways to deal with the procedural dysfunction of committees. I provided a full account of this to the Assembly yesterday and I have nothing further to expand on it.

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

**MR COE:** Chief Minister, what was your basis for telling the Assembly yesterday how Minister Corbell found out about the opposition members voting in the committee meeting?

**MS GALLAGHER:** What was the basis for it? There was a motion of no confidence before the Assembly, and I provided an account explaining the situation as it was. That was the basis of the comments I made. There was a no confidence motion in this place.

### **Roads—Majura Parkway**

**MR COE:** My question is to the Treasurer. Yesterday, we asked questions about the problems becoming apparent with the Majura Parkway project. In response, you read a press release from the contractors stating that the project is, and I quote, "on track". This morning work on the project stopped, with reports that heavy earthmoving machinery has been removed from the site to the depot. Treasurer, in light of the continuing turmoil at the site, we ask again: what steps have you taken to protect the ACT from a cost blowout of tens of millions of dollars on the project?

**MR BARR:** The first point to make is that work on the parkway is continuing. Regardless whether Hewatt continues as a subcontractor, Fulton Hogan, the head contractor, is continuing work on the project. I am advised that there a number of unconfirmed media reports in relation to action that Hewatt may or may not take at a press conference they may or may not be party to later this afternoon. They are unconfirmed reports.

But the advice that the government has from the contractor, the party that we have a contract with, Fulton Hogan, is that work continues on the project. In fact, I understand about 95 per cent of the work that Hewatt was subcontracted to undertake has been completed.

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

**MR COE:** Treasurer, how does this turmoil affect the \$144 million in commonwealth funding, and is it true that any and all cost escalations will be borne 100 per cent by the territory taxpayer?

**MR BARR:** Firstly, it is a hypothetical question. Secondly, I can advise the Assembly that the commonwealth's funding conditions require that we ensure the contractor must comply with the national code of practice for the construction industry and the Australian government implementation guidelines for the national code of practice for the construction industry of May 2012. These are in ACT government contracts on any basis anyway. There is no substance to the question from Mr Coe.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Treasurer, what exposure does the ACT have should the contractor fail?

**MR BARR:** The contractor is not failing.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Treasurer, what financial risk assessment was carried out in the planning of this project, and will you now table that assessment?

**MR BARR:** Consistent with Infrastructure Australia guidelines and the commonwealth guidelines that I have just outlined.

### **National Commission of Audit—recommendations**

**MS BERRY:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, last week the federal government released the Commission of Audit report. The report made specific recommendations in a number of sectors subject to recent major federal reforms such as health, schools and disability under the umbrella of the federal financial relationships framework. What impact would these recommendations have on ACT jobs and the operations of the ACT government?



**MS GALLAGHER:** I thank Ms Berry for the question. As Ms Berry outlined in her question, last week the commonwealth government did release the Commission of Audit report as one of the blueprints for commonwealth policy decision-making, perhaps to be reflected in the federal budget next week. It made 86 recommendations, none of which, it is clear, have been endorsed by the commonwealth government. However, it does contain recommendations which, if adopted, would hold quite significant consequences for the ACT.

The report also advises, though, that the commission has not undertaken detailed costings of the recommendations. However, when you look at some of the recommendations proposed by the commission, it would create a large number of casualties in the form of public servant jobs, and of course we would disproportionately share in that allocation. I notice that Tony Shepherd said in the order of 15,000 originally, although that did seem to change over the next 24 hours. We would expect to see thousands of jobs lost from Canberra if they were adopted.

The recommendations, if agreed, would shift employment from the public sector to the private sector. Whilst this would create some opportunities, these recommendations are largely accompanied by downsizing and consolidation recommendations. These would have flow-on effects to the ACT economy, with significant effects on industries such as retail trade, communication, hotels, cafes and child care.

I think, and I hope, the Commission of Audit is largely a distraction in preparation for a less bad outcome in the federal budget next week. But there were a number of very significant recommendations in relation to health, schools, disability and the federal financial relations framework which, if adopted, would have the potential for some very negative consequences here in Canberra and indeed for some of the small states in relation to those federal financial funding arrangements.

In schools funding, it recommends a major withdrawal for the commonwealth, transferring all policy and funding responsibilities to the states and territories—as it does, to some degree, in health. That poses some significant risks to jurisdictions which do not have the revenue-raising capacity to meet the growth in those large areas of government expenditure.

It remains to be seen how many of these recommendations are proceeded with, but it was a \$2½ million exercise, I understand, to get this audit report to where it is, and from the point of view of an average Canberran raising a family in the ACT, it is not a blueprint that we would want adopted.

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

**MS BERRY:** Chief Minister, do you have any preliminary estimate of the number of jobs at risk in the ACT if the recommendations relating to a reshaping of the federal public service were adopted?

**MS GALLAGHER:** Of all the jurisdictions, the ACT would be hardest hit by the job cuts and the proposed restructuring by the commonwealth, as outlined in the audit report. It is unclear, because they have not endorsed the recommendations, but if you accept approximately 15,000 jobs, we would expect the allocation to the ACT to be in the order of 6,000 in Canberra. That is over and above the job losses that have already been experienced in this city. So that would be close to a three per cent reduction in the ACT's current employment level and obviously a job loss of that size would have serious flow-on consequences.

I am hoping—and the Prime Minister outlined to first ministers at COAG that the commonwealth would not be proceeding with all the recommendations in the audit report but that the budget would be a tough budget—and I am expecting, of course, that there will not be a whole lot of good news in the federal budget next week. But if these recommendations were adopted—and the sounds of silence from those opposite around the commission of audit is deafening—if that were to hit the city, there would be some very significant consequences.

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

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Chief Minister, how will the recommendation to delay the implementation of the NDIS affect the planned commencement of the scheme in the ACT from 1 July this year?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Before I call the Chief Minister, I do not recall in any of Ms Berry's questions or the answer any mention of the NDIS.

**Ms Gallagher:** It is a recommendation of the audit report.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** But there was not any mention in Ms Berry's question.

**Dr Bourke:** Madam Speaker—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Sit down, Dr Bourke. Did you mention the NDIS, Ms Berry?

**Ms Berry:** I mentioned schools and disability.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Okay. I am sorry; I did not pick that up. Mr Gentleman, could you repeat the question, for the benefit of everyone?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Chief Minister, how will the recommendation to delay the implementation of the NDIS affect the planned commencement of the scheme in the ACT from 1 July 2014?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I thank Mr Gentleman for the question. One of the good outcomes from last Friday's COAG meeting was a reconfirmation that all governments remain committed to the full scheme rollout of the NDIS, along the timetables that have been agreed to by individual jurisdictions. I note that there is a level of caution picked up in the Commission of Audit's report about the overall cost of the full implementation of the NDIS, but first ministers were provided with

information from the board of the NDIA which showed that, over time, as more people were joining in to the scheme—I think there are around 5,000 in the scheme now—the overall cost of packages was progressively coming down. I think that is what had led to the recommendation in the report.

We remain committed to the rollout as agreed in our bilateral agreement. It is important that we prioritise people with a disability. That is what the NDIS does. COAG agreed that that should remain the case. So I think some of the uncertainty presented by that recommendation has been addressed in the COAG communique of Friday afternoon.

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

**MR COE:** Chief Minister, will you table the ACT's equivalent of the audit commission report—that being the Costello review?

**MS GALLAGHER:** No. That matter has been dealt with by the Assembly.

### **Multicultural affairs—Fringe Festival**

**MR SMYTH:** My question is to the Minister for the Arts.

*Members interjecting—*

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, you have been recorded in today's *Canberra Times* that this year's Fringe Festival—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I am sorry, Mr Smyth; I was unable to hear your beginning because of the interjections from Ms Gallagher and Mr Coe. Could I ask you to start again, please?

**MR SMYTH:** I certainly can. My question is to the Minister for the Arts. Minister, it has been recorded in today's *Canberra Times* that this year's Fringe Festival included strict acquittal processes, and was a success. These are comments attributed to you. However, the festival director that you directly selected was quoted in the same article as saying:

The festival had cost \$35,000. On top of the \$20,000 grant, it made \$8500 on the bar, leaving a \$7500 loss.

With “strict acquittal” processes, as you claimed in this project, how is it that the Fringe Festival made a loss of \$7,500?

**MS BURCH:** I thank Mr Smyth for his question. Mr Gardner was provided with a grant for \$20,000 to put on a fringe festival. He was asked to acquit to the \$20,000 and he has done so. So we gave a grant of \$20,000, and he has acquitted to a grant of \$20,000.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, what are the elements that led to the \$7,500 loss for the Fringe Festival?

**MS BURCH:** It is my understanding that there was not a loss to the Fringe Festival. I read some of that information for the first time in the *Canberra Times* where Mr Gardner has claimed that he is in fact out of pocket. But there was \$20,000 put on the table for the Fringe Festival. It was a success and Mr Jorian Gardner has indeed acquitted to the \$20,000.

The Fringe Festival was a success. Over 18,000 people went through it. I am very satisfied with the level of the Fringe Festival. It has had positive feedback to me and I would expect that we will see the fringe back in 2015.

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

**MRS JONES:** Minister, is the territory compensating the festival director for a \$7,500 loss, and what discussions has the government had with the director regarding this?

**MS BURCH:** I am not privy to any of those contractual arrangements and discussions between the directorate and Mr Gardner.

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

**MS PORTER:** Minister, how did the community respond to the Fringe Festival?

**MS BURCH:** The community responded very well to the Fringe Festival and the Multicultural Festival. We saw 250,000 people, that is, a quarter of a million people, out of this city and the area come to celebrate our diverse multicultural community. I call that a great success.

The fringe, which has been out of connection with the National Multicultural Festival for a number of years now, has come back, and I perceive that 18,000-plus Canberrans came through. I have not had anyone who was directly at the Fringe Festival make any other comment than of their enjoyment of the fringe.

### **Multicultural affairs—Fringe Festival**

**MRS JONES:** My question is to the Minister for the Arts. Minister, on 26 November 2013 you advised the Assembly that you made the appointment of Mr Gardner as director of the 2014 Fringe Festival yourself. In documents recently released through the FOI process in relation to this appointment, you noted that you “took into account advice from artsACT and the Office of Multicultural Affairs”. In documents released, a senior executive in artsACT had advised:

We have similar experience with Jorian and grants that remain unacquitted, however his name has always been replaced by a business colleague (read girlfriend). I project an active negative response from the arts community to the announcement and the lack of peer review due to Jorian and his reputation for not paying artists/suppliers and his lack of artistic credibility and judgement.

Was this advice communicated to you?

**MS BURCH:** No, certainly the detail of the correspondence—and I have had a look at the FOI myself—was not provided directly to me. But I stand by my appointment of Jorian Gardner. He ran the Fringe Festival from 2003 through to 2008. It was a success. I invited him to come back and have artistic directorship of the 2014 Fringe Festival, which he did. I was very clear about having a very clear-type contract, because he has not had a formal contract himself or a grant in this manner before. He has been paid as an artistic director but there was not a grant in this manner. So I was very clear that we have very clear accountabilities in there, what was to be delivered, when he was to deliver that. That is on the public record. That was put in place and that has been acquitted.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

**MRS JONES:** Minister, is it because of your directorate's reluctance in relation to Mr Gardner that you appointed him yourself?

**MS BURCH:** Sorry; I just did not hear the first part.

**MRS JONES:** Is it because of your directorate's reluctance in relation to Mr Gardner that you appointed him yourself?

**MS BURCH:** I would say no. I have said in this place that Jorian is not without his reputation. I think I have described him as a colourful character. But that is fine. To run a fringe festival, one would think that you wanted a colourful character. I do not think there is crime in being a colourful character. Indeed, if everyone has a right to be a bigot, I think Mr Jorian Gardner has a right to be a colourful character.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, did your directorate raise concerns with you about the appointment of Mr Gardner?

**MS BURCH:** Not in the direct sense, but certainly there was—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MS BURCH:** I was aware that we needed to have a very firm contract, a very firm performance management and time line around where the program will come in and when the acquittal will be made. Those arrangements were put into place. At the end of the day, we have done so. If you want to continue on this, just look at the reality. We had a \$20,000 grant made and it has been acquitted. We had a successful Fringe Festival and an extremely successful National Multicultural Festival. I think that is a good outcome. If you want to continue chasing this, you can go all you like, but I will stand by that arrangement. It was fine, it was appropriate and it delivered what this city was satisfied with.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, if not raised directly with you, how were concerns raised with you and what were those concerns?

**MS BURCH:** The discussion was generally around will he be available, will he deliver and what are the contract conditions that will ensure that. And all of that was put in place.

### **Multicultural affairs—Fringe Festival**

**MR DOSZPOT:** My question is to the Minister for the Arts. Minister, schedule 1 in the territory's deed of grant with Mr Jorian Gardner for the delivery of the 2014 fringe festival noted: "The Grant is payable as two installments being \$5,000 conditional on acceptance of a program and budget due 30 September 2014 conditional on all special conditions being accepted." One of the special conditions noted in schedule 3 of the grant is: "The recipient to provide a detailed program and budget by 30 September 2013 to be approved by the Territory."

Were you provided with this detailed program? Did this program mention performances with adult content?

**MS BURCH:** No.

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

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Doszpot is asking the question; Mr Coe and Mr Hanson are interjecting across the chamber. Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, how is it that you were not aware that an adult or Nazi stripper performance was in the program for the fringe festival?

**MS BURCH:** The program was provided, as I understand, through to the contract manager. A detailed program has not been provided to me. Your continued reference to a Nazi stripper was not something that I was aware of, and I think we have stood in this place and said artistic direction sat with Jorian Gardner. I have not had a single complaint to me from anyone that was at that performance.

**Mr Hanson:** Diana Abdul-Rahman.

**MS BURCH:** She was not there. I have had that conversation if you want to go there, Mr Hanson. I have had a conversation with her, and she based her letter on the beat-up in the *Canberra Times* that was stirred up by Mrs Jones and Mr Hanson.

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

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, how did the Canberra community respond to the program?

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, Mr Coe! Minister Burch has the floor.

**MS BURCH:** Thank you, and I do thank Mr Gentleman for his question, because in the main—

**Mr Wall:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Stop the clock, please.

**Mr Wall:** I think we have got repetition in questions here. Earlier Ms Porter asked the question, “How did the community respond to the Fringe Festival?”

**MADAM SPEAKER:** No. Mr Gentleman asked how did they respond to the program. It is a perfectly reasonable question. It is not the same question, and it does not infringe the standing orders. It does not infringe standing order 117(g).

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Before I start the clock and call Ms Burch, I will ask Mr Hanson to be quiet. Minister Burch.

**MS BURCH:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and for your instructions to Mr Hanson as well. But in response to Mr Gentleman’s question, the program was welcomed. Eighteen thousand-plus attended the Fringe Festival. I have heard positive feedback. I have continued to receive emails about the local artists that valued the opportunity to participate, to be part of the Fringe Festival. Indeed, those that went to the festival enjoyed it. The local community of artists had the opportunity to be part of the program, valued it and held that opportunity in high regard.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, will you table by close of business tomorrow a copy of the detailed program provided to the directorate?

**MS BURCH:** I am happy to provide what I can but I would have assumed that it was in the FOI document.

### **Infrastructure—public-private partnerships**

**MS PORTER:** My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, can you update the Assembly on the ACT government’s approach to implementing public-private partnerships in the territory?

**MR BARR:** I thank Ms Porter for the question. Public-private partnerships have been used successfully across Australia and around the world and can be very effective in delivering quality outcomes for the community.

Late last year we launched our framework for the management and implementation of public-private partnerships, known as the partnerships framework. This framework is the work of a significant consultation program with other state governments and the federal government, as well as major industry participants, and has received very positive feedback from stakeholders to date. By looking at the experience of other jurisdictions, we have been able to develop a policy that takes into account many of their experiences and their learnings.

There are a few ways in which the territory's policy is differentiated. One example is that we have a very strong preference to short-list to two bidders. Short-listing to two bidders reduces the bid costs for industry and the procurement costs for the territory, increasing efficiency and subsequently enhancing the ability of consortia to present competitively priced bids.

The capital framework that we launched in the middle of last year identifies nine delivery models, of which the PPP model is one, recognising that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. The territory is committed to matching the right model with the right project.

In the case of the ACT court facilities project, we have decided that the most effective delivery model will be a PPP. This project is seen as a pathfinder for the territory's future PPPs and has been designed to attract industry and to showcase the evolving collaborative approach that the government is taking to the delivery of the capital works program.

By undertaking the courts project through a PPP model, the territory is planning for the longer term. The outcome of the process is expected to be a high functioning, durable and architecturally appropriate building for the administration of justice in the territory.

The government has engaged KPMG as our commercial advisers, and Crown Project Services has joined as the project director. Both bring significant experience and expertise in the delivery of social infrastructure PPPs. Most recently, following Minister Corbell's project launch, I addressed the industry briefing held here in the Assembly, which is the first formal engagement of industry before the release of an expression of interest later in the year.

The government looks forward to the success of this project and leading the way in the delivery of major infrastructure for the city's future.

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

**MS PORTER:** Treasurer, what consultation has the government recently undertaken about PPPs?

**MR BARR:** In addition to the extensive consultation undertaken in the creation of both the capital and partnerships frameworks, there has been ongoing engagement with industry on the courts PPP. As I mentioned in my previous answer, the industry



briefing that was held on 30 April was attended by more than 120 people—I am advised making it one of the largest and most successful industry engagements in the territory's history.

At the event I briefed industry on the intent of the territory in creating the partnerships framework, given that the capital program for the ACT is now reaching a level that encourages collaborative and public finance models of delivery. Representatives of the Justice and Community Safety Directorate and the project director also participated. I certainly look forward to further engagement with industry members in the territory and indeed across Australia as the territory moves into this new procurement space.

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

**MR COE:** Treasurer, what intellectual property or commercial-in-confidence provisions will apply to the courts' PPP and other PPPs in future?

**MR BARR:** I advise the questioner to read the partnerships framework.

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

**DR BOURKE:** Treasurer, what are the benefits of PPPs compared to other models for infrastructure delivery?

**MR BARR:** Public-private partnerships bring many benefits but also bring some challenges. I think it can be stated very clearly that before contemplating a PPP it is important to evaluate the commercial drivers for a project, including a range of factors, including time to market and the level of innovation that is sought.

PPPs are at the high end of allocation of risk to the private sector, packaging design, construction, maintenance, operations and financing, which the private sector then packages and recovers from the government, generally through an availability payment. The consortium is in this way incentivised to design for cost-effective and durable construction; to design and construct to a high standard so as to reduce maintenance, operations and refurbishment costs; and to maintain so as to minimise any impacts upon service delivery.

The government is committed to ensuring that PPP procurement is only selected where rigorous financial analysis identifies its appropriateness. Of course, in selecting a PPP delivery model, we must first establish that the higher cost of borrowing borne by the consortium is less than the savings provided through the PPP delivery.

### **Health—poisonous mushrooms**

**MR WALL:** My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, on 30 April you told 2CC listeners that your directorate has undertaken work to inform the community about poisonous mushrooms. What information has been distributed and to whom?

**MS GALLAGHER:** This is an ongoing piece of work since we had the unfortunate death of a number of people in Canberra about three years ago I think where we had a

complete review of the information that is provided to people in different languages, in particular, Mandarin. The review we have done included a recommendation that we regularly remind people about the dangers of death cap mushrooms. There was a media release in March 2014 with radio and news broadcasts. There has been information sent electronically through social media. Information was also distributed to educational institutions like ANU, the University of Canberra, ACU, CIT and the International Students Association, the Canberra Hospital, Calvary Hospital, the poisons line and multicultural community organisations in the last month. We had done that post the death of those individuals some years ago.

We have done as much media as we can. We have information available on the ACT Health website including media releases, information sheets, posters and flyers. In addition, we work with TAMS around making sure that where there are areas of concern those are appropriately signposted. Indeed, I saw at the lake today that the NCA also has signposts up about that area having death cap mushrooms.

I think we do what we can. We will, of course, look back at these cases and see if there is anything further that can be done to make sure appropriate information is given to the right individuals.

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

**MR WALL:** Minister, what foreign languages are these notices produced in and particularly is Cantonese one of those languages?

**MS GALLAGHER:** Yes, they are available in English, traditional Chinese and simplified Chinese as I understand it. I should also say that the Chief Health Officer and I post the death of the individuals a couple of years ago did some media work with Chinese TV to get messages out through Chinese broadcasting around the dangers of death caps in Canberra.

We have done that. We will look at what has happened in this situation and make sure that we are doing everything we can to get the message out about the harm that can be caused by death caps.

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

**MR HANSON:** Minister, have you provided restaurants and grocery stores with information directly?

**MS GALLAGHER:** There has been some close work done with restaurants, particularly in the last month. I would have to check whether that happened after the last incidents. We have also worked with business groups, with business and industry membership groups, to get information out where we can. Indeed in the last week we have asked a number of restaurants which are advertising wild mushrooms not to proceed with that and to change their menu.

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

**MR HANSON:** Minister, given these latest incidents, what will you be doing to assure the community that the information you are promulgating is reaching its target audience?

**MS GALLAGHER:** As I said, we will be reviewing the situation that led to the poisoning of the individuals. I am trying not to disclose any private information. Indeed, we are already aware, as much as we can be, because two of the individuals have been discharged from hospital, about what led to the situation for them. We will review it and if we need to do more we will work with multicultural organisations, in particular, to make sure that the message is there, that it is clear.

I am not sure, in my review of the situation, that anything more could have been done in this instance but we will keep an open mind and see whether we need to change the information we have got and how we get that information out. I am happy to brief people not in the chamber on that, just to assure you that I do not think any changes to what we had in place would have necessarily changed the outcome we saw over the last month.

### **Schools—online enrolments**

**MR GENTLEMAN:** My question is to the minister for education. Minister, you recently announced that parents would be able to enrol their children in ACT schools online. Can you inform the Assembly how this reduction of red tape will make it easier for parents to engage with their schools?

**MS BURCH:** I thank Mr Gentleman for his interest. Many members would be aware that traditionally enrolment in our schools, the public schools and colleges, was completed using printed application forms. There was often a great deal of paperwork and waiting lines at the front offices of many ACT public schools at the commencement of the enrolment period on the first day of term 2. Families of students transferring between schools were required to complete additional paper-based forms. This was a process that many parents and students thought they could do without. We have agreed with them. We thought we could do better, and we have.

The government has developed a new online enrolment form for all ACT public school enrolments and transfers. The new process for enrolment was introduced on 28 April this year, with the start of the school term. The online form replaces all existing paper-based forms and simplifies the enrolment and transfer process for families. It makes the process easier and faster for parents, and much more efficient for our schools.

I am advised that the ACT is the first jurisdiction to implement a fully online enrolment and transfer procedure. The new enrolment process provides a single online form for all year levels, from preschool to year 12. It removes the need for parents to complete multiple enrolment forms and it improves consideration of siblings in the enrolment process. It removes the differences in enrolment processes between the primary schools, high schools and colleges.

Parents are able to log in from their home computers, smart phones and tablets to complete their child's enrolment. Over 1,000 enrolments were received on the opening day of the enrolment period. A help line has also assisted parents and carers with questions about the process. This is one more step that we are taking to build parental engagement at our schools, helping to ensure that great outcomes continue for our students.

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

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, what benefits does this online form have for schools and principals?

**MS BURCH:** The online enrolment is the beginning of a new era for ACT public schools and principals. The single online enrolment form, replacing multiple hardcopy forms, as well as consistent system-wide procedures and time lines applying to all public schools, are great advances.

Parents and families are at the centre of our school communities and, as a result, we have ensured that the new process is user friendly and efficient. Previous enrolment practices saw schools inundated with families submitting paper enrolment forms and other documentation at the front office, often adding extra pressure to the staffing of administrative teams.

Online enrolment now allows families to enrol or transfer at their convenience, from a location of their choice, and once the enrolment has been confirmed a meeting between the applicant and the accepting school will be arranged. The online enrolment and transfer form will reduce staffing pressures and provide consistent time lines and procedures for all public schools in the ACT.

Principals can now get timely information on their students and start the conversation with parents earlier about the needs of their children. This is a small but important step forward—easier and quicker for parents and carers and much more transparent and efficient for our school administrators.

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

**MS PORTER:** Minister, what other programs and policies is the government implementing to make it easier for parents to engage with their schools?

**MS BURCH:** I thank Ms Porter for her question. Ensuring that parents, students and families are at the centre of everything that our schools do is a priority of this government and we have commenced two key projects that will work to support parental engagement and involvement in education sectors across the ACT.

The preschool matters program acknowledges and recognises the expertise of families in their children's education and the importance of parental involvement and engagement in the preschool area. Preschool matters has been developed in consultation with stakeholders from early childhood education services and parent representative groups.

Starting preschool can be exciting and it is also daunting for parents as well as for children. This publication for parents provides advice about the ACT preschool programs, including questions they can ask, contacts for family support services and agencies, and strategies for reading with their child.

In an Australian first, the ACT government and the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth are partnering in a new parental engagement project in response to this evidence. The project will build on the positive relations that ACT schools have with their families. It will equip parents and schools to build partnerships that are focused on children's learning and wellbeing, and to measure the impact of parental engagement in learning for their children.

The government has demonstrated a strong commitment to supporting parental engagement and we look forward to developing strong and effective partnerships across all our schooling sectors and organisations through the implementation process.

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

**MS BERRY:** Minister, why is it important for new school parents to engage with their prospective school and meet the principal and teachers?

**MS BURCH:** I thank Ms Berry for the question. Children do better at school when parents and teachers work together. Parents play a critical role as partners in ensuring that our young children get the best start to life. Creating strong and effective partnerships between parents and their child's education enhances their later learning success. Parental engagement in education is recognised as enhancing academic success and student wellbeing.

In order to achieve this, we need strong relationships between teachers and their families. We need welcoming schools and parents who feel that what they have to say will be heard and that they have a stake in how their school is run. It is not just about what happens on the school grounds.

Schools can play a vital role in enabling and supporting parents to provide the kind of home learning environment that kids need to thrive—in shaping parents' beliefs about their role in the child's learning and their sense of their own ability to help educate their children.

The preschool matters program and the progressing parental engagement in the ACT project recognise the central role of parents in helping their children. This is about parents working alongside teachers and leaders in the education of their children, which has the potential to have a positive impact on their children's futures.

Schools and parents working together will increase the chance of children emerging from our education system not only educated but also, more importantly, holding the view that they are ready to take their own unique place in the world.

**Environment—biodiversity offsets policy**

**MS LAWDER:** My question is to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services. Minister, the commonwealth biodiversity offsets policy requires governance arrangements to be in place which ensure offset sites are readily measured, monitored, audited and enforced. Given your department's role in managing offset sites and the fact there is no published ACT government offsets policy, would you please explain the governance arrangements in the ACT which ensure offsets are managed in accordance with the commonwealth policy?

**MR RATTENBURY:** Environmental offsets are designed to compensate for the adverse impacts of development on matters of national environmental significance, as Ms Lawder has touched on. This is work that is done across a range of ACT government agencies through the Economic Development Directorate which is often responsible for the development of the land, the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate which sets the policy in this area and then TAMS as the operational agency which manages them.

As Ms Lawder noted, there is not a formal ACT government policy in place. That work is underway. But I should be clear that the commonwealth, in approving offsets, sets out certain criteria for these offsets. That is the criteria that the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate operates to.

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

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, could you please confirm that all offset sites in the ACT are delivering the proposed biodiversity outcomes?

**MR RATTENBURY:** The approval decision for an offset includes a range of matters that might be measured. So it is difficult to speak to Ms Lawder's question directly. Because there are a number of different sites and a number of different conditions, I would be happy to provide Ms Lawder with some of those details on notice.

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

**MR COE:** Minister, why is the information on the data collection and monitoring of sites not publicly available, given the proponents are paying for it?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I will take that question on notice.

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

**MR COE:** Finally, minister, when will the ACT government offsets policy be available and published online?

**MR CORBELL:** Madam Speaker, I will take that question as Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development, as I have policy responsibility for the development of the offsets policy. The government is in the process of considering

and finalising its development of an offsets policy for the ACT. We have had to have regard for a range of factors, including the new one-stop shop arrangements in terms of assessment and approval of bilateral negotiations with the commonwealth under the EPBC legislation and the development of the offsets policy is being informed by those negotiations which are currently underway.

### **Crime—sentencing reform**

**DR BOURKE:** My question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney, in last week's hearing by the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety into sentencing you mentioned that the government is embarking on a justice reform strategy to investigate possible sentencing, restorative justice and related reforms. Can you please tell the Assembly about this?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Before I call the Attorney-General, could you just repeat the introduction to your question, Dr Bourke?

**DR BOURKE:** Of course. Attorney, in last week's hearing by the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety into sentencing you mentioned that the government is embarking on a justice reform strategy to investigate possible sentencing, restorative justice and related reforms. Can you please tell the Assembly about this?

**MR CORBELL:** I thank Dr Bourke for the question. Yes, I am pleased to confirm today, as I indicated to the standing committee last Friday, that the government is to pursue a new justice reform strategy focusing on enhancing the legal framework for sentencing and alternative sentencing options in the territory, including the possible expansion of restorative justice and intensive community correction orders.

This is an important reform program. The government has committed three-quarters of a million dollars over a two-year period for the necessary resourcing and academic research and investigation and advice that will be needed to engage with stakeholders and to develop options for the government's consideration. In particular, I am keen to see my directorate focus on best practice research from overseas which confirms the benefits of measures such as enhanced restorative justice approaches.

Already the ACT has a strong program of restorative justice for juvenile offenders and for less serious crimes. What we know from the international evidence is that restorative justice is at its most effective when it is focused on adult offenders and with crimes of violence. This may be somewhat counterintuitive, but it is nevertheless backed up by comprehensive international research and the recently released Campbell collaboration research, including from the Australian National University. I am keen to see this work fit into our future policy development.

The incarceration of an individual is sometimes the necessary punishment of them associated with the seriousness of their wrongdoing or to protect the broader public. But there are other instances where alternative sentencing options could potentially be more beneficial: more beneficial for the offender in terms of reducing opportunities for recommitting on their release otherwise from prison, more beneficial for the

victim—as the research indicates that victims feel a greater level of restoration, acknowledgement and closure associated with restorative justice compared to conventional sentencing practices—and more beneficial for the community in terms of reduced cost in the justice system overall.

So the government is focused on undertaking this work. If it means that we can stem and, over time, reduce the costs associated with incarceration, if it means that we can further reduce levels of recidivist behaviour and if it means that victims feel better supported and better acknowledged through the justice system then these are beneficial reforms to undertake. This program and this justice reform strategy will give us the tools and the analysis we need to progress those future reforms.

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

**DR BOURKE:** Attorney, can you expand on the drivers and components of the justice system that the review will be examining?

**MR CORBELL:** The issues around sentencing and the interaction with criminal behaviours, particularly social and economic drivers, is a complex one. The review will focus on a broad range of issues, including the adequacy of the existing sentencing options, particularly in the context of the decision to decommission the periodic detention centre at Symonston and the repeal of periodic detention as a sentencing option. It will also look at mechanisms for addressing reoffending and making the justice system more efficient and effective. It will look at opportunities to reinvest resources towards primary crime prevention. So the principles of justice reinvestment now need to take a further step up and we need to look at how we can divert funding that is currently spent at the bottom of the cliff in dealing with the consequences of crime and invest more of those resources into preventing crime from occurring in the first place.

We need to undertake comprehensive research and evaluation. That is why the government is making such a strong investment in this program—to engage with the leaders, with the experts in the field, from an academic perspective, a legal stakeholder perspective and the perspectives of the judiciary, the police, victims of crime and the broader community.

We need to make sure that we have recommendations on the table that can drive future decisions on the part of the government. The overall reform agenda is placed to be a two-year program of intensive work and analysis to deliver options to government in 2016.

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

**MR HANSON:** Attorney-General, has the review been prompted by community concerns regarding what the DPP described as manifestly inadequate sentences?

**MR CORBELL:** No, it has not, and I think that Mr Hanson puts the DPP's comments out of context. From time to time, the DPP will comment on individual circumstances where he believes that sentences are manifestly inadequate, but the DPP would also assert that it is properly the role of the courts, and in particular the



court of appeal or the Supreme Court in the case of a Magistrates Court matter, to review sentencing decisions. That is where those matters should sit. But I do not think for a moment that the DPP has characterised every sentence handed down by the Supreme Court or the Magistrates Court as manifestly inadequate and it would be wrong and false of Mr Hanson to characterise it as such.

It is important that we engage with justice stakeholders, the views of organisations such as the DPP, such as police, such as judicial officers, such as victims of crime and many others that need to be there at the table. The resourcing and commitment that the government is making to this program will facilitate that detailed discussion needed for an informed and comprehensive program of reforms to reduce recidivism, to reduce the cost to the taxpayer and to improve the support, recognition and acknowledgement needed by victims of criminal offences.

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

**MS BERRY:** Attorney, what other stakeholder consultation is envisaged as part of this review?

**MR CORBELL:** I thank Ms Berry for the supplementary. This will be driven across government by the Director-General of the justice and community safety agency. She will have responsibility to coordinate the views and the input of the various agencies across the government that have a key interest. But it is not just a within government effort. As I have said, we need to engage with traditional officers, the police, legal practitioners, in particular the DPP and Legal Aid, human rights advocates, victims of crime advocates, victims of crime, academic experts and the broader community. All will need to be at the table. We will engage in that process.

We want to draw on the best practice research nationally and internationally. This is a real opportunity for the ACT to create a contemporary sentencing framework that can serve as a model for others but also, most importantly, to meet the needs of our community and deliver justice in a more timely, more efficient, more cost-effective and, ultimately, a more just manner. And I look forward to the work of this program getting underway.

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

## **Paper**

**Mr Corbell** presented the following paper:

Koppers wood products—Minister's statement, pursuant to the resolution of the Assembly of 9 April 2014—Tabling statement.

## **Canberra—priority issues**

Debate resumed.

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (3.29), in reply: The opposition will not be supporting the amendment. To quote Shakespeare from

*Macbeth*, it seems the lady doth protest too much. There is a desperate need to say “Well, we’ve got priorities, too. We care about the people. We do. We’re not just focused on ourselves.” To an extent, we know the Labor Party cares about the people out there in the outer suburbs. They certainly care about the people in Charnwood where their Labor Club is; the people in Charnwood who can shovel as much money into their pokies as they could possibly get. That is where the Labor Party’s concerns are.

They talk about the hardworking families. They talk about their commitment to social justice. We hear so much rhetoric from those opposite. Unfortunately, we all know that the Labor Party machine, that mob opposite, are funded by the proceeds of money that comes out of the hardworking families that we on this side seek to represent but who those on that side seek to exploit to get as much money as they can out of those families to fund their coffers and spin their Labor Party machine.

There has been a lot of talk about priorities today. I say to you, Madam Speaker, that the only concern you see out of this mob opposite—

*Government members interjecting—*

**MR HANSON:** I would not be surprised if the only time Andrew Barr goes to Charnwood is to go to the Labor Club to ask, “How much money have we made this week, boys? How is this going to affect our receipts?” Where else to go? Weston Creek. I imagine the only time Labor Party members go out and see the good people of Rivett or Stirling or Fisher or places like that is to ask, “How much money are we making out of those people this week to fund us?” They are the priorities of the Labor Party.

*Government members interjecting—*

**MR HANSON:** It has got them fired up. They are pretty sensitive about this. They do not like it. They come in here with their flourishing rhetoric, their compassion, their heart. You have got Ms Berry up the back there talking about social justice all the time. “The poor hard workers. We care about them.” Do they? They care about their dollars that go into fund their Labor Party machine through the pokies.

There are certain words that I cannot say because words like “hypocrite” might be ruled out of order, so I will not use them.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Do not tempt me, Mr Hanson.

**MR HANSON:** Madam Speaker, let me go through the amendment. It starts, ironically, with the importance of ongoing engagement with Canberrans. Now, the latest example we have seen about ongoing engagement with Canberrans was the 11-day turnaround for a committee report. Mr Coe read out in his speech the submissions to that committee where every single person that responded to something that is going to have a massive and substantial impact on the planning of this city said, “There is no consultation here. This is a sham.” So do not talk to us about community group consultation.

We then got the boast about a sustainable, stable and progressive tax system. They talk about it being fair—an extra billion dollars in rates by 2031. What we got from Mr Barr's report he tabled in this place is—I admit—that the Liberal Party got it wrong, because it showed rates will not triple. The lowest measure Mr Barr had was that they would quadruple in the period of tax reform, and his highest measure had them going up sevenfold. That is what the Labor Party means by “progressive”. That is the mentoring he received from Mr Quinlan who said, “Squeeze them till they bleed but not until they die.”

As to the high quality and responsive health system, we have got my stump speech on that, which I will spare the Chief Minister from, but we can talk about a few highlights. The highlights could be the culture, the ED results, the elective surgery results and bed occupancy. I will spare the Chief Minister the indignity of talking again about the disgraceful episode of data doctoring.

As to the education system, the motion refers to all children and young people. It is fair to say that this side of this house has dragged those opposite kicking and screaming to make sure that they understand that kids who go to independent and Catholic schools are just as important as those in the public system. We know that in 2006 the Labor Party left moved a motion that Katy Gallagher and Simon Corbell supported saying that private schools are socially divisive. I think we have come a long way and I think we will keep this mob opposite honest about that.

Let us also not forget that Katy Gallagher sold out this territory by \$30 million, and the evidence is there in black and white. If you look at the budget papers from 2012-13 and compare them with 2013-14 you will see that what she signed up to comparative to the national partnerships is \$30 million less, and we know why. You needed to help Julia Gillard out. It did not do her much good though, did it?

**Ms Gallagher:** Because the Liberals had cut education funding in New South Wales and Victoria.

**MR HANSON:** Well, let's talk about New South Wales and Victoria, and WA. What did those Premiers do? They did not go skipping along saying, “Julia, I'll sign up and keep your job safe.” They fought for every single dollar, and they got millions and millions extra for their kids while you were selling us out by \$30 million.

The next item is housing affordability. Isn't that going splendidly? Land release—well, that is a model. Maintenance of shops—Mrs Jones has had something to say about that. I think you are a little bit out of touch when you talk about that. Housing—I look forward to Ms Lawder's motion to be moved later today about the lack of information and planning being provided about the ABC flats. Sustainable transport policies—well, Mr Coe's motion is coming up next, and I look forward to that. But let's not pretend that this is anything other than the fact that this lot are anti-car and anti-parking. They are trying to drive people out of their cars. They are trying to drive people on to their light rail system, and we will have much to say about that.

I could go on, and I have plenty of notes about this. The justice system is a beauty. Anyway, I am very glad this motion has been so popular. I think only Ms Berry and Dr Bourke have not spoken to this; I am not sure why they chose not to when the others did. It is clear that we have different priorities on this side than on the other side. It is true of any government—I would say it is sometimes true, I have to admit, of Liberal governments—that as they get old and tired—and this government has been around for 13 years now and it is certainly happening in this case—they start to look more and more at the issues that affect them personally—looking after their mates, listening to a narrow group of bureaucrats and focusing on the issues that matter to them.

We will not be doing that, Madam Assistant Speaker. We will look after all those people who want to send their kids to different sorts of schools and who make that choice. We will look after those who live in the outer suburbs and need better provision of amenities and roads. We will look after those people who are waiting longer than anyone else in the country for emergency treatment. We will work hard for those people who are paying higher rates, paying the highest bills and paying the highest taxes per capita than anyone else in the country. Those people are paying more and more and are getting less and less.

Fundamentally, we will look after those people who believe they can make their own choices, who know how to spend their own money and make their own decisions and live their own lives. We will be doing that for all of them. I think we can fulfil that. That is the vision I have and it is one of the fundamental reasons I came into politics—that is, to make Canberra the best place for everyone to live, to raise a family and to get ahead. That is what we will deliver for the people of Canberra.

That is something you will hear from us repeatedly over the next two and a half years. That is our vision; that is what we are going to do and you will increasingly hear more of the policy agenda that we will flesh out. I believe we will make that a reality and make this a better place than we are seeing under this government that has lost its way.

Question put:

That the amendment 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, as amended agreed to.

## Transport—light rail

**MR COE** (Ginninderra) (3.41): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes regarding light rail:

- (a) there will be minimal demand for light rail against the peak hour traffic flow and during off-peak times;
- (b) other routes in a potential ACT-wide network were not considered prior to an announcement on Gungahlin to the City;
- (c) the timeframe and \$614 million cost could blow-out considerably given the Government's track-record of delivering capital works;
- (d) the cost of financing the project is likely to be significant;
- (e) the operational cost is not yet known;
- (f) land on the light rail corridor could be developed independent of light rail;
- (g) the Government's own economic analysis suggests that bus rapid transit will offer a better economic return; and
- (h) the proposed route does not serve different parts of the CBD, Convention Centre or the Airport; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

- (a) abandon the current light rail project but preserve the corridors for possible future use; and
- (b) consider alternative ways to improve private and public transport between Gungahlin and the City, and other parts of the City.

The opposition has strong concerns about the light rail project. We believe these concerns are representative of the community at large.

Whilst there is no doubt that the vast majority of people like the idea of hopping on a tram to go from point A to point B, unfortunately point A and point B may not correlate with those of people living in Canberra.

Madam Assistant Speaker, \$614 million is a lot of money to spend on a project which has been poorly thought out. Is the government not concerned that the commonwealth government under Julia Gillard reviewed this project and said no? In January 2013, Infrastructure Australia said in relation to the ACT government's request for \$15 million for a study—not construction, just a study:

The case for favouring light rail over bus rapid transit has not been strongly made, especially when the submission itself points to the stronger economic performance of a bus rapid transit option.

If Infrastructure Australia do not think this is viable, why do they think that it will still work? Why do they think that the private sector will back this?

We have heard the government tout the project as being a PPP. If it is a genuine PPP, where the middle P, the private sector, take on the risk, that would be a very interesting project. However, it seems to me that all the risk and the vast majority of the funds will come from the government—that is, the taxpayers. It may well be a PPP in construction, but it will not be a PPP in risk or funding. Regardless of whether the government pays a company or a consortium in cash or in land, one way or another, this is going to cost the ACT many resources.

I do not deny that light rail is the flavour of the month around Australia and in many places around the world. But, as many cities are finding out, not every place is suited to an at-grade tram. Hobart and Perth have had similar projects proposed, but both have been abandoned. Not only did the Perth project not stack up, but it was the ALP opposition in Perth which contributed to the project not getting up. How things are different out west.

I am concerned that there will be minimal demand for light rail against the peak hour traffic flow and during off-peak times. I acknowledge that at peak times there is a fair chance the trams will be full going southbound from Gungahlin and, in the afternoon, northbound to Gungahlin. Between 7.30 and 9 am and between 4.30 and 6 pm I have got no doubt that there will be very high capacity on those trams. However, who is going north to Gungahlin at 8.15 in the morning? And who is going south to the city at 6 pm on a Tuesday night? For the whole project to stack up, the patronage has to be consistent throughout the day. There have to be high patronage levels in both directions throughout the day. I simply do not see how this is going to happen with what they are proposing.

At the Gold Coast, the cost has spiralled out to \$1.3 billion for just 13 kilometres. That is \$100 million per kilometre at the Gold Coast. In addition to that, the former Labor government said that 50,000 people would ride the tram each day. That has now been revised downwards to 17,000 to 25,000, less than half of what the original projection was. Over there, up in Queensland, it is only just viable as a private sector project. Even then, many are saying that in fact it is not viable as a PPP. And the demographics and population density of the Gold Coast are far more conducive to light rail than they are in the ACT.

The government has advised that 4,500 people will use capital metro to get from Gungahlin to the city each weekday morning. At present, there are more than 3,000 people who use the Northbourne Avenue corridor southbound every morning. So 4,500 people are going to go south on light rail, but at present more than 3,000 are currently using buses. In terms of commuters, we are only looking at an additional 1,500—at most, 1,500. This to spend \$614 million!

Part (b) of the motion is about other routes in a potential ACT-wide network. Yesterday I asked a question of Minister Corbell about the staging of the future rollout of the network. He said that the master plan will provide advice to the government about the rollout, about the staging. That is important, and I am glad it will. But why was that information not provided prior to committing to Gungahlin to the city? It may well be that this government is doing a tremendous disservice to light rail in the ACT by putting forward a route that may not be viable. And, of course, we on this side of the chamber believe it is not viable.

The staging of a light rail network is vital. It is vital so that the maximum economic return and patronage levels can be returned. In any system, there will be some routes which are more economic than others. This is especially the case when the routes are stand-alone, such as Gungahlin to the city. By getting the staging right, less economic routes can feed off the more economic routes and therefore collectively be more economic than they would be as stand-alone routes. Therefore it is absolutely vital to get the staging right.

Unfortunately, the ACT has not considered which leg is the most important one to start the light rail network. They have simply committed to Gungahlin to the city without proper analysis of the other routes. The ACT has simply gone ahead without economic analysis and said that it is in Canberra's best interests to start a light rail network with Gungahlin to the city. Where is the economic analysis to back the \$614 million of capital expenditure?

We are concerned that the time frame and cost could blow out considerably from the \$614 million and the four or five years for construction. As we have seen with so many of the government's projects, they simply do not get it right. Whether we are talking about the secure mental health facility, the Canberra Hospital car park, the ESA headquarters, Tharwa bridge, the GDE or the Cotter Dam—all have blown out considerably. The Cotter Dam is a classic one; it went from \$120 million to \$410 million for the main dam wall. The GDE went from \$53 million to \$200 million. With ESA headquarters, it was 13 to 76. With the Canberra Hospital car park, it was \$23 million to \$43 million. With the secure mental health facility, which we are still waiting for, it has been \$11 million to \$25 million—and who knows what it will actually finish up at?

We know that \$614 million is already a conservative cost compared to that of the Gold Coast. Let us also remember that the Northbourne Avenue corridor will have to be dug up. Who knows what water pipes there are, whether it be sewerage or town water pipes? What about electricity cables? What about gas? What about communications—defence communications et cetera? Many of those will be insulated with asbestos. We have some tremendous challenges with this project, all of which I think could contribute to the cost blowout and to a time blowout.

The cost of financing the project is likely to be significant. If the government borrows between \$500 million and \$600 million, even at a conservative interest rate, we are looking at \$20 million per year. That is a huge amount of money to recoup off the cost of running light rail. To think that you are going to get \$20 million in fair revenue for

one route is extraordinary. That brings into question the whole PPP. If, in the full operating costs, you have got \$20 million a year in financing expense, who is going to take this on? Who is going to take this on?

We have some very big problems to overcome, and I am concerned that the government has not properly considered all of them. Everyone likes the idea of hopping on a tram, but is this tram actually going to live up to what the government is promising? The operational cost is not yet known. How much is it going to cost to operate? It is a simple question. The government has given me some indicative advice of around \$7 million. I have doubts that it is going to cost just \$7 million. And who knows whether that \$7 million includes fare revenues, so whether it is a net figure, or whether it is simply the outlays? But one way or another, when you put in the operational costs and the cost of finance, we are up to a huge amount. Therefore a PPP is looking very dicey.

I believe that land in the light rail corridor could be developed independent of light rail. I believe the government want to bring density to Northbourne Avenue. They can do that right now. We have already seen that in several projects. We have seen it with Space and Space 2. We have seen it with the Axis apartments. We have seen it with IQ, which is being constructed at the moment; the Avenue apartments; and numerous hotel developments and commercial buildings up and down Northbourne Avenue. There is already a mood for investing in Northbourne; we do not need to spend \$614 million to spark that.

The government talks about uplift a lot—the uplift we are going to get from Northbourne Avenue. For the purpose of the scenario, let us choose a round figure of \$50 million. Let us say that you can get a block of land, one of those public housing blocks of land, that is worth \$50 million at present. With light rail, let us say it is worth \$60 million. What the government is doing is saying, “The uplift is \$60 million.” No, it is not. The uplift is the just the difference. It is the marginal benefit the light rail brings. It would be \$10 million in that scenario. The Canberra community and this chamber have to be very careful that we do not get fooled into thinking that every single dollar that comes in uplift is a dollar which could only come as a result of light rail.

Northbourne Avenue and the broader corridor can be developed without light rail, and we have already seen that at Flemington Road. The government’s own economic analysis suggests that bus rapid transit will offer a better economic return. In a submission they put to Infrastructure Australia, they said that light rail will deliver \$2.34 per dollar but bus rapid transit will deliver \$4.78. By their own analysis, bus rapid transit would deliver double the economic benefit. And, in addition to that, they may well have inflated the cost of bus rapid transit to well over \$300 million, which I am somewhat doubtful about.

We believe that Northbourne Avenue should be preserved as a potential light rail corridor at some point down the track. But, especially in this economic climate, we do not think it stacks up to spend \$614 million on this project. We should be preserving transit corridors across the city. We should be looking to the future with regard to preserving corridors so that at some point in the future we can build and upgrade



public transport if we want to. But as it stands at the moment I do not believe the government has made a sufficient case to either the opposition or the Assembly, and definitely not to the people at large, as to why it is going to spend \$614 million on this project.

We believe that the bus system in Canberra can and should be improved. It can and should be improved. We have seen the success of the 200 service. Whilst it was oversold at the start as being a rapid express when it was not a rapid express, it was still a good, frequent bus service, at 15 minutes. It has been popular. It is far cheaper and far more versatile than what the government is proposing with light rail. How are they going to get the patronage so much higher than we are currently seeing on the 200, to a level which would make this project viable?

The opposition has real concerns about what the government is proposing. Like, I think, most people, we like the idea of hopping on a tram in Canberra, but the reality is that it simply does not stack up as an economic proposal at this time.

**MR CORBELL** (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations and Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development) (3.56): I thank Mr Coe for the opportunity to speak about this very important project today. First of all, I am pleased that the Liberal Party have nailed their colours to the mast and have told the Canberra community that they have no vision, they have no view, that after 10 years in opposition, indeed over 10 years in opposition, they have no concrete proposals to deliver better public transport for our city and our community, no clear vision about how they are going to accommodate urban growth, no clear vision about where the future residents of this city are going to live as our population tracks toward half a million over the next 30 to 40 years—no vision for the future at all.

Their only transport proposal in the last election was to build more car parks. That was their position in the last election—more car parks, more roads, more asphalt, but no concrete vision for a more sustainable, a more liveable, a more walkable city that delivers on public health benefits, sustainability, more lively public spaces, better economic activity and a better future for our residents, for our citizens. That is their lack, and it is confirmed in the terms of the motion today.

The government will not support this motion today. We reaffirm our commitment to progress the light rail network in our city, with construction to commence on the Gungahlin to city corridor in 2016. We remain rock solid behind that commitment we took at the last election and we are investing the resources needed to make it happen.

Part of the motion brought forward by Mr Coe today is asking the Assembly to look at the issue of demand for light rail during peak hour and off-peak times. It will be little surprise to any of those involved in and aware of the details of those debates that during peak times the counter-flow, the flow travelling in the other direction, is lower. What a surprise! What a surprise that during the peak time the counter-flow is lower than those travelling to the workplace! Of course that is the case. It is certainly true that counter-peak demand and off-peak patronage demand are lower than during peak time and peak direction on any public transport system. It is the same on the bus network right now.

Mr Coe also suggests that other routes in a potential ACT-wide network have not been considered by the government. We do not agree. Yes, we have made a commitment to deliver on the light rail corridor between the city and Gungahlin, but that is based on the outcomes of the Gungahlin to city transit corridor study, which supported the feasibility of light rail in the corridor. That study was built on previous work undertaken to develop the strategic public transport network identified in transport for Canberra. Transport for Canberra identifies five key corridors: Gungahlin to the city, Belconnen to the city, Tuggeranong-Woden to the city, Queanbeyan-Fyshwick to the city, and Woden-Weston Creek-Molonglo to the city. The ACT planning strategy also outlines how these corridors will be the subject of future land development opportunities.

The government is undertaking the work needed to assess and finalise the detail of likely costs in relation to the procurement, delivery and operation of the light rail service, to satisfy itself of the viability and affordability of the project. As a consequence, one element of the work underway and being resourced by this government is the ongoing development of revised cost estimates based on the detailed design as it progresses through the reference design stage. Mr Coe seems to believe that you do one single assessment at a high level, and that is the final cost. He is badly informed again and shows his ignorance of the detailed assessment process needed to develop and finalise a business case for a project of this complexity, of this significance and magnitude. That costing will both inform and is informed by the detailed technical design of the project as it is progressed.

The government will see the complementing of the expert costing advice through a program of value management, risk quantification and assessment of operating and maintenance costs. There is built into our program a series of checkpoints at each stage of the design process to challenge the construction and design options being put forward, to make sure that the cost estimates will take into account the timing of light rail infrastructure construction. The Capital Metro Agency has commenced its investigation of construction options and the mitigation of risks associated with construction. A key component of those risks is the impact on time frames for construction.

Whilst it can be trite to simply trot out the line that time means money, in a risk quantification sense for this project, capital metro, it is very much the case. And that is why this assessment also includes decisions around procurement methodology which provide the best risk transfer solutions and which are still impacted by time to deliver. Impacts include financing and material costs, particularly with regard to those components exposed to international exchange rates and long lead times for delivery.

Mr Coe also asserts that the operational costs are unknown. But these costs are, of course, naturally contingent upon the final design and service level parameters that are still under development as the project work progresses to a level of certainty sufficient to take this project to the market. As with the estimates for the capital costs of the project, detailed estimates of the operational costs associated with capital metro are currently being defined, based on the design and operating information as it is developed. Once again, Mr Coe asserts in a simplistic and ill-informed way that this

project has not been properly scoped and worked through when it is exactly the opposite. This project is subject to a level of rigour and assessment which is appropriate for a project of this complexity and magnitude, both financially and technically. The model for the estimation of costs is extremely detailed and provides clarity on all aspects of day-to-day operation.

A challenge review is planned to test assumptions and benchmarking used in the model and so secure further certainty around the operational and whole-of-life costs of the light rail service. This will help us as a community to further refine both the actual cost and any contingency necessary to be incorporated at this point in time. The government, through capital metro, will also undertake market benchmarking to ensure that the costs associated with the project are broadly consistent with those elsewhere and that, where appropriate, differences have been accounted for.

Areas where there is the potential for early works and de-risking of the project prior to going to market are also being identified, and a potential program of these works is being further refined. This, again, gives us greater capacity to finalise and have confidence in relation to the cost estimates. So this project is making a very significant impact on how people view and think about this corridor. This agency, the Capital Metro Agency, is undertaking the work and the analysis needed to make it happen.

But I think the most important thing to stress is that, in the Liberal Party's world, their view, as the city heads towards half a million people, is that buses will do the job. Mr Coe seems to think that buses along Northbourne, mixed with general traffic, are going to be the solution to the public transport need along the city to Gungahlin corridor. He thinks it is all right. He thinks it is all right for people to continue to catch the bus and be held up in general traffic, with no priority along the corridor, delaying both bus travel and motorists. It is just not good enough.

It might suit his car-centric view of the world that the best solution to the transport task in our city is the continuing use of the private motor vehicle, but what he is doing by continuing to adopt that approach—just build more car parks, just build more lanes on roads; that will fix the problem—will not fix the problem. We need more people catching public transport. We need to reduce the cost to our community associated with the expansion and the adding of road infrastructure to our city and the continued reliance on large levels of surface car parking to meet that demand.

We have to make a shift as a city. We have to shift away from our reliance on the private motor vehicle. The private motor vehicle will continue to play a critical role in the transport task for our city. But we need to reduce the need for people to pay to have a three or four-car household because there is no alternative. And we know this is increasingly common. If mum has a car, dad has a car and the teenager gets a car—if there are two teenagers in the house maybe they both get a car—those costs add up. Those costs add up on household budgets. Fuel costs, purchase costs, maintenance costs, registration and insurance costs—they all add up.

In addition, we see fewer people walking; we see fewer people cycling; we see fewer people on the street. And we know what the impacts are of sedentary transport. Obesity, less activity in our community, the public health benefits that come from

that—these are all the consequences of policy that is skewed towards sedentary transport choices. Light rail enlivens public spaces. Light rail encourages more people to walk and cycle to the public transport node, far more than buses do, because it delivers certainty.

In a place like Gungahlin and the Gungahlin district, nine out of every 10 journeys—not just journeys to work but nine out of 10 journeys overall undertaken by Gungahlin households—are by private motor vehicle. We need to change that. And we need to change it for the financial and economic benefit of those households, for the health benefit of those households and for the vibrancy and the activity on the street in Gungahlin suburbs. We need to do it for all those reasons.

Mr Coe has a different view. And his view consigns people to the use of the car, consigns them to a lack of choice and a lack of opportunity. When it comes to buses, he is quite happy for those buses to keep going down Northbourne Avenue, mixed in with the general traffic, with all the inconvenience, cost and waste and loss of time associated with that choice. That is his vision. That is not our vision. Our vision is for the capacity for this project to drive a faster pace of redevelopment along the corridor.

What Mr Coe fails to recognise is that the development of light rail along this corridor shifts the pattern of development beyond business as usual. Mr Coe asserts: “Development is happening on the corridor already. You do not need light rail.” But the point is that it shifts that pattern of redevelopment activity beyond business as usual, beyond what is happening now, to a higher level, to a pace that would not otherwise be expected.

Why is it that the Liberal Party oppose accelerated redevelopment along that corridor that brings jobs and economic opportunity for people in our city as well as houses and accommodation closer to where they work in other parts of the city, closer to their services and facilities, closer to better public transport? Why do they oppose those things? This project delivers those outcomes. We are proud to be a government that delivers those outcomes, and we will continue to work to deliver this very important project for the people of Canberra. The government will not be supporting this motion today.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (4.11): I will not be supporting Mr Coe’s motion today either, although I congratulate him on finally making it clear to the Assembly and to the community that the Canberra Liberals do not support light rail in our city. It is clear that they do not support the first stage of capital metro, which would see light rail operating between the Gungahlin town centre and Civic. And it is clear that they do not support the ongoing work of the light rail master plan that is currently looking at how light rail can be extended to other parts of Canberra in the future.

Mr Coe argues that the light rail project does not stack up. My response is that Mr Coe’s arguments are not only spurious but the Liberal Party’s position on rail is simply, and basely, guided by the fact that they are in opposition and they are determined to oppose and denigrate, no matter what. That really is their mantra: “I oppose, therefore I am.” I accept, of course, that there are challenges to this project, and there is a lot of work to do to bring it to fruition. But I do not accept this polarising position of the Liberals that the project should be abandoned.

Let me make several points to flesh out that argument. Firstly, let me draw attention to the position of the Canberra Liberals on light rail at an earlier time. This was in 2011, before the capital metro project had been adopted by the current government. Here is what Mr Seselja, the former leader, said to the Assembly:

I believe, like most Canberrans, I think, that light rail is a good idea.

Mr Seselja went on to criticise the previous studies done by government on light rail, in particular that it had not spent enough money on the studies. He criticised the Labor and Greens parties for a lack of action on light rail, saying:

But they are not prepared to do the study; they are not prepared to do the work. They promise it at every election ... And they will have to look the electorate in the eye and tell them why they did not get it done.

What an irony then, that now, as the government makes solid progress on light rail—with my strong support—the Liberal Party revises its position. Its position now appears to be, “Stop doing the study, stop doing the work and abandon the project.” As has been noted in this Assembly before, Mrs Dunne also has expressed what I would characterise as strong support for light rail. In fact she documented it in a published paper. Mrs Dunne wrote:

Despite its car-centred infrastructure, Canberra could shift commuting patterns through a light rail system linking its constituent nodes.

She argued that Canberra can change its reliance on the car for ordinary commuting and “the obvious answer is a light rail system, or adaptation of transit oriented development”.

Other parts of Mrs Dunne’s paper note that the arguments in favour of light rail are strong. She points out that medium-sized cities with a comparable population to Canberra’s have light rail systems which work better than bus-only systems. She lightly chastises Labor governments for not being willing to outlay large amounts of money on important capital projects. She concluded by saying:

My suggestion for Canberra is that by taking into account the city’s unique profile, we can devise an integrated urban design policy that would give meaning to the notion of a “sustainable city”: one in which the development of a light rail transit system would play a crucial part.

Again, how ironic it is that now that the light rail project is finally progressing, and progressing well, the Liberal Party quickly reinvents itself as the arch-enemy of light rail. Never mind what Mr Seselja or Mrs Dunne may have said, the key for the Canberra Liberals now is to find every way they can to denigrate light rail as part of a contrived political attack on the government.

The points Mr Coe makes in his motion elucidate a one-sided and misinformed approach to this project. I will touch on several of them by way of illustration. Point (1)(b), for example, states that other routes in a potential ACT-wide network were not

considered prior to an announcement on Gungahlin to the city. I believe that they were. For example, the 2008 submission to Infrastructure Australia looked at routes from Gungahlin to the city and further to Barton and Kingston; from the city to Belconnen; and from the city to Woden and beyond to Tuggeranong. The 2004 Kellogg Brown and Root study looked at a Gungahlin route, a Belconnen route, a Woden-Tuggeranong route and a Civic-Manuka route. Incidentally, this study assessed different transport modes for these corridors and it noted in its outcomes that light rail scored more highly than any other mode. I note that Mr Coe, with typical parochial double standards, tries to keep the option of light rail alive for his own electorate, suggesting that he wants a light rail line running from Belconnen into the city.

In point (1)(c) Mr Coe says that the time frame and cost of the project could blow out. Is this supposed to be a reason for abandoning the capital metro project? Time and cost overruns are, of course, a risk on any project and any project manager will be working hard to safeguard against these risks. It is a risk on capital metro, just as it is a risk on the Majura parkway project. I note, however, that Mr Coe's approach to the Majura parkway project was to bring forward a motion calling on the government to expedite the project start date.

In point (1)(d) Mr Coe says that the cost of the light rail is likely to be significant. Yes, it is. But, of course, it is a significant investment in pursuit of a significant benefit for the Canberra community. The government is taking a sound approach to the financing of light rail through the Capital Metro Agency, with the advice of expert financial, legal and technical advisers. As Mrs Dunne wrote in the context of funding light rail:

All governments these days are now reluctant to borrow in order to fund what any sane person would regard as necessary, long-term investment ... the average polity must finance at least some of its wealth-building infrastructure from borrowings.

Mrs Dunne is essentially advocating borrowing to buy long-term beneficial infrastructure. She goes on to talk about the possibilities of using value capture, private sector investment and PPPs—all elements that the government is currently investigating.

Mr Coe says that there will be minimal demand for light rail against peak-hour traffic and in off-peak times. I would not say “minimal” but it is obvious that off-peak and non-peak routes have less patronage than peak routes. It is just the same for the current bus network or, frankly, the road network. It is no reason to abandon public transport projects. This is also a challenge that light rail will help address as the redevelopment of the Northbourne corridor creates more density and destinations along the route.

In point (1)(g) Mr Coe suggests that the government's own economic analysis shows that bus rapid transit, or BRT, will offer a better economic return. This point should not be made out of context. The URS light rail study that compared bus rapid transit and light rail on Northbourne clearly says:

A triple bottom line evaluation ... comparing their social, economic and environmental impacts to the 'do-nothing' scenario has shown [light rail] to provide higher benefits ...

And that light rail “generates the best overall outcome for Canberra”. The point is that light rail will bring more benefits, and benefits that bus rapid transit cannot achieve. The fact is, though, that light rail is more expensive. The question is whether we are willing to pay for these additional benefits. We say embracing these unique benefits is worth it and will change our city for the better. This is all that a cost-benefit analysis means—that it is cheaper to get the benefits of BRT. BRT receives a higher cost-benefit ratio in the initial assessment. However, BRT will not bring the same type of benefits as light rail.

Mr Coe talks about the cost-benefit analysis as if it is conclusive and, in particular, as if it comprehensively models every aspect of the light rail project. It simply does not. He conveniently ignores the important explanation from the consultants that their cost-benefit analysis only assesses traditional transport benefits—things like travel-time savings, carbon emission reductions, vehicle operating costs and road accident costs. The consultants specifically point out that intangible or newer economic benefits are not included in the assessment, but note that these kinds of improvements would produce significant benefits to the Canberra community.

Light rail in particular is a mode that generates significant benefits that fall into this non-traditional category. I have spoken about these in some detail in previous debates in this place. This is becoming relatively well established around Australia and there is now a lot of work occurring amongst transport analysts and economists to try to properly monetise some of the more intangible benefits of light rail projects. The number in the cost-benefit analysis is only one narrow way of looking at the project. It is by no means conclusive and we should not act like it is.

In conclusion, I do not support abandoning the light rail project as the Canberra Liberals suggest. I accept that there are plenty of challenges with the capital metro project and we need to continue to work through these to ensure the best outcome for Canberra. But I do not accept the misinformed and somewhat hysterical criticism that has been put forward today.

Perhaps, to some extent, this is not just opposition for opposition's sake. Perhaps it reflects a real and deep belief of the Liberal Party that there is no place for sustainable transport options in Canberra. After all, we have heard Mr Coe express a belief that the concept of peak oil is bogus. We have heard him insist that Walter Burley Griffin designed Canberra specifically for the car—despite, I might add, information I have provided from the Walter Burley Griffin Society pointing out that this is wrong. Perhaps it is about not worrying about reducing carbon emissions in the future, or running light rail on renewable energy—and we know the position that has been put forward frequently by the opposition on renewable energy initiatives.

My challenge to the Liberal Party is to actually look at the project fairly and objectively, and to look at the enormous opportunities and benefits it will bring to Canberra. By all means examine and highlight the challenges, but just do not base

your position on a base political need, as this just does a disservice to the community and to the future of this city.

This project is one that will bring substantial change for Canberra. It will deliver new economic opportunities. It will deliver environmental and economic benefits for our city. It is one that I think the community does support and sees the long-term benefits that this project will bring for our city.

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (4.22): I thank Mr Coe for bringing this motion before the Assembly today. It is a very important motion. It is a line in the sand. It makes our position clear. The Liberal Party has engaged in a very deliberative process over the last 18 months in looking at this proposal. Mr Coe has raised numerous questions and has put in FOIs. We have had many deliberations, and we have talked to experts and consultants.

It is an informed decision that we have come to today, Madam Assistant Speaker. And it is not about whether you like rail or do not like rail. It is a matter of whether the business case has been made for what the government are proposing—stage 1 of their light rail system, which is essentially a tram track between Civic and Gungahlin.

When you look at all the factors, the conclusion that we have come to, and I would argue the conclusion that Canberrans themselves are coming to as they become apprised of the facts, as they understand the business case or the lack thereof, is that it simply does not stack up.

It is pretty clear that this is ideologically driven and the key proponents who are driving this are Shane Rattenbury and Simon Corbell, who think that this is some form of green crusade. We know that from their comments they want to be at the fringe of the environmental debate. The reality is, though, that there is little if no difference between buses as we have them and a light rail system from an environmental perspective. But it does give a grand appearance that Simon Corbell and Shane Rattenbury are making some huge difference. It is a bit like Simon Corbell's banning of lightweight plastic bags—essentially there was an admission it will make no difference but it will give you the feeling that something good is happening.

There is a lot of “feel good” about a light rail system. A lot of people, on the surface, without looking at those facts, would probably feel good about it. But when you look at the issues, as I said, the case has not been made.

The cost is extraordinary—\$614 million of capital expenditure. It will be the most expensive project ever undertaken by the ACT government. It is equivalent to \$4½ thousand a household. I ask you, Madam Assistant Speaker, whether any of the members can really think of any substantive projects that this government has put forward that have not been subject to significant delay and budget blowout. The Cotter Dam is, of course, a very recent example, but even now it would appear that the Majura parkway is heading into trouble. These are complex programs and I have no confidence that it will remain at that level. It is clear when you look at our budget and the debt position this government is in that this is not the time when we should be going out and borrowing hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars.



The only other way, it would seem, to fund it, if they do not fund it themselves, is by way of some sort of PPP. Are we going to find a situation where deals are done with a private provider to give them a gift of land or whatever it might be? There is always an opportunity cost, and the reality is that ultimately the ACT taxpayers will pay for this. They will not just pay for the capital cost and the ongoing interest on that, or the loss of income that would have otherwise come through assets that are used to entice a private provider, but there are the operational costs. What are the operational costs?

The government are saying, “We’re moving ahead with this.” They are investing millions of dollars already in the light rail authority. Meanwhile they say, “We don’t know what it’s going to cost. We couldn’t tell you what a ticket price is. We don’t know what this is going to cost every year.” It would be premature, apparently, according to the minister, to say what the operational cost would be. I think it is extraordinary.

We have to look at what the economic benefit would be. I actually heard Minister Barr on the radio the other day say how light rail will generate an enormous amount of extra economic benefit for the ACT. Well, it will not. There will be some building activity whilst it is being constructed, but you could do that with any project. If you are spreading \$614 million around, there would be a lot of better ways to create economic activity and benefit from expending that sort of capital money.

Simply reducing or potentially reducing the travel time of a limited number of Canberrans from point A to point B is not going to have any measurable economic benefit to this city. Indeed, as Mr Coe has outlined on numerous occasions, when you do the comparison—and it is in the reports—between light rail and bus rapid transit, in actual fact buses win out. I think there is a fourfold benefit for buses and a twofold for light rail. So there really is not a case that can be made when it comes to the economic benefit.

This is not going to increase much flexibility for people either. As Andrew Barr said on the radio the other day, on 666, they will cancel the buses. So we have to be very careful that we are maintaining flexibility in our system.

As Mr Coe has outlined, why is it that the government has picked the city to Gungahlin? What would normally occur is that there would be a plan conducted to map out a system and then, for the most appropriate and best economic case, the most affordable or the one that is going to reap the best economic benefit, that route would have been selected. Instead we have the route that goes from Civic to Gungahlin. Clearly, when you look at the other routes, there is not a case to be made that that is the right route.

It would appear that the politics have got in the way. Who is it, Madam Assistant Speaker, that sits in that government over there that protects the ministers regardless of what case is mounted—we saw that yesterday—so that he can get light rail? It is the man that lives in and gets his support from the inner north, Mr Rattenbury.

This is a real piece of electoral sugar for Shane Rattenbury. Let us be in no doubt that he is the biggest winner out of this. He is a great beneficiary and this government is

prepared to pay \$614 million to keep Shane Rattenbury in the cabinet because Shane Rattenbury knows this is a magnificent thing for him electorally—or he thinks that is the case. There does not seem to be any other argument coming from that side.

The other point that Mrs Jones, a great advocate for Gungahlin, makes is that when you look at where this government is struggling to resonate, is struggling to connect with the electorate, Gungahlin clearly is a vulnerability. So this is about political expediency to try to sweeten the deal for Shane Rattenbury in the inner north and the people of Gungahlin.

The problem—and this is where the government will come unstuck—is that the good folk of Gungahlin are pretty smart. When they see what this is costing, when they start to understand what this means, when they realise that they have to drive to Mitchell to get onto that train if they are doing the park and ride, when they realise the difference between what they have already got with buses and what they will get with light rail, the people of Gungahlin will be saying, “Hang on. This is not what we’re signing up to here.”

I think that the government have made a very bad decision here. I think that they have decided to pursue something for ideological reasons. \$614 million: the consequences of this will reverberate for decades. Our children, if not our grandchildren, will inherit this debt that is being generated by the government essentially for electoral benefit. Really, when it comes down to it, it will be of no benefit to the people of the ACT. The broader ACT across all the other suburbs—Tuggeranong, Weston Creek, Belconnen, Woden and so on—is not going to get any benefit. It will be Shane Rattenbury who is the winner. (*Time expired.*)

**MRS JONES** (Molonglo) (4.32): I am pleased to add my voice in support Mr Coe’s motion calling for putting off the light rail construction and improving private and public transport between Gungahlin and the city. It is a strange sort of a marriage that the Greens and Labor have concocted to form government in the ACT. It seems that the glory box prepared for this wedding is the light rail development.

Mr Rattenbury was wondering about the ceremony and how it would go ahead. After the election they sat down and negotiated. It seems that, at any price, in that glory box will be a train set—a gold-plated train set. The price that we pay is a lack of roads infrastructure in places like Gungahlin and a lack of bus infrastructure in places like Weston Creek.

The marriage has become so strong now that Mr Rattenbury is being given his speaking notes from the Chief Minister’s office. This morning after the Chief Minister left and Mr Rattenbury came in, he was using the same lines that the Chief Minister was—workshopped lines about Mr Hanson’s speech. It seems that party room discussions on the other side are very productive and that speaking notes are given out for all to follow. Mr Rattenbury, in his commitment to this union, has decided to follow the script.

I do not think Ms Le Couteur, if she was elected here, would be so easily bought. The plan to build light rail from Gungahlin to the city at this point in time is an

unreasonable risk of taxpayers' money and it is also an attempt at pork-barrelling. For Mr Rattenbury, it may be an ideological preference, but for the government it is a matter of winning seats in Gungahlin.

This government has lost sight of delivering on the needs of all Canberrans. The planned light rail will be paid for by all ACT taxpayers, but it will not benefit the people who pay their rates and live in Weston Creek, for example. How will it help them get to work? How will it help them get around? We still do not have a direct bus from Weston Creek to Tuggeranong or a bus from Weston Creek to Belconnen. Where is the money to spend on that?

Will people in Woden benefit from this light rail system? I do not think so. Ratepayers living in Kambah, Torrens and Farrer will not be able to use the light rail system that they will have to pay for. People in Amaroo will still have to use three modes of transport to get to Russell offices, two modes of transport to get to work in the city, three modes of transport to get to work in Woden and perhaps four modes of transport to arrive at Tuggeranong for work.

The light rail system will not resolve the gridlock for half a day on Horse Park Drive or Gundaroo Drive. These roads will still have to be used just as much as ever to get people to the town centre or elsewhere. In the last campaign, the ALP candidate up in Gungahlin stood at the crossing and promised people who asked about the duplication of Horse Park Drive that this government would deliver a duplication of that road.

I challenge members of the government to drive out to Forde, Amaroo or Bonner and to drive to Civic at 8 am or 8.30 am. I challenge them to drive out to Ngunnawal, Casey or south Amaroo and try to get to the GDE via Gundaroo Drive any time from 7 am to 10 am and they will see my point.

At a cost of \$614 million, plus interest, plus operational costs, which are not yet known, this is another grand plan from the government whilst the basic services that ratepayers expect are neglected and ignored. The focus of the government is not right. The Canberra Liberals would put the focus back on to getting the basics right so that people can get on with living their lives.

Instead of pursuing a public transport model which is so unrealistic with the urban sprawl we currently have, let us deliver the basics before we build the gold-plated tram set for the glory box which will require payment from all Canberrans for the benefit of only very few.

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (4.36): I rise to support Mr Coe's motion today. It is quite concerning to me that the government is planning to spend at least \$614 million on a light rail system that will only service a very small portion of our population and a very small area. As a member for Brindabella, I must pass on the many, many comments I have received from my constituents who will be paying for light rail but in no way seeing the benefit of it.

I am concerned that the ACT government's own figures demonstrate that there would be a better economic return for bus rapid transport than there would be for the

implementation of light rail. I support the call today for the light rail project to be abandoned and for the ACT government to not spend over \$600 million they do not have on a system that their own figures show would not provide the greatest economic benefit to our city.

There is a time and a place for light rail, but we do not currently have the population to justify this. We do not have the density and the research does not support it. Now is not the time, and the short run between the city and Gungahlin is not the place. When you are thinking of dollars of this magnitude, we have to think about what else \$600 million-plus could be spent on. Think of our education system, the health system or providing more affordable housing. We could create a very effective and efficient rapid bus transport system. The fact is, though, we do not have \$600 million to throw around.

What else does it mean? It means that we will have a significant interest bill to cover every year, which could be in excess of \$25 million per annum. Then we must also think of what else we could spend \$25 million per year on. I am concerned that the government is supporting light rail at any cost. The government wants the residents of the ACT to pay for this light rail network at any cost. They do not know the operational costs once it is completed, nor does it seem to matter to them how much the costs might blow out on this project.

They have said it themselves; this government will push forward with this project at any cost. Madam Deputy Speaker, that is of grave concern to me. I am here to represent my constituents. Just last night at the Tuggeranong Community Council there was a show of hands to determine support for light rail, and the great majority did not support it. This was only a straw poll, not a scientific survey of any sort. Nevertheless, it is indicative of the people that I talk with each day.

I cannot support light rail at this time in Canberra if I am to do the best by my constituents. I support Mr Coe 100 per cent in his motion today. It is time we focused on doing the best things for the residents of Canberra.

**MR COE** (Ginninderra) (4.39), in reply: I would like to thank Mr Hanson, Ms Lawder, Mrs Jones and others for their contributions to this debate. It is a debate that we should be having in this place. The expenditure of \$614 million plus interest plus recurrent costs is something that is highly appropriate for this chamber to deliberate on. I am sure we will be doing so many times into the future on this issue.

It is interesting to note how captive Mr Rattenbury—or perhaps more so, Mr Rattenbury's office—is to this government. I would think that nobody in this place would be more disappointed and more unhappy with the government's handling of the light rail project than Mr Rattenbury. He is the one that wants to be defined by projects such as light rail. Therefore, when the government stuffs up projects like this one it potentially is a personal reflection on Mr Rattenbury's mission to deliver light rail in Canberra.

I said earlier that the way the government is going about this project and how they have selected the initial route for a possible future network is potentially doing a

disservice to light rail in Canberra. You can be an advocate of light rail but still be critical about how this government is making decisions.

It is all very well for Mr Rattenbury to say to me, “You need to be objective.” We are being objective. Look at all the reports; look at all the information. Does Mr Rattenbury honestly believe that the government has made the case for light rail? Perhaps it is he, Mr Rattenbury, and others in this place that are blindly following the government and Mr Corbell’s leadership on this issue when they all know that this project is not being managed very well.

Mr Rattenbury said that there were problems with the cost-benefit analysis. That is the analysis that this government submitted to Infrastructure Australia. It does include an environmental impact. It does include time savings. It does include noise. It does include numerous other factors and it still said that bus rapid transit was better. Mr Rattenbury asked me to be objective and then says that I need to look at the intangibles. It is very hard to be objective and to look at intangibles, and he failed to actually mention what they are.

I urge everyone in this place to be very careful about blindly following the government on this project—whether it is simply in this chamber, whether it is in committee or perhaps even in party rooms. I urge everyone in this chamber to scrutinise the project so that we will get the best possible outcome. If the government is going to deliver this and if the government genuinely starts to deliver this, then we will scrutinise it to make sure we get the best possible outcome. But it still does not mean that the project, based on the information we have now, is enough to commit to. It simply is not.

We do believe that we should be getting adequate information about the project before we decide on whether to go ahead with it or not. But all the information they had at the time of committing to this said that bus rapid transit was a better option. Yet somehow \$614 million has been committed to. I imagine that in a month’s time we are going to see in the budget some of the capital being put in there, because to date it is unfunded.

Madam Deputy Speaker, for yourself in Ginninderra which, of course, includes three suburbs of Gungahlin, for Dr Bourke, for Ms Berry and for Mrs Dunne in my electorate in Ginninderra, I think we have got to be looking at this. Are we doing the best thing possible for our electorate? Even those members representing Molonglo, are they doing the best thing possible for their electorate when you consider the cost of \$614 million plus interest plus recurrent costs?

How many people are actually going to be within walking distance of light rail? How many people? Why cannot the government tell me this, because I have asked this? They cannot tell me. These are core questions that you would think they would have answers to. There are many, many problems with the case the government has outlined to date. If the government has this really compelling case, why are they not conveying it? Why are they not conveying it? We all know that there are people in the government, people who work in government departments, who are going around town saying that this project is a disaster. We all know it.

If people in government, towards the very top of government agencies, are saying this—presumably they are privileged to more information than we are—I think that is of real concern. We believe that at this stage in our history, in our development, we are better placed to properly pursue buses as the primary mode of public transport. We believe they provide the most versatile service and a very comparable service by almost any indicator. By way of cost they are considerably cheaper; considerably cheaper. It is for that reason we think that we should be pursuing buses at this time, but we should also maintain the corridors so that at future points in our development we can move to another mode if need be. I urge members to support the motion.

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.

## **ACT men's sheds**

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella) (4.49): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the recently successful inaugural Men's Shed ACT Forum held in the ACT Legislative Assembly on 29 April 2014;
- (b) the pivotal role that ACT Men's Sheds provide to their respective local communities through provision of access to local networks, health awareness and recreation;
- (c) the improvements towards social cohesion delivered by the members of ACT Men's Sheds;
- (d) the importance of the many vital volunteers and donors that continue to build the community based organisations at a grass roots level; and
- (e) the continuing support from the ACT Government in supporting current and new Men's Sheds including the investment into the new Tuggeranong Men's Shed, as part of the Tuggeranong Multi-use Indoor Community Facility; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) continue the current feasibility study into the needs and roles of ACT local Men's Sheds, recognising their vital contribution to wellbeing and the contribution Men's Sheds make to the broader community;
- (b) investigate the best way to make ACT Government information and services available to Men's Sheds and their participants; and
- (c) investigate the provision of training opportunities for ACT Men's Sheds members, including machinery operation, occupational health and safety and basic first aid.

I move this motion today to recognise and celebrate the contribution of men's sheds across our city, especially to recognise the contribution of the many local men who have, over time, established and sustained men's sheds across Canberra.

The social, community and health benefits of men's sheds in the ACT are many and varied. There are 13 men's sheds across the ACT, with another located in neighbouring Queanbeyan. They offer a diverse range of activities from wood and metal working, regular cycling outings, hosting guest speakers and excursions, to online networks and information sharing.

As many of us know, men's sheds in this region and around the country generate significant benefits for their members and for their communities. The website, The Shed Online, hosted by beyondblue in conjunction with the Australian Men's Sheds Association, or AMSA, aims to recreate the atmosphere of an actual men's shed and, in their own words, The Shed Online is now Australia's largest men's shed with over 8,000 registered users.

This considerable spread of men's sheds across our country demonstrates that Australian men from all walks of life have experienced the camaraderie and wellbeing benefits of men's sheds. In addition, men's sheds also contribute to their own communities, helping with maintenance, fundraising and other forms of local support to schools and community groups across the country.

An Australia-wide survey conducted in 2013 found that 94 per cent of shed members felt that their shed made an important contribution to their community. Men's sheds have long been recognised as meeting places where men can find social support and camaraderie. The benefits of this increased connectivity enhance social cohesion and flow through to local community networks.

In the ACT, men's sheds host members that are, on average, between their mid-60s and early mid-70s. Most men are retired, but there are some younger men, and all sheds have members in their 80s and 90s. Most members live in the suburbs in the vicinity of their men's shed. Men often choose to join a men's shed after a significant life event, such as retirement, changed family circumstances or after relocating to the ACT and region.

For these men, men's sheds offer an invitation to form new friendships, to re-engage in an active lifestyle, to share their own and others' knowledge and expertise and to give back to their own community. The reasons they continue to participate revolve around the social aspects of the membership. Enjoyment of camaraderie and learning and the comfort of an atmosphere of shared respect are some of the key reasons that members attend shed activities. Over half of the members regularly attend their men's shed in the ACT.

Many of the local men's shed participants have indicated that their participation is a means of remaining engaged in life and with men of similar age as an alternative to spending the majority of their time at home. The men's sheds provide these men with the means to enjoy the benefits of social connection when they may otherwise be prone to social isolation.

Indeed, the movement has spread beyond those community group men's sheds, Madam Deputy Speaker, as you would be aware from the forum. We now have men's sheds actually located in retirement villages. The retirement villages themselves have funded the men's shed program. It is great to see so much support. It is particularly important for retired men in our community, with many participants stating that the men's sheds provide a replacement for the work environment that they have left. We also know that men's sheds are a strong nexus for the community. They open access to local networks for members and provide a connection with other community groups and activities which enrich our communities.

The men's sheds in the ACT reflect a broad range of experience and professional backgrounds. The skills of public servants, builders, engineers, teachers, architects, carpenters, solicitors, accountants, small businessmen and many others are put to use in the development and ongoing operation of the sheds. Indeed, on my last visit to the Monash Goodwin homes men's shed I found that not only were some of my ex-work colleagues from APS there but also I had friends there that had retired and moved into the Monash Goodwin homes facility and had taken advantage of the men's shed there.

Men's sheds have become an informal forum for passing on skills and for learning new skills and where members' own skills and expertise are utilised and valued. The creation of an open community is amplified in many cases through the men's shed management structures where management committee meetings are often open to all members and where many decisions are reached by consensus.

Some sheds are affiliated with regional or local community organisations and complete projects on behalf of organisations in the community, drawing on the expertise and experience of men's shed members. These collaborations continue to strengthen community networks.

As the motion notes, last week, together with my colleagues Dr Chris Bourke MLA, Ms Yvette Berry and yourself, Madam Deputy Speaker, we held a men's shed forum in the Legislative Assembly reception room. There were over 20 representatives from each of the ACT men's sheds at the forum. Those included Giralang Men's Shed, Belconnen Community Men's Shed, Melba Men's Shed, the ACT Model Railway



Society, which is currently located at the historic railway site out at Kingston, Kangara Waters Men's Shed, Goodwin Ainslie Men's Shed, Majura Men's Shed, Gungahlin Men's Group, Lanyon Men's Group, Tuggeranong Men's Shed, Forrest Men's Shed, Vietnam Vets Men's Shed—that is located over in your electorate, Madam Deputy Speaker: you have probably visited that yourself; it is a great establishment there alongside the Vietnam vets memorial place—and Hall Men's Shed.

The forum was also attended by representatives of the Community Services Directorate and a consultant currently undertaking some work for the government on men's sheds. That is, of course, funded in the ACT government's 2013-14 budget. I want to thank those people for attending. I was particularly pleased that the forum discussions will be included in the report currently being prepared.

The forum was an excellent opportunity not only for us MLAs, as our community's representatives, but also, significantly, for the men's sheds themselves to gather around and share their experience with one another. It is clear that we all learnt from one another and came away from the forum with new networks and, importantly, for the men's sheds participants, they made some connections with one another. They have learnt what works and what does not work and what new activities men's sheds could try.

I would like to advise the Assembly on the issues raised in the forum. The participants raised a range of general issues—from where they saw their own roles in playing a key part in men's health to the opportunity and need of sharing skills, equipment and experience between those other men's sheds. In addition, they also raised a number of specific issues that the men's sheds have come across throughout their individual journeys of become a men's shed in the first place and activating the community.

All of the men's sheds in Canberra hold one very important similarity—the fact that they are, as an organisation, completely run and organised from the grassroots level. There is no-one there paid through these groups. They rely solely on volunteers for the completion of day-to-day tasks, as well as organising the group to achieve their core outcomes, whether it be to bring in a guest speaker to discuss men's health issues, organise a local barbecue or finish a community project. The volunteers are constantly working to deliver positive outcomes for those around them.

Men's sheds at the forum told us that they need government support in many different ways. Sometimes small amounts of funding can help, sometimes assistance with facilities and planning issues can help and sometimes the most useful thing is the information about government services and assistance to navigate government processes.

That is why my colleagues and I have called on the government, through this motion, to consider the best way to provide this sort of support and assistance to men's sheds. I am very pleased that this motion is being debated. If supported today, I look forward to further advice being provided to the Assembly on the outcome of this work.

The members of the men's shed forum also highlighted the current demand for some additional training for their members in a suite of skills, including those of first aid,

product training and IT skills to ensure that their respective local men's sheds are safe and able to run in the most efficient way possible.

In conclusion, men's sheds achieve positive health, happiness and wellbeing outcomes for men who participate, as well as for their partners, families and communities. A renewed sense of purpose and the act of giving back to the community returns a sense of value and self-respect to those participants. The strong sense of belonging built on the companionship and shared learning that is generated by these sheds alleviates and prevents social isolation for its members.

The social and community benefits of men's sheds in the ACT have already been shown to be significant. Men's sheds in the ACT strengthen and integrate community links and participation and have significant social impacts for individual members.

Finally, I would like to thank all the participants of last week's forum, including yourself, Madam Deputy Speaker, Dr Bourke and Ms Berry—but also John Murphy, or "Spud" to his mates, Ian Dalziel, Mark Quilligan, Howard Fraser, Ray Nelson, Billy Williams, Graham Wright, Gavin Bennett, Bob Haverfield, Don Stewart, Michael Ashbury, Doug Edwards, Marcus Jense, Paul Parritt, David Wise, Roy Halton, Jim Thornton, Keith Billingham, John Landos, Peter Kercher and Bob Richardson for taking their time to meet with us. I extend my broader thanks to all of their members for their ongoing contribution to our community. May they grow in strength.

**MR DOSZPOT** (Molonglo) (5.02): I thank Mr Gentleman for his motion today on what is an important program for our ageing population. For most men the start of retirement is an exciting new stage in their lives, but for some it is met with isolation and fear. The benefits of physical activity later in life are well known. However, the importance of continuing mental health later in life is less renowned.

A report produced by the ACT government in 2010 titled *Population Ageing in the ACT: Issues and Analysis* says in regard to anxiety and depression:

At the most recent assessment in the PATH through life study, 39.6% of older adults had a high chance of clinically significant depression symptoms. Almost one third (31.4 per cent) of older adults also reported a high likelihood of clinically significant anxiety.

A similar report conducted by National Seniors Australia in March 2013 titled *Staying Connected: Social Engagement and Wellbeing among Mature Age Australians* had similar results with 20 per cent of those surveyed reporting to feeling downhearted and blue at least sometimes.

Clubs in any form play a very important part in the lives of the ageing, whether they be sport or hobby based. The support and social inclusion they provide the community has wide-ranging benefits. Men's sheds are one of the very important community programs that are being delivered both in the ACT and Australia-wide.

The Australian Men's Shed Association was formed in 2007 to provide support and guidance to men experiencing or at risk of experiencing mental illness or other

debilitating illnesses and provide men with the links to enable social interaction and build a culture which is based on inclusion and mutual respect.

The values of the organisation are to ensure that it:

... is accessible to all men and whose primary activity is the provision of a safe, friendly and healing environment where men are able to work on meaningful projects at their own pace in their own time in the company of other men.

These community-based, not-for-profit, non-commercial organisations provide a service to the community which is particularly relevant in our ever-increasing ageing society. With age comes the decision to downsize. Long gone are the backyard sheds and garages for men to tinker and create in. Men's sheds provide an opportunity for men to come together, whether it be to fix toys, undertake a new woodwork project or learn or transfer a skill. I have had firsthand experience of Goodwin men's shed where I was shown the great benefits that these facilities have to offer both the community at large and the members involved.

I applaud the work of men like Jim Crane at Goodwin who provides support and administrative direction to his group, enabling their 56 members to, apart from pursuing their individual hobbies, assist the wider Goodwin homes community through helping older residents with furniture repairs, making toys for grandchildren and other much valued assistance.

Men's sheds are not just about woodwork and metal; they are about men working in a constructive environment sharing interests and skills with other men. Depending on which men's shed you join, you can learn anything from computers to metal work, with the philosophy being more about support and inclusion than skill and experience. Men's sheds provide a sense of mateship where men can go and have a cuppa and a chat or undertake their latest woodwork project.

A good example of this is the work carried out by Harry Redfern and members of the Melba shed. I have heard from various other men's shed groups how much they admire the initiatives of the Melba shed, which includes, apart from their normal men's shed activities, community work with local primary schools like Charnwood and Mount Rogers where they provide mentoring to individual students through using Meccano building projects, a support that I understand is very much appreciated by their local school communities.

Because of examples like these and other similar groups, it is vital that the ACT government does its bit to ensure the continued success of men's sheds throughout the ACT. I note that Mr Gentleman has called on the government to continue the current feasibility study to investigate the best way to make ACT government information and services available and to investigate the provision of training opportunities for ACT men's sheds members.

These are all aspects we support. However, without the sheds themselves, there is no program. The government needs to ensure the delivery of these is in a timely manner and within the time frames it has set itself. You only need to look at the debacle that

took place in providing the Tuggeranong Men's Shed access to the Tuggeranong multiuse indoor facility. The site was open and ready, yet the access for the men's shed was delayed due to bureaucratic bumbling with to-ing and fro-ing between the ACT government directorates.

In addition to the delays experienced with getting access to the facility, the 95 Tuggeranong Men's Shed members are still waiting for an official opening, which I understand is being delayed because of disability access issues. Disturbingly, there also appear to be quite lengthy delays in payments to people engaged in aspects of the building project in Tuggeranong. It may be appropriate for Mr Gentleman to also seek to fix the outstanding payment issues as well.

More men's sheds have been allocated in the Community Services Directorate budget for the coming financial year 2014-15. But the community needs to feel confident that the feasibility and design study is going to produce bricks and mortar results, not just propaganda.

We note the recent inaugural men's shed ACT forum held last month. Whilst the forum was a great tool to enable men's sheds to come together and discuss ideas and issues they are currently facing, there needs to be some feedback and direction from the ACT government into the future. Given the Chief Minister's election promise of 2012, it would have been great if she herself had addressed these members and informed them of the progress on Labor's commitment to men's sheds, with firm time lines.

Chief Minister, your government has been in office for 13 years. It is time to deliver on projects. Your government has the opportunity to provide significant value to the lives of the members that wish to use these facilities. As mentioned earlier, in 2012 the Chief Minister committed in her policy statement that if ACT Labor were re-elected they would:

... establish more Men's Sheds, like in Tuggeranong, committing \$2.2 million to help community groups establish the sheds for older men, closer to where they live and provide greater opportunity to participate in their community.

There are questions to be asked. When will these sheds be built? Where will they be built? How many will be built? And, importantly, why does it take two financial years to undertake feasibility and design study on this? There needs to be a clear directive that this and other promises will be delivered on time and on budget. We will be keeping this government accountable.

I thank Mr Gentleman for this motion today. We strongly support the men's shed movement. We will be supporting this motion as, like most Canberrans, we know this program can deliver real and tangible results.

**MS PORTER** (Ginninderra) (5.10): Mr Assistant Speaker, I rise to speak in support of this motion, and I thank you for raising it. As you outlined earlier, men's sheds have become a well-established part of the ACT community and, indeed, across Australia. Men's sheds are principally emerging out of the community, as you have

described, as a way of providing practical support for men in our suburbs. That is an important point to make leading on from what Mr Doszpot has just said. These sheds emerge from the community; it is the community that has the initiative and the government comes along underneath that and supports the work they have done and are doing. The top-down approach will never work with these kinds of groups.

As you said, Mr Assistant Speaker, men, in particular when they retire, often find themselves in a situation where they are faced with the risk of isolation, loneliness, perhaps depression and possibly suicide. As we all know, men's health issues, particularly as they grow older, have a significant impact in terms of their general wellbeing and the effect of that on the whole community. As we are aware, after men retire, their usual busy routine is disrupted and their day-to-day contact with their workmates is obviously curtailed. That significantly increases the chances of feelings of isolation and worthlessness.

It is generally recognised that after many years of employment many people find it difficult to adjust to life after they retire; for obvious reasons. We can see that men's sheds provide an environment which is safe and informal, where men can meet to share their stories with one another and as a way of transferring their skills to others. No wonder their numbers are increasing in our suburbs in Canberra.

A research project that was undertaken in South Australia under the national vocational education and training research and evaluation program funded by the Department of Education, Science and Training on behalf of the Australian government and state and territory governments says that men's sheds provide mateship and a sense of belonging through positive and therapeutic informal activities and experiences with other men. The report goes on to say that men's sheds achieve positive health, happiness, and wellbeing outcomes for men who participate as well as for their partners, families and communities. This is a good outcome not only for the individuals but also for the general community.

In my Ginninderra electorate alone—and you have mentioned some of these, Mr Assistant Speaker—we currently have about seven active men's sheds, including Hall Men's Shed; Melba Men's Shed; Belconnen Community Men's Shed; Giralang-Kaleen Men's Shed; Kangara Waters Men's Shed—which is a men's shed in a retirement village that you highlighted when you were speaking—ACT Model Railway Society and the Vietnam Veterans and Veterans Federation ACT. However, due to the men's shed movement being relatively new, coupled with its rapid growth, it is possible there could be more sheds that we do not know about yet and potential for more sheds to emerge. It is for these reasons I believe it is important that governments find ways to engage and closely work with men's sheds to facilitate their development and secure their long-term sustainability.

Recognising the importance of men's sheds in the Belconnen community, I, along with my colleagues Ms Berry and Dr Bourke, on 3 February this year successfully convened a Ginninderra men's shed forum here in the Legislative Assembly. The aim of the forum was to facilitate networking opportunities for the various Ginninderra shed members as well as to listen to the issues that sheds had both individually and collectively. We also sought to map out ways we as elected members can work together with them towards achieving satisfactory long-term solutions.

The success of this initial forum then set the stage for the recent inaugural ACT men's shed forum that was held on 29 April which you, Mr Assistant Speaker, spoke about and outlined the benefits. The forum was a great success, and your motion is one more step in strengthening this movement across the ACT.

It is difficult to talk about such an important and successful movement without reflecting on my personal experience with the men's sheds. As you are aware, over the years since being elected to the Legislative Assembly I have had the privilege of being invited to most of the Belconnen sheds. During these visits I was privileged to listen to men share their successes as well as their challenges and sometimes what are heart-warming stories and at other times heart-wrenching stories.

I have also seen firsthand how these sheds continue to assist men in Ginninderra. I would like to highlight one men's shed—that is the Belconnen Community Men's Shed in Page, which I have had the privilege of being invited to on several occasions. I have seen the progress that has been made from the early days through to the recent official opening, which Ms Berry was also able to attend.

As you are aware, this shed is auspiced by the Mosaic Baptist Church in Belconnen, which also donated the land beside the church's community centre on which the shed is now built. In February 2011 a committee was formed to create a space where men could meet and share their stories and skills and learn new skills and support one another. Through these visits I heard the stories that were told of people who know of suicide by men who battled with isolation, loneliness and depression whose lives could have been saved, perhaps, had there been such a facility as the men's shed or had they known about one nearby. I also heard very positive stories that reassured me that the shed was already making a big difference to men in Belconnen, turning lives of isolation around and building relationships.

Mr Assistant Speaker, the men's shed movement in the ACT has shown that with spirited determination a small group of people can make a difference in our community. Before closing, I especially thank my fellow members for Ginninderra, Ms Berry and Dr Bourke, and also you, Mr Assistant Speaker, for the work that we are doing together. I acknowledge the work of my staff and thank them for their support in the work we are doing as members in this place. I add my thanks to yours, Mr Assistant Speaker, to the representatives of all the men's sheds who have so willingly joined with us to help them strengthen the movement.

It is because of these experiences that I strongly support this motion calling on the ACT government to continue the current feasibility study into the needs and roles of the ACT local men's sheds, recognising their vital contribution to wellbeing and the contribution men's sheds make to the broader community; investigate the best ways to make the ACT government information and services available to the men's sheds and their participants; and investigate the provision of training opportunities for the men's shed members, including machinery operation, occupational health and safety and basic first aid.

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra) (5.18): I have to be honest; I had not known that much about men's sheds until more recently. I got to know them a little with a friend of mine who was down the coast, a member of a men's shed down there, but it was only after I was elected to the Assembly that I really had the opportunity to go out to the men's sheds and meet some of the fellows that are out there and hear some of the stories and share in their "shedness", if you like. My recollection of sheds is mum saying, "Yeah, go down to the shed. Dad's down the back." But I know that the men's sheds in the ACT and across the country are very different creatures to my dad's shed. So I thank you for the opportunity to speak about them today.

In the ACT the men's shed has a fairly short history but it has become an invaluable part of the territory, providing a place for Canberra's men to socialise, learn and contribute to our community. And in my time in the Assembly, albeit a short time, I have got to know many of the men of the local men's sheds in my electorate. I am proud of the wonderful work that they do in partnering with schools and other community organisations. I will probably be repeating a bit of what has already been said today, but I think it is important that we acknowledge the important work that the men's sheds do for themselves but also for our community.

As I have said before in this place, I have been lucky enough to be invited to some of the men's sheds, the Melba Men's Shed in particular, to talk about ways they could report problems in their community to the ACT government. As I said at the time, I could not imagine a bunch of blokes better placed to do that.

I am a woman and, visiting the men's shed, I felt a bit special that they had allowed me into their inner sanctum. Hearing some of their stories, I know that they did tone things down a little for me while I was there, and I appreciate their honesty and that they were doing that. But with the camaraderie and the bantering across the room with each other, it was really wonderful to be sitting there and being part of that conversation. Whilst they are not just interacting with each other, their involvement in this organisation, this men's shed, has led them to discover new opportunities about how they can be involved in their community.

It is worth saying again that whenever I am out and about in my community I am always running across members of the Melba Men's Shed in particular. Mr Doszpot has already talked about the positive male role models that they play in primary schools where they have been using Meccano as a project with kids, to help them learn in a different way. They are participants in and leaders of community walking and cycling groups, active members of the Holt community park carers, church congregations and community councils, and they are a familiar face at the barbecues at Bunnings. They also support their local neighbourhood watch groups.

I think it is important that, when we speak about men's sheds, we highlight the fact that in many cases it is not always the case that the blokes join the shed off their own bat but rather that the strong and sometimes forceful encouragement by their wives and partners to join is the catalyst for men getting involved in their local men's shed.

But in all seriousness, I know how important these sheds have become for men in making sure that they are able to get the most out of their retirement years. These sheds ensure that they have a safe and constructive place to pursue their interests and that they are able to have meaningful engagement with their community. These organisations have become important places for men too, in an informal way, to remain healthy and active in their retirement years.

Men's sheds provide health information and support for older men in our community, which Ms Porter has just talked about. Indeed, at the meeting that I attended at the Melba Men's Shed there was a discussion on prostate friendly bike seats, where to buy them from and a review by current users of the seats about their comfort and their health benefits to the men at the shed. But it is not just the physical health that these men's sheds are important for; it is also mental health. As the Australian Men's Shed Association has recognised, good health is based on many factors, including feeling good about yourself, being productive and valuable to your community and connecting to friends and maintaining an active body and an active mind.

As I have said before, until you have seen it, it is hard to understand the importance members place on tackling serious issues from men's health to community infrastructure and also the commitment they show to lifelong learning and their respect for each other's skills and talents. But I think one of the key strengths that I have been seen in the sheds, particularly in the Melba Men's Shed over the last five years, is that amongst the seriousness they also make sure that every meeting has time for a joke and a song.

Too often we talk about ageing in terms of the need to budget for increasing service provision as life expectancies increase and the baby boomer generation moves towards retirement but this, I think, drastically narrows the reality of what ageing means. In September 2012, the then Gillard Labor government commissioned an advisory panel on positive ageing to lead a national dialogue on ageing issues, improved coordination of policy design across portfolios and work with government on implementation and design of ageing policy. One of the panel's tasks was to promote programs that encourage active or positive ageing. By this, we mean exactly the kinds of things that men's sheds do, which is promote continued participation in society through social, economic, cultural, civic and religious affairs, not just the ability to be active or participate in the workforce.

In a political environment that is seriously considering forcing Australians to work until they are 70, we should in this place take stock for a moment and consider one of the great achievements of the 20th century, and that is to recognise the right of people to a dignified retirement. These days that means we have to look beyond just arguing about the amount we spend on the pension and how we regulate the superannuation system. Notwithstanding the importance of both these policies, we have to examine ways of making sure that, no matter how large the ageing population, they can enjoy their retirement years with dignity and with purpose.

As policy makers, we have to be creative. We have to support communities who want to support our ageing population. We also have to examine ways of making sure that



people who are entering retirement are given support, because, for many people, leaving the workplace can leave them feeling isolated and without purpose. These are the kinds of challenges that the men's sheds can help overcome.

As the baby boomer generation begins their journey into retirement, many on the right of politics and technocrats with no imagination will begin to put pressure on our right to a dignified retirement. We must push back on these challenges and we must also be creative. That is why I am happy today to stand up and highlight and applaud the good work of Canberra's men's sheds.

Our community has many challenges facing us over the next few years, especially if Mr Abbott and his Liberal government fulfil his promise and put a wrecking ball through our city. So it is nice to give time to recognising one of the good-news stories of our community and to recommit our support to men's sheds and the great work of their members. Thank you, Mr Gentleman, for bringing this motion to the Assembly.

**DR BOURKE** (Ginninderra) (5.27): We are constantly being warned about the dire consequences for our nation of the ageing of our population. At times it borders on ageism and not valuing the contribution senior members of our community, our elders, have made to our nation throughout their lives—

*Mr Doszpot interjecting—*

**DR BOURKE:** What was that, Mr Doszpot?

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER** (Mr Gentleman): Order, members! Address your comments through the chair, Dr Bourke. Mr Doszpot, if you would not interject that would be good.

**DR BOURKE:** At times it borders on ageism and not valuing the contribution the senior members of our community, our elders, have made to our nation throughout their lives, through their careers and in raising and educating the next generations. The senior members of our community continue to make a great contribution. They are valued members of family, supporting and mentoring young people, and they contribute to a range of groups as diverse as the Country Women's Association, professional associations, sporting clubs, various disease support groups and, of course, the subject of today's motion, the men's shed movement.

Men's sheds are a grassroots movement, filling an identified need in men's lives for primarily a post-retirement way of men to get together, support each other, value each other and do things together. More so than women, traditionally men's lives have revolved around families and careers, with so many of their social relationships built around the workplace and those work networks. After retirement, many men lose these contacts, and the men's sheds help them rebuild social and support networks away from a workplace.

We know that strong friendships are one of the greatest preventive health measures, in addition to giving up smoking and getting more exercise. Friendship and good fellowship offered by men's sheds are immeasurable in terms of health benefits. They

provide a safe space, a safe space for men to talk about their lives and their concerns, in that shoulder-to-shoulder mode of operation, a way which is very attractive to older men.

Men's sheds are also a great vehicle for spreading positive health messages and combating isolation, depression and illnesses of the older man. With this in mind, I and other Labor backbenchers have been meeting with men's sheds representatives to discuss their needs as well as to hear what they do and what belonging to a shed means to them and their community.

As you have heard, we have arranged a recent roundtable-style forum where shed members were able to network and share knowledge on resources, activities, finding sponsors, gaining grants and recruiting new members. The ACT government is also preparing a report on men's sheds and their needs.

The men's shed movement began in the 1990s. The nation-wide movement is a wonderful self-help way of promoting social interaction and reducing depression in elderly men. It has evolved to include men of all ages, perhaps some of us here. Following the success in Australia, the movement has also gained momentum in Europe and South East Asia. What is important for men in the community seeking friendship and active interests is a space to meet. These gatherings give men the opportunity to be valued and to be valuable members of their community. It is also an opportunity to have a lot of fun and use and share skills learned over a lifetime.

Some sheds specialise in restoration and construction and helping community groups. Others concentrate on social and educational activities, though there are many sheds doing both and more. As well as meeting members of Canberra's men's sheds as a group at the Assembly, we have also been out visiting individual sheds in our constituencies.

I was welcomed at the Melba shed on a day of a downpour in April. Members had made valiant efforts to create stepping stones through the flooded footpath at the entrance to the shed. The president jokingly suggested I had come to open their new shed pool. Melba shed opened in August 2008. It was a joint initiative of the Rotary Club of Ginninderra and the North Belconnen Uniting Church. In contrast to other men's sheds, Melba does not have a workshop, nor does it aspire to one. It is a talking shed.

One of the outcomes from the roundtable bringing together members of sheds from across Canberra was the invitations going back and forwards across the room between the sheds to visit and to use their equipment or to see what they do. Some workshops have basic tools. One specialises in woodturning, another has welding equipment and another has a program for a computer-controlled saw available to shed members, with the expertise to assist them to use it. The pooling of ideas and resources between the sheds was magnificent.

Melba shed representatives at the roundtable, Billy Williams and Ray Nelson, were especially proud of their shed's IT group's expertise, their email and online networking, and they offered mentoring in this area to the other sheds. The Melba

shed caters for men who enjoy convivial discussion forums, listening to guest speakers, going on excursions and participating in special interest group activities. Their regular meeting takes place on a Friday morning and everyone is welcome. There are about 80 members on the active roster and a regular meeting attendance of about 50 individuals. A typical meeting starts at morning tea, a discussion around the shed's activities and plans, accompanied by a few cheeky interjections and then a guest speaker on an advertised topic. After the gathering there is lunch at the McKellar Soccer Club. I am looking forward to being their guest speaker at the shed later this month during Reconciliation Week. Some Fridays are reserved for a barbecue or an excursion to a local attraction.

Members also volunteer, as we have already heard, to help community groups such as the YMCA at their garage sales, working-bee improvements at the not-for-profit Greenhills Centre and fundraising at the Rotary trivia night for polio research. There are also the SIGs, the special interest groups, who meet regularly for walking, cycling, bowls, golf, tennis, mahjong, men's sing-a-long and gaining and improving computer skills. To improve healthy eating and lifestyle, there is an activity at the CIT Fit and Well gym at Bruce. I am really impressed with the level of energy at this shed and their wide-ranging interests and activities on offer.

They have got a terrific website that also includes everything you need to know about their program and activities, information about other sheds and so much more, including a funnies page, plans and pictures for Rosella bird boxes and links to wellbeing sites. The weekly newsletter, which is written with style and wit, is on their website and is a testament to the enjoyment and comradeship of the Melba shed.

Men's sheds are an important means for men to improve their quality of life. They offer enjoyment to many which, in turn, encourages a more active mind and body. This is good news for men's health in general. I look forward to seeing the ACT government report on men's sheds and hearing about its reception from the men's shed community. Finally, I am also pleased to learn the forum has resulted in those reciprocal invites amongst the Canberra men's sheds, further linking the community and spirit of friendship.

**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) (5.34): I thank Mr Gentleman for bringing this motion to the Assembly. The men's shed organisation has been close to my heart for many years; they are a fabulous organisation and they do great work for men—and for the community, because of the ripple effect of the work that the members of the men's sheds do.

This government acknowledges the important place that men's sheds occupy in our community. This is reflected in the ACT strategic plan for positive ageing, which includes the strategic priority of work and retirement and reiterates the importance of retired people continuing to be active in our community. The associated 2012-14 action plan includes the action of developing a policy on the government's supports for men's sheds.

We are currently seeing a steady large stream of baby boomer men retiring from the workforce. This will continue for years to come. The percentage of ACT men over the age of 65 years is projected to increase from the current 10.7 per cent to 15.1 per cent by 2035. These men will be seeking a suitable social outlet in retirement.

Researchers tell us that the social isolation in later life can reduce our life expectancy by up to 10 years and that the key to healthy ageing is friendship. Men generally find their social connections through work. When they retire, they lose that social network. Men's sheds are an important avenue for many men to reconnect and to form new friendships through valued activities.

The Tuggeranong Men's Shed, for example, has been a shining example for others. While doing the creative activities that we would expect out of a men's shed, like woodwork, they have also focused on maintaining the members' mental and physical health through information talks and the "Spanner in the works" screening program. The Tuggeranong Men's Shed is a member of the Australian Men's Shed Association and is currently auspiced by Communities@Work. It is also supported by the Tuggeranong sea scouts, Bunnings Warehouse and the Canberra City Lions Club.

The shed was constructed by the Tuggeranong Archery Club using ACT government funding as part of the Tuggeranong multipurpose sporting facility. The building work on the facility has recently been completed, and an open day was held last month. It was a fabulously well attended open day. I had the great pleasure of taking part in some of the activities in the multipurpose sporting facility. I tried my hand at archery, bocce, badminton and a few other things. People tried to entice me onto the trampoline, but I thought that was best left to the young of body. It was a great turnout and I had the chance to look through the new men's shed there.

People in this place may recall that it was the Minister for Sport and Recreation and I who got that development and that fabulous asset for the Tuggeranong community. The facility down at Tuggeranong includes a 180 square metre workshop, a kitchenette, a meeting area and a barbecue area with a large pergola. The shed has 95 members, with 40 members attending regularly—the majority from the Tuggeranong area, with a few attending from Weston Creek.

Tinkering in the backyard shed has been a long-known male phenomenon. I have a shed in my backyard, and I know that for my husband it is a place of refuge on many an afternoon. But the back shed does not offer the opportunity for a chat or the opportunity to share in one's experience or share knowledge and skills. Also, many men that are now retiring do not have a quarter acre block with a shed. We have heard that from a few other speakers here today. The sheds are also an opportunity for men to work with other men to regain skills that they have not used in decades. Or perhaps they have never developed handy skills, but are very keen to learn. Having a purpose in life is vital to our wellbeing. Men generally get this purpose from work. Men's sheds not only give men a focus to their day through learning, the exercise of skills and the sharing of experiences, they can boost men's self-esteem and self-worth.

Men's sheds are also places for men to talk about emotional or family issues, knowing that this environment of camaraderie is a relatively safe place, with men of their own age and life experience. While their mates may not have the answers to all the problems, the sheds are at least places where men can share and get some reassurance or advice on who can be the best help with particular problems. This can stop them from spiralling into poor mental or physical health. Sheds can also be a useful regular break from caring responsibilities which, without such respite, could lead to depression.

The government is proud to have been able to assist many sheds through capital works and through seniors grants. Therefore, I support Mr Gentleman's motion for the continuation of the current feasibility study into the needs and the roles of ACT local men's sheds, a venture that I believe will be a very cost-effective way for the government to assist older men to stay healthy in retirement.

There was some comment by Mr Doszpot about our commitment to men's sheds. Let us be very clear: it was the Labor Party that put that commitment on the table. Let us be very clear that, as demonstrated at the Tuggeranong Men's Shed, we have supported our commitment to men's sheds. I remind Mr Doszpot that when they had the chance in 2012 to take to the community their clear articulation and support for men's sheds, they were found to be wanting. I suggest to them that if they want to come here and complain about our commitment, our commitment is clear. It has been demonstrated. All they have is words of opposition. As I said this morning, the role of opposition is to oppose. Government gets on and does things. The Canberra Liberals form a very good opposition indeed.

There has been mention today of the Melba men's shed. From the last time I went to the Melba men's shed—I believe, sadly, in many ways, it was the only time—I remember very vividly their rendition of “Mulga Bill, from Eaglehawk”, not only in prose but in actions to boot. I have a memory of this charming gentleman falling down the side of the mountain, so to speak, and collapsing into the creek below. That is the fun that they have at the men's shed.

Mr Gentleman's motion also states that it is important that we establish a single point of contact within the government for men's sheds, both for the sake of the community sector and to facilitate better planning within the government.

Finally, Mr Gentleman also points out that it is important that we investigate the training opportunities within local men's sheds. While the sheds' activities have traditionally been around woodwork and metalwork, we should start to see an expansion of activities around the country, as many sheds are starting to incorporate other life skills, such as computer work and cooking. They may in essence be wellness centres for men.

And whilst the focus on men's sheds is for retired men, make no mistake that they provide great mentoring and support opportunities for other young men in the community.

Congratulations, Mr Gentleman, for bringing this forward. I think it is well supported.

**MR BARR** (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Community Services) (5.42): I thank Mr Gentleman for bringing forward this motion this afternoon. It recognises the important role that men's sheds make in our community and the difference they make to the individual lives of many men throughout the city.

I would also like to extend my thanks to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to Dr Bourke and to Ms Berry, together with Mr Gentleman, for hosting last week's forum here in the Assembly. I am sorry that I was in a cabinet meeting at the time and unable to make it to the forum, but I understand from reports that it was a resounding success and that everyone present benefited from the opportunity to get together to share their ideas and experience. It has been particularly pleasing to hear from those who attended that the men's sheds found particular benefit in learning from one another. They indicated that they were keen to operate as independent groups, but were also able to adapt their activities to their members and to their local communities, and that the government can play a role in facilitating their activities, providing assistance where needed and learning from their experiences.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I congratulate you and all of my colleagues who hosted the forum for bringing together these grassroots community members and facilitating an environment where they learned from one another and provided useful information to the government on how best to support men's sheds across the city.

As has been outlined already, but it is worth reiterating, men's sheds play a significant role across Australia and in our city. That is why the government has previously invested in men's sheds across the city—most recently, as Ms Burch has indicated, at the Tuggeranong facility, as part of the multi-use indoor community facility. And we have committed to providing further support for men's sheds in the future. The government will soon receive a report based on extensive consultation with men's sheds. Thanks to last week's forum, this will include information from discussions and ideas generated there. Some of the preliminary findings from the report have confirmed what previous studies have already found, that men's sheds offer significant benefits—to participants, but also to the broader community, through their activities and contributions to other community groups.

One of the other significant benefits is for the partners and families of the participants. I am told that many partners find benefits in having their husbands or partners out of the house, making community connections. That sounds like a win-win to me. No comment on possums at this point, Madam Deputy Speaker!

The preliminary work also demonstrates—

**Mr Doszpot:** I have heard a complaint from one of my constituents.

**MR BARR:** Indeed; so have I. The preliminary work also demonstrates—

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Mr Barr, do not digress along the lines of a possum.

**MR BARR:** The preliminary work also demonstrates that each men's shed has its own unique character, and that this is one of the most important things that men's shed participants wish to maintain. This character also changes over time, and adapts itself to changing membership, to the interests of members, and to when and how they meet. It is clear that men's sheds are very diverse, some meeting daily, others operating on a weekly format. Some meet purely for socialising. Others meet only to get their hands dirty and to craft and produce a wide range of products. Others have a more exercise and lifestyle approach, and participate in regular outings across the city and the region.

Despite these differences, there is a common thread as to why these men participate. They want to connect with each other, give back to the community, be active, and share and learn from one another. These are the hallmarks of a healthy community. It is really pleasing to be able to report that men's shed numbers across the city are growing. This reflects the change in demographics of our city.

In closing, I thank my colleagues for bringing this motion forward today, for hosting the forum, and for your advocacy on behalf of your constituents and older men across the city. I note your advice from the men's shed forum; people have been able to communicate directly with government on the ways that we can help and investigate the best ways forward to provide information and services to men's sheds and to look at the range of opportunities for further assistance. We look forward to this work continuing, and to receiving the final report about men's sheds later in the month.

**MS GALLAGHER** (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education) (5.47): I thank Mr Gentleman for updating the Assembly with this motion, in particular about last week's forum with representatives of men's sheds in the ACT. These local sheds have become part of a strong national movement delivering enormous benefits to the mental and physical health of older men. The benefits also flow through to their communities, in particular through the volunteer work that many of the men's sheds do.

One key to the success of men's sheds has been widespread support amongst political parties and at different levels of government. I am very pleased that this government is able to continue its support for men's sheds here in the ACT. As part of this commitment, the government provided funding for a study into men's sheds across Canberra. The initial findings of the study confirmed the many benefits they provide through support, participation and socialisation for older men.

As the study continues, aided by the forums, such as the one held last week, I hope to see a strong future path emerge for our local sheds. We want the ACT sheds to retain the freedom and flexibility to serve local communities' needs as they see fit. However, we have heard a consistent message from shed organisers that some administrative and organising functions are a drain on their resources. This study will also look into those issues. Making sure the sheds are sustainable is something that we need to work together on.

I would like to focus on the significant health benefits the men's sheds offer the growing group of older men, in particular, across our community. It is estimated that

at some point in their lives one in eight men will experience some form of depression, and that there are many triggers to this, including retirement, day-to-day stresses, family breakdown, isolation, unemployment, financial troubles and alcohol and drug use. These triggers are almost impossible to avoid, which is why we need support mechanisms for those who suffer from resulting mental illness.

Men often experience health issues differently to women. There are also differences in how men respond and seek out support services. Men are generally more likely to seek help later rather than earlier; they are less likely to know what help is out there or how to access it; and they may often feel personally weak if they experience a physical or mental health issue. The “Toughen up; be a man” message is persistent in our community. Unfortunately, it means that some men still suffer poor mental health or other treatable diseases without seeking appropriate help and support.

What the men’s sheds do is target activities and support to men, providing an environment to support social interaction, sharing of skills and interests and emotional wellbeing. Shed activities provide the benefits of keeping physically and mentally active for men whose experiences put them at risk of health difficulties. More than this; the sheds are building resilience in men to help them through future challenges and provide the support network through which to get help and advice.

Canberra, like the rest of Australia, is experiencing a rapid increase in the age of its population. The male population aged 65 and over is forecast to increase by 47 per cent from 2011 to 2019, a major demographic change which will bring with it significant challenges. This population ageing suggests that there will be an increasing demand for access to networks of men’s sheds—another reason why it is a good time now to look at the actions needed to ensure their sustainability into the longer term.

One aspect responding well to change is the online environment. The Australian Men’s Shed Association has partnered with Beyondblue to develop “Shed online”. It has become the largest men’s shed of all, and you can see in the discussion forums that it is a valuable place, particularly for those feeling isolated, to engage with a larger support network. More than 8,000 users, also known as shedders, are now registered on the website. It is a large hub of information, activities, contacts and even a men’s shed YouTube channel. This proactive online presence is great to see and is likely to grow in importance as an avenue for governments to provide information and support to the sheds and their members.

I am really pleased to support Mr Gentleman’s motion today and his call for further government work to support local men’s sheds. We should all recognise their contribution to the health and wellbeing of men and the broader community. We should also see them as a valuable partner in providing important health and community services to the people in the community who may otherwise be missed. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (5.52): I would like to thank Mr Gentleman for bringing this motion forward today because I think, as members have commented and as we all know and have experienced, Canberra’s men’s sheds are a tremendous community asset. Certainly, I have had the terrific opportunity in the past to go to the Melba Men’s Shed. I know that the people who were present there that day were



getting a lot of benefit from being there. There was a real sense of community spirit. I think it really highlighted the benefit of having a facility like that.

The government's support for the men's sheds I think is very welcome. We have seen them spreading out across the city now. They are in a number of locations. For men of a certain age—perhaps that is the polite way to put it—I guess there is not a culture of sharing or of talking about issues of concern. I think what men's shed do is provide a pretty practical place to allow some of that bonding and sharing to go on in a way that is comfortable for men who perhaps have traditionally not been willing or able to share in that way. So I think they provide that real social cohesion, as Mr Gentleman mentions in his motion, and that opportunity to come together that is incredibly valuable.

The other thing I mention that men's sheds do is that they provide a focal point for skills and community giving. Again, the experience that members have talked about today, and that we have seen in some of the men's sheds, is the community support and community work that gets done. Certainly, my experience the year before last year when I went to visit the Melba Men's Shed was one of real energy and a real dynamism around having that group coming together and working together.

I will keep my remarks brief today. I simply wanted to take the opportunity provided by Mr Gentleman having put this on the table to offer my support to the motion, to support the continuing government support for men's sheds and to investigate the kinds of things Mr Gentleman has talked about in his motion—the provision of training opportunities and how to make ACT government information services available.

Often the group of people who are accessing these facilities are perhaps not the best ones to be looking for information, but if this is a forum in which the government can perhaps provide it more readily than has been the case, then that is another benefit. As I say, I will keep my remarks short today. I simply thank Mr Gentleman for bringing this motion forward and offer my support to it.

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella) (5.55), in reply: I would like to thank everybody for their fantastic contribution to this motion this evening. It is wonderful to see so much support for the men's shed movement across the territory. In closing, I want to make a final plug for Tuggeranong Men's Shed. I have just had a look at their website. The smiling face of Frank Vrins there on the top. It says that the Tuggeranong Men's Shed:

... is a relaxed and creative space for all men to enjoy. Make new friends and spend time with other men over a cuppa and a chat. Learn and share skills in light woodwork, maintenance, computers and photography. Join us for trips to other sheds.

The new shed is open Tuesdays from 9 am until 1 pm at unit 1, 299 Soward Way down in Greenway. They are open Wednesdays from 9 am until 1 pm and Fridays from 9 am until 1 pm as well. It is fantastic group of people down there at the Tuggeranong Men's Shed. Of course, that is auspiced by the Communities@Work group.

They are also supported by the Lake Tuggeranong Sea Scouts, Bunnings Warehouse and the Canberra City Lions. Fantastic! We have heard today from members about the fellowship of men's sheds and the importance of their contribution to our community. Most importantly, we have heard about the positive contribution men's sheds make to men's health. As Ms Berry outlined, it is not just their physical health but, importantly, their mental health as well.

As I said, it is great to see all parties support this motion for the benefit of our community. I look forward to the growth of the men's shed movement throughout Canberra and our region.

Motion agreed to.

*At approximately 6 pm, in accordance with standing order 34, the motion for the adjournment of the Assembly was put and negatived.*

## **Disability services—service provision**

**MR WALL** (Brindabella) (5.59): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) Therapy ACT currently provides a number of services for people with a disability;
- (b) the ACT Government have announced that they will be withdrawing from specialist disability service provision from December 2016;
- (c) from 2015, early intervention services previously provided by the ACT Government will be provided by non-government organisations; and
- (d) families of children and individuals with a disability remain uncertain about the effects that the withdrawal of the ACT Government from specialist disability service provision will have on their own circumstances; and

(2) calls on the Minister for Disability, Children and Young People to make public and promote a detailed plan and timetable for the withdrawal of disability service provision, particularly Therapy ACT services, and subsequent replacement services by 1 July 2014.

The motion I have moved here today has come about as the result of feedback that I have received following the government's announcement made by the Chief Minister and Minister Burch that specialist disability service provision would no longer be provided by this government. It must be said from the outset that the opposition has indicated that we are supportive of this move and that wherever services that are currently provided by government can be provided by the non-government sector, it is a move that should most rigorously be investigated and seized where possible.

However, this agreement does not provide a free card for the government to simply go ahead with these changes without providing the proper public consultation and information about how these changes will go ahead, nor does it prevent the government from receiving appropriate scrutiny from the opposition as these changes are made.

That said, this announcement has brought with it an enormous amount of stress and anxiety for the families of individuals who are directly affected by these changes. This is the driving force behind today's motion that is before us currently. My office has received a considerable amount of correspondence in the last couple of weeks in the wake of the recent announcement. More often than not, words such as "unsure" and "unclear" are used in the correspondence. This to me highlights the current failure of the minister to provide the answers for the uncertainty faced by the disability community and the need for a clear and detailed understanding of just how the withdrawal of services will be handled, particularly with regard to Therapy ACT.

According to the Community Services Directorate annual report for 2012-13, Therapy ACT provided services to 4,736 clients, of whom 1,515 were provided with brief consultation services through a drop-in clinic or intake service and 3,221 were accepted as clients for a therapy program. It was originally expected that only 4,410 clients were likely to need to access therapy services in that year. However, last year there was a blowout and the number increased as a result of demand from the community.

Overall, 75,697 hours of therapy services were provided last financial year. These services were received by some of the territory's most vulnerable individuals and their families. This is a significant gap that will need to be filled by the non-government sector as we transition towards the national disability insurance scheme. If you are a recipient of these services, it is easy to understand why there may be some significant anxiety or uncertainty surrounding the minor detail that has been released to date on how these changes will progress.

We know for a fact that demand outstrips supply when it comes to provision of therapy services. There are countless families still waiting for assessments and services and countless more are yet to even get to the point of assessment. Only last year we had another case in this minister's responsibility where she was simply unable to get the communication with the community right. That was when it came to consultation on the decision to change the setup for, and to close, some respite services in the ACT.

Minister Burch announced in September last year that centre-based overnight respite services that were provided by the Elouera House, the Kese House and the Teen House were no longer going to be provided by the ACT government. The families who used these services were, however, not properly informed about the decision and were left in a distressed and anxious state about alternatives and what these changes would mean for them.

It is not good enough to shut services that are heavily relied upon by families and individuals without first providing information to those that are going to be affected by the change and the information surrounding the alternatives that are available. It seems that some of the lessons that were portrayed last year have not been considered properly and have not been learned from.

As I mentioned earlier, there has been a significant amount of correspondence that has come into my office in recent weeks surrounding the government's decision. I will quote very briefly from a parent who has written to me:

The newspaper reports say the ACT Government is shutting down its therapy services for school students with a disability ... but the NDIS does not cover education-related services. Surely this means some students with a disability will be worse off with the arrival of the NDIS ... but no one was supposed to be worse off with the NDIS. To my knowledge, there was little or no service for students with ASD ...

I think those sorts of comments, coming from a parent, clearly articulate the uncertainty and the need for more clarity and a more defined approach to how these changes are going to be transitioned. I think it is incumbent on the government to articulate clearly how this is going to happen, what services are going to be changed, when they are going to change and who is going to be picking up the slack and filling the gaps from those service providers.

It is completely understandable. Many of us have children of our own. If we were on a waiting list to have our child assessed for what may be a disability knowing that the services that are currently catering for those diagnoses are soon to be wound up, we would be concerned that there still was no clear articulation as to who would fill in those gaps.

As I mentioned, the correspondence continues to roll in. A couple of moments before I came back down to the chamber to move this motion, a parent from Cranleigh School contacted us about her concern. I saw in the email that the minister has also been included in on that email. I am sure that in due course the response will come either through the Assembly or direct to the parent but I think it is dependent upon the government to clearly articulate the proposed changes. That is the crux of my motion. I call on all members to support it today.

**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) (6.05): I thank Mr Wall for bringing forward this motion. We broadly support it, but I seek leave, Madam Speaker, to move two amendments together.

Leave granted.

**MS BURCH:** I move:

- (1) Insert the following new paragraphs:

“(1) (e) the Government’s approach on a gradual phase-out of provision of specialist disability services has been endorsed by the ACT Opposition;

(f) since the announcement of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, the ACT Government has been closely consulting with people with a disability and their families, as well as service providers and staff, on the implementation of the scheme; and

(g) the ACT Government submitted its preferred phasing schedule to the Commonwealth earlier this year and despite detailed negotiations, is still awaiting agreement to proceed with an agreed schedule.”.

(2) Omit paragraph (2), substitute:

“(2) calls on the Minister for Disability, Children and Young People to:

(a) continue to seek sign-off from the Commonwealth on the phasing schedule, in order to end the uncertainty facing people with a disability and their families;

(b) release and promote the phasing plan for disability service provision, including Therapy ACT services, prior to 1 July 2014; and

(c) provide regular reports to the Assembly on the implementation of disability reform in the ACT.”.

The amendments clearly set out that we do support providing information to the community. I have not been backward in bringing forward the information that I have to hand back into the community. I am more than happy to give an update on the NDIS. This government is indeed ready to go. I understand, and I hear too, that people with a disability and their families are keen to know the information around the NDIS and how it will affect them. To indicate that there has been no communication with the community is simply false. I do not think there has been a week gone by since the announcement was made that there have not been different groups and forums for the community to come in and be part of different conversations—individuals, families and organisations.

Let us be clear that we in the ACT government are ready to go. I believe that the biggest hold-up now on detailed phasing comes because we have not got formal sign-off from the federal government. The ACT is ready to go, and in response to the community—and I will stand by this community each and every day in their need to know—just yesterday I wrote to the responsible federal minister spelling out what we are doing in the absence of a confirmed commonwealth agreement. I wrote:

The ACT is fully committed to a start date of 1 July 2014 and has invested significantly in preparing families, carers and service providers to be ready for the trial commencement.

Given the imminent start of the ACT trial we are commencing contract negotiations with our service providers to incrementally decrease their funding as clients enter the NDIS. This is consistent with the ACT goal to “cash out” as many services as possible.

I went on to say:

To ensure that organisations are fully prepared for the NDIS, ACT Government officials will provide each funded organisation with detailed information regarding the decrease in funding over the two years of the ACT trial based on the three phasing streams agreed at senior official level:

These phasing streams are, for adults:

Adults will transition to the NDIS from oldest to youngest over the trial period.

For children:

Children below school age will transition to the NDIS over the first six months, including all babies who were born after 1 July;

School leavers will transition to the NDIS at the end of the 2014 school year, in time to have their packages ready when they leave school; and

School-age children will transition to the NDIS during the school year 2015.

For group homes:

Group homes need special treatment so that the whole household can transition to the NDIS together. Households will transition from youngest to oldest over the trial period—

through to mid-2017—

This staged phasing of group homes also spreads the financial impact of these higher cost clients.

That is, in essence, the letter that I sent to the federal minister seeking that we really need to get this deal signed because our community need this information. There is no doubt about that.

This is an exciting time for people with a disability in the ACT, and we look forward to continuing to work together closely to implement the trial. It is important to understand that the decision by this government to gradually withdraw as a provider for specialised disability services is part of our commitment to the NDIS. The government made the decision to withdraw as a provider of therapy and early intervention education services in order to deliver better outcomes for people with a disability in the ACT.

Greater service opportunities will be available for people with a disability in an open and innovative competitive market under the NDIS. Providing an environment for the NDIS to successfully operate in the ACT will require expanding the non-government sector.

Decisions taken by this government about therapy and early intervention services are consistent with what is happening around the country. Each state and territory is seeking to grow the disability sector. Tasmania has outsourced its services. Queensland is considering transferring its services over a five-year period. Western Australia supports a competitive model but, because of its unique geography and population, the state will respond where there is no viable service. The South Australian government has a trial site but has not made a formal announcement about services since its recent election, as I understand it. New South Wales has said it will divest all government-run services.

I am pleased to see that the approach we have adopted has the full support of the ACT Liberal opposition. Indeed, Mr Wall has described it as Liberal policy, and I quote: “Certainly the principle of phasing out of government services responsibility for service provision would be Canberra Liberal policy.”

In considering the withdrawal of government therapy and specialist disability services, we recognised that the NDIS is based on a person-centred system. The NDIS is a catalyst for nationwide change. This does not mean that the current model in the ACT has failed or is broken, but there is potential for greater choice and control of services for people with a disability under the NDIS. The principle underlying the NDIS is that services need to be person centred. This means that the provision of care places a person at the centre and considers the needs of their carers, guardians and families.

The services provided by Therapy ACT in the early intervention programs provided through ETD could be described as available on a rationed basis. The government has chosen to make changes so that the current structures and funding are remodelled to align with the NDIS principles of reasonable and necessary support and choice and control.

Meeting the needs of people with a disability is best achieved through a growing and diverse non-government sector where the sector offers a wide range of choices, services and innovation. Let me reiterate the reasons why we need to align to the NDIS. The government is the single largest provider of therapy services in the ACT. Having a dominant government provider impedes innovation and competition of disability and therapy services. What we want in Canberra is to see the growth and expansion of current and new service providers. We want to see flexibility and diversity. We want to see people with disability purchasing the services when they want them.

The commencement of the NDIS trial will triple the funding available for disability supports and services by 2019. By withdrawing from government-managed services and investing strongly in the disability sector, we will increase service options for people with a disability.

In terms of services and jobs, the growth of the non-government sector means that experienced disability and therapy staff will be highly valued by service providers. We have already commenced conversations with non-government community-based service providers about their interest in working in the ACT.

Many people with a disability are already receiving services from the non-government disability services operating in the ACT, and the NDIS provides an opportunity for this sector to grow. In terms of supported accommodation, two-thirds of supported accommodation is already provided by non-government services. So whilst the withdrawal of that will be a significant change, there is already an active market and an active service provision within the community for that.

The government is working with Therapy ACT and Disability ACT staff and will provide additional training and upskilling so that these staff have new employment opportunities. Therapy ACT and Disability ACT staff may choose to seek redeployment within the ACT government, they may seek employment with another provider or they may form their own business or cooperatives.

The gradual withdrawal will take place over two to three years. The staff will be supported, trained and assisted as they make their choices about their careers. The Assembly will already know that disability advocates have endorsed the government's decision. This adds weight that gradually withdrawing as a specialist service provider will deliver the best outcomes for people with a disability.

The ACT Council of Social Services welcomed the government's decision by saying:

This decision is in line with the principles that have guided design and launch of the NDIS and will contribute to opening up more diverse, flexible and community connected options for people who currently access government delivered services.

Craig Wallace, the President of People with Disability Australia and ACT NDIS expert panel member, wrote:

There is a lot of misinformation around transformations like this, with terms like "privatisation" loosely thrown around, but the reality is that government stepping carefully out of the way is one of the best things that could happen. By gradually withdrawing from provision of these services we create room for the non-government sector to expand and deliver the choice of service provision to people with disability that the NDIS promises.

The national disability insurance scheme is, indeed, a landmark for Australia. It has the support of people with disabilities across Australia and, I would hope, all governments and parliaments. I think the biggest risk to the NDIS seems to be some recent commentary out of the Commission of Audit and other uncertainties about the implementation of the NDIS. I was very pleased to see some quite clear statements coming from COAG that have said unilaterally that in the states implementing this there should be no delay, that the community of people with a disability have waited long enough for these services to come through.

Turning to my amendment, it accepts the first part of your motion, Mr Wall, and notes that we are waiting for final sign-off. As I have outlined, in terms of our transition and phasing today, you can use that, Mr Wall, in any of your conversations with people. I think that is important information to be out there. It calls on me to seek sign-off from



the commonwealth so that we can be very clear with our community. I am overly conscious that we have seven weeks to the start of this and I remain frustrated at the delay that occurs, but the delay is not ours.

I am more than happy to release and promote the phase-in for disability services, and I am more than happy to provide regular updates to the Assembly on the implementation. This is serious and major reform: make no mistake about that. I anticipate that for families and individuals there is a level of anxiety, but to say that there is no communication or conversation with those folk is simply not true. As I have said, not a week will go by when there is not a forum or a conversation happening. I have attended a forum around supported accommodation. I know staff have made contact and will continue to make contact with each member of a group home and with services as people come into services.

I hope that people accept the amendments. They are sensible. Indeed, they give greater depth to what Mr Wall is trying to do. I note that Mr Wall has already issued a media release saying he is calling for greater work, and I just hope he underscores the fact that the ACT government is ready to go. The hold-up is not with us. We need to get on with this. Maybe he can approach his federal counterpart and encourage them to get on with their part of the job and sign the deal.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (6.18): I thank Mr Wall for bringing forward this motion today because the implementation of the NDIS is an important issue. This is probably the most fundamental change to the provision of services to people with a disability that we have ever seen. The funding model shift will mean that individuals and families will be able to make their own decisions about where to access their services and where they want their support to be allocated. This will enable a better level of empowerment for those with a disability, hopefully better choice of service delivery models, and potentially a vibrant and diverse service delivery sector.

While that is at its heart about empowering people with a disability, it comes with a range of risks and challenges that will likely become more apparent as the implementation comes closer. There is the risk of people with a disability not being informed, supported and empowered to make the decisions that they need to make. There is the risk that service delivery agencies are not up and running or the options available inside the ACT are limited. And the third risk is the implications of accessing private services that participants have not realised and that will emerge later—extra costs that may not have been anticipated, the little extras that people had not realised were provided by their government service in the past.

There will be difficulties with the changeover. There will be concerns from parents and individuals and issues will need to be ironed out across the system. With any change as big as this there are concerns about not being ready. This is especially relevant for service providers who are looking for clear guidance about what is going to happen after 1 July.

Therapy ACT has a long history in Canberra. It is an amalgamation of a number of government services—the child health and development services, which merged with staff from adult disability service provision. Over its life the organisation has existed

within the health department, the education department and the community services department. It is a group of professional service providers that has maintained high levels of expertise in an increasingly resource-constrained environment and with competing demands.

The wealth of knowledge about how to provide services effectively in the ACT, about which programs work, which ones do not, are part of their corporate memory, as are the community networks that have been developed over time. With the ACT withdrawing from the provision of direct services, we could be seeing the end of this organisation. It would be good to think that we can maximise and, if possible, retain the expertise and thinking that is such a valuable resource for those in our community, a resource that has been accessed for what might be considered free of charge by thousands of Canberrans over the past few decades.

The ACT government has also provided early intervention programs for different groups in the ACT, and these, too, are likely to be shifted into the private sector under the NDIS. However, we must acknowledge that Therapy ACT is about to enter into a transition period of a couple of years and that the government will work with staff and clients to ensure that this transition is smooth. It is also likely that some aspects of its service will continue to be provided by the government albeit under different auspices. Not all clients of Therapy ACT would be considered to have a disability, and not all services provided by Therapy ACT are disability specific. Intake and referral services, including such things as speech pathology drop-in clinics, are mainstream services.

The Greens are supportive of the ACT government in their intentions to roll out the scheme. It is evident this work has been taking up significant time and resources of the Community Services Directorate and that there has been a significant level of consultation with the sector and with individuals. I suspect this can always be done better. I know there will be people who still will be surprised about what is coming and will not have fully understood it. I hope the directorate will continue to engage in the provision of good information, as I know they have been, as the rollout happens as an acknowledgement that when the rubber hits the road a whole new group of people are going to start to engage in a way they perhaps have not yet.

We understand the ACT provided the commonwealth with their plan of action for implementation some months ago and as yet have not had that plan signed off by the commonwealth. So I think Mr Wall's motion today is very timely. I note the amendments that the minister has tabled effectively retain the key points that Mr Wall has raised, and I welcome that. There are no detailed public plans yet as to what is going to happen post 1 July, and those in the community—those with a disability and those involved in service provision—need that information urgently so they can effectively plan, because it is now only less than two months away.

The key questions for today are: why is that information being held up and who is sitting on the plan? From the advice I have received it seems that the ACT government has put its plan to the commonwealth but it has not yet been signed off. It is my understanding that the information that Mr Wall is calling for in his motion cannot be made public until this happens. That seems to be the dilemma at the crux of this discussion today.

It appears we are all in furious agreement on this as best I read it, but there is an obstacle in the way. I hope today's debate puts the focus back there and perhaps serves as an encouragement to the federal government to respond quickly. I support Ms Burch's amendments today. I think they serve to add to Mr Wall's motion constructively, adding further detail without changing the commitments Mr Wall has sought for the information to be made public as soon as possible.

In addition, they add a commitment to report back to the Assembly with updates on the implementation of the NDIS. I am certainly happy for Minister Burch to come in here as often as she feels she needs to or can to give those updates. We are at a place in this cycle where it is the more the merrier, and I am sure all members take a keen interest in this.

I thank Mr Wall again for bringing this issue into focus today. I look forward to us all being better informed as the NDIS rollout occurs in the ACT. It is an exciting phase. As the minister said in her remarks, it is a phase that will be nerve-racking for clients, for staff, for families, for carers. There is some uncertainty, but I think we are heading in a direction where all those groups will be better off. This system is the right direction to go, and the challenge for all of us is to do what we can to make the changeover as smooth as possible.

Amendments agreed to.

**MR WALL** (Brindabella) (6.26): I think we are all in agreement that more information needs to be provided. Until such time as the process by which services are to be phased out of government control and into the non-government sector is known, there will continue to be a cloud of uncertainty and doubt by all those who work in and rely on the services provided by the system.

The opportunity the government has to get the information out early will only strengthen the implementation of the NDIS in the ACT. It will ensure the private sector service providers, or non-government service providers, have an opportunity to prepare for the services they offer so they can best meet the demand for therapy services in the ACT. Private practitioners currently in operation in the ACT will also have a better understanding of how their services and their expertise will fit into the new system.

We have attempted today to uncover what is happening, but it seems that the minister and the directorate are not yet ready to announce their plan for how therapy services will be phased out. As many in this place are aware, the closure of therapy services was a decision taken by the government in their capacity as a service provider to get out of the space as the NDIS comes in. Clearly, the phase-in arrangement for the NDIS will not affect whether or not the government are a service provider, but they have taken the decision to no longer provide services in this space. It is incumbent upon them now to articulate how they choose for that to happen. We will support the motion as amended, and we await the detail with bated breath.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

## Adjournment

Motion (by **Ms Burch**) proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

### **Hawker Primary School—fete**

**MR COE** (Ginninderra) (6.28): I rise this evening to speak about the Hawker Primary School fete. I had the pleasure of attending the fete last month. The fete is held annually on the first Sunday in April and is run by the school's P&C in conjunction with the school board, the school's teachers and the rest of the school community.

This year the fete featured a variety of events, including a silent auction, raffles, craft, books and white elephant stalls, as well as pony rides. As would be expected, the fete also brought out the best cooks and bakers at the school, with a variety of different and delicious foods and drinks on sale.

The fete is the school's largest fundraising event. Last year the fete raised approximately \$20,000. Over the years the success of the fete has helped the school to update their computers, build a multipurpose sports court, put in ICT equipment, build shade structures and other playground improvements and provide learning materials to their students both inside and outside the classroom. Fundraising at the school has also helped to provide extracurricular activities to the students, including chess, music and drama.

I am pleased that this year's fete was again a huge success. With the funds raised this year, the school is hoping to fully resurface their school oval. The school oval has unfortunately been hit hard by long periods of drought and requires nothing less than a full resurface in order to be fixed. I sincerely hope that the school is able to upgrade the oval so that the school's students can fully enjoy the benefits of playing and exercising on the oval.

I would like to congratulate the Hawker Primary School P&C on again running a successful fete. In particular, I would like to thank and commend both Gillian Treloar and Kate Cappaletti, the fete coordinators, for organising and planning the fete. They did a wonderful job. As well as Gillian and Kate, the Hawker Primary School board also deserves congratulations on assisting the P&C.

Finally, congratulations to all the people who spared their time to ensure that this year's fete was a great success. This includes all the people who helped to plan the fete as well as those people who helped out on the day, whether that be by running a stall or by providing food or other materials to the stalls. Congratulations also to the many individuals and businesses that made donations to ensure that this year's fete was a resounding success.

I commend the work of the Hawker Primary School community and I encourage members to attend the fete next year. For more information on Hawker Primary School and their fete I urge members to visit their website at [www.hawkerps.act.edu.au](http://www.hawkerps.act.edu.au).

## **Hawker Primary School—fete Men's sheds**

**MS PORTER** (Ginninderra) (6.30): Before I talk to my substantive matter, I would like to add my congratulations to the organisers, teachers, students and parents on the Hawker fete, which I also attended, along with Dr Leigh at the time that I was there. Dr Leigh and I drew the raffles for numerous baskets of goods that were prepared by each class. Each class, with their parents and with their teachers, prepared a basket which had a different theme. It was fantastic to see the effort by the whole community, as Mr Coe has mentioned, to run a successful fete every year.

Following on from Mr Gentleman's recent successful motion, I want to mention that in Darwin there is a men's shed band which is a group of younger men and some older men which started from a small band practising in a shed, now growing in numbers to offer friendship and also the chance to learn and compose music and to sing and play a musical instrument.

Some of these men's shed members are young and still in paid employment. That is why I am talking about this particular shed. Many of us have concentrated in our remarks today on the value of the movement to retired and older men and their families and communities. I do not want to lessen that impact or indicate that in any way it is not important, because that is very important. However, men's sheds are many and varied, as many of us have said. They emerge organically from their communities, usually because of an initiative of one or two people seeing the need for wanting to start something new or to reach out to others. They do not always call themselves a men's shed straightaway; it takes the gradual evolution of the shed that leads to the members identifying their group under the men's shed banner.

It appears this was the journey that this men's shed band in the Northern Territory followed. I realise this is in a different territory; however, it is just another example of the diversity of the movement that I mentioned and the way that it responds to what is occurring at the local level.

I look forward to learning more about men's sheds emerging across the ACT. I know from our experience here that members of the existing sheds will be generous in their support of any new sheds. I am glad that the minister is keen to continue to support the movement in the ACT.

## **Canberra winemaking**

**DR BOURKE** (Ginninderra) (6.33): Grape growing and winemaking are a significant part of the agricultural industry surrounding the ACT. The region has been producing wine for over 160 years and we are proud to call it the Canberra wine district. The quality of our wines is evidenced by the award to Tim Kirk from Clonakilla of *Gourmet Traveller* magazine's 2013 winemaker of the year. The geography of our region, with elevations ranging from 300 to 800 metres, different soils, temperatures and humidity conditions, produces a great diversity of wine styles, as well as enabling the cultivation of a broad variety of grape varieties, including shiraz, pinot noir, riesling and chardonnay.

The spread of more than 33 wineries located within 30 minutes of Canberra also gives us a tourism opportunity. It enables us to showcase a side of Canberra where the rural ambience and small-scale cellar door operations with their innate intimacy offer a counterweight to the magnificent national cultural institutions surrounding Lake Burley Griffin.

The Canberra region is renowned for cool climate wines. What will then be the effect of climate change and global warming? The two to three degrees change predicted would irrevocably change the climate characteristics, the grapes grown and the wine made. Climate change is very serious business for the Australian wine industry, with recent reports of wine companies buying land in Tasmania not for what they can grow there now but for what they can grow in the future.

I attended a seminar the other month at ANU's Fenner School of Environment and Society on supply and demand of future climate change information for adaptation in the Australian wine-grape sector. The researcher was Ms Miriam Dunn, a PhD student at the ANU. Her thesis explores a disconnect between users and providers of climate change information within viticulture. In other words users—grape growers, winemakers and the wine industry—need climate change information which may not be produced by the providers—environmental scientists—in a form which is useful for short or long-term decision making.

Her subjects for interview and survey—the research used a mixed methods approach—were across Australian winemaking regions and also from overseas. They included an interview sample of Canberra district viticulturists, giving us a direct insight into our local situation.

She found that the information required by Canberra winegrowers for short-term decision making—less than 12 months—was for great detail about rainfall, humidity and temperature—detail at the one to 10 kilometres grid level. Long-term decision-making required much coarser information—regional is sufficient—presented as homoclimes. A homoclimate is a region climatically similar to another region. For instance, the success of tempranillo in the Canberra district has been predicted by climate similarities with Ribera del Duero, Spain, where tempranillo is the major grape variety grown. Canberra and Ribera del Duero are homoclimes.

What the Canberra wine industry wants to know for long-term decision-making is: what will the regional climate be like here in the coming decades, specifically the next 10 or 20 years? Will it be like Mudgee or the Hunter or somewhere else? This then allows them to use current knowledge from those homoclimes to make those long-term decisions.

NARcliM, a collaboration between the ACT and New South Wales governments and climate researchers, aims to produce regional climate projections that will support decision making in health, utilities and agriculture, including viticulture. A recent briefing to me on the work of NARcliM indicated that the need of grape growers and winemakers for information presented in a useful format will commence shortly. I am proud that our ACT government is part of the NARcliM funding consortium to deliver climate change information for our regional community.

## Community radio

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra) (6.37): I rise tonight to draw attention to the importance of community radio. Last night I had the honour of joining the El Salvadorian ambassador in awarding the participants of the Spanish language radio training program with their certificates of completion. It was a timely reminder of the important role that community radio plays in giving a voice to parts of our community that are often marginalised in the broader media landscape.

Sadly, the future of community radio in Australia is under threat. The Commission of Audit has recommended the abolition of the community broadcasting program. This would see \$17 million ripped out from local stations.

The value of community radio is not only in the programs it produces but in the important message that we all have stories to tell and that there is value in sharing them. It provides a space for groups in our community who are often too marginalised to speak for themselves.

One of those shows is *Friday Night Lip Service*. *FNLS*, as it is known, is a late-night radio show run by queer women for queer women. One of its founders describes the importance of community radio better than I ever could:

Friday night lipservice creates a place for disconnected women and queer people to explore their stories and experiences with a wider audience.

It is important and empowering for them to experience and connect together—beyond age, and geography. *FNLS* really brings lots of people together to share their stories. I think that is immeasurably important.

They go on to say:

Community radio is also local—it is our friends and neighbours, but without social barriers. It creates connection.

The recent report of the Commission of Audit suggests that there is no imperative to maintain funding to community radio because the federal government already funds the ABC. Our national broadcaster does a great job of exploring the complexity of modern Australia but it cannot give all of us a voice. That is the promise and the role of the local community radio station.

Here in the ACT on 2XX community radio gives voice to a great range of people. It makes sure that foreign language speakers have a familiar voice in our community and that farmers, visually impaired people, LGBTIQ people and Indigenous people have a space to share and explore their experiences. By opening the door to access to media, it plays an important role in our democracy. It creates a pathway for ordinary people to move from being passive consumers to active participants in shaping their community.

Aside from all these obvious social roles, it is also a place for soccer fans, the philosophers, the unionists, the grammar nuts and the ABBA tragics, just to name a few, to explore their interests with other Canberrans. It is the connection this creates and the potential for real voices over radio waves to alleviate loneliness and isolation that cannot be overstated.

Talking last night to the graduates of the Spanish language radio training program, there was pride and excitement about being the voices that would keep their language alive here in Canberra and about the potential that shared language has to create links between a broader diversity of cultural groups here in Canberra.

I urge the federal government to ignore the recommendations from the Commission of Audit and to continue to support these people and the many thousands of groups like them across the country. I also invite members of the Assembly to support community radio by joining the commit to community radio campaign at [committocommunityradio.org.au](http://committocommunityradio.org.au).

### **Anzac Day**

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella) (6.41): I rise tonight to speak about my experiences surrounding Anzac Day this year. Each year Anzac Day is a mixture of reflection and celebration for the fallen, current and retired service people of Australia and New Zealand. It provides a collective opportunity for Australians to examine the history of wars in which our nation has partaken or been drawn into. It provides an opportunity to look at how we can learn from the conflicts which inhabitants of this land have been involved in since 1788, and even before.

I attended three events in relation to this annual commemoration. The first event did not occur on the 25th; it was on 2 April. I was honoured to attend the annual aged-care Anzac wreath-laying ceremony on behalf of the Chief Minister in the western courtyard of the War Memorial. This event is organised by the Department of Veterans' Affairs in conjunction with the Australian War Memorial each year and provides an opportunity for people who might otherwise be unable to attend regular Anzac commemorations to do so with help and support to get them to and from the event.

It is obviously an important opportunity for many aged-care residents who may have been involved in war themselves, had spouses, family members or friends who were involved in war or who simply may want to pay respect to victims of war. I wish to commend all those who attended and made this event possible for these aged-care residents.

I feel that this year is particularly important in the commemoration of war as 28 July will be the 100th anniversary of the commencement of World War I, one of the bloodiest conflicts in which Australia has been involved. We lost over 60,000 service people, and it was to be the war that ended all wars at the time. No-one could consider the possibility of anyone being willing to begin war after what happened on the battlefields of Europe and north Africa. But, alas, we know that the power of humanity to begin war is more often than not stronger than its capacity to prevent it.



The second event I attended was the 10 am march on the actual day—the 25th. As always, the march and ceremony were wonderful events. Thousands of people turned out with ceremonies being held at the Australian War Memorial. I was proud to be able to march for my grandfather, who served in the 6th Light Horse about a century ago. Of course, the 6th played an important role in Europe and Africa. Also they served in Romani, Egypt, the famous battle of Beersheba, in Jerusalem, in Jordan, Es Salt, in Amman and also in Palestine. They stayed on for another year after the war to support the area as a policing force.

Later in the day I was able to represent the Chief Minister again at the French Embassy for a ceremony that they hold each year to pay homage on behalf of the French people to the service men and women who have participated in war. The Republic of France and Australia have had a relatively intertwined military history since Federation. They have been involved in many conflicts together on both French soil and abroad as participants in war and peacekeeping forces.

During both World War I and World War II Australian forces participated in the defence of France from the Axis and Central powers. One village in France in particular acknowledges this relationship and the sacrifice many Australian service people made on French soil. In Villers-Bretonneux, just east of Amiens in the north of France, there is a large memorial which commemorates and provides a symbolic resting place for all Australians who died protecting the town from 1916 until the end of the First World War and who never received a proper burial. At this site each year Anzac Day is commemorated by locals, Australian visitors and expats alike. It is a service and a site which I would love to attend one day.

I wish to thank the French Embassy and Charge D’Affaires Cedric Prieto for the organisation of the wreath-laying ceremony. I would also like to thank, in no particular order, Air Marshal Mark Binskin, representing the Chief of the Australian Defence Force, Air Vice-Marshal Kevin Short, New Zealand Vice Chief of Defence Force, Mr Paul Madden, United Kingdom High Commissioner, His Excellency Mr Chris Seed, New Zealand High Commissioner, His Excellency Mr Jean-Luc Bodson, Ambassador for Belgium, Reha Keskinetepe, Ambassador for Turkey, and finally Mr Brendan Nelson, Director of the Australian War Memorial.

As always, I hope that the reflection which is undertaken on Anzac Day each year helps us to better understand conflict and, in turn, how to prevent conflict within and outside Australia in the future.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

**The Assembly adjourned at 6.47 pm.**