



# Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

**EIGHTH ASSEMBLY**

**14 MAY 2014**

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**Wednesday, 14 May 2014**

Infrastructure—proposed new convention centre .....	1419
Economy—employment .....	1438
Questions without notice:	
Transport—light rail .....	1460
Transport—Woden bus depot.....	1462
Budget—consolidated financial report .....	1463
Federal government—budget .....	1463
Environment—biodiversity offsets policy.....	1466
Federal government—budget .....	1467
Uriarra Village—proposed solar farm .....	1470
ACTION bus service—airport.....	1472
Energy—wind.....	1474
Asbestos—removal.....	1476
Women—services.....	1477
Supplementary answers to questions without notice:	
Transport—light rail .....	1481
Transport—Woden bus depot.....	1481
Economy—employment .....	1481
Planning—territory plan review .....	1494
Infrastructure—maintenance schedules .....	1506
Administration and Procedure—Standing Committee .....	1519
Parks—facilities .....	1519
Unparliamentary language (Statement by Speaker) .....	1530
Adjournment:	
ClubsACT .....	1531
Australian National Eisteddfod .....	1533
National Volunteer Week .....	1533
Public Education Week .....	1535

**Wednesday, 14 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.

### **Infrastructure—proposed new convention centre**

**MR SMYTH** (Brindabella) (10.01): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes the:

- (a) broad support for a new Convention Centre from the Canberra business community;
- (b) Government's lack of commitment for a new Convention Centre—having spent more on light rail in one year than on a new Convention Centre over 10 years;
- (c) Government's failure to align the need for a new Convention Centre with the Federal Government's infrastructure program and imperatives; and
- (d) Government's failure to develop a comprehensive investment ready plan for this project;

(2) condemns the ACT Government's inability to adequately prepare for and win support from both the present Coalition and prior Labor Federal governments on strategic infrastructure to provide a soft-landing for our local economy; and

(3) calls on the Government to provide up to \$10 million in the 2014-2015 ACT Budget to get the new Convention Centre project to shovel ready stage so that they can reapproach the Commonwealth for financial support.

The proposal for a new convention centre for the ACT has been on the agenda for some years, and for most of those years the ACT Labor government, while paying lip-service to the need for a new facility, have now been exposed for their failure to get the project shovel-ready. If we were ever to have a chance of getting funding from the federal government, which seems to be the stipulation that the Treasurer has for the project proceeding, that has been rebuffed by the government. I think that is unfortunate but perhaps it is understandable.

The community has offered broad support for the new convention centre, and in a way that I do not think we have ever seen from the business community in this city. The document *The meeting place of Australia* lists 54 different organisations that have said this is the number one business infrastructure priority for Canberra. Yet if we look at the record of the Gallagher-Barr government and the Stanhope-Gallagher government before that, it is a record of neglect on this issue.

The convention centre proposal received \$250,000 from the ACT government many years ago, which was more than matched by the community, to fund the Australia forum study, and we now have the Australia forum study from April 2011. But the amount of funding to get the project shovel-ready since then has been incredibly disappointing. There was a line in one budget of \$1 million for the Australia forum, but in reality it was a land study to see how much they could get out of West Basin should it proceed, and the amount of money from that \$1 million actually spent on the Australia forum was very small.

You have to juxtapose that against the money for capital metro, the government's preferred piece of infrastructure—the piece of infrastructure that of course keeps them in government and buys Mr Rattenbury's support. In a single year, in a single budget, the government committed 10 times more to capital metro than they had done in 10 years for a new convention centre. I think that summarises their commitment. I think I am being generous when I say 10 times more; it is probably much more than that but we will call it 10 times more.

**Mr Hanson:** Shame.

**MR SMYTH:** And that is a shame. It is a shame because it is this government that have stood in the way of the convention centre going ahead, and it is this government that pay lip-service by speaking to the tourism industry and businesses in this city and saying, "Yes, we're behind this." But you have to question their priorities with something like capital metro. I am sure capital metro will get a huge cash boost in the coming budget, so that they can keep the Greens sweet, but it is not the sort of project that can immediately have an impact on our city. If this government had done their work, if this government had been ready, and if the government had not been negligent in the way they have looked after this project, this project could well have got some funding. But it did not.

Who is to blame? According to the *Canberra Times*, the Chief Minister blames the federal government. The Chief Minister apparently got a letter from the Prime Minister saying there is no funding for it at this time. There is all of this wringing of hands and gnashing of teeth since the Chief Minister revealed on Monday in the *Canberra Times* that it had been rejected. In a way, she outs herself, because in the *Canberra Times* article she says:

We put in about \$1 million to get to this point and we have agreed with the business support stakeholders on a site for the convention centre ...

A million dollars is all this government has put in, according to Ms Gallagher. I think it is dramatically less in real terms. She goes on to say she does not understand why the government would do this. My understanding is that the explanation is very simple. The federal government looked for construction-ready, shovel-ready projects that they could get out of the ground quite quickly because they are expecting a downturn in mining in the 2015-16 and 2016-17 years. What they wanted were projects that could go ahead immediately. Did the ACT government take a shovel-ready convention centre project to the federal government? The answer is no.

You have to question what they have been up to when they have not got it to the shovel-ready stage. This is not a new issue, Madam Speaker. At the tourism awards in December 2001, Ted Quinlan said, “By December 2002 we will have selected the site for the new convention centre.” That did not happen, really, until late last year, and I think actually it was early this year, more than a decade later—a decade of neglect and a decade of wasted opportunities.

Everyone that I know that looks at the operation of convention centres says that it will induce business. A better facility, a bigger facility, a state-of-the-art facility will see business come to Canberra. That is good for the economy, it is good for jobs and it is good for the government as it helps the government coffers. But the government has turned a blind eye to this project from the start.

Everyone tells me that if a new convention centre is built then it will lead to a number of new hotels, because if you are seeking a bed in Canberra tonight, you will not get one. The 20 weeks that the federal parliament sits means that most of the beds are occupied, certainly for those 20 weeks, and the business of government helps to keep our hospitality sector at very high levels of occupancy. That is a good thing. But a new convention centre with a bigger capacity will mean that there will be a need for one, two or three additional hotels, and that is good for the economy, it is good for jobs, it is good for business and it is good for the government.

But the government are just not committed to this project. The proof of the pudding is in the numbers. They have had 13 years in office. They have spent, according to the Chief Minister, only a million dollars on the project. After 13 years in office it is not shovel-ready and it is not ready to go. When the opportunity comes—noting that they had rejection after rejection from their former Labor colleagues when they were in office—when they were asked for shovel-ready projects they did not have a single one to take to the federal government.

That is the failure of this government, and that is why this motion condemns the ACT government’s inability to adequately prepare for and win support from both the present coalition and prior Labor federal governments on strategic infrastructure to provide a soft landing for our local economy.

The important thing is, of course, that the government know this process because they wanted money for capital metro. They went to the previous Labor government through Infrastructure Australia, and the government should know that major projects worth over \$100 million have to go through Infrastructure Australia. I am sure the Treasurer will enlighten us when he stands and moves his amendment as to how many times they have taken this project to Infrastructure Australia. I suspect the answer is that they never have. They have never made the effort. They have never gone through the process adequately to ensure the outcome that the community in this city wants, because at the end of the day their priorities are not the priorities of the community. Their priorities particularly are not the priorities of the business community, which has come together and said the number one priority is the new convention centre.

That is why, in paragraph (3) of my motion, I call on the government to provide up to \$10 million in the 2014-15 ACT budget to get the new convention centre project to shovel-ready stage so that they can then reapproach the commonwealth for financial support in the outyears. The commonwealth have put large amounts of money, billions of dollars, into the outyears so that they have an infrastructure program to help Australia smooth some of the bumps that are appearing on the international horizon. You only have to ask why did the—

**Ms Gallagher:** The bumps?

**MR SMYTH:** If you had turned up for breakfast this morning and listened to Robert Gottliebsen, you would have heard him talking about the impact of the downturn in China and what it is going to do to our economy—noting, of course, that the Chief Minister spoke about China being interested in investment-ready projects.

The interesting thing is: what did the Chief Minister do when she got the letter? The article appeared in the *Canberra Times* on Monday, 12 May, so you would expect that the releasing of that would coincide pretty quickly with the arrival of the letter. But I have managed to get a copy of the letter and apparently it was sent on 10 April. So the Chief Minister gets a letter from the federal government saying, “You’re not going to get the money to do the shovel-ready stuff.” We know the reason why—because they are not providing anybody with money to get projects to the shovel-ready stage; they are saying it is the responsibility of the proponents to make the case and then come to the government. But we sit on it for a month. It is dated 10 April. If it took a couple of days to get to the Chief Minister, she probably got it on 12 April. But there it is: on 12 May it suddenly appears in the *Canberra Times*.

The question is: what did the Chief Minister do in that intervening month? The release of this letter was timed for shallow political purpose, instead of going back to the government and saying, “What do we need to do?” The Prime Minister makes that offer. He said:

However, as the Australia Forum is a priority for the ACT Government, I have asked the Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, the Hon. Jamie Briggs MP, to discuss the business case requirements in more detail with you and advise on any non-financial support that the Commonwealth could provide.

So make the case. You did not make the case. You were not ready. You were ill-prepared. You went to the house without the tools that you needed to get the outcome that the people of Canberra desired and deserved.

**Mr Hanson:** Haven’t done your homework.

**MR SMYTH:** As Mr Hanson so eloquently puts it, “You didn’t do the homework.” You went up there ill-prepared and you got the answer that your preparation probably deserved, which was, “Go away and please do the work and make the case so that we can do a reasonable assessment through the processes that we have in place, which includes a process to go through Infrastructure Australia.”

It is interesting that on a number of occasions this government have had a rebuff from Infrastructure Australia. Who could forget that capital metro did not get funded because they did not believe their numbers? So that is the hallmark of the government: don't do the work; take extraordinary amounts of time not to do the work and then blame somebody else.

It is a very simple message in this motion. It says we know that there is broad community support. We know the government have failed; they should be condemned for that. And if they are serious about the convention centre going ahead, if they are serious about getting the benefits that are detailed in the Australia forum study, which says that a new facility could probably double the business events contribution to our economy, if not triple it in a very short time frame, if they are serious about getting those benefits, do not go off half-cocked. Actually do the work.

Why is it that capital metro, in a single year, got approximately 10 times what the convention centre has had spent on it in 10 years? I do not think there will be a reasonable answer. I look forward to the answer to that question. Why is it that capital metro has got so much money? If you are supportive of the convention centre, if you are supportive of the benefits that it brings, with all the soothing words you give to the business community about, "Yes, we want this to happen," you should at least get it to shovel-ready stage. That is your job. That is actually your responsibility. I think you have been told that by the federal government.

Sitting on a letter for a month just for the timing effect is sad. Not having done the work is sad, and it is now time for you actually to stump up and put the money in the coming budget so that we can get this project to shovel-ready stage and so that you can reapproach the commonwealth government. Hopefully, we will then get a new facility in this city that will become a real hub for the meeting industry, for our higher education sector, for the business community, for the cultural and artistic facilities that we have so that we can showcase Canberra better, so that it can become Canberra by name and Canberra by nature—a meeting place by name and a meeting place by nature.

**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) (10.15): The Prime Minister's decision to reject a request for seed funding to develop a new national meeting facility in Canberra, the Australia forum, to investment-ready stage will amplify the pain felt in the ACT as a result of the public sector job cuts announced in the federal budget. Canberra Business Council chief executive officer, Chris Faulks said today:

This is a missed opportunity for the Abbott government to invest in an infrastructure project that will drive jobs and economic growth, and help to counter the impact of federal public sector job cuts.

Ms Faulks is absolutely right, Madam Speaker. What an embarrassment for Mr Smyth and the Canberra Liberals to raise this issue 24 hours after their federal colleagues delivered a budget that will devastate our local community. What an embarrassment

that Mr Smyth and the Canberra Liberals were trying to deflect the failings of the federal government to support a major new infrastructure project—in fact, any new infrastructure projects in the ACT—and attempt to blame the territory government. The government will not be supporting Mr Smyth’s motion and I now move the amendment tabled in my name:

Omit all words after “from the Canberra business community”, substitute:

- “(b) the Government’s ongoing commitment for a new Convention Centre;
  - (c) the ALP/Greens Parliamentary Agreement includes progressing the Convention Centre project to an investment ready stage; and
  - (d) that the Government has identified a prime site at an apex of the Parliamentary Triangle, has invested in an Australia Forum scoping study, conducted a workshop with industry experts and key stakeholders to review and confirm the functional requirements for the Convention Centre and is progressing a functional brief reference design and business case; and
- (2) calls on all Members of the Assembly to advocate for Federal Government support of the Convention Centre project.”.

We do agree with one thing, Madam Speaker, that the opposition has raised this morning: yes, it is broadly acknowledged that there is support within the business community for a new convention centre. Chris Faulks in an ABC article on 12 May was quoted as saying:

The reality is that we need to diversify our economy and what we’re asking for is just a little bit of support from the federal government as they would support any city that has been affected by job losses.

We see the absolute failure of the commonwealth government on this matter, a failure firstly to offer any new infrastructure projects for the ACT given that this community is bearing a disproportionate burden of the federal budget cuts announced last night, the failure of the Canberra Liberals and, indeed, Senator Seselja to be able to win any support from the federal government for this. I understand that Senator Seselja has said to Fairfax Press that he does not get any special access and nor do other backbenchers. There are probably a few people in the Liberal Party who will be reflecting upon the decision to preselect him and not Gary Humphries as a result of that particular admission.

It proves yet again that Canberra does better under Labor governments. Everyone knows it. Deep down everyone knows it; the business community knows it; Canberrans know it. That was a sentiment that came through very strongly as a result of what the Liberals did to this city last night. Let us be very clear: the ACT government is a strong supporter of the Australia forum project and it has been our financial support and the work of ACT public servants behind the scenes that has allowed significant progress to be made in advancing the new convention and exhibition centre.



It is a major part of the city to the lake project. The territory government has committed to bringing the project to investment-ready status as part of the parliamentary agreement. As Mr Smyth has begrudgingly admitted this morning, the ACT government has provided cash funding to support the undertaking of the initial scoping study. Since the time of the scoping study being released in 2011, the government has progressed the Australia forum project. It has set aside a very valuable site overlooking City Hill for the project.

The government has undertaken an extensive and detailed conversation with industry experts and key stakeholders, including the Convention Bureau, the Business Council and the Property Council. In September last year a workshop was held led by renowned international convention centre designer Larry Oltmanns. We were even generous enough to invite you to a dinner, Mr Smyth, in an attempt to find some bipartisan support on this issue and to make further significant advancements on the project, including confirming the City Hill site.

Through that workshop funded by the ACT government a consensus view across the stakeholders was reached that the City Hill site would accommodate the Australia forum functional brief and also achieve the iconic outcome that many are seeking. The flexible design concept was developed to test the site to provide for future growth in the Canberra convention market and to be able to cater for ceremonial events appropriate for the national capital.

Siting the convention centre in this area reinforces the primacy of City Hill health; it boosts the economy of the city; it underpins our visitor economy; it plays an important civic role in delivering a unique cultural arc that addresses City Hill; and it significantly contributes to the realisation of the city plan and the city to the lake project. The concept that was tested at the workshop had a substantially greater convention exhibition meeting and banqueting capacity than we currently have at the National Convention Centre.

The concept proposes a stacked design over two main levels, four activated frontages, multiple entrances to Vernon Circle and two to London Circuit. The frontage and entrance off Vernon Circle would become highly visible and an important element of the city itself. The flexible design concept includes two large subdivisible halls totalling 16,000 square metres with the capacity of between 3,000 and 5,000 people, depending on the form of particular events; a foyer and pre-function space totalling 19,000 square metres; meeting rooms totalling 4,500 square metres; a centre for dialogue; a plenary section with 3,000 seats; and a range of other retail and commercial opportunities.

In February of this year the Chief Minister wrote again to the Prime Minister reiterating that the Australia forum was the number one private sector infrastructure priority in Canberra and sought assistance and support for progressing the project. The letter outlined the significance of the Australia forum to the economic development of the territory and indicated that an \$8 million contribution from the commonwealth towards the development and comprehensive business case for the proposal would be appropriate.

The Prime Minister wrote back to the Chief Minister indicating that the commonwealth was unable to contribute any funding for the business case but he indicated that it would consider nonfinancial support. It is not entirely clear at this stage what that might entail but the ACT government has agreed to work with the Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, Jamie Briggs, to further explore these opportunities.

Despite the lukewarm response from the commonwealth, the territory government is committed to continuing to work with the Business Council and the Convention Bureau to take this project forward. It has already had a number of meetings subsequent to this information being made available from the commonwealth. A key stakeholder forum will be convened shortly to support this work and will draw on the significant progress made in the September 2013 workshop.

A detailed functional and operational brief is being developed and will be finalised later this month. I repeat that because I think the shadow treasurer was not listening: a detailed functional and operational brief will be finalised later this month. The government is intending to call for expressions of interest for the preparation of the reference design which will enable detailed costings to be developed as the key input to the business case. The reference design and business case are planned to be completed by the end of 2014-15.

The territory government is progressing work on the convention centre. So it is disappointing that the opposition are engaging in petty point scoring rather than joining with us in making a contribution to this particular process. But in the end it is unlikely that the federal government will provide significant support for this project. So it will fall to the territory government and the private sector to deliver it. I am not optimistic, given all that has been said and the track record of the Liberal Party in supporting Canberra.

There is very little opportunity, it would seem, for there to be federal funding forthcoming in the short term. We will continue to ask and we will continue to see whether—maybe this can be a test, Madam Speaker—there is any capacity for the Liberal Party to support any infrastructure projects in the ACT because all we saw last night was the re-announcement of a range of Labor infrastructure projects funded in previous years, and we are meant to be grateful that they were not cut.

Some of them were cut, actually. The University of Canberra loses \$25 million worth of funding for an infrastructure project that was already committed in a previous budget. In fact, that is the second time that has happened to the University of Canberra. I am referring to the money that was committed under regional development funding for the second stage of the UC sports hub. It was funded in the budget. I repeat that it was funded in the budget. There was a provision made and that funding was cut. So the University of Canberra has had two projects canned. The ANU loses funding last night as well. So, we see a continual—

**Ms Gallagher:** NICTA.

**MR BARR:** Yes, the Chief Minister has reminded me that NICTA is to be defunded from 2016. So another great win, brilliant outcome! The Liberal Party is once again demonstrating their complete lack of commitment to this city. It is just as well we have a Labor government locally that is prepared to invest in the future of Canberra, that is prepared to grow this economy, that has a track record of creating 10 new jobs every day for 10 years on average.

Whilst we have been in government, 36,000 new jobs have been created in this economy under this government's watch; on average, 10 new jobs every day for 10 years. Last night what did we see? 7,500 jobs were cut by the Liberals. The Liberals cut jobs. The Liberals cut Canberra. The Liberals cut jobs and make significant cuts to infrastructure in Canberra, to social programs in this city and to our employment base.

What we are going to see is a continuation of that approach. So it falls to the territory government and to the private sector to drive economic growth in Canberra. We intend to take up that challenge, Madam Speaker, with or without the support of the Canberra Liberals.

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.27): It gives me great pleasure to get up again to support one of Mr Smyth's motions calling on us to get on with the convention centre. We all understand the passion that Mr Smyth has for this issue. I think everybody now understands the arguments. He has made the case repeatedly. There is no doubt in this chamber that one thing that we do agree on is that a convention centre would bring great economic opportunity to this town. What we disagree on is what happened, the history of why we are in the position where essentially nothing has happened and the way forward. So I commend Mr Smyth. If I get time at the end of my speech I will talk in more detail about the case for a convention centre. But as I said, I do think that that has been articulated well today and previously in this place.

I reflect that when the case was last made—and the motion was moved by Mr Smyth in October last year—he actually called on the government to table the work done on the investment-ready plan “by the last sitting day of this year”, that being 2013, and called on the government to establish a trust and get this ball rolling. Mr Smyth has articulated today why the ACT government failed to secure federal funding. What was needed was a shovel-ready plan, an investment-ready plan, to be presented to the federal government so that they could get on with the business of supporting the building of infrastructure to create jobs.

But what this government has failed to do is what they promised they would do—and it is in the Greens-Labor agreement. They said they were going to do this. They have not. We called on them in October 2013 to do this and they did not. Then they went up to the feds saying, “We have not done what we were supposed to do. We have not done our homework. Can you do this for us?”

While we in the Canberra Liberals are saying, “Let us get on with this, let us get it shovel ready, let us put the \$10 million on the table to get this working now so that the federal government or private investors can get involved in this project to bring

economic activity to this town,” what is Mr Barr saying in his amendment? He calls on us to advocate for federal government support.

So once again you have a government that is trying to squib the responsibility. Mr Barr and Ms Gallagher are refusing to acknowledge that they have got to do some work and have got to make some investment if this project is going to get going. If this project is going to get the support from the federal government that we all want to see, then they have got to take something to the federal government that they can actually support.

But instead of acknowledging, “Yes, we did not do our homework, we have not done the work that we promised that we would do, that the Canberra Liberals called on us to do last year,” what does Mr Barr’s amendment say? “Go back to the feds.” Mr Barr needs to acknowledge that the feds are going to continually say to him, “Andrew, you have not done your homework.” That is what they have said this time and that is what they will repeatedly say if this government does not do the work. So this ACT government need to take on the responsibility, fulfil the promises that they have made and have put into their Greens-Labor agreement and actually start investing some money to make sure that the shovel-ready plan is there so that we can then get the investment to make this project a reality.

There is a blame game going on here and the version that Katy Gallagher and Andrew Barr would have you believe is that this is all the federal government’s fault. Be it the convention centre or everything else, it is all Tony Abbott’s fault. Let me debunk some of those myths. I have made the point that the reason that we did not get the funding for the convention centre was as a result of this government’s inaction.

Andrew Barr is saying that the federal budget will devastate our local community. Does he believe that? Talk about talking this town down! We are trying to attract investment. We are trying to reassure the community that we have got a strong, vibrant economy that will weather this budget and we will come back stronger. That should be the message. That is what Kate Carnell did. She got on with the job. She made sure that this town came out better, bigger and stronger.

But what do we see from this Treasurer? What he is doing is crying about the fact that he did not get the investment for the convention centre because he did not do his homework. And he is saying—and it is a disgusting thing for a treasurer of this territory to be saying—that the federal government is going to devastate our local community. How negative! What a shocker! Does he believe that? Does he really think that?

I know it is different from what Ms Gallagher has been saying. I thought she was saying that this is not going to have a big impact, that we have got a vigorous economy. I read some of her comments in *The Canberra Times* that were actually more measured. I acknowledge that they were more measured. She did not see this as the end of the free world. She did not see this as the end of Canberra.

But for cheap political purposes, for dirty, grubby, little politics to try to play the blame game—and I can see what is happening here—to try to excuse Andrew Barr’s

budget that he will be delivering in June, he is trying to create this impression that this is going to devastate our local community. I would certainly give leave to Mr Barr to get up in this place and apologise for those words and say, “I withdraw those words. Yes, that was an overstep. I should not have said that. I will stop talking this town and this economy down.”

Andrew Barr is out there saying that it is going to devastate our local community. That is an absolutely outrageous thing to say and he needs to be condemned, not only by people on this side of the chamber but by people on that side of the chamber, for what is a very negative and very hurtful thing for our economy.

Let us go to Mr Rattenbury. I see him sniggering over there. I see him shaking his head. I see him moaning and groaning. But why have we not got the convention centre to the point where it is shovel ready? I will tell you why: all of the attention is on light rail, because Mr Rattenbury wants that tram track in his electorate before the next election so that he can go out to the good people of the inner north and say, “Look what I have delivered for you. Vote for me.” And that is what this is all about.

If this government had paid even 10 per cent of the attention to the convention centre that they are paying to light rail and set up authorities—and we called on them to set up a trust for the convention centre in October, but no, they rejected that—they would have set up an authority, as they did for light rail. They have shovelled as much money as they can into that, including hundreds of thousands of dollars for spin doctors to sell it. But you can see that this government is dropping the ball on just about everything in their pursuit of light rail to keep Shane Rattenbury on board.

We had this debate about the secure mental health facility in question time yesterday, a project that was promised three years ago and not a sod has been turned. If that was the light rail project there would have been a secure mental health facility authority. They would have had dozens of people in there working on it. They would have a spin doctor. But where is it? Where is this Chief Minister’s passion for mental health? She has got a passion for keeping Shane Rattenbury in the government. She has got a passion for keeping Simon Corbell and the left faction happy. She has got a passion for keeping the inner north voters happy. They will pursue this at any price.

But when it comes to things like the secure mental health facility or this convention centre, this government has dropped the ball. It is very disappointing. Andrew Barr talks about how this is going to devastate our community. Things like the convention centre are the opportunities that we need. They are what we need in this town to get our economy going.

Let us remember the 14,500 job cuts that came under Kevin Rudd. And we know that figure because Mr Barr got that from the treasury secretary or the finance department secretary—I cannot recall which one. I cannot remember Andrew Barr saying that was going to devastate our community, can you, when Rudd made those cuts?

**Mr Smyth:** That was fiscal consolidation.

**MR HANSON:** That was fiscal consolidation. But when Tony Abbott puts 2,000 job cuts on top of that, that is devastating our community. That is the absolute—and I cannot say some of these words I want to, can I? I am trying to think of another word for hypocrisy. I will not say that one. That is a ridiculous blame game.

So I commend Mr Smyth again for advocating for this important infrastructure. And I say to this government, “Get on with it, allocate the money and stop trying to blame someone else for your own inadequacies.”(*Time expired.*)

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (10.37): I am pleased we have an opportunity to talk about the prospect of and necessity for the Australia forum for Canberra, because a new convention centre is something that all three parties in this place agree there is a clear need for, as does the Canberra business community. Having just been at the budget breakfast this morning, I know it was a topic of some considerable conversation amongst people I was chatting to. It is clear that our current convention centre has been overtaken by time; it is simply not big enough for larger events and does not have the flexibility to hold simultaneous events. It is now one of the smallest convention centres in Australia and also one of the oldest.

We have seen in recent years considerable investment in other places in convention centres, and the message I have been given very clearly by the business community in Canberra is that this is an area where significant investment is going on and where governments have recognised that this is a source of economic opportunity for their cities. We are seeing right across the country, as well as across the world, efforts to upgrade convention centres, and clearly that is something we need to be doing here in Canberra. I support a new convention centre because it is important for us as a city and for Canberra as the national capital.

Convention centres are not just important and necessary facilities in their own right; they provide a key focal point for people to come together and exchange ideas and add great value to the city as a whole. At a personal level, that has been one of the more impressive features of the way this proposal has been worked up, and the thinking that has gone into it. It is not just a convention centre; the notion of the Australia forum is much more than that. It is not just any old convention centre; it is about having a place in the national capital where the big ideas are discussed and where significant groups of people can come together in recognition of this as the heart of the nation.

Canberra needs a venue that can be used by our national knowledge and research sector for conferences, for our commercial sector for trade fairs and exhibitions and by the federal government for international level meetings and conferences. A new centre will be a great resource for our city, attracting new interstate and international visitors and boosting business tourism and the private sector. That is an important part of diversifying the ACT economy, especially in the face of the cutbacks outlined in the federal budget handed down last night.

That is why the Australia forum is an item in the ALP-Greens parliamentary agreement, as the motion has identified. When we sat down to talk about the things

we wanted to achieve during this term—that is what the parliamentary agreement is about: the things we collectively wanted to move forward, things the Greens wanted to bring to the partnership and things that the ALP wanted to bring to the partnership—there was a clear commitment to get the Australia forum to the stage where it is investment ready. That is what the Canberra business community had told me and the Greens prior to the last election; that was the policy commitment they were looking for.

The thing was not ready to go, but there was a whole lot of work that could be done to get it to that point where it is investment ready and where financing can then be explored as to whether it will be funded through a federal government contribution or whether it will be a public-private partnership. The various financing approaches were not clear at that point, but the government's job was to help it to get to the investment-ready stage. That is why it is reflected in the way it is in the parliamentary agreement, and that is what the Greens and Labor Party committed to.

The proposal put forward by the Business Council and the Canberra Convention Bureau to progress the Australia forum to be investment ready by 2016 includes a schedule of activity which was commissioned through Ernst & Young and outlines the steps which need to be followed to get to that point. That gives us a clear roadmap. As Mr Barr has noted in his amendment, progress is being made. A site has been chosen on City Hill, and the Australia forum group has committed to work towards a design to suit the site.

I am sure if a whole lot of roads were involved in the project we might have seen some federal funding last night, because clearly that is a big focus, or perhaps if Canberra were losing a whole lot of car manufacturing plants we might see some more investment. But, unfortunately, this very good proposal which is being driven by the private sector in the ACT and which will help to diversify our economy was not seen as fit for help to move it forward with a minor contribution from the federal government. We are not talking millions and millions of dollars here, the sorts of figures that we are seeing put on motorways in other cities. We are talking about a handful of millions of dollars to enable a development to keep moving forward in a way that, in the commonwealth scheme of things, is affordable.

It is very disappointing that the commonwealth government has not seen fit to support this project. In other cities where significant job losses occur we see an outcry and we see significant transitional funds being put in to help develop other industries. But not for Canberra; that does not seem to be the way that this city gets treated by the federal government.

We know from international experience how important it is to build the right building in the right place. In the context of the overall city to the lake development, the City Hill site will work very well—it is close to the city centre, it is within a five-minute walk to the lake, it is located close to the theatre precinct and some of the major hotels that are already here, and it is close to shops, cafes and restaurants. The other alternate site had been one down by the lake. My personal observation was that that would be a spectacular site as well, but I have been swayed by the argument that being closer to the rest of the facilities in and around the city has a lot of merit.

The government has been consulting with industry on the development of a functional brief. Mr Barr has spoken about that in his remarks, so I will not speak about that in more detail. He has indicated the time line on that, and the next step will be the development of reference designs, which give options for the look and feel of the facility based on the parameters set out in the functional brief.

There are other technical studies, such as traffic management and survey work, that will obviously need to be done. The issue of the business model for the development and operation of the centre is yet to be sorted out. As I have touched on, there is a lot of work still to be done. Mr Smyth has put forward the case in this place for a trust model, which has been touched on again today, but there are other options, and these things will need to be sorted out in due course.

It is interesting the way the Liberal Party talk about different things. Light rail and the convention centre are in quite similar places. There are a whole lot of question marks because the work needs to be done, the planning needs to be worked through and the analysis needs to be finalised. But Mr Smyth and his Liberal Party colleagues have no qualms coming here and saying, "We must have a convention centre." Yet when those same questions need to be answered and that same work still needs to be done over light rail, they have no qualms in asking all sorts of questions and casting all sorts of aspersions on it.

It would be welcome if there were a little bit of honesty about the fact that big projects like this have work to be done on them and that there are times when not all of the information is available. A little bit of honesty about the similarity of those things would be a very welcome addition to the debate in this place.

It is disappointing that the federal government has declined to support the development of the Australia forum in Canberra at this time. I would have thought it would be right up their alley, having called themselves the infrastructure government and having made it clear to the states and territories that they want to support investment in private sector infrastructure. This is a project where a contribution at this point could have really helped accelerate things. The ACT government will now have to fill that void. That sort of commitment to Canberra from the federal government would have seen them making that sort of investment and assisting us to get these things moving forward.

I am looking forward to seeing the development of the Australia forum over coming years, and I thank the Canberra Convention Bureau and the Canberra Business Council and their many members who have and are continuing to put in considerable effort and energy into their work in advocating for this facility. I believe it is the sort of facility we want here in Canberra; it is a facility we need for the future of this city. I am pleased the government is continuing to progress the project and is continuing to investigate options and seek opportunities for funding to get it off the ground.

As I spoke about earlier, there is a commitment in the parliamentary agreement to move this forward. Anybody who comes in here and suggests that the government is not committed to that is simply doing it for reasons that suit their political agendas. I



think it would be best if we go back to the bottom line on all this—that is, all parties in this place support this facility. We know it is right for the future of this city. Rather than the sort of debate we are seeing today, the emphasis should be on how we work collectively to get this delivered in this town in the shortest possible time. I will be supporting Mr Barr’s amendment today as I think it more accurately reflects the current situation.

**MS GALLAGHER** (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education) (10.47): I welcome the opportunity to talk about a very important project in Canberra, the convention centre or Australia forum, and support the amendment that has been moved by the Treasurer today.

There is no doubt that the ACT government has a strong commitment to a new convention centre. Indeed, I do not think there is anyone in this place who is more committed than the Treasurer, who has been working on this with the Canberra Business Council and associated supporters of it, including in determining the appropriate site for the facility and getting final agreement on the site as part of the work that was completed last year.

The government has invested significantly in this project, together with the Canberra Business Council. It provided \$400,000 for the scoping study and a functional brief; the Canberra Business Council contributed \$250,000. In 2013-14 we allocated \$800,000 under the city to the lake project, which includes the convention facility. This was followed up by a workshop with industry experts, advocates and key stakeholders in September 2013. The next steps are to finalise the functional brief with detailed operational components, prepare a reference design and develop an indicative budget in order to finalise the business case. Preparations for this work are well underway. We are very disappointed that the commonwealth has refused to provide support to progress the project, particularly in the context of such heavy hits as Canberra experienced in the budget last night.

I want to correct comments from the opposition, who have not, as far as I have been aware, been involved in any of the discussions that I have had with the Abbott government on this. The day after the election, or in my first phone call with the Prime Minister after his election, after I congratulated him on his election win, he asked me what the top private sector project was. This myth that we were approached for a shovel-ready infrastructure project is wrong. The words “shovel-ready” have never been used to me. I was asked, “What is the private sector’s top priority?”—not “What is the ACT government’s top priority?” or “What are the public infrastructure priorities?” and not “What are the priorities the ACT government has to provide schools, hospitals and public transport?”

The convention centre is not the government’s top infrastructure priority, because we have other pressing needs, like hospitals, for example. I do not think that should be a surprise. When I was asked, “What is the top private sector project?”—that is, not involving government—I answered honestly, “It is the Australia forum.” He was aware of that project: “Yes I am aware of that. I have heard of that from discussions with the Canberra business community. It was made very clear to me that this is the

project they were interested in.” To come here and say that this is our fault because we dropped the ball, because we have not developed it to a point, is simply incorrect. It is not what happened. It was not what I was asked.

I then went and met with the minister, Jamie Briggs, with a delegation of the Canberra business community with me. This again was raised as their top priority, which the government was happy to support.

That is the role that we have played in this. We have not taken ownership of the project. Nor do I believe we should. I do not believe that we as the government and the community, when we have other competing priorities and other hits occurring on our budget—and last night has only compounded them—can rank this one as ours, as the ACT government’s top priority. Yes, it is a key project for Canberra. Yes, we want to see it progressed. And yes, we believe it is a private sector investment opportunity to help deliver city to the lake.

They are the origins of the discussions that we have had with the commonwealth. I was asked at all of those meetings, “What is the next step for that project?” Not only was I asked; the Canberra business community members who were at that meeting were also asked. The universal ask was: “We would like some financial support to get it to the next stage. That is what we need.” So all this positioning and covering one’s back that is going on with Senator Seselja about it all being the ACT government’s fault is just not true. I was asked what the private sector’s main priority in Canberra was. This, of course, was after I was assured there would be no economic harm caused to the city through decisions taken by the federal government—which, as we can see after last night, is clearly not true either.

We are in a position now where we have to work closely with the business community to identify ways to keep moving this project forward within the constraints of our budget. We will do that. We have already had discussions with the Canberra Business Council, in particular, as the main proponent and supporter of this project. So yes; we will continue to do that. The parliamentary agreement included a commitment to progress the convention centre project to an investment-ready stage. We had hoped that we would get some commonwealth support for that, but, as it turns out, that is not coming.

In relation to the conspiracy, let me say that I like it when Mr Smyth focuses on the minutiae about the date of a letter sent to me! I have mentioned that a number of times. It was not picked up. That is not my problem. I have not made a secret of it. I am not surprised that you got a copy of the letter, because I was asked for it and I released a copy of the letter. I could see no reason not to release a copy of the letter. We have continued to work with all interested parties on this project, and we will continue to do so. It is an important one.

That is why the refusal from the commonwealth seems even meaner. Essentially even a rounding up in their budget has not been able to be provided to the Canberra community. As if they would have noticed \$2 million, \$3 million or \$4 million when they are ripping hundreds of millions of dollars out of this economy through job cuts and other service cuts over the next couple of years. It makes it even harder when you

see hundreds of millions of dollars going all over the country. There could be a tiny allocation to progress this to a point where private sector investors would be in a position to be assessed against their proposals for investing, and they could not find that money. It is perhaps even more galling that we have the apologists for Prime Minister Abbott here today, trying to play the blame game and not in any way look at the realistic options for progressing this project to the next stage.

I do not believe it is the responsibility of the ACT government only, singularly. We have already said that we will find the land and make the land available subject to the business case reaching the correct stage. I think that is more than generous of this community. This is the nation's capital. It is absolutely essential that the commonwealth government, the Abbott government, help build the national capital. That is what this project is about. To this point they cannot see fit to round up a number in their budget paper and allow that work to happen. That speaks for itself.

**MR SMYTH** (Brindabella) (10.56): It is quite revealing that the Chief Minister commenced her speech in this discussion today by saying that they have a strong commitment to the convention centre but finished by saying, "We have not taken ownership, and nor should we." You have to ask the question: who has ownership of this?

You only have to look around the country to see who is delivering the important infrastructure that convention centres are to know that it is a state responsibility, a state or territory responsibility. The Northern Territory government built a new convention centre. The state government built the convention centre in Brisbane and the Gold Coast convention centre. In Sydney we are seeing an amazing redevelopment where this is so important to their economy that they have pulled down the existing convention centre, or are currently in the process of pulling down the convention centre, and will not have a major facility for three years so that they can have a bigger and better one to meet the expanding need. In Melbourne the state government built the convention centre. In Perth the state government built the convention centre. In Adelaide they have not only built it; they have enlarged it. And they are about to enlarge it again—the third, I believe. The extension to the Adelaide convention facility—the extension on its own—is larger than what is proposed for the Australia forum. This is a state or territory responsibility. We have a government that have been negligent in that responsibility, and they should be condemned for their failure.

It is not as though this is a new idea. It has been there for 13 years. Ted Quinlan acknowledged it in December 2001. Here we are in May 2014, and we have a government that does not have ownership of this project. That will come as a great shock to the business community, I think.

The Chief Minister is condemned by her own words: "We have not taken ownership." They should. It is infrastructure at the state level that all of the other states have taken ownership of and have delivered in the time that we have been having this debate in the ACT. She talks about "a strong commitment" and having "significantly invested". She quoted two figures: \$400,000 and \$800,000. I know that they were welcomed by

the community, but it is not enough to get it shovel-ready. Indeed, with the Greens-Labor agreement, which will cease in 2016, they will have to put significant funds in to get it shovel-ready by 2016. Those funds should appear in the coming budget. That is what this motion is about.

It is interesting that Mr Rattenbury talked about the prospect of a new convention centre. Is it a prospect or is it a reality that we will get a new convention centre under this government? The downgrading and the use of the word “prospect” are of concern to me. He said that convention centres are a source of economic opportunity. If they are, why haven’t you cashed in? We have had budget after budget where the ACT government has said that the greatest impact on the ACT economy would be a downturn in federal funding. We all know that; we all appreciate it. But that again highlights your failure: it was not ready to go when the opportunity came to ask for some funding.

Mr Rattenbury and Mr Barr both talked about job losses. I regret the job losses, and I have said that to my federal colleagues. These people are real. This is an impact on families. But we did not hear the same sort of language from those opposite when it was simply “fiscal consolidation” under the Rudd government. And we have had them outed by the head of finance when he said, I think, that 14,457 jobs will go as a consequence of Labor’s budgets and policies. Then it was fiscal consolidation—a glib line from a glib Treasurer.

In his speech, Mr Barr acknowledges that he has not done the work. I do not think he used the words “shovel-ready” once. He could not bring himself to say them, because he knows he has failed. This government has failed the business community. Through that failure, it has failed all the people of the ACT, because it has not taken up the opportunities that every other state and territory in this country have. In the time that we have been talking about this, in some cases they have extended once, if not twice, or built completely new facilities.

**Mr Barr:** And we have completely refurbished our existing one.

**MR SMYTH:** The minister says, “We have completely refurbished our facility.” That was because some of it was an OH&S issue, some of it was because the roof was leaking, and some of it was because the equipment was out of order.

**Mr Barr:** That over \$30 million was spent means nothing!

**MR SMYTH:** If the \$30 million had been spent on getting the business case ready, we might have had a new convention centre by now. We may well have had a new convention centre by now. Many said that this is money that could be used for that purpose.

We have lots of excuses. “It is not shovel-ready.” “It is impossible to approach the federal government.” What I am advised is that it will have to go through Infrastructure Australia. As with the attempt to get capital metro funded by Infrastructure Australia under the Labor government, they failed. They have failed to do the work.

This government should be doing the business case requirements that the commonwealth needs to genuinely look at funding for the project. They need to do it quickly. They should have done it years ago. They have had 13 years. Mr Rattenbury said at one stage that there is a lot of work to be done for big projects like this. Yes, he is right. And it has not been done. It has not been done in 13 years. That is the point.

We are simply saying that if, as the Chief Minister said, they have a strong commitment to the project, they should put the money in the budget. The money in the budget appeared for capital metro. If you are as committed to this project as you say, put the money in this year's budget. Shave a bit off capital metro. I have no doubt that there will be additional funding for capital metro in this coming budget from the ACT government. Shave the \$8 million or \$10 million that is required to get the convention centre shovel-ready so that we can go back to the feds and get some of the infrastructure funding that they have said they will be spending over the coming years back into the ACT.

It is a very simple request; it is a very logical request. Everybody has said they are in favour of it; let us make a reality of it. Let us stop talking about it and do the job that is required to get this piece of infrastructure into the ACT so that we can become a Canberra meeting place by name and a Canberra meeting place through what we say and do. Let us highlight exactly what Mr Rattenbury and others have said through the rally group so that we can showcase all the excellent work done at our universities and our institutions, we can be a place where the big issues are discussed, and we can hold the conferences and business meeting events that we should be able to hold in this city as the nation's capital.

That is why this motion should be supported today and that is why this amendment should not be supported.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

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

Noes 8

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

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

## Economy—employment

**MS PORTER** (Ginninderra) (11.08): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that the Federal Budget handed down last night will have a direct and long lasting impact on the economy of the ACT;
- (b) that the Federal Budget will result in a decrease funding of direct services to the ACT community;
- (c) the public sector workforce in Canberra is highly skilled and delivers an important and highly valued service to the broader Australian community;
- (d) that in other jurisdictions, when significant job losses occur, the Federal Government has provided structural adjustment packages to the affected communities;
- (e) the ACT Government has outlined plans for a number of high profile infrastructure projects including Capital Metro, the University of Canberra Public Hospital and City to the Lake;
- (f) that these projects will generate investment and jobs growth in the ACT and promote economic activity for local suppliers and small businesses;
- (g) the ACT Government remains committed to stimulating and further expanding its support for and investment in our digital economy and local private sector businesses;
- (h) that our strong health, education and tertiary sectors remain an important part of not only the ACT economy but are a critical element in our growing role as a regional service hub for south east NSW; and
- (i) the strong commitment the ACT Government has to supporting our tourism and sporting facilities and events to continue to build economic activity in these sectors; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to continue to build and transform our city by investing in Canberra and investing in jobs generation and growth diversifying our economy and to promote jobs growth.

As I move this motion today we wake to a nation which is digesting the coalition's first budget, a budget that will undoubtedly have a significant, direct and lasting impact on the economy of the ACT. While all the details of the budget are still being digested, it is clear that the largest effects will be felt within commonwealth agencies and the bureaucracy, affecting thousands of Canberra public servants and their families. This is also likely to place additional pressure on the ACT economy, possibly slowing down business activity and impacting unemployment and house prices.

The ACT government has focused significant resources and energy on encouraging greater diversity in the ACT economy. The ACT economy is now more resilient than ever and is as well placed as it can be to deal with the negative impacts that will arise from the commonwealth's budget decisions.

However, while the ACT has withstood the contractions to date, our economy will struggle to absorb large levels of commonwealth redundancies without assistance. The magnitude of the cuts to the Australian public service can be expected to have a direct impact on overall economic activity in the ACT. While the news is not good and Canberrans will face challenges in the future, the ACT workforce is perhaps the highest skilled in Australia. With appropriate assistance, there can be opportunities for workers and businesses as well as challenges.

Nonetheless, it is clear that Canberra does not get the same assistance as other jurisdictions. It has not seen the same level of support shown to South Australia, Victoria or Tasmania. Let us remember the commonwealth made a 2013 election commitment of \$16 million to assist Cadbury in Tasmania. We saw the \$155 million growth fund to generate the jobs of the future for employees and supply-chain businesses in Victoria and South Australia affected by the closure of local automotive manufacturing.

The Prime Minister has also previously announced that more than \$1.5 billion has been set aside for South Australian infrastructure projects over the next six years and \$6.5 billion for Victorian projects. This was to help offset a reported loss of only 3,000 employees. In Canberra the latest estimates suggest there are at least 8,000 employees to lose their jobs.

While the ACT government has limited scope to cushion our economy in the light of these challenges, we have outlined plans for a number of infrastructure projects to help maintain economic activity and confidence. It is important that the ACT government continues to support these infrastructure projects as they are essential in generating investment and job growth and promoting economic activity for local suppliers and small businesses.

We have also taken the initiative in providing support for the building and construction industry through the announcement of a two-year stimulus program. We are strengthening our higher education sector, supporting our IT and knowledge-based industries, and we will help protect the most vulnerable in our community through important initiatives such as our hospital infrastructure program, transition to the NDIS, increasing school resourcing and the healthy weight initiative.

It is fortunate the ACT's economic fundamentals are sound and we have a highly competitive economy. IKEA's investment in Canberra and the \$46 million Canberra computer animation academy are both evidence of this. The ACT government has a strong working relationship with the business sector and is committed to driving growth in investment, exports and jobs. It is this commitment that has the ACT's unemployment rate at 3.6 per cent, with sound economic foundations in other key

sectors such as housing and retail activity. We value the people of Canberra, we care about the small business owners and we want to see the private sector flourish.

The ACT government remains committed to support and investment in our digital economy through creating a digital Canberra. The forward-looking focus of digital Canberra is ambitious in nature with its staged rollouts of free wi-fi to areas of the ACT and the digital footprint in the heart of the CBD. Digital Canberra will improve the economy's existing advantages while assisting businesses and local communities through the digital Canberra fund, innovation challenges and ICT capacity-building workshops.

The five priority projects under the digital Canberra action plan will help take forward the ACT's digital agenda through partnering with the community, business and across government. These projects are: free public wi-fi across town centres and public spaces; creating the largest free public wi-fi network in Australia where users will experience free services similar in speeds to the 3G network; Garema Place will be re-established as a digital space with a digital screen and innovative hub, with applications having until 30 April to respond to the request for proposal; and science, technology, engineering, mathematics internships for young people to connect with real-world experiences in innovative industries, helping create a STEM culture. There is no doubt that funding these projects will boost Canberra's digital economy.

The government's ambitious vision is equally present in the physical infrastructure projects I mentioned—in particular, the city plan. The government has released the final version of the city plan, which provides a large step forward in the transformation of our city centre. The Chief Minister presented the project to investors in China last month as part of the Prime Minister's trade delegation, and the Deputy Chief Minister will be doing the same in Singapore and in Hong Kong in June.

It is a plan to guide decision making for public and private sectors and encourage the next phase of our city centre growth—a process already well underway. It will steer the city centre towards a commercial and cultural hub which both our city and regional communities have said it ought to be and, most importantly, it will help bolster our economy in the coming years.

Capital metro will have similar transformative and economic benefits. It is not only a transport solution; it is a city-building project—a major capital investment which delivers against other key priorities: a catalyst for economic growth and development, with a major uplift effect along the corridor; a centrepiece in the transformation of the city centre; a driver of commercial growth in Gungahlin town centre; a more active, healthy and affordable transport option for Canberrans; and a project which will pick up some of the spare capacity created by the completion of other major infrastructure projects.

While last night's budget also delivered hits to health and education funding, the health and education sectors will remain an important part of the ACT economy, including as a regional hub for south-east New South Wales. The higher education sector makes a significant contribution to the ACT economy. The ACT government



has been actively investing time and funds to continue to support and develop the sector in Canberra, in particular through the \$2 million study Canberra initiative.

The Chief Minister's recent visit to China also resulted in the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the ACT government Education and Training Directorate and the Shanghai Normal University. The MOU will foster new and mutually beneficial relationships with ACT schools and the Shanghai Normal University and their affiliate university schools. The MOU seeks to provide a number of opportunities for teacher and student exchange, language programs and collaborative research initiatives between Shanghai Normal University and our ACT schools.

Other important activities are occurring in relation to health services and infrastructure. Health is an area targeted by commonwealth spending cuts, contrasting with the ACT government's commitment to work positively to strengthen the health system and ensure it will cater for the future needs of our community.

We are committed to a University of Canberra public hospital, and other aspects of the health infrastructure program currently underway reflect a major investment in health facilities across the ACT. This includes new community health facilities, a mental health young persons unit, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residential and other drug facility, also known as the Ngunnawal bush healing farm, and the Canberra Region Cancer Centre. These investments not only ensure that Canberrans of the future will have the facilities and services they require but they also contribute positively to the economy by providing construction jobs and ongoing health and allied health jobs.

The ACT government is also committed to supporting tourism, sporting facilities and events to encourage visitors to Canberra and spending in our city, which all contribute to developing our economic activity. The capital region has always been an important element in the tourism offering of Canberra. The capital region complements what the city has to offer. Together they provide a diverse visitor experience.

The growth and development of Canberra Airport also represents a significant element to tourism infrastructure. The ACT government has led a project to support Canberra Airport's ongoing discussions with airlines to commence direct international services to and from Canberra from New Zealand and Singapore. The region plays an important role in securing international flights, highlighting to airlines the opportunities that Canberra and the region present. Securing international flights will further help the city's position as a business and tourism hub and the national and international perception of Canberra and the region.

Brand Canberra also offers an opportunity to present a common message to visitors, investors and potential new members of our region's community, enhancing the image of Canberra and the region. ACT government officials will work with council economic development officers to identify ways the brand can be executed across the region. The ACT government has a commitment to Canberra and has achieved much in ensuring that Canberra continues to be a diverse, vibrant place to live, work, visit and recreate.

Following the delivery of the commonwealth budget last night, there is no doubt that there are challenges ahead, but the fundamentals of the economy are strong and the ongoing work of the ACT government, the business sector and the community at large will help Canberra in the coming months and years. This government will do whatever it can to support the workers and families of the ACT, and I urge everyone in this place to support this motion.

**MR SMYTH** (Brindabella) (11.20): I move the amendment that has been circulated in my name:

Omit all words after “notes”, substitute:

- “(a) that the Federal Budget handed down last night will have a direct and long lasting impact on the economy of the ACT;
  - (b) the public sector workforce in Canberra is highly skilled and delivers an important and highly valued service to the broader Australian community;
  - (c) of the estimated 16 500 jobs to be lost as a result of this Budget, approximately 90% or some 14 500 jobs were the result of previous Federal Labor Budgets and economic mismanagement;
  - (d) unlike other jurisdictions, the Federal Government continues to provide billions of dollars in employment to the ACT economy;
  - (e) the ACT Government has outlined plans for a number of high profile infrastructure projects, but has failed to deliver on important projects—resulting in overwhelming community response being, ‘just get on with it’;
  - (f) that these projects will not generate the desired investment and jobs growth in the ACT and promote economic activity for local suppliers and small businesses;
  - (g) failed to get Commonwealth funding for a new Convention Centre as a consequence of not having the project at a shovel ready stage after 13 years in Government;
  - (h) that the ACT Government has thus far failed to stimulate and further expand its support for local private sector businesses over its last 13 years;
  - (i) that the Government’s clean energy schemes have caused discord in regional communities in NSW; and
  - (j) the ACT Government’s failure to support our tourism, sporting, and events industry; and
- (2) condemns the ACT Government for its failure to genuinely diversify our City’s economy over the last 13 years.”.

It is a timely motion that Ms Porter has put on the notice paper, and we thank her for it. Again it allows us to have a real discussion about the state of the ACT. I think the amendment that I have moved is perhaps a more realistic version of what the Labor Party seeks to do through Ms Porter's motion.

We agree with paragraphs (a) and (b). The federal budget handed down last night will have a direct and long-lasting impact on the economy of the ACT. I do not think anybody doubts that. This side of the house has always lamented job losses, unlike the other side of the house, who saw them in economic terms of fiscal consolidation. What was it that was said—that, as a direct result of federal Labor's policy, 14,457 jobs were going. I think that was the number.

Let us look at the numbers from last night of 16½ thousand jobs. Some 90 per cent of them are job cuts from the Labor Party. I think you could make a fair case that the other 10 per cent are a consequence of the general mismanagement of Labor as well. So let us have no doubt about this. These are Labor's job cuts. I think it is a shame that the economy under Labor got to such an extent that these job cuts were seen as necessary at all.

Let us face it: people do not get sacked when there is a surplus. When you have a downturn, possibly leading to recession, which thankfully Australia avoided in the GFC, this is what happens. It is a shame that this has happened, and it happened on the Labor Party's watch. It happened when those opposite were very quiet and hiding behind economic terms instead of taking the federal Labor government to task.

It was interesting that at the breakfast this morning Andrew Leigh got caught out. Andrew Leigh said he could not find anything to support in the budget. Bruce Billson got up and said, "That is interesting, because, Andrew Leigh, when you were studying at Harvard,"—I think it was for his doctorate—"you were actually in favour of a co-payment." The laughter in the room and the embarrassed look on Dr Leigh's face showed how badly he had been caught out. Labor has been caught out on these losses. The same was the case in 1996 when there were job losses which were also unfortunate. It was about cleaning up Labor's mess. So let us have no doubt about it.

The other thing we need to keep in mind, as set out in paragraph (d) of my amendment, is that, unlike other jurisdictions, we still receive billions of dollars worth of employment in the ACT thanks to the federal government. This is perhaps still part of the problem. When Kate Carnell came to office in 1995 the ACT budget was tracking very poorly because of the excesses and the failure of the then Follett government to control their spending. They flooded the land market and they killed house prices in the ACT.

It certainly did not get better, when Howard was elected, for a couple of years, but have no doubt that local Labor contributed to the troubles that this city went through in the late 90s. And that is the problem. There is no acknowledgement from those opposite that they contributed.

We do still get lots of employment from the federal government, and that is a good thing. I am sure everyone in this place hopes that it continues. But until we address the overwhelming dependence on the federal government, this city will suffer under federal governments—and, let us face it, both sides have done it. Rudd's 14½ thousand jobs is perhaps the highest number directly attributed to a single government. While we have an almost total dependence on the federal government, this will continue.

When Kate Carnell came to office in 1995 it was 60 per cent public service. When we left office in 2001 it was 40 per cent public service. I know a lot of the private sector jobs still depended on the government, but that was a genuine attempt to wean the ACT economy off a total dependence on one industry. And the work, I think, stopped then.

We have seen a decline. Yes, the population has grown; yes, employment has grown. But still 50 per cent of employment in the ACT is public sector and approximately 50 per cent is the private sector, which I think still means that we are dependent on government spending, whether it be federal or ACT government. And we are going to continue to have boom and bust cycles if we do not steer our own course. We need to do that. For years I have said that we need to diversify the economy, and for years I have said we should build appropriate business infrastructure like the convention centre.

We are grateful for the federal spend. We are grateful for places like the ANU, for the CSIRO, for the national cultural attractions, which benefit us greatly. But there must be a time when this territory steers its own course. Unfortunately, that time has probably been forced on us now.

We note in paragraph (e) that, yes, the ACT government has outlined plans for a number of high profile infrastructure projects but it has failed to deliver on any of them. I think there is an overwhelming community sentiment out there of, "Just get on with it." Indeed, the Chief Minister, in her own introduction to the capital plan released earlier this year, said:

One of the strongest messages we heard was 'just get on with it'.

She went on to say that "people want to see change". That is right. I think they actually do. I think there is growth in the community—it is certainly not in the government—in the notion that Canberra can stand on its own and that we have lots to offer.

I have mentioned here before Fivefold, a firm of five young ladies who have set up a jewellery shop at the Braddon traders. They are former graduates of our School of Arts who have decided to stay in Canberra because they think it has something special to offer, rather than, like most of their peers, going to Sydney or Melbourne. I have used the words "hip and homespun". We must be relevant and we must be local. That is what changes, and I do not see that in all the things that this government has done.

In paragraph (f) I say that these projects will not generate the desired investment and jobs growth in the ACT. It was interesting in last year's estimates process that the advisers said to us, "You will not get the uplift that the government say they will get from capital metro." It never happens. They made it quite clear that it does not happen. The Liberal members wanted to get more information. The Labor members refused. It is a shame that we do not get some independent analysis of the uplift. The government talk about it being "transformational". Well, it is a glib word. Keep using it. I do not think you are convincing anybody when your own consultation says, "Stop talking about it; just get on with it."

We have had in the last couple of days a whole lot of programs where we have seen that the government has not delivered. What about Mr Corbell's *City Hill: a concept for the future*? Nine years, and nothing has happened. With the bush healing farm, it was probably closer to nine years from when it was first mooted to when it was completed. With the secure mental health facility it has been about nine years again.

This is not a government that delivers. The GDE: double the time and quadruple the budget. Yes, there are some jobs and, yes, there will be some investment, but I do not think, because of the way they deliver them and the poor management of them from this government, that we truly get the value that we should from those projects.

With respect to paragraph (g), we have just had a debate on this. The government have failed to get funding for a new convention centre—and not just from the Liberal government; they could not get anything out of the Labor government either. We now have this extraordinary admission from the Chief Minister that they are not taking the lead on this; it is not their project. You can ask the question: whose is it? The government should show some leadership in this sphere and make it happen.

Paragraph (h) says that the ACT government have thus far failed to stimulate and further expand its support for the local private sector over the last 13 years. I think that is a true statement. You can see that clearly as a percentage. There was 60 per cent private employment when they came to office; it is now approximately 50 per cent. This is the government that in 2006 cut all the business programs. We heard for years Minister Barr talking about business welfare: "I'm not in the manner of giving out business welfare." How about providing business with the framework to make it work?

They cut tourism, as we note in paragraph (j). They cut tourism funding by a quarter. It truly slowed down the tourism numbers and the tourism numbers are only just now getting back to the 2003 levels. That is despite the growth in population et cetera over a decade. Again, the litany is long and it is sad in the ways that this government have failed this community.

Paragraph (i) says that the government's clean energy schemes have caused discord in regional communities in New South Wales. They talk about working with the local community but they do not do what they preach. There are lots of words. When you look at their actions, they are arrogant, they are out of touch and they do what suits them rather than living up to the expectations that they create.

Part (2) of the amendment that I moved simply says, “Condemns the ACT government for its failure to genuinely diversify our city’s economy over the last 13 years.” You only have to look at the way their business programs have declined and, indeed, at the business documents they produce. Give Ted Quinlan his due; the economic white paper back in 2003 had four major themes, nine strategic sectors and 47 recommendations. As Ted said, it was a statement of the bleeding obvious. Business hardly rated a mention in the government’s document *Capital development: towards our second century* in August 2008. It is just words; it is just floss.

If we look at the jobs diversification document, let us give Mr Barr his due. He finally could use the word “diversification” in a document, and he can get credit for that. Again, it is not about targets. They mention “thinking” and “expectations”. On page 35, under “How will we know we have succeeded?” there are some sort of measures there, but the problem is that most of this is a rehash, a renaming or an amalgamation of existing programs, or programs that had existed before and programs that they had abolished in the past. Again, we really need there to be a commitment to the business sector in this city.

They do the usual things. There are some programs there that had to be re-established after they were gutted. But you really do not have a champion in that cabinet for business in the ACT and, as a consequence, the business community, I think, suffers.

We have very smart people here. We have lots of opportunities. I do not think we have truly embraced, in any of the major areas of business, whether it be tourism or the like, what is there and actually capitalised on the benefits that they bring to the community in terms of employment and wealth creation. The government gets a dividend from it in the form of increased revenue to secure the budget. We really have not had a serious look—certainly in the last 13 years from this government—at how we might play truly to the strengths of the ACT and truly minimise the impact.

There will always be an impact when we have changes of government and changes in government circumstances, particularly at the federal level. For those of us who were here when Mr Quinlan was here, we got the constant lecture on the economic cycle of boom and bust—and that economic cycle will continue, much of it well and truly beyond our reach.

What we can do is make sure that we use the resources that we have more wisely, that we deliver better projects in a timely fashion, with better scoping and with more accountability, and that we make a serious and genuine attempt to diversify the city’s economy instead of making pat lines like the Treasurer made about the business community not stepping up. If you had worked with the business community, you would be surprised at what talent there is out there. We can still see the benefits from some of the projects that we commenced when we were last in office. The AIE started with a grant from an ACT government—and look at it today. It goes from strength to strength, and good luck to all those involved with the AIE. But until you really have a plan to grow, diversify and create jobs in the ACT, the ACT will still be well and truly beholden to the federal budget cycle. I commend my amendment to the house.

**MS GALLAGHER** (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education) (11.34): What a sorry state of affairs this is that the morning after this city got a belting we have the 3IC leading the charge for the Canberra Liberals. The opposition leader, missing in action—or perhaps we should say missing in inaction. He has not had a thing to say, and that says one of two things: one, he does not care and does not think what happened last night matters to people in Canberra; or two, he is too embarrassed to join the chorus of the Abbott apologists over there to try and make it everybody else’s fault other than the government that determined the outcomes they delivered in the budget last night and their consequential impacts in Canberra.

We can all sit here and go, “Well, so many jobs were in last year’s budget, so many jobs are in this year’s budget,” but let’s think for a moment about what it means—16,500 jobs to go, of which we expect somewhere near 50 per cent will come from our home city—our neighbours, our colleagues, our kids’ friends’ parents. That is what it means today, and the Canberra Liberals have managed to have two people here in this chamber for this important debate this morning, and not even their most senior members. They could not be bothered, could not be in here to stand up for this city and express their concern. Instead, 3IC moves an amendment that makes it all the ACT government’s fault.

That is the situation we are in now, and it is not just those 6,500 or 7,500 or, indeed, 8,000 jobs that might go from Canberra—we are still trying to work out how many there are—it is all the other jobs that will be affected. Jobs in the private sector, which Mr Smyth seems to care more about than the public sector, their pipeline of work will be affected by what happened last night.

We have the Australian Taxation Office losing massive amounts of jobs, the industry department losing 1,700 jobs, Immigration and Border Protection losing jobs, DFAT losing jobs, the Federal Police losing jobs, 500 jobs from Health in Canberra and 500 jobs from the Treasury department in Canberra. This is what happened last night to this city. This morning many Canberrans woke up, one, probably not knowing if they had a job—thousands of them woke up to that—or, two, worried about the impact that someone else’s job loss would have on them, and the Canberra Liberals cannot even be bothered to debate it.

The measure of a good politician is their ability to stand up and speak up for their community when things like this happen. Last night we had Mr Smyth providing the commentary. Mr Hanson could not even find the time to actually provide the first response of how concerned he was for our city.

Think about the impact of the job losses on those people, their children, their families, their mortgages. These are real people who are just dismissed with, “Oh well, 16,500 jobs, no worries.” Let’s remember the outcry when 1,200 jobs went from Geelong. Let’s remember the outcry when 1,800 jobs went from areas like Newcastle. Let’s remember the jobs that will go from the automotive industry over the next few years. We are sorry for those people too, but let’s share the same compassion and the same concern for the 6,500 people, at a minimum, that were wiped out in terms of

their jobs with a swipe of the Treasurer's pen and the dance in his office—the best day of his life. I can tell you that I have already had people telling me it was not the best day of their lives.

It is not only the jobs; it is the attacks on our institutions—\$25 million gone from the University of Canberra. The opportunity for the University of Canberra to specialise in making our teachers the best teachers in Australia so that our children can have access to the best teachers—gone. \$26 million committed, \$1 million paid, \$25 million gone. \$6.5 million from ANU as part of the work they do through the Coombs centre with the Department of Industry—gone. NICTA—gone. No federal government funding for that. In a year's time—gone. You have to fundraise all your own money from private sources, apart from the small support that small governments like us can give. Seventy-odd jobs in Canberra. That's diversification for you, isn't it, Mr Smyth? There we are growing a fantastic institution in NICTA, which is doing incredible work. Anyone who has been over there to see the work they do would know that. "Oh, well. Cut 'em loose. Off they go."

Let's look at other things that were cut last night: national education reform and national health funding reform. "Don't worry. The states and territories run health and education. We can take \$80 billion out of that around the country. We can just cut elective surgery from being delivered in hospitals because we don't run them. We don't care about them. You go and fix it." It is good to see some of the Liberal premiers coming out and calling this for what it is—the biggest cost shift we have seen since federation probably and certainly since we have signed up to all the agreements we have. That is what they are doing in other states. They are saying, "This is not acceptable to us," but that is what happened to Canberra last night.

National partnerships on Indigenous early childhood development—terminated, when we know that in closing the gap one of the fundamental deliverables is to make sure Indigenous young people and children at the earliest age are supported in their education. Gone. Terminated from July 2014. \$1.1 million gone. There go the West Belconnen Child and Family Centre programs. The national partnership on financial assistance for long-stay older patients—terminated from July 2014. Worth \$4 million, and this is older people in hospital awaiting transition to nursing home accommodation. Gone.

Other payments ceased: the national partnership on concessions for pension concession cards and seniors card holders, the preventative health partnership, the training places for single and teenage parents, I have spoken about the public hospital one and adult dental services will go. Public dental services—gone.

This is what happened to this city last night, and we are then meant to swallow some pill that it is good that we got \$26.8 million for DSS to stay in Tuggeranong. So withdraw hundreds of millions of economic activity through jobs and slash payments to our budget, and Senator Seselja tells us we should be feeling really good this morning because DSS is staying in Tuggeranong. It is not expanding; it is not doing anything other than staying where they are. Well, I am not going to cop that as a good outcome last night.



I do not think you can blame everything on the ACT government or the Gillard government or the Rudd government. Decisions were taken about this city last night which were taken by the Liberal Party—by Tony Abbott and his friends supported in this place, aided and abetted by the 3IC, the Abbott apologist. Well, no-one else is talking, Mr Smyth. Nobody else seems to care what happened to this city. The small opportunity there is for us to work together is shown wanting today by the complete disinterest shown by the Canberra Liberals in this debate and what happened to this city last night. That will rest on your heads.

**MR BARR** (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Community Services) (11.44): It is disappointing to have to speak to this amendment today. It is disappointing to have to canvass the devastating impact the commonwealth government—the federal Liberals, the Liberal Party—is imposing upon our city. Let's be very clear: the decisions taken last night will have an impact on our city. Not only was the budget handed down last night full of lies and broken promises, but it went further than a number of stated election commitments, particularly in relation to the number of job losses.

It is disappointing, but it is not surprising because it comes from a political party that has a fundamental dislike of the public sector and no regard for the sector's contribution to our society. It is no surprise because the Liberal Party have form on this. Their approach is to gut services right across this nation. It is a uniform approach taken by the party in every jurisdiction where they form government.

Ms Porter's motion raises a number of issues that the Assembly should be concerned about. The federal budget will have an impact on the economy. The initial estimated job losses in the ACT—6,500 directly and a further 1,500 likely to go as the result of mergers, privatisations and the abolition of agencies, so around 7,500 to 8,000. We have 215,000 jobs in our economy. This is the Liberal way. But the even sadder thing is that the commonwealth government is not interested in helping this community through the impacts of the savage cuts that it is imposing on this community.

Economic shocks happen around Australia due to international and global events, but usually the commonwealth government is there to assist. For example, when BlueScope closed its plant in Port Kembla and the region lost 0.7 of one per cent of its workforce, the commonwealth was there with a \$30 million fund to stimulate the economy as a result of the loss of those jobs. When Holden closed in Elizabeth, 1.4 per cent of Adelaide's workforce was slashed. When Holden closed their plant in Port Melbourne, half of one per cent of the workforce was lost. The commonwealth assisted with \$60 million transition packages. When Ford announced its closures in Geelong and Melbourne, again, half a per cent of the region's workforce lost their jobs and a \$40 million transition package was provided. When Toyota announced the closure of its Altona plant and just under one per cent of the local employment base lost their jobs, a further financial assistance package was provided.

In all of these examples, under 1.5 per cent of the local workforce lost their jobs, nevertheless, there was a significant and negative impact in those communities from

those job losses, and the commonwealth government provided support. What is estimated now from the impact from the Liberal Party's decision to slash jobs in Canberra is that we will lose three per cent of our workforce. The cuts to our city announced yesterday will be one of the largest economic shocks experienced by a region in Australia in our history, but the commonwealth is offering no assistance to help the territory.

The key point to reinforce here about why this economic shock is different from the others is that this one is caused by the commonwealth government itself. It is driven by a dislike of the public sector. Let's have a look at the history of recent local governments: in Queensland, nearly 13,000 jobs lost; New South Wales, 10,000 jobs; Victoria, nearly 4,500 thousand jobs lost; Western Australia, 1,000; and now we can add 16,500 from the Liberal government federally. Contrast that with what has occurred in the ACT. We have, in fact, increased public services with 2,000 extra staff working in health, education, municipal services, community services and across the range of state and municipal services provided in the ACT over the last five years. Despite the economic hit that the commonwealth is imposing, the territory government has a plan to drive our economic growth and we will continue to invest in this community and in transformative projects for this city.

Labor will invest in Canberra; the Liberals will gut our city. That is the very clear contrast. Everyone knows it. Everyone has known for the last three decades that this city does better under Labor governments.

I do not really need to say much more than that; people will judge for themselves. They will see the contributions the respective sides of politics will make to this city's economic growth in the future. It is very clear; it is stark: one side breaks promises and lies. We have all heard this morning the replays of the Tony Abbott press conference where there would be no cuts to health, no cuts to education, no changes to pensions, no new taxes, no cuts to the ABC. What do we get last night? The complete reverse of all of that.

Canberra motorists in Gungahlin and in Tuggeranong, who often have the furthest to travel in order to get to their place of work, will be paying more for their petrol as a result of that broken promise. That will have an impact on this economy, and for all the talk about supporting people in outer suburban areas in Canberra, stripping away various family benefits, stripping away support for young people to access a variety of government programs and making it more expensive to get to and from work, to get your kids to school, to get to and from child care and to undertake the day-to-day activities that are part of everyday life is the legacy of the Liberal Party and its budget last night.

The challenge now is what can be done locally by this community pulling together, by the ACT government and the private sector working together, in order to facilitate new economic growth opportunities for Canberra. The government will play our part through our budget next month. We will play our part through supporting investment in new infrastructure in health, education and transport and in new business development opportunities through projects like the city to the lake.

The commonwealth budget will have a significant impact on the territory's budget, and that is likely to be more than \$100 million a year off our bottom line in lost commonwealth payments, national partnership agreements ceasing, the flow-on impact of lower revenues and lower land sales from population growth decline or even stagnation. The New South Wales Treasurer, Andrew Constance, believes there is a \$1.5 billion hole in the New South Wales state budget as a result of decisions announced last night. As a rule of thumb, we are between 12 and 15 times smaller than the New South Wales budget, so it is at least \$100 million, likely to be \$150 million, on the ACT bottom line as a result of the cost shift.

The commonwealth are making efforts to repair their bottom line by shifting the burden to the states and territories and to individuals and households. That is largely what happened last night. Someone else's bottom line looks better by making every household's bottom line look worse and making the states' and territories' bottom lines worse. You do not need to take my word for that, Mr Assistant Speaker; you can take the word of the New South Wales Liberal Treasurer, Andrew Constance. He says it represents \$1.5 billion out of the New South Wales budget. It is going to be more than \$100 million annually out of the territory budget and increasing, particularly with the decisions that have been announced in the health portfolio.

We will have to make some significant revisions to the ACT government budget. I note some of my other state and territory colleagues who are yet to deliver their budgets for this year are frantically having to rewrite their budgets as a result of what was announced last night. The budgets that have been delivered in other jurisdictions in advance of the federal budget are now out of date within a week of their presentation. We have delayed our budget to ensure that it occurs after the commonwealth budget, but make no mistake: this will hurt the ACT.

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra) (11.54): I thank Ms Porter for bringing this motion to the Assembly today. It is disappointing to have to speak, as Mr Barr said, about last night's federal budget and what signal it sends to all Australians. Last night the Liberal Party of Australia told the low paid, the poor, the aged and the disabled that they are on their own. The safety net has been cut. If you are sick, if you are chronically ill, if you are learning or if you are looking for a job, you are on your own.

For the first time since Federation, Australia has a federal government that is attacking the idea that by working together, by each of us contributing to the collective wealth of this nation, we can make a better life for us all. Instead, it is dog eat dog. It is access to a doctor or emergency room only if you can afford it. It is access to a university education but only if you can afford it. It is access to a blood test but only if you can afford it and it is access to a trade but only if you can afford it. As ACOSS CEO, Dr Cassandra Goldie, said:

The budget divides rather than mends. It entrenches divisions between those with decent incomes, housing and health care and those without them. It undermines the fabric of our social safety net with severe cuts to health, disability support, income support, community services and housing programs.

If you are a young Canberran and you are looking for a job, the federal government has some bad news for you. The new rules for young job seekers will deny income

support for young people up to 29 years for six months of every year and then force them into work for the dole. It will deny them Newstart allowance until they are 24 and move more young people on the disability support pension to Newstart or the youth allowance, which according to ACOSS is a cut of at least \$166 a week.

This is punishing the young people who are already missing out on experiences that will set them up for a good life. A good transition from education to work is one of the best indicators of life-long workforce participation. It is like the Liberals get some sort of sick satisfaction out of humiliating people who are already at their most vulnerable. It flies in the face of evidence to suggest that work-for-the-dole schemes are going to help people. Work for the dole keeps young people out of JobSearch and devalues the work that they do.

You do not build people up by putting them down. What makes this worse is that this despicable, punishing scheme treats young people struggling to get a start in the world as failures. It treats young people as failures. It is a part of the budget that is slashing a program that worked. It comes at the same time the federal government is slashing funds to youth connections, a program that works across the community to connect young people with homes, education and training, mentoring, health services and counselling—the kinds of services that address the structural issues that keep young people out of work.

In a country as well placed as ours it should not even be a question of whether we help people into work without making them live in poverty. It is a disgrace that we have a budget that does the opposite. It is a budget that removes the help and increases the poverty. At its core, this budget attacks jobs, it attacks health and it attacks education. It attacks all the people in our community who receive income support and it ignores the role it plays in providing a decent quality of life for the majority of Australians.

Joe Hockey is attacking jobs. He is cutting 16,500 public service jobs. He and Tony Abbott are basically saying that if you are a public servant, you are a second-class citizen. Your town, our town, does not deserve help to readjust to job cuts. You are expendable and the long hours you have worked for many, many years were unnecessary and selfish. 16,500 jobs—the jobs of our neighbours, friends and family who today are waiting to find out if they are going to have a job and a future.

The Liberals are attacking health. The sad thing is that I do not need to tell anyone in this place that there are people in our community who just cannot afford a co-payment. It is going to be the mums at my school in western Belconnen who, getting towards the end of pay week, cannot get time off work when they have got the flu because they will not have the money until payday. It is going to be the older members of our community who are to sit at home and worry about symptoms until their pension comes in. It is going to be people putting off the visit until the problem is much more than it should be.

The federal Liberal government are attacking education and they are turning their backs on needs-based education funding and an evidence-based model. Looking at this budget, it is pretty easy to see that the federal Liberals do not believe in a fair go.

What makes all of this worse is that the Liberals will not even be honest about what they are doing. What they are doing is implementing their vision for a small, selfish, cutthroat Australia.

Instead, this budget has been sold as necessary in order to supposedly end the federal government's debt. Let us look at this claim for a moment. Australia's debt is only 12 per cent of GDP. Compared to similar countries in the OECD, debt to GDP is around the 70 per cent mark. During the GFC the federal government put people first. It kept people in work and that people-centred approach means that now we have the sixth lowest debt and the fourth lowest tax-to-GDP ratio in the OECD. If we do not have a debt crisis, what do we have? We have got a politically manufactured crisis being used as an excuse for an ideological agenda that devalues our community and our national culture of a fair go.

This budget is cruel. It is not about paying down debt; it is about shaping our society into a user-pays economy. It is a choice by this federal government to slash our safety net and tighten the screws on community life. But there are those of us who believe in a fair society and we refuse to sit back and let this budget shape the culture of our city. There are those of us—unions, charities, community groups, political parties like the ALP, the Greens political party and hundreds and thousands of Canberrans—who are happy to do their bit to ensure that we all enjoy Australia's prosperity.

I know that we will continue to support good schools and education. We will continue to support people with a disability and fight to improve access to lifelong health. We will invest in infrastructure projects and develop the digital economy, because we know that we all benefit when we keep our city working. Most importantly, we will continue to invest in the fabric of our community because we know the kind of country we want to live in and it is not the small and selfish one contained in the pages of the 2014 federal budget.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (12.03): I think it is a good day to be having this discussion and reflecting on the nature of last night's federal budget and the impacts it will have both on Canberra residents and Canberra as a city, because I think it is important to reflect on both of those, in light of some of the changes we have seen. The 2014 federal budget certainly does have a direct and long-lasting impact on the economy of the ACT and on the people of the ACT. I believe this is a budget that, contrary to the words of the Treasurer in his speech last night, impacts and leans on the poor to lift the rich. I do believe this is a budget that is not fair. I do not believe that the load has been evenly spread.

There is a thin tissue of alleged burden on high income earners and big business, but I believe many of those measures will be easily abated or will have little contribution to the budget bottom line, as those on the highest incomes organise their affairs in a way to minimise their tax liability. And what we will actually see is that the vast bulk of the heavy lifting in the budget is being done by those who can least afford it.

The biggest hits in this Liberal-National Party budget are on the young people looking for work or studying, those who need regular access to health care, the sick and the vulnerable. The budget will hit Canberra hard, with the extensive cuts to the public

service. Also, through the changes we have seen, it will impact all Australians, including those here in Canberra. The cuts to health services, the cuts to education, the cuts to universities, the cuts to the Canberra-based national institutions are not just a Canberra thing. People come from all over the country to access those national institutions and the cutbacks we have seen there, I think, will reverberate right across the Australian community.

I do want to talk about Medicare. The attack on the heart of Medicare, which is the mainstay of our modern and caring society, in my view, by removing free, universal access to quality health care is a disaster for those on low incomes, a disaster for the health of our nation. I think it is simply unfair and is poorly targeted. The federal government should not put any impediment in the way of people dealing with their health needs at an early stage. It costs us all if injury and illness escalate from primary needs to tertiary treatment. Early identification and treatment save lives and money. The co-contribution is short-sighted and should be reversed.

Having spent some time in the US last year and talking to people about health care over there and the way that plays out for them, having watched the considerable debate over Obama care, what we do not want to do is go anywhere towards a US-style health system. Talk to Australians who travel, Australians who look at international affairs. The first thing that often comes up in this sort of conversation is, "We do not want to end up like the US." I fear that this step of undermining universal free health care is the first step towards what will inevitably become a more US-style health system. Those who can afford health care, get it. Those who cannot, simply miss out.

The changes to Medicare tie in with the uncertainty surrounding the changes to Medicare locals, which will be replaced with primary health networks from 1 July 2015. I am a strong supporter of Medicare locals and their work in coordinating a range of local health providers to deal with primary healthcare needs. I am concerned by these changes and I will certainly be watching them very closely. I hope that this is done in a way that is about getting the best possible outcomes and not simply about some quick fix to try to save a few bucks, because that will be very short-sighted, again. The coordination of local healthcare services has worked to ensure that they are available and are really about avoiding long-term health costs.

I will take the opportunity, as the only other member of the Assembly who was there at the breakfast this morning, to respond to Mr Smyth's earlier comment. It is not my job to defend Dr Leigh, but I would note that Dr Leigh, after the comment from Mr Gottliebse that Dr Leigh should stand up and say that had been his position but he had changed his view, based on a range of research and other people's opinions that had been put to him over time, acknowledged that. I am sure Dr Leigh will continue to make that case for himself in the future.

I would like to turn now to transport issues that arise, and this comes up in both Ms Porter's motion about infrastructure and also in some of Mr Smyth's comments in his amendment. The federal government announced that a key component of the budget is the road funding plan for more than \$80 billion over the next six years. We will also see the increased fuel excise go into roads.

If we talk about this figure of \$80 billion, this same money could build 70 per cent of the east coast high-speed rail network linking Brisbane, Newcastle, Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne, modelled in 2012 by the Department of Infrastructure and Economic Development at \$114 billion. This study predicts this network could attract approximately 83.6 million passenger trips by the year 2065. The \$80 billion roads budget could build the entire high-speed rail line from Sydney to Melbourne via Canberra at \$50 billion and still have \$30 billion left over for roads. It could build the entire east coast high-speed rail network modelled by Beyond Zero Emissions and the German Aerospace Centre who estimated it at \$84 billion, using less tunnelling and bridge building.

Joe Hockey says that his road building plan will create tens of thousands of new jobs and address the significant drop-off in investment in construction in Australia. High-speed rail would easily achieve the same results while at the same time creating a new, faster, more environmentally friendly transport system that would serve Australians long into the future. In light of those comments from Joe Hockey, I have also seen a number of pieces of analysis overnight that have reflected on the fact that modern road building does not actually employ that many people and is now very capital intensive. So I think the notion that this is a significant job creator is one that is open to debate and open to question.

In my capacity as Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, I have looked at how the federal budget will contribute to Canberra's roads. Warren Truss sent me a letter yesterday to tell me about the government's infrastructure commitment to the ACT, and I would like to thank Mr Truss for the courtesy of the letter. I was momentarily surprised by the letter when I opened it, as it identified some hundreds of millions of dollars for the ACT, until I looked in the attached spreadsheet and realised that the vast majority of the money was the money already committed by the previous government for the Majura parkway.

It makes one wonder how much of the proposed road funding around Australia is actually just a repackaging of already-committed funds. I have no doubt that that analysis will continue to emerge in the coming days and weeks as people make their way through the details of the budget papers and get more information about it.

I would like to turn to housing and homelessness. Last night's budget provides a stay of execution to the majority of the nation's housing and homelessness providers for at least a year but plenty of question marks still remain. With the large national affordable housing agreement funding pool to remain for the next 12 months and the national partnership agreement on homelessness transitional agreement also in place for 12 months, now, more than ever, the sector and the ACT government will need to work together to prepare for and engage with federal policy directions to ensure the ACT does not lose out any further in the coming years.

The cessation of the national rental affordability scheme round 5 allocations will not have an immediate effect on growth of the ACT affordable housing sector but the announcement that it will be reviewed will cause some providers to rethink any future construction at a time when this activity is needed. It is disappointing and slightly

paradoxical, however, to see that funding for homelessness research has been cancelled, just as the federal government calls for more review and evaluation of programs.

I can only hope that the Minister for Social Services is genuine in his desire to consult states and territories over the next few months and that the potentially disastrous Commission of Audit recommendations regarding the cessation of all specific purpose funding in favour of bulk commonwealth rental assistance payments does not reappear.

In the space of legal services and human rights, I would like to make a few remarks. The budget cuts \$15 million from legal aid over the next four years. The government's mid-year budget update already cut \$43.1 million over four years to legal policy reform and advocacy funding. This is another way to hurt the most vulnerable people in our society, like migrants who, ultimately, will end up representing themselves without assistance. Not only does this lead to injustice to those who cannot afford it but it is ultimately a false economy as court time is wasted and unsatisfactory verdicts are appealed.

This is complemented by cuts to the Environmental Defender's offices which basically put Australia's EDOs at risk of closure, especially smaller offices like the one in the ACT. This is an incredibly valuable service.

The federal government has also cut funding for the Human Rights Commission and, not surprisingly, it has cut the number of human rights commissioners who help educate Australians on human rights and hear complaints on issues such as racial discrimination and vilification. This, of course, comes at the same time as the federal Attorney-General has declared that people have a right to be bigots and moves to repeal long-held racial vilification protections.

I would like to speak briefly about climate change because the federal budget confirms that the Abbott government almost does not even care to hide the fact that they are opposed to action on climate change. It is an embarrassment to see what they are funding in direct action. The funds allocated might give them about \$6 a tonne of carbon to just reach the five per cent target they have, a ridiculously low national target that, regrettably, they share with their federal ALP colleagues.

Of course, the biggest embarrassment here is that they are ripping up the price on carbon, a world-leading legislative scheme that is already in operation. It is embarrassing that they are going back to this model of operation, government grants to solve a systemic problem, rather than using an infrastructure that has been created to address it in a systemic way.

They are not just beating up on the renewable energy sector in the usual way of federal governments, with fluctuating policy settings, uncertainty, changing the rules. No, they are going even further and cutting the heart out of support. Hand in hand with a cynical agenda around the renewable energy target, the renewable energy sector has a right to be hostile to this government's agenda.



With the abolition of the \$3.1 billion Australian Renewable Energy Agency, which was formed to develop new and emerging technologies and to help fund world-leading solar research, ARENA will go from having \$1 billion of funds, which are already contracted, to a pathetically low budget of \$15 million for the next two years of new projects. Clearly the federal government are not aspiring to have any kind of smart, modern, diverse renewable energy sector. They really are dinosaurs in this modern world.

The million roofs program has gone. Instead of \$1 billion for a million solar roofs, we have \$2.1 million for a handful of community solar projects in a handful of marginal electorates. A small silver lining perhaps is that even the coalition can no longer justify the high level of spending on carbon capture and storage, a beacon of hope that governments of federal persuasion have hung onto for a number of years. They always thought there was some silver lining to burning coal as the solution to climate change. So this is at least one piece of good news in the federal budget when it comes to the climate issue.

Off the back of the federal budget last night, my federal colleague Senator Christine Milne said:

I've just watched Treasurer Joe Hockey deliver an unashamedly cruel budget. It's a budget for big business, and a budget that will hurt the rest of us now while delivering nothing for the future.

She went on to say:

The real long-term challenges Australia faces—like global warming and growing inequality—have been ignored in favour of Tony Abbott's fabricated budget emergency.

As we saw tonight, there is no plan for new jobs in Tony Abbott's budget, just a tunnel vision for motorways and stranded fossil fuel assets that will be worthless to our economy within decades. Their budget attacks economic foundations like education and research and aims to tear apart key elements of our social fabric like universal healthcare.

I quote Senator Milne because I think she has summed that up very succinctly there. I think this is a budget that is inherently unfair. I think it does lean on the poor to lift the rich. We are going to see that play out here in the ACT.

I note the comments in Ms Porter's motion. I think what this budget does is really put the challenges in stark light for the ACT government. As a much smaller government, we have to now look at what steps we can take to try to offset some of these impacts on our community. There are, of course the many job losses that Canberra will face. There is the impact it is going to have on things like house prices, the impact on small businesses who rely on those federal public servants to drive their businesses.

I think Ms Porter's motion has identified some of the key issues. I will be supporting it today. I do not believe that Mr Smyth's amendment is an accurate reflection of the

situation. I think some of his points are fair enough. The public sector workforce in Canberra is highly skilled and delivers an important and highly valued service to the broader Australian community. That is absolutely true, but what we saw last night was no recognition of that in the federal budget. We have seen an ideological drive to gut the public service, and that will do Australia a disservice in the long run.

**DR BOURKE** (Ginninderra) (12.18): Just the other day when I was shopping at Jamison supermarket I was bailed up by a friend, a grandmother, an Aboriginal woman, worried about her daughter's job. The daughter is the family's primary breadwinner. She has served the federal government well for years. Now she is in limbo, sent with others from her branch to the terminator's waiting room with little to do but witness the slow execution of their careers. The mother, who has lived a hard life and who is very proud of her daughter's career, asked, "Couldn't we give one generation a fair go?" This family has endured the reserves, endured the stolen generations.

We know that many more public servants are being lined up for the sack. This federal government has little care for or understanding of the functions they perform or the services they provide. We know many have already been terminated or given voluntary redundancies. Some are being put through the private recruitment agencies tests and interviews as they play musical chairs for the diminishing jobs in their departments.

About a year ago, on May 9 in question time, my fellow member for Ginninderra Mr Coe asked Mr Barr, "Treasurer, will you now write to the current Prime Minister and ask for a commitment to stop job losses here in Canberra?" I ask Mr Coe: will he write to the Prime Minister, trusty Tony Abbott, smokin' Joe or Senator Zed for a commitment to stop job—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, Dr Bourke! The convention in this place is to refer to members in this place by their names and I think it is reasonable to refer to other members of parliament by their titles.

**DR BOURKE:** As Minister Barr replied at the time, the Liberal Party is the party of recession in this city. That has been demonstrated time and again. Before the federal election trusty Tony Abbott spoke of his interest in Aboriginal affairs. He said, "There will be, in effect—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Dr Bourke, I have already asked you to refer to members of parliament by their title. I do not want to have to do it again.

**DR BOURKE:** Before the federal election Prime Minister Tony Abbott spoke of his interest in Aboriginal affairs. He said, "There will be, in effect, a prime minister for Aboriginal affairs." Last night he ripped half a billion dollars out of the Aboriginal affairs budget over the next four years. We have seen him centralise federal public servants working in Indigenous affairs by bringing many of them into his department as second-class citizens on lower pay rates.

The PM made great play of bringing Indigenous expertise into his department and taking more personal control of Indigenous affairs. What Mr Abbott did not say was that it was a cut-rate, cheapskate exercise where there is a two-tier payscale now in PM&C. An Indigenous worker brought into the PM's department from FaHCSIA at an APS6 level is being paid \$12,000 less than other PM&C public servants at the same level. The disparity apparently worsens at higher levels.

It is outrageous that the PM talks about closing the gap and elevating responsibility for Indigenous affairs to PM&C when he has not similarly elevated the wages of the new Indigenous workers brought to his elite department. How will the prime minister for Aboriginal affairs consult the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community? It will not be through the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples. Last night's budget listed that all of its funding has just ceased.

The elected National Congress of Australia's First Peoples was set up to advise the federal government. Co-chairs Kirstie Parker and Les Malezer were both elected. They led it and both are well respected members of the first nations with a long involvement in national affairs. The Commission of Audit said that the congress duplicated other bodies. About the only one I can think of is the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, a groundbreaking initiative of the local community and this government.

But ours is not a national body. These are not comparable. The Commission of Audit can only mean that the congress is duplicated by the Prime Minister's hand-picked members of his Indigenous Advisory Council, chaired by his mate Warren Mundine. It is interesting that Mr Mundine has already warned his council members they may become some of the most hated people in the country. At least he has taken great exception to Senator Brandis's campaign for bigotry.

But what does this budget mean for a young school leaver in Belconnen—say, a young man looking for a job and driving the family's old car? For a start, the Liberals have restored the fuel excise increases Mr Howard dropped years ago before a tight election. He is probably old enough to remember the Canberra Liberals' 2012 campaign about the cost of living. However, he cannot remember the Liberals saying anything in last year's election about putting fuel taxes up. I hope his old car is not a Holden.

Maybe he wants to do an apprenticeship, maybe he is doing a course based at the Bruce CIT campus. Well, the Liberals have axed the tools of trade apprenticeship assistance scheme worth over \$900 million and replaced it with trade support loans worth less than half that. They have cut almost half a million dollars over four years from trade training assistance. Who needs skills when we are having the budget we had to have, in the words of Kate Carnell last night.

Hopefully, our school leaver can find work or study, otherwise his parents will need deep pockets to support him for six months before he can get the dole. If he gets sick he will have the chance to cure cancer with some of the new \$7 tax that he will be paying on his visits to the doctor and increased charges for prescriptions and screening services going to the new medical research fund.

Perhaps he has an interest in science and research and was looking to the CSIRO at Black Mountain for a career or at one of the cooperative research centres. CSIRO is losing \$116 million over four years. Its workforce is to be literally decimated with over 500 or a tenth of its jobs to go. Many will be from Black Mountain. And the next round of CRC grants worth \$80 million have been scrapped.

If he wants to study at the University of Canberra or the ANU, and perhaps wants to defer for a few years, he really is stepping into the unknown. He really has so little idea what fees he might be charged with the deregulation of fees in the budget. Most likely it will be a higher HECS debt.

There is another three-word slogan that we have not heard from the Liberals: fees for PhDs, but now they will be introduced. I could go on, but I will just finish with a sentence about the budget by Ross Gittins in Fairfax Media today:

Only those people right at the bottom of the ladder have been hit hard—unemployed young people, the sick poor and, eventually aged and disabled pensioners—but who cares about them?

Not Tony Abbott, Zed Sesleja or the Canberra Liberals, it seems.

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

**Sitting suspended from 12.26 to 2.30 pm.**

## **Questions without notice**

### **Transport—light rail**

**MR HANSON:** My question is to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services. Minister, what is your and your directorate's role, aside from the subcommittee of cabinet, in the development of light rail?

**MR RATTENBURY:** As Mr Hanson has rightly touched on, I do, of course, have a role as part of the subcommittee of cabinet. But with TAMS specifically, the Director-General of TAMS is present on the board of Capital Metro, as are a number of other directors-general from ACT government agencies. TAMS played an initial role in hosting the Capital Metro Agency in its early inception and has provided a level of what might be described as corporate support to the agency in its early stages. Outside that I cannot think of anything in particular. Obviously, though, TAMS will play an ongoing role in working with Capital Metro in the provision of the many services that TAMS provides for the integration of road services, and obviously for footpaths and cycle path connections. For those kind of infrastructure questions there will obviously be a strong crossover between TAMS and the Capital Metro Agency. The other thing that TAMS has done, as have a number of ACT government agencies, is to second staff to the Capital Metro Agency with particular skills that the agency needs.

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

**MR HANSON:** Minister, what concerns have you raised about the management of the development of light rail in Canberra?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I cannot think of anything that I would care to share with Mr Hanson at this point.

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

**MR COE:** Minister, how many staff are on secondment from TAMS to capital metro and under what budget are they being paid?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I cannot quite think, just at the moment, of the specific number. I will take that on notice and give you a full and accurate answer, Mr Coe, and get back to you with that.

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

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, how will the development of light rail transform public transport choices for the territory?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The question was to Mr Rattenbury in relation to his directorate's role. Is Mr Rattenbury the minister responsible for capital metro?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Madam Speaker, if I could: the original question was on development for light rail, and that was how I termed the supplementary question.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson, could you read the original question?

**Mr Hanson:** Certainly, Madam Speaker. What is your and your directorate's role, aside from the subcommittee of cabinet, in the development of light rail?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Gentleman, can you repeat your question, please?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Yes, if I could, Madam Speaker. How will the development of light rail transform public transport choices for the territory?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I suppose as Mr Rattenbury is the minister responsible for major public transport, I will allow the question.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and Mr Gentleman for the question. I think it will play out in a number of ways. The first will obviously be that, as light rail comes on stream, there will need to be a realignment of the ACTION bus network to support and interact with the line down Flemington Road and Northbourne Avenue. That will obviously require some realignment of the bus services. The planning work on that is yet to be done.

It is, however, clear that the government will be aiming to have a single ticketing system across these modes of transport so that people can move seamlessly between them. The other place that will play out, of course, will be that issues such as cycling and walking infrastructure will also need to be configured to offer the maximum benefit to patrons seeking to use light rail.

### **Transport—Woden bus depot**

**MR COE:** My question is to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services and it is about bus depots. Minister, where is the government at with regard to investment at ACTION's Woden depot?

**MR RATTENBURY:** The intention to use the Woden depot as a third depot for ACTION Canberra has been delayed. This has been as a result of problems with underground storage tanks, which were there from earlier times. There have been some issues with the removal of those tanks. This is an environmental safety and I think occupational health and safety issue that needs to be addressed. There has been some delay in getting the detailed designs and costings for the removal of those tanks.

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

**MR COE:** If the tanks provide a threat to the future use of the Woden depot, does that mean the depot is not currently in use?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I will check this, but I believe part of the depot is currently tenanted out to another user.

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

**MRS JONES:** Minister, as a result of light rail drawing public transport capital expenditure, is there less money for the Woden depot changes that are required?

**MR RATTENBURY:** No; there is absolutely no correlation between those two things. The connection Mrs Jones is seeking to draw is simply not there. As I explained in my initial answer to Mr Coe, this has been an issue quite separate from the issue of funding of light rail.

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

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, what benefits will arise for ACTION from this work at the Woden bus depot?

**MR RATTENBURY:** The intent of reopening the Woden bus depot has been to provide a reduced amount of dead running for ACTION buses by having an additional hub. This will obviously produce a range of efficiencies for ACTION, which improves both the passenger service and the bottom line for ACTION. If the intent of Dr Bourke's question was around the actual clean-up, obviously, it is a matter for government to be responsible about ensuring that the site is cleaned up from the tanks that were there previously and the impact that they have had.

**Budget—consolidated financial report**

**MR SMYTH:** My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, in the March quarter consolidated financial report released yesterday, what does “transactions involving owners affecting accumulated funds” take into consideration?

**MR BARR:** I will need to take that on notice. If the shadow treasurer could provide me with a page reference, that would be—

**Mr Smyth:** Page 25.

**MR BARR:** Page 25. I will take that on notice.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Treasurer, what does the “dividends approved” element take into account?

**MR BARR:** I will take that on notice as well.

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

**MR DOSZPOT:** Treasurer, what is the reason for the variance of minus 88 per cent for dividends approved?

**MR BARR:** I will take that on notice as well, Madam Speaker.

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

**MR DOSZPOT:** Treasurer, what is the reason for the revised estimate from minus \$180 million to minus \$157 million?

**MR BARR:** I presume that follows on exactly the same page of the statement?

**Mr Doszpot:** Yes.

**MR BARR:** I will take that on notice.

**Federal government—budget**

**DR BOURKE:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, the federal budget was handed down last night. What impact will this budget have on the ACT economy, jobs and services?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I thank Dr Bourke for the question. I think it is important that the Assembly discusses the federal budget that was handed down last night. The commonwealth budget involves substantial changes to the public sector, with the downsizing, closure or merger of many public service departments and agencies.

The budget identifies 16½ thousand APS jobs to go over the next four years. Job reductions will be made through targeted cuts and efficiency dividends in each portfolio. About 4½ thousand jobs are expected to go in the 2014-15 financial year and for the ACT in that year alone we have been asked to carry the burden of about 50 per cent of those job losses, with 2,000 of them expected to come from Canberra. This is around a one per cent reduction in current employment levels in the territory.

The job losses are one of the impacts of the federal budget last night. The other impact is the reductions in programs and services that have been flowing through our agreements with the commonwealth. The third area of impact is around the taxation changes, of which the ACT will share a disproportionate burden to the rest of Australia. The fourth area is in relation to the infrastructure spend that occurred around the rest of the country, indeed in every other single jurisdiction, except in the ACT. So there are probably four main areas.

The second thing I would say is that it is going to have an impact on our own budget. We are currently working through the detail of that and we will do that over the next week or so.

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

**DR BOURKE:** Chief Minister, are there any particular areas of service delivery in the ACT which will be affected?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I thank Dr Bourke for the supplementary. The federal budget will have significant impacts on service delivery here in the ACT. We are trying to work through many hundreds of pages and the financial tables contained in the detail that has been released.

We do know that essentially the national healthcare reforms have been torn up. That agreement does not exist. They have walked away from activity-based funding, from the funding guarantee and from a fairer share of funding into the future, which was part of, and central to, the reforms as they were signed up to several years ago. So that is a big problem.

I note the silence from the opposition. Every other Liberal party in the country is screaming about this from the rooftop. All the premiers are out today. All of them are aware that they have a massive hole in their budgets that was created last night—a massive one. They are criticising the federal government for it, but the gang of Abbott apologists over there remain silent and have nothing to say about a federal budget that—

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MS GALLAGHER:** To all intents and purposes, it did not happen last night! Nobody saw it! Nothing to say! Nothing to say! Didn't see it! No impact! It is just to absolutely ignore and pretend that this will go away. Well, it will not.



There are a number of other programs in health which have been stopped. The preventative health national partnership, which Mr Hanson often goes on about—gone. The elective surgery and emergency department funding—gone. Adult dental services—gone. The Indigenous early childhood national partnership—gone. All of those have gone—some of them from July this year, some of them from July next year. The GP co-payment is being introduced. (*Time expired.*)

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

**MS BERRY:** Chief Minister, do you have an early estimate of the number of direct job cuts in the commonwealth public sector in the ACT and any assessment of the flow-on impact to private sector jobs in the ACT?

**MS GALLAGHER:** As to the convenient line of “Don’t talk down our economy”, I think the people of Canberra expect their Chief Minister to stand up and be honest about what happened to this city last night. I am not going to pretend it did not happen. I agree that we have to move on and work out how we manage the impact of last night, and we will be doing that. But on day one after this city took a beating, I think it is fair enough that we stand and articulate exactly what happened last night in this city: the Australian Taxation Office, 2,329 jobs; the Department of Industry, 732 jobs; the CSIRO, 489 jobs; Immigration and Border Protection, 400 jobs; the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 535 jobs; the Federal Police, 347 jobs.

In the next year alone, the ACT is being asked to shed 50 per cent of the commonwealth job losses. That is in the next 12 months. Probably our neighbours, our friends, people our kids go to school with, their jobs were taken last night, and we should be feeling for those people today. We should not be pretending that this did not happen and that we are not allowed to talk about it under the guise of, “Oh, you’ll talk the economy down.”

**Mr Coe:** We had a motion on it this morning.

**MS GALLAGHER:** Yes, we had a motion this morning that nobody turned up for! The senior leadership of the Canberra Liberals did not even have the time to come into this place and debate that motion today. That is how seriously you took what happened to this city last night. Could not even be bothered to get out of the armchair and come down and listen to what happened. So the two most senior members of the Canberra Liberals do not care about it at all.

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

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order! Ms Porter has the floor. I would like to hear her.

**MS PORTER:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Chief Minister, are there any aspects of the federal budget that will have a positive impact on the ACT?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I thank Ms Porter for the question. In amongst all of the bad news for the ACT—and you had to search pretty hard to find anywhere where you could say it was at least a reasonable or good outcome—we do agree that maintaining DSS in Tuggeranong is a good outcome. But let us not pretend it is something new. They are maintaining their presence in Tuggeranong. That is what this has come down to. With the removal of hundreds of millions of dollars from our economy through lost jobs, Mr Abbott would like us to be thankful that DSS is staying where they are, probably with fewer people. But that is what we have got to go up to him and say, “Thank you so much for that. That’s a good outcome.” But they are staying. It is maintaining what they do.

**Mr Hanson:** Where was this passion when Rudd cut the jobs?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I can tell you what: there was nothing like that happened to this city under a Labor government—nothing like it, absolutely nothing like it.

We have got every Liberal premier out there screaming from the rooftops today, and Jeremy Hanson cannot even be bothered coming into the chamber until he gets personally offended and has to jump to his feet. How ridiculous is that! Your job is not unsafe too, is it, Jeremy? We hear the talk, and your absence this morning has played right into that. The single biggest issue hitting this town, and you are missing in action, totally missing in action.

There is a small increase in black spot national partnership funding to the ACT, I think of the order of \$3 million, and we are hopeful that in relation to the research fund, if it passes through the Senate and the House of Reps as part of the budget, the ACT would be well placed to access some of the funding associated with that, particularly with the ANU. *(Time expired.)*

### **Environment—biodiversity offsets policy**

**MS LAWDER:** My question is to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services. Minister, on 7 May you indicated that TAMS is operating in line with the commonwealth criteria for offsets. These criteria include the requirement for annual reports and offset management plans to be available to the public. In accordance with the conditions set for Ngunnawal 2C, an offset site approved in March 2011 and managed by your directorate, an annual compliance report should be publicly available each year by 30 April. Minister, is the report which was due no later than 30 April 2014 available? If so, when and how was this made available to the public?

**MR RATTENBURY:** What I can let Ms Lawder know is that just this morning I have signed off on a number of detailed responses to the questions that I took on notice last week that go to some of the detail that she has just asked me for. In regard to Ngunnawal 2C, I will also take that on notice and get some detailed advice for Ms Lawder.

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

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, why is there no biodiversity offset management plan available online as required under the commonwealth approval?

**MR RATTENBURY:** The answer I have signed today to send back to Ms Lawder provides her with a range of information that is available online. I would note that I only took these questions on notice a week ago. I have signed the answers off this morning. I think that is clearly a quick turnaround and it is a fairly detailed level of information. I hope that Ms Lawder will find that information useful. If not, I would be happy to answer further questions once she has seen that detailed information.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, are you confident that Ngunnawal 2C is delivering the intended biodiversity outcomes?

**MR RATTENBURY:** As I indicated in my first answer, I will seek further advice on that and provide the Assembly with more detailed information.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, can you please outline the funding arrangements for the management of this offset site?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I will also take that on notice and provide the information with the other information I have undertaken to provide.

### **Federal government—budget**

**MS PORTER:** My question is to the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer please update the Assembly about how the commonwealth budget issued yesterday will impact the ACT budget?

**MR BARR:** Badly is the short answer to Ms Porter's question. All states and territories are going to bear the brunt of the cost shift from the commonwealth to our own budgets. New South Wales indicated they think it will be in the order of \$1.5 billion on their budget and they are now calling for an emergency meeting of COAG in order to discuss the budget. Mike Baird, the New South Wales Premier, has described last night's budget as a kick in the guts for the states and territories. Even Campbell Newman, the great cutter of the north, says that these cuts are unacceptable. Campbell Newman thinks they are unacceptable. The more refined approach from our Victorian colleagues is that Premier Napthine believes these cuts are extremely concerning.

Other state and territory leaders and state and territory treasurers around the country are equally concerned. It will have a significant impact on all of our budgets. The impacts from these cuts are across the board. They impact in terms of direct cuts in funding for programs and agreements signed up to between the commonwealth and

the states and territories. There are also impacts that flow through to the broader economy and hit a range of other parts of the territory budget.

We fare worse because the cuts from the commonwealth are concentrated in the territory. We are hit twice. Not only do we lose the payments, like all other states and territories, but also we have the double whammy of the commonwealth's contraction in employment and spending hitting all other aspects of the territory economy, particularly the performance of the private sector.

For example, in health, we are the hardest hit. On top of the GP co-payment, the commonwealth has ceased funding for a number of national partnerships. The commonwealth has ceased funding in other areas. The national partnership on Indigenous early childhood development helps to fund essential services at the West Belconnen Child and Family Centre. This is just one example of where the commonwealth's decision to withdraw from national partnerships—to withdraw from, seemingly in the medium term, any responsibility for health and education services in this country—is very concerning, and should be for all Canberrans.

The initial estimation flowing through the range of different revenue lines impacts on payroll, on stamp duty and on our land revenues, combined with the withdrawal of commonwealth payments both in terms of those that relate to health and education specifically. That series of national partnerships sees the impact on the territory budget of certainly north of \$100 million each year and probably around \$150 million each year and rising in the future, particularly with the new indexation arrangements that the commonwealth have announced for health and education funding from 2017 and 2018 respectively.

That will ensure that all state and territory budgets come under extreme pressure and the majority will likely be permanently in deficit unless there is a significant cut to services or a massive increase in taxation at a state and territory level because, as we all know, this level of government does not have the wide-ranging taxation powers that the commonwealth government does.

So it is all well and good for the commonwealth to be improving their bottom line, but all they have done last night is pass the problem to the states and territories and to each individual household in this country. (*Time expired.*)

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

**MS PORTER:** Treasurer, how else do economic conditions affect the revenue lines you mentioned?

**MR BARR:** The cuts to employment will flow through to lower spending in our economy, meaning our private sector and our households will take a hit. The expected flow-on effects will head into a number of our revenue lines, as I indicated. Payroll tax revenue reflects expectations of growth in employment and wages in relevant sectors of the economy. General rates revenue is dependent on changes in the wage price index and, of course, in new property growth. Conveyance duty revenue is directly dependent on transactions in the property market and can now be expected to

decline due to the softening of that market. Land tax revenues are also a function of property valuations.

Slowing population growth in the territory will have corresponding implications on demand for housing and property, which will, of course, flow through into conveyance duties, will impact upon land sales revenue and also impact upon the territory's share of the goods and services tax. So all of these factors combined—the broader impacts on our economy, together with the withdrawal of commonwealth funding partnerships with the states and territories—will have a significant impact upon the territory budget.

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

**DR BOURKE:** Treasurer, how do economic conditions affect expenditure lines?

**MR BARR:** Large public sector job cuts and significant savings by the commonwealth are undoubtedly going to damage consumer and business confidence in the territory economy. This is in addition to the human cost caused by Canberrans being out of work. This is likely to lead to an increase in demand for ACT government services. For example, more people being out of work means more people being eligible for the range of concessions that the territory government offers. Reductions in commonwealth payments associated with health, education and disability services will increase pressure on the delivery of these services in the territory. The most obvious case that has been highlighted around the country is the pressure on our emergency departments from the co-payment arrangements. This, of course, will have the greatest impact on those most in need.

The territory government will need to respond to these challenges by increasing its investment in capital works to create local jobs and to stimulate economic activity. We will do what we can to buffer the effects of the commonwealth budget. We are not going to reduce our public sector workforce, which means that the ACT government will be doing some of the heavy lifting and keeping people in jobs. But, like all other jurisdictions, we are unlikely to be able to step into the large gap that we now see from the commonwealth ceasing funding and engagement in a large number of services.

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

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, how will the forthcoming ACT government budget mitigate the impact of the federal budget?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** You will have to be very careful in answering that, Mr Barr, that you do not announce policy.

**MR BARR:** Indeed. We will seek to mitigate to the fullest extent that we can, but we recognise the limitations of the territory budget and our capacity to fill a hole as large as the one that the commonwealth have created. What we will continue to do, though, is to support this community, to make strategic investments both in infrastructure and in our key priority areas—health, education, community services, disability services

and municipal services—and in supporting business growth and development, and particularly seeking to leverage investment partnerships. Where we can make an investment in public infrastructure that will leverage a co-investment from the private sector, we will certainly be pursuing those opportunities.

There are, fortunately, a number of examples of such opportunities that are before us in the coming years—in Tuggeranong with the Southquay redevelopment, in Woden with the bus interchange redevelopment, in central Canberra with the city to the lake project, in north Canberra with the capital metro project, and in west Belconnen there are a number of education and health-related initiatives, particularly the University of Canberra public hospital, and also a number of initiatives targeted at new estates and new development in west Belconnen, particularly associated with Riverview. So right across the territory we see opportunities to fast-track new infrastructure—

**Mr Smyth:** You're not going to fast-track the convention centre?

**MR BARR:** It is part of city to the lake. With the support of the private sector, we will seek to continue economic growth in this city. But we know we will be doing the heavy lifting, in partnership with the private sector, and the Liberal Party nationally will contribute nothing to our city's economic growth.

### **Uriarra Village—proposed solar farm**

**MR WALL:** My question is to the Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development. Minister, on 8 April 2014, in response to an email from a Uriarra resident, the Chief Minister wrote, “I can appreciate the community's frustration at the delays. However, this is something that falls within the independent planning process which includes the DA completeness (or administrative) check by the planning authority. The advice that I have received from the planning authority is that the proponent is addressing matters raised in the initial administrative check and is expected to lodge once it is revised and that is completed.” Despite this, yesterday in response to a question on this matter you answered:

If the question is has a DA been lodged, my understanding is not at this time.

Minister, what documents in relation to this project been submitted to ACTPLA?

**MR CORBELL:** My answer was accurate. No DA has been lodged or is in receipt of the ACT Planning and Land Authority at this time, nor was it in receipt of the ACT Planning and Land Authority as of yesterday when I answered the question. My understanding as of yesterday—I think it may have occurred around the time of question time—was that an environmental significance statement had been lodged, which is a necessary precursor prior to a DA being lodged. But I am advised, as of today, that no DA has yet been lodged.

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

**MR WALL:** Minister, if until yesterday no documents had been lodged, why is the Chief Minister providing inaccurate information to Uriarra residents?

**MR CORBELL:** You did not ask me yesterday whether any documents had been lodged. You asked me whether a DA had been lodged, and my answer is accurate.

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

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, how is the next stage of these large clean energy projects progressing?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Before I call Mr Corbell, the first question was about a development application for what, Mr Wall? What was your question, Mr Wall?

**Mr Wall:** It related to the Uriarra solar farm.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Yes. I call the minister.

**MR CORBELL:** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to say that these projects are progressing through the normal process and that it would be expected to see their assessment and approval or another decision not to approve or, indeed, their physical construction. Right now, the government is seeing a successful implementation of the first round of the solar auction process with the finalisation of construction of the 20 megawatt solar powered facility at Royalla, which is nearing completion. That is the single largest photovoltaic solar power facility under construction in Australia at this time. It will be the first large-scale PV solar generator to be connected into the national electricity market, the first in Australia. It will deliver enough renewable energy to meet the equivalent of the power needs of nearly 5,000 Canberra homes.

This is a great project for our city. It has delivered jobs, it has delivered investment into our city, it is helping our city to achieve its greenhouse gas reduction targets, and it is also helping our city to become a leader in clean energy technology, development and deployment.

Right now we see around the country projects being mothballed because of the regressive and anti-environment policies of the federal government. We see large-scale renewable energy projects stalled right around the country because of uncertainty around the future of the renewable energy target. We have seen the abolition of commonwealth agencies in the recent budget. And all of these are having a big impact. (*Time expired.*)

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

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, do you see any support coming from the federal government for these important renewable energy generation projects?

**Mr Coe:** Point of order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Yes, Mr Coe.

**Mr Coe:** I ask whether Mr Gentleman's question is in fact asking for an opinion of the minister.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** No; I do not think that that is the case at all. He said, "Did you see?" He did not ask him what he thought about it. I am happy with the question.

**MR CORBELL:** I appreciate why the Liberal Party do not like talking about renewable energy projects, because their federal colleagues, the federal Liberals, are busy winding back every possible level of support for renewable energy generation in our region and across Australia, denying communities jobs and economic opportunity as well as locking householders into higher energy prices if we continue to rely on sources such as coal and gas for our energy supply.

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MR CORBELL:** Mr Coe's interjection, nevertheless, should not detract from the supplementary asked by Mr Gentleman.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** It should not be even contemplated, Mr Corbell.

**MR CORBELL:** What Mr Gentleman is asking is: is there support coming from the federal government? Regrettably, overwhelmingly, the answer is no. The shutdown of the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, ARENA, announced last night is denying hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars to renewable energy projects across the nation. The review of the renewable energy target and the uncertainty associated with that are leading potentially to a flight of capital from Australia. I thought the Liberals said that Australia was open for business. Apparently it is not open for business if you are a renewable energy company. If you are a big multinational renewable energy company, you are not open for business. Talk about subsidies! Just look at the international evidence. Look at the assessments of the International Energy Agency and others about the level of subsidy provided for fossil fuels in this country. It is in the tens of billions of dollars. *(Time expired.)*

### **ACTION bus service—airport**

**MRS JONES:** My question is to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services. Minister, the ACTION website advises commuters that "there is no direct ACTION service to the Canberra Airport, however there are multiple buses that service stops close by on weekdays". What bus stop services the airport terminal?

**MR RATTENBURY:** There are a number of services that go to the airport precinct, as Mrs Jones identified and has clearly read in the *Canberra Times*. These are services that go to the offices out there.

*Members interjecting—*

**MR RATTENBURY:** Patience, colleagues.



**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order! Mr Rattenbury is answering Mrs Jones's question.

**MR RATTENBURY:** I am getting there, colleagues. As I said, there are a number of ACTION services that go to the precinct. The actual airport terminal has been a subject of some ongoing discussion with the airport, because it is a source of frustration to me. But my recollection—I will double-check this—is that, to this time, we have not been able to get approval for an ACTION bus to pull up at the terminal. That is right; we have not been able to get approval for an ACTION bus to pull up at the terminal. This is obviously not ideal and it is something that we are looking at both in the ongoing discussions with the airport owners and as part of the network 14 considerations. I will double-check that, but I am quite certain that is the case.

The other thing I would point out to members that the letter writers in this week's *Canberra Times* have failed to acknowledge is that there is in fact a private operator who runs a shuttle bus to the airport—a private service. I would be happy to get feedback from members of the opposition outside the chamber; they obviously should not be giving it to me now. But if they want ACTION to take over that service and put the private operator out of business, they should let me know. But it is quite clear that there is a private service that operates to the airport. I gather it is quite well utilised by tourists coming into Canberra.

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

**MRS JONES:** Minister, why are there no ACTION services to Canberra airport? Whose approval are you awaiting, and what discussions have been had about that approval?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I refer Mrs Jones to my previous answer, and I will seek further information.

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

**MR COE:** Minister, if you are concerned about putting a business out of business, will the government be abandoning the parliamentary triangle route because it will put out the tourist service?

**MR RATTENBURY:** Currently, ACTION provides in the order of 450 services a day to the parliamentary triangle. I think they are quite a different service to the private tourist operator who runs a loop service. I think it is quite different and Mr Coe's question frankly is preposterous. It is quite different to run a shuttle service back and forth to the airport as opposed to the extensive network of services that ACTION provides in the parliamentary triangle each day.

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

**MR COE:** Minister, did you receive any complaints from private operators about bus No 100 working as a tourist service?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I will check my records.

### **Energy—wind**

**MR GENTLEMAN:** My question is to the Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development. Minister, last month you announced an auction process to support the development of new wind farm projects. Could you please tell the Assembly about the wind auction and of any developments in federal policy settings that could impact on this policy?

**MR CORBELL:** I thank Mr Gentleman for his question. Yes, in April this year I was very pleased to announce the opening of a new auction process to support the deployment of up to 200 megawatts of renewable energy generation from wind farms to meet the energy needs of our city into the future. This 200-megawatt auction will deliver sufficient renewable energy supply to meet the needs of 65,000 Canberra households, that is, one in every in every two Canberra households to be powered by renewable energy generation by the year 2020.

The auction process has been facilitated as a result of the passage of changes to the large-scale feed-in tariff law considered by the Assembly last year. As a result, we have seen strong interest from the private sector in competing and in bidding in this auction process. The ACT's policy framework has really demonstrated how a city can make the shift to a renewable energy future, that it can do so in a timely and efficient way, in a market-based mechanism way and at a low cost to consumers. I am very pleased with the level of interest to date shown by the private sector.

But it is the case that what we see at a federal level is policy settings that are creating uncertainty in the renewable energy industry. We are seeing policy decisions such as the decision to abolish the Australian Renewable Energy Agency in last night's budget, ripping away \$1½ billion over the next five years of potential investment by the federal government in renewable energy projects. And that signal alone from the federal government means that some companies may think, "Why are we here in the Australian market? Maybe we will go and spend our dollars elsewhere. Maybe we will go and employ people in markets that we consider more favourable and more supportive of renewable energy projects." And that is a tragedy.

Policies like the ACT's are helping to instil confidence in the ACT as a place to develop renewable energy projects. They are helping in instilling confidence in our region as a place to develop renewable energy projects. But with the types of policy settings we are seeing from the federal government, such as the abolition of ARENA and the review and all the uncertainty associated with the review of the renewable energy target, we know that that is causing serious concern amongst market participants. And we need governments that are prepared to support renewable energy generation in the future.

Do the Liberals really think that it is a good idea for consumers to be held hostage to rising prices associated with fossil fuel generation? Do they really think it is a good idea that consumers should have to pay more because people who mine gas can get a better price overseas and can impose those costs on consumers here in the ACT? Do they think that is a good idea? Clearly they do. Clearly the Liberal Party do, because that is the consequence of their policies. The consequence of their policies is locking consumers into high-cost fossil fuel electricity generation and energy use well into the future—decades into the future—when the alternative is to invest in renewables now, to make the transition to a low-carbon future, because the good thing about renewables, once you meet the up-front cost—(*Time expired.*)

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

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, how has industry received the announcement of the wind auction in light of the federal government's winding back of policies to support these renewable energy installations in Australia?

**MR CORBELL:** The renewable energy generation industry has received our policy settings very favourably indeed because they see the ACT as one of the few places remaining in Australia where there is the opportunity to invest millions of dollars in large-scale renewable energy projects. We are seeing strong interest from market participants. Over 50 representatives attended the industry briefing held on 8 May this year at the convention centre. This confirmed a very high level of interest amongst potential bidders in the large-scale wind auction. It confirmed that they consider the ACT as one of the few remaining places in the country where there is support for large-scale renewable energy generation.

These projects create jobs. Surely that is what we want, especially at a time right now when the Liberals are cutting tens of thousands of jobs out of our local economy over the next three to four years. Surely those opposite would support jobs in civil contracting, in supplies, in electrical maintenance, in electrical installation. Surely they would support jobs in all of those industries, but they clearly do not. These are exactly the sorts of jobs that are delivered through the renewable energy policies of this government, and they are exactly the sorts of jobs that are being lost in our region and around the country because of the policies of the federal Liberals—Tony Abbott and his colleagues in the ACT. Those policies are driving away jobs and driving away investment in renewable energy generation. And it is not just here in Canberra; it is in the broader region. We are talking about jobs in civil construction in the region. (*Time expired.*)

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

**MS PORTER:** Minister, why is the territory investing in wind power?

**MR CORBELL:** Wind is currently the lowest cost renewable energy source available in the market. It is around half the price of solar. It is the cheapest and most cost-effective form currently to make the shift to a low carbon future and the decarbonisation of our electricity supply sector. The 200-megawatt wind option will

deliver around 24 per cent—that single option alone—a quarter of our total electricity consumption, projected in 2020.

We know that these projects are creating jobs and economic opportunity. Over 100 people have been employed in the development of the Royalla solar farm. That is everything from design to engineering, research and development on the ground. Wind projects typically employ one person per four megawatts during operation and many, many more during the construction. These are jobs with a sustainable future. These are jobs with opportunity.

*Mr Smyth interjecting—*

**MR CORBELL:** Mr Smyth does not seem to care about jobs. He does not seem to care about investment in—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MR CORBELL:** He does not care. We heard his lecture this morning that we need more jobs in the private sector. Well, here is a private sector industry wanting to invest in Australia, bring money to Australia, employ Australians, but apparently that is not good enough.

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MR CORBELL:** I will mention your interjection to the Spanish ambassador, Mr Coe, and see what he thinks about that. I mean, how insulting is that? How insulting is it? Companies want to invest in Canberra, but if they are from overseas we do not want them. Is that the new Liberal policy? If a company is from overseas, we do not want them? *(Time expired.)*

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

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, why, if this is the lowest cost option, will meeting the 90 per cent renewable energy target add 16 per cent to our electricity bills by 2020?

**MR CORBELL:** The net cost to households, when you look at energy savings as well as the cost of purchasing renewable energy supply, is around \$4 per household per week in 2020, offset by energy savings of around \$4 per household per week, thanks to measures this government has introduced, such as the energy efficiency improvement scheme—a scheme, of course, opposed by those opposite even though it reduces household electricity bills. They are just beyond the pale, Madam Speaker, when you think about that. Here they are, lecturing us on the cost of living, and they still cannot reconcile their opposition to a scheme that saves households money on their energy bills.

### **Asbestos—removal**

**MR DOSZPOT:** My question is to the Minister for Workplace Safety. Minister, with regard to the issue of Mr Fluffy loose-fill asbestos in ACT homes, you stated in the *Canberra Times* on 23 April 2014 that:

... the loose-fill asbestos removal program did not guarantee removal of all asbestos, just what was visible and accessible, and this information had been provided to householders repeatedly over the past two decades.

Minister, did these notices specifically advise home owners of the fact that their homes could still have asbestos?

**MR CORBELL:** I thank Mr Doszpot for the question. The advice repeatedly provided by government agencies and the government itself to householders involved in the loose-fill asbestos removal program was that asbestos may still be present in those homes. That information has been consistently provided.

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

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, when was the last time a similar notice was mailed out to home owners prior to the notice that was sent out to Mr Fluffy home owners this year?

**MR CORBELL:** In 2005.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, how many representations has the government received from affected home owners since issuing the notice this year?

**MR CORBELL:** I am not clear what Mr Smyth means by representations, but in terms of inquiries or contacts, it would be over 100. The government has established a hotline process to field those calls and to provide answers. It would be over 100, but I would have to get the exact number, so I will take that question on notice.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, when will the next Mr Fluffy notification be issued?

**MR CORBELL:** The government will continue to provide up-to-date information to householders wherever it is appropriate to do so. The government will continue on that course of action.

### **Women—services**

**MS BERRY:** My question is to the Minister for Women. Minister, could you update the Assembly on how the government continues to support women in the ACT?

**MS BURCH:** I thank Ms Berry for her question. The ACT government is committed to supporting women and empowering women and girls in the ACT. The 2013 progress report on the women's plan describes the government's substantial investments in services and programs for ACT women and girls, both targeted and

mainstream, including pay increases for community sector workers and increased access to child care.

The ACT women's grants provide funding for organisations to contribute to the objectives of both the ACT women's plan and the prevention of violence strategy. This year, eight organisations will receive funding, including Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT, which will deliver a project to increase access for women with a disability entering menopause to easily access information, resources and support.

I recently announced funding to support women with a disability who experience domestic violence. In addition, we have created the role of gender adviser, a person who has been employed by the Community Services Directorate to ensure that the national disability insurance scheme responds adequately to the needs of women and girls in the ACT.

In 2012-13, the Community Services Directorate, Health Directorate, Justice and Community Safety Directorate and Education and Training Directorate provided over \$27 million of funding to a number of organisations to provide support services and programs for women, girls and their families in the ACT. The ACT government has established a range of useful support packages for organisations under the community sector reform program. This program supports organisations to strengthen their governance and financial management and to identify opportunities to broaden their funding base.

While funding reductions at the national level are largely outside the ACT government's control, our investment in supporting community organisations to withstand these changes is proof of the government's commitment to support all community organisations, including the women's services sector.

Just in regard to the federal budget last night, with a focus on older women, it is worth noting that the reduction in overall spending in female-dominated industries such as health care, education and community services is likely to increase the unemployment rate for older women, who have traditionally worked only in unqualified caring roles. While the restart payment may provide industry incentives to employ people over 50, the reduction in employment options in female-dominated industries means that it is likely to benefit men more than women.

Older women's homelessness is a significant and rising issue. Reductions in affordable housing and homelessness funding will impact disproportionately on older women. In particular, those who have experienced separation, have been out of the workforce for extended periods and do not have adequate financial resources will be increasingly vulnerable to homelessness.

The pausing of indexation of the age pension is likely to impact disproportionately on women as the gender disparity between superannuation levels for men and women means that more women may be reliant on the age pension than men.

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

**MS BERRY:** Minister, what other recent decisions will have an impact on the level of demand for ACT government support for ACT women?

**MS BURCH:** In general, the 2014-15 budget that was delivered last night will, I believe, disproportionately impact on women through a range of savings measures targeting families, young people and older people. It has been described, in essence, last night as a mean budget, disproportionately affecting those vulnerable in our community.

Women are often engaged in part-time or casual work, so changes to welfare payments will impact negatively on women's overall living standards. In 2011 3.3 per cent of the ACT population identified as having a profound or severe disability, needing assistance in one or more of the core activities. Of this identified group, 56 per cent were females providing unpaid care to a person with a disability. Pausing the indexation of the disability support pension will therefore impact negatively on women. Cuts to the public service of 16½ thousand will also disproportionately impact on women as they hold a high proportion of public sector positions.

In regard to young people aged 22 to 30, they will be required to move to higher employment areas if they are unable to find employment after a 12-month period. Young women will be especially vulnerable if forced to move to larger urban centres and cities without the support of their families or existing networks. Deregulating higher education is likely to increase course fees across the board. In addition to the lowering of the HELP debt repayment threshold and the increase in interest charged on HELP loans, these changes will make access to higher education less affordable. While these changes will impact on all women, it has a clear disproportionate impact on the women in our community.

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

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, how is the return to work program helping disadvantaged women return to the workforce?

**MS BURCH:** I thank Mr Gentleman for his question. The ACT women's return to work grants program provides grants of up to \$1,000 to support women on low incomes, women who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, young women or women with a disability who have been in a caring role looking to re-enter the workforce.

The eligibility criteria for the grants was expanded back in 2011 to include women who have been out of the workforce due to a caring role that has prevented them from employment for a period of time. Women who have children over the age of 16 are also now eligible to apply. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the program is reaching a broad range of women wanting to return to work after an extended period of caring. To date 801 applications have been approved since the program commenced.

The key measure that the program is working is the number of women who now feel they are close to being work ready and who in the longer term have been able to re-enter the workforce. Survey data for the two reporting periods indicate that, for survey respondents, almost two-thirds had returned to work in a full or part-time capacity after receiving a return to work grant, and a second survey showed an even higher success rate.

This is a positive outcome. This is this government helping women and putting real action into place, unlike what we saw last night—a diminishing of support which will have a disproportionate effect on women in our community.

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

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, what work is the government's Women's Information Service undertaking following its recent move?

**MS BURCH:** I thank Dr Bourke for his interest. The Women's Information Service, previously known as the Women's Information and Referral Centre, has been relocated to the North Building on London Circuit. Women's information continues to provide phone and face-to-face information and support for women in the ACT, along with a range of personal development courses and a domestic violence support group.

Women's information will work in collaboration with community organisations to deliver courses and support groups throughout 2014. Women's information also provides an online directory for women wanting to connect with local women's services and support groups and produces the publication *What's on for Women*, which is a calendar of women-specific courses and support groups across Canberra.

In addition to providing information and support from one central location, the transition of the service to the new model also means that provision of support will be provided in community locations to improve access for women and girls who may not have ready access to the city.

Outreach locations will include the child and family centres and the Housing ACT gateway, with planning well underway to establish a permanent presence across all of these locations in the second half of this year. The return to work coordinator is already providing outreach at the Housing ACT gateway one day per week.

This transition will involve greater partnerships with community-based centres, such as the child and family centres, and with community organisations best placed to deliver training and support for these women in the ACT.

It is worth noting that one of these child and family centres has clearly been earmarked in last night's budget. There will be no funding to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. So the child and family centre at Belconnen will be without a significant source of funding, courtesy of the Liberal Party of Australia.

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



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

### **Transport—light rail**

### **Transport—Woden bus depot**

**MR RATTENBURY:** I was asked two questions today in question time. The first was in relation to TAMS staff that are seconded to the Capital Metro Agency. I can inform the Assembly that currently one TAMS staff member is seconded to Capital Metro and they are paid for out of the Capital Metro budget.

With regard to the Woden bus depot, I was asked whether there are other tenants on the site. I can confirm that there are tenants there. There are safety plans in place, as well as safety fencing. That is the area where the tanks are fenced off. Alternative access arrangements are in place for the tenants so that they do not need to go anywhere near where the tanks are located.

## **Economy—employment**

Debate resumed.

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (3.35): In rising to speak to this motion I indicate my strong support for Mr Smyth's amendment. I find it ironic that, as I stand to speak, the Chief Minister, who spent much of her speech complaining that I was not in the chamber for a Labor motion, has deserted the chamber. Where is she? What has happened? She was so keen to hear me speak. She was very critical that I was not here, and then she abandoned the chamber; she has given up. I am very disappointed. It is very disappointing to me that the Chief Minister, who was so keen to hear me speak, has deserted the chamber and does not want to be here for this important motion. She said, "It is such an important motion and we all need to be here to speak on it," and she has wandered off. She has gone off to have a cup of tea or something more important, no doubt. It is very disappointing.

*Mr Barr interjecting—*

**MR HANSON:** Mr Barr will listen to my speech as a proxy. We know that he wants to fulfil the role of the chair next to him that is vacant now as Ms Gallagher abandons the chamber and walks away from what she described as such an important motion. It is very disappointing that she is not here. But anyway, Mr Barr will fill her shoes, as we know he is very keen to do.

This is a tough budget, and no-one is denying that; it is a tough budget. I think that in response we have to look at what we are now going to say and what we are now going to do and why we have this budget before us. Kate Carnell has been brought into this debate. There is a media article and, in fact, I heard Ms Gallagher, the Chief Minister, on the radio this morning saying that she is going to give Kate Carnell a call and say, "Ms Carnell, you responded to a tough budget. What did you do?" I refer members to a media alert that I have seen that has just come online on ABC, dated today at 3 pm: "Kate Carnell, former ACT Chief Minister, says Katy Gallagher, ACT Chief Minister,

should not be a prophet of doom following the federal budget, suggesting Canberra is well positioned to handle the changes.”

Sadly, members, we have seen those opposite being a prophet of doom. Instead of talking up our economy and supporting the Canberra Liberals’ motion today to say, “Let’s put some money into the convention centre to get it shovel-ready,” they just want to take it back as homework to the federal government. What we have seen from this mob—

*Mr Barr interjecting—*

**MR HANSON:** Mr Barr is interjecting. Let us see if he was being a prophet of doom. Mr Barr said that this will devastate our local community. Is that helpful, members? We heard from Shane Rattenbury, saying, “It’s a disaster.” That is what he was saying. We have heard similar things from all of those opposite. I could not help thinking that they sound very much like an opposition.

*Mr Barr interjecting—*

**MR HANSON:** I hear the interjecting from Mr Barr. He is quite twitchy about this one because he knows that this government, this local government, instead of standing up and saying, “Yes, it’s a tough budget, but we’re going to respond and we’re going to do what Kate Carnell did,” is being negative. She came to this place and she went out into the community. As a result of her policies—and I commend Mr Smyth, who was part of that—they made Canberra stronger. They responded in a positive way. They got on with the job. That is very different from what we have seen today, which is political opportunism, and the Chief Minister spending half of her speech complaining about my not being present and then ironically disappearing.

Mr Barr is very twitchy about this whole process. The wall of negativity has been disappointing. We heard some of that in question time as well. What I would ask you, members, through you, Madam Assistant Speaker, is this: where were these concerns when Kevin Rudd cut 14½ thousand jobs from the federal public service? We know this is true because I will refer to Mr David Tune, who is the Secretary to the Department of Finance, who was being questioned by Senator Wong. This was said late last year:

The advice that the government has received is that, over the forward estimates, the funding profile that you determined translated—

this is to Senator Wong—

into 8,819 fewer Public Service jobs, and that that reduction combined with another 846 jobs from so-called more efficient management structures and 4,808 jobs through the additional efficiency dividend to 2.25 takes the total reduction in public sector staff to 14,473—as a result of decisions that you—

referring to Senator Wong—

made before the last election that were never publicly disclosed.

None of us in this chamber, I am sure, want to see a reduction in jobs in Canberra. I think that is something that we can all be clear about. We can all be clear about standing up and saying, “We want to see a strong economy in the ACT. We want to see strong jobs growth.” We have all made representations to our colleagues federally to say, “Let’s make sure that that is the case.” But where was the rhetoric that we have heard today from those opposite when federal Labor were doing what we saw they were doing to the ACT economy and to the federal public service?

I think that we need to look at what this government are doing in response. Instead of behaving as they did today, like a bunch of doomsday cultists—as ex-Chief Minister Kate Carnell has said, “Don’t be prophets of doom”—do not be prophets of doom, Mr Barr. Yes, this is a tough budget. Yes, we need a response. Yes, we need to get on with business. But let us not talk our economy down. Let us not talk this community down and let us not do as Mr Barr has done and say that this will devastate our local community.

There is a cycle in politics that we all understand and I think it needs to be acknowledged that the tough decisions that have been made by the federal coalition will have an impact on Canberra. No-one is denying that. We know that it will, but it is now a matter of how we respond. I think it is important to understand why those decisions have been made, and it is because of the position that the federal budget is in. If you listened to Mr Hockey’s speech last night you got a very clear illustration that doing nothing was not an option. Just letting the budget slide to \$600 billion of debt was not an option. Hard decisions needed to be made.

I always argue—and I do argue and I make representations to my federal colleagues—that I do not want to see a disproportionate effect on Canberra than on the rest of the nation. But it is clear, given that we are the home of the federal public service, that when a budget is in a position that we see it in and decisions have been made, we are going to bear some of that pain. Unfortunately, we are seeing some of that happen now as a result of the problem that the federal government is trying to sort out.

I would rather we do not play the blame game. Unfortunately, the conversation that those opposite want to have today is about the blame game. They are trying to generate the political heat around it. We know exactly what they are doing. Everybody observing this will understand what they are doing. But if there is to be a blame game played, should the blame be levelled at the person that is trying to fix the problem or should it be at the people that caused the problem in the first place?

Now, I would contend that is where the guilt, the blame, lies, but what I would rather see are positive motions like Mr Smyth’s in this Assembly saying, “This is how we can get this economy moving; this is how we can take action locally to get the convention centre built,” rather than what we have seen today—that is, a wall of negativity from those opposite. I hope you respond better to what we are facing now rather than just complaining and trying to create political opportunism in motions like this. (*Time expired.*)

*Mr Rattenbury interjecting—*

**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) (3.46): Madam Assistant Speaker—

**Mr Hanson:** On a point of order, Madam Assistant Speaker—

**MR CORBELL:** I would ask you to stop the clock, Madam Assistant Speaker.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER** (Ms Lawder): Stop the clock.

**Mr Hanson:** Mr Rattenbury just interjected with the word “sanctimonious”. I would ask him to withdraw. I was asked to withdraw on a similar interjection last week and I ask you to ask him to withdraw.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr Hanson. I did not actually hear that. Mr Rattenbury, do you have—

**Mr Rattenbury:** I am happy to. I just did so, but I thought Mr Hanson’s contribution was a sanctimonious number. I do not believe that to be an unparliamentary term, but I will take your guidance.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Thank you. I do recall the same conversation last week and at that time Madam Deputy Speaker did ask the person to withdraw.

**Mr Rattenbury:** On that basis, I will, of course, withdraw.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr Rattenbury.

**MR CORBELL:** I am amused and dismayed, I have to say, to hear that apparently the problem here in the ACT when it comes to job cuts by the Tony Abbott Liberals is the ACT Labor government. Apparently we are the problem. How extraordinary! We hear Mr Hanson say you have got to be positive. Indeed, we do have to demonstrate confidence in our city. This government will do so and has done so.

Let us look at Mr Hanson’s lecture and compare it with the comments of his Liberal counterparts in other jurisdictions. We have got Mike Baird, the Liberal Premier in New South Wales, Mr Hanson’s colleague in the Liberal leadership team across the federation, saying: “This is a kick in the guts. This budget is a kick in the guts for New South Wales.” We have got Campbell Newman, the Liberal National Party Premier, Mr Hanson’s leadership colleague in Queensland, saying, “These cuts are not acceptable.” We have got Premier Napthine, Mr Hanson’s Liberal leadership colleague down in Victoria, saying that Victoria is extremely concerned. A number of premiers are now calling for an emergency meeting of COAG to discuss the impact of the budget, and its cuts to health and education, on state and territory health and education budgets.

This is the consequence of the betrayal of the Australian people by Mr Abbott and the Liberals. Remember “No surprises; no excuses?” Remember that? Remember “No new taxes,” “No charges,” “No cuts to education,” “No cuts to health,” “No changes

to the pension,” “No changes to the GST”? Remember all of that? Lies, Madam Assistant Speaker; they were all lies. That is the consequence that we are now dealing with here in the ACT.

In my own portfolio, we are seeing a range of impacts as a result of these cuts. Most concerning to me, and the one with the most immediate impact, is a cut to legal aid services in our community. Legal Aid represents the most vulnerable in our community, people who cannot afford legal representation but are facing serious charges in court that may result in significant penalties against them if they are not properly represented. What is the impact? What is the impact of the Liberals’ cuts on legal aid? The impact is \$400,000 less next financial year to ACT Legal Aid to represent the most vulnerable in our community. That is at least 2½ full-time staff, who represent and provide assistance to the lowest paid, the most vulnerable, in our community. It is a disgrace.

It is in contrast to this government’s commitment to improve funding for legal aid representation, such as the initiatives announced in the last budget to provide over \$1 million worth of funding for the creation of a new community legal hub. Here is this government supporting legal aid services, and there are the Liberals cutting it—cutting services to the most vulnerable in our community.

The government is also concerned about the impact on funding and the reduction in funding and agencies to support the development of renewable energy in our city and our region. The cuts to ARENA which I mentioned during question time have seen \$1½ billion of funding ripped away that would otherwise have been provided to hundreds and hundreds of renewable energy projects across the country—projects that would have created construction jobs, service and supply jobs, and ongoing jobs in the maintenance and operation of the facilities. Of course, they would have had an environmental benefit as well as an economic benefit, but those opposite clearly are not interested.

Those opposite are only interested in the environment if it means they can force people to work for less than the minimum wage. That is exactly what the new green army scheme is going to do. The green army scheme forces people to work in that scheme for less than the minimum wage. What an absolute betrayal of some of the lowest paid and most vulnerable in our community by this government. You are going to be compelled or expected to participate in the green army scheme, but you are not going to be paid a minimum wage, and you are not going to be paid for the value of your work; you are going to be paid less than that.

That is the sort of government we now have from the Liberal Party. That is the sort of government we now have from this Tony Abbott Liberal government. The impacts are being felt right across our community.

This government does have a plan and a strategy to address these challenges. We cannot do all of the heavy lifting. It is not reasonable, as the Treasurer has said, to expect the ACT government to pick up all the slack, to somehow compensate for the impact of the reduction in public sector spending by the Tony Abbott Liberals, but we will do everything that we can—

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER** (Ms Lawder): Mr Corbell, I hesitate to interrupt you, but earlier today Madam Speaker asked Dr Bourke to refer to people by their title—including the Prime Minister. Could you adhere to that.

**MR CORBELL**: I think the Prime Minister's name is Tony Abbott, Madam Assistant Speaker.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER**: By his title, as per the current standard.

**MR CORBELL**: Well, Prime Minister Tony Abbott Liberals—

**Dr Bourke**: Point of order.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER**: Do you have a point of order, Dr Bourke?

**Dr Bourke**: Yes, I do. Having been the subject of the ruling by the Speaker, can I say that it was in regard to a title which was not "Prime Minister" which I placed before Mr Abbott's name.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER**: I apologise; my error. Nevertheless, it is our usual practice to refer to people by their correct title.

**MR CORBELL**: I do not think there is any problem with me referring to the Prime Minister as Tony Abbott, Madam Assistant Speaker. That is his name and that is why it is relevant for me to assert that that is how he should be identified. His name is Tony Abbott. He leads the Liberal Party.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER**: I did not disagree.

**MR CORBELL**: They are Tony Abbott Liberals, Madam Assistant Speaker.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER**: I am speaking; thank you, Mr Corbell. I asked you to refer to him by his title. I did not disagree that that was his name. I do agree with you on that point, but could you please refer to people by their titles.

**MR CORBELL**: Madam Assistant Speaker, which standing order requires me to refer to Mr Tony Abbott as the Prime Minister?

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER**: I think what I said, Mr Corbell, was that it is our usual accepted standard here in the chamber.

**MR CORBELL**: I am just asking you for your guidance, Madam Assistant Speaker.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER**: And I am giving it to you.

**MR CORBELL**: Which standing order requires—

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** If you could stop speaking while I am speaking, I would appreciate it. Thank you. The commonly accepted practice here in the chamber is to refer to people by their correct title.

**MR CORBELL:** Madam Assistant Speaker—

**Mr Gentleman:** Point of order.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Do you have a point of order, Mr Gentleman?

**Mr Gentleman:** I do. On your ruling on the point of order, Madam Assistant Speaker, it is common practice here that we do refer to people by their name. In debate, I hear quite often the opposition members refer to the Chief Minister as Katy Gallagher and to Andrew Barr as Andrew Barr rather than Treasurer or deputy. I think it is common practice.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr Gentleman. I have heard that, too, and I have heard whoever is in the Speaker's chair at that time continue to ask those members to refer to people by their correct titles.

**MR CORBELL:** Thank you, Madam Assistant Speaker. It is the Tony Abbott Liberals. That is who they are, Madam Assistant Speaker. Madam Assistant Speaker, there is nothing in the standing orders that requires me to refer to Tony Abbott as the Prime Minister. I am referring to him by his name, and I am allowed to do so.

It is the Tony Abbott Liberals that are causing this harm and impact on our community. This government has a plan to do everything it can to assist our community. That is why we are bringing forward the large and significant projects that we believe are important for the future development and growth of our city—projects like city to the lake; projects like capital metro; projects in the health sector, the health infrastructure projects. All of these will create jobs and help to support our economy at this time. These are important investments for the future growth and development of our city, and you will be hearing this government talk more and more about the importance of these projects and our support for them. Of course, there is no support from those opposite for these projects that will help our city at this time.  
(*Time expired.*)

**MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella) (3.56):** I rise today to talk about the ACT-based implications of last night's budget, but I firstly want to touch on Mr Hanson's view of Kate Carnell's call to support Canberra. I was really interested in that because last night Kate Carnell said that this is a budget that delivers short-term pain for all of us, including short-term pain for businesses, but "it is a budget that we had to have." I do not think there will be any cigar for the reproduction of that line, Madam Assistant Speaker.

We have already heard that this budget is a wrecking ball aimed at the people of the ACT and the ACT economy. With over 8,000 jobs lost for the public service through this budget, we can be assured that the federal government will continue to show a

lack of respect to those who work day in and day out to ensure the policies of the federal government are delivered appropriately. With nearly 3,000 jobs going from the Australian Taxation Office alone, we can be assured that we will soon see Canberra go into crisis mode while families struggle to make ends meet and these job seekers struggle to find employment.

Let us not forget the new threat to CSIRO based in Canberra. This agency has made a well-renowned name for itself through its many significant discoveries over the years. We have seen the invention of wi-fi, Aerogard and the extended wear contact lenses to name just three of its major discoveries. Unfortunately, this is another area to see cuts, with \$111.4 million being removed from this organisation over four years, including job losses. Yet another sign of the Abbott government's disregard for science and its value in the Australian community.

The public service may not be the only employer in the ACT, but the people who work in the service day to day are the ones who shop at our local supermarkets, have their cars repaired locally and, in general, invest their incomes locally day by day. The 8,000 jobs being ripped from the government sector will flow on directly to small businesses and other employers in Canberra.

We have seen the government mourn the loss of Holden production plants pulling out of Australia, ripping 3,000 jobs out of the Australian economy with many more thousands of jobs being lost from the flow-on. However, they show absolutely no regard for the impact on Canberra by larger cuts to the public service. There is no shadow of doubt in my mind that the Liberals show no empathy for our families here in the ACT.

To add insult to injury to these families, the Tony Abbott government has announced more plans to hit people who will become unemployed. The Liberals have announced the end of the free medical service Medicare. Bulk-billing will now become a thing of the past, with \$7 fees being imposed on those who can afford it the least. That is not the only impact that will be experienced by the ACT community in relation to health care. This \$7 fee will also impact on pathology, X-rays and other diagnostic tools. It is a sad day when you say goodbye to the free healthcare services our country has enjoyed for the last 40 years.

What does this mean to the young people in the ACT? Unfortunately young people and families are hurt the hardest by this budget. Not only will a career in the public service be something they will no longer be able to work towards, the Liberals will also ensure that these young people struggle to make ends meet while they look for work through the announcement that they will raise the age of eligibility for Newstart from 22 to 25. Previously, once people turned 22 they could shift from the lower paid youth allowance to Newstart. This means a cut to them of \$96 a fortnight. This is in addition to the new arrangement that people under 30 who are unemployed will have to wait six months to be eligible for Newstart benefits and will only be able to claim it for six months before the benefit is cut for another six months. This six-month cycle of getting benefits cut and returned will continue until someone gets a job or turns 30. I have always been proud of this country for its ability to ensure a fair go and equity for Australians, but these changes simply go against that entire nationwide rhetoric.



What we have also seen from this decimating budget is the federal government ripping spending from the areas that the previous government had been working on to ensure long-term viability. A staggering \$80 billion has been ripped from health and education over the next 10 years. Services in these areas are two of the most crucial front-line delivery areas of this country. Gone are the days of equality for students. Gone are the days of increasing public health investment to address our ageing population.

With this we see the dissolving of Medicare Local, a successful tool connecting local needs with the larger health system. I am sure I am not alone in receiving correspondence from the ACT branch of Medicare Local calling on support to continue its strong role in our local community. You only need to turn to their report card to see the positive impact they have had on our community in harnessing local knowledge, driving community-led best solutions, delivering coordinated front-line services and joining the dots.

This budget provides even more pain for those families who have chosen, due to reduced costs, to live in the outer suburbs, many located in my electorate of Brindabella. With petrol prices rising through the taxation system and the remarkable lack of ACT infrastructure funding in this federal budget, we again see the federal budget hitting hardest those who cannot afford it.

It is not just Canberra as a whole that will be affected by this budget. As someone who has a deep passion in the move towards a sustainable future through renewable energy, I am dumbfounded at the wanton destruction of the renewable energy sector, with \$1.3 billion being ripped out of our children's future by the removal of the Australian Renewable Energy Agency. What do we see as the alternative? It is quite laughable—\$525 million to fund the green army initiative and, as we have heard from Minister Corbell, all will be paid less than the minimum wage. This is offset by the \$438 million loss to Landcare expenditure. We know those community groups are currently doing the same job it is proposed the Green Army will do, and they have been so successful. This policy continues to ignore the long-term positives of renewable energy and the future of combating climate change in our own region.

It may be that Canberra as a whole is in a better position now to ride through the attack than it was when we saw a similar budget in 1996. The ACT government continues to roll out our economic plan in order to transform and diversify the territory and the ACT government will help soften the blow to Canberrans. Through planning and red tape reduction changes, we continue to see a growing private sector in Canberra as well as continued major infrastructure projects rolling out across the territory in the forward years. I urge all members to support Ms Porter's motion.

**MS BURCH** (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability, Children and Young People, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Women, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Racing and Gaming) (4.04): I am pleased to support Ms Porter's motion and to speak a little on how, through education, the ACT government is promoting economic growth, job growth, and creating a more diverse and prosperous city. Education contributes significantly to the ACT economy.

It does so in many ways across our schools and the Canberra Institute of Technology. Education opens up individuals' opportunities for our citizens and provides a basis for business and economic growth. Education contributes by ensuring that Canberrans have the skills and the knowledge to gain meaningful and dignified work and to ensure that we continue to be seen as part of a smart and innovative city.

The ACT has the best-performing education system in the country, being first or equal first in all of the 20 NAPLAN domains and ranking amongst the top 10 in international performance. This is a direct result of the investment of this government over the last decade in supporting our high-quality education. It continues to be supported by recent announcements, including parental engagement, the work of our Teacher Quality Institute and the announcement of testing new recruits, ensuring that we have the best of the best teachers for our schools.

We are supporting the productivity of our workforce by investing in our early education and care sector through scholarships for certificate III and degrees. We have seen a 94 per cent increase in long-day places since coming into office. We now have over 9,500, and more places will come online this year.

We have put over \$11 million into infrastructure for early childhood care and child care over the last few years. Some childcare expansions are at Campbell cottage, Appletree House, Gungahlin centres, and, of course, the expansion of the site for child care at Taylor school, up to 65 places. The list goes on. I can wax lyrical on the investment of this government through the Education and Training Directorate. It is a timely opportunity to compare that significant investment that sees us ranking in the top jurisdictions of investment in education and the results that that brings to what we saw in last night's federal budget, which has been described as a mean budget.

So let us be very clear about some of what we will see. The commonwealth has abandoned a number of national agreements as agreed by COAG. The national education reform, the commonwealth has backed away from the previous 4.7 per cent plus enrolments growth funding commitment and reduced it to CPI plus enrolments from 2018, as I understand.

The national partnership on Indigenous childhood development will see the child and family centres grant terminate from July of this year. That is worth over \$1 million to the ACT, and that funding supports the West Belconnen Child and Family Centre. That is a direct impact of the decisions taken last night by the Liberal Party.

The budget sees the funding promised for the centre for quality teaching and learning at the University of Canberra gone. Of the \$26 million that was committed, \$25 million is yet to be paid. That is \$25 million taken away from our community, taken away from the University of Canberra.

It has been articulated here that Tuggeranong gets \$26 million for a department to stay in Tuggeranong. Look, I welcome that. I am from the Tuggeranong Valley and I am very pleased to see that that department will stay there. But when you compare that with what has been taken out of this community, it is no great prize to have business as usual for a federal department to stay in Tuggeranong.

The universal access national partnership is a program where agreements end in December of this year. There is a possibility that there could be some contingency funds in the budget. This program is being looked at. But if that is not continued, again, we will see around \$8 million taken out of our Canberra community. The result will be that the 15 hours of preschool, universal access for our Canberra families, will no longer be available. Those hours will be reduced should they decide not to continue to fund it.

What else is a direct result from the decisions of last night? We will see the outyears of the national education reform changed. The Australian Education Union has expressed concern about disability funding loadings under the NERA. In particular, no additional funding will be provided for students with a disability in these new arrangements.

What else do we see? In VET funding the significant announcements made will impact on Australian apprenticeships, considered both positive and negative. The government will achieve savings of \$1 billion over five years, but how do they achieve that? By ceasing 10 skills and training programs from 1 January next year. So the Liberal Party, through its federal budget, is ceasing 10 programs: the national partnership agreement on training places for single parents, ceasing; the accelerated Australian apprenticeship program, ceasing; the Australian apprenticeship mentoring program, ceasing; the national workforce development fund, ceasing; workplace English language and literacy program, ceasing; alternative pathways program, ceasing; apprenticeship to business owner program, ceasing; productive ageing through community education, ceasing; the Australian apprenticeship access program, ceasing; and the step into skills program, ceasing.

The savings from this measure will be redirected perhaps, but there will be an impact of those 10 skills training programs ceasing. The national agreement on training places for single parents is currently administered by the ACT government with all training funded under this program delivered by CIT. ACT students and employers may be benefitting from other programs; however, we know that the training places for single parents courtesy of the Liberal Party will no longer exist.

Much has been said about our doom and gloom approach. Just let me read other words about this. The family tax payments will be tightened with families on sole incomes who currently receive family tax benefit B to be hit the hardest. Recipients of family tax benefit A have also been slugged with income thresholds for eligible families reduced from a maximum of around 150,000 to a new maximum of 94,316. About 15,200 Canberrans receive tax benefit B. 15,000 families here will be hit by that.

Then we have an aged pensioner who said to Mr Abbott, "I have never heard such rubbish in all my life. Why don't you leave the pensioners alone? If we pull the belt any tighter, we're going to choke to death." That is how Mr Abbott, the Prime Minister and Leader of the Liberal Party, supported by those over there, treats pensioners. That is what one pensioner thinks of his reforms.

In today's *Canberra Times* there was a budget lift-out which goes to winners and losers. The winners, defence; the losers, the sick with a \$7 fee increase for GP visits and cuts to hospital funding. The winners, small to medium businesses; the losers, university students who face higher deregulated fees. The winners, construction firms; the losers, foreign aid, families, local councils, Indigenous people, pensioners, motorists, the ABC and the SBS, and the young unemployed.

Apprentices who are learning a fabulous skill are to lose tool payments. They will lose handouts of more than \$5,000 to pay for tools. The government will save funding by pulling the plug on the tools for trades. The payments of \$5,500 will be cancelled from 1 July. That is a devastating impact on young men and women in this city who are trying to get ahead. (*Time expired.*)

**MR WALL** (Brindabella) (4.14): My, oh, my, what a difference a year makes! I take members back 12 months to this day last year when there was a motion brought to this place by members of the opposition, the Canberra Liberals, in response to the Wayne Swan budget that was delivered on 14 May 2013. A quick check shows that Mr Smyth moved the motion. The Chief Minister, Ms Gallagher, spoke to it and Mr Hanson spoke to it. Mr Rattenbury made some comments and moved an amendment, and then Mr Smyth closed the debate.

The *Hansard* interestingly enough picks up that the Treasurer of the ACT, the Treasurer in charge of the territory's budget was given the opportunity and was asked, "Are you going to speak, Andrew?" I think *Hansard* picks up Mr Barr responding, "I might" or something to that effect.

It is important to highlight that, regardless who is in charge up on the hill, whoever is in government in federal parliament, it is the Canberra Liberals that consistently time and time again stand up for Canberrans and Canberra families. Last year when there were 14,500 job cuts handed down in the Labor budget, Dr Bourke was silent on the issue. Ms Berry was silent on the issue. No-one saw Mr Gentleman or Ms Porter in the debate, nor Minister Burch, nor Minister Corbell. As I have already said, the Treasurer, Mr Barr, was also silent.

Madam Assistant Speaker, Canberrans can rest assured, regardless of who is making the decisions in the federal parliament, that the Canberra Liberals will consistently hold them to account and fight for what is in the best interests of all Canberrans.

**MS PORTER** (Ginninderra) (4.16): I will speak to the amendment and close the debate. I thank members for their contribution to the debate. Mr Smyth's assertion that it is about time the ACT stood on its own two feet and stopped relying on the commonwealth is a bit rich given the statements he made this morning about needing to attract funds from the commonwealth for the new convention precinct.

He soundly berated the ACT government not working hard enough in his opinion to secure commonwealth assistance. Clearly Mr Smyth believes that without commonwealth assistance the project has not got legs. I would like to remind Mr Smyth that this government is investing in this city and doing the hard yards. It

has placed the ACT economy in a very good position to weather the coalition's onslaught that is its first budget. Rather than talking down the ACT economy, I and my colleagues have cited many examples of how the ACT economy has been and is being strengthened through sound investment, through diversification and through our strong infrastructure program both now and into the future.

However, we heard from my colleagues about the many short-sighted and frankly mystifying decisions announced by Mr Hockey last night. Small-minded and mean is the way they are being described, and that is certainly the way I would describe them. But they are not only small-minded and mean. It seems a deliberate attempt to damage Canberra and hit the most vulnerable in our community, while not offering any assistance to the territory to help withstand the impact. Chris Faulks of the Canberra Business Council said today in her media release:

Our concern is that in this Budget the Federal Government doesn't seem to have recognised and responded to the disproportionate impact these cutbacks will have in Canberra.

She also decries the decision not to fund the convention centre to investment-ready stage, stating:

Importantly in the context of public service job cuts, the Australia Forum will drive the business tourism industry and reduce our reliance on the public sector. Canberra Business Council is disappointed that the Federal Government has failed to listen to the local business community and support the Australia Forum. However, we won't be giving up and will be going back to the Federal Government for funding in the future—and when we do we will be reminding Treasurer Hockey of his commitment in tonight's Budget speech to building more national infrastructure in partnership with states and the private sector once the Budget is repaired. The Australia Forum has to be a leading example of a project that enjoys support from the business community and state/ territory government.

Members have heard more than adequate proof of the nonsense of this coalition's decisions. It is not good enough for the Canberra Liberals to run away from the facts. It is not good enough to try and divert attention from your federal colleagues' appalling decisions by Mr Smyth moving his hamfisted amendment. I think he wanted us to think that by doing this everything was going to be okay. Well, everything is not okay, and that amendment, of course, is not supported by me or by my colleagues.

Talk about avoiding any responsibility! It is very disappointing that the Liberals in this place cannot bring themselves to stand up for Canberra and condemn these decisions, these cuts. It is disappointing that they cannot follow the example of their colleagues in other states who have stood up for their states this morning. However, this Labor government is a sound government. It has placed, and it continues to place, the ACT economy on a sound footing. This will assist in helping it withstand the shock of the coalition's budget.

We will continue to work with the business sector and the wider Canberra community because this Labor government is committed to Canberra. We are committed, and will

remain committed, unlike the Canberra Liberals who I maintain are missing in action, or in non-action as the Chief Minister puts it, notwithstanding Mr Hanson and Mr Wall suddenly rushing at the last minute into the fray. I trust that Mr Hanson will support my motion and stick up for Canberra and that Mr Wall, after what he has just said, I certainly expect will be voting for my motion.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8		Noes 9	
Mr Coe	Ms Lawder	Mr Barr	Ms Gallagher
Mr Doszpot	Mr Smyth	Ms Berry	Mr Gentleman
Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall	Dr Bourke	Ms Porter
Mr Hanson		Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury
Mrs Jones		Mr Corbell	

Question so resolved in the negative.

Motion agreed to.

## **Planning—territory plan review**

**MR COE** (Ginninderra) (4.25): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes the ACT Government's recent record in the planning portfolio, including:
  - (a) mismanagement of DV 306;
  - (b) counter-intuitive fees and charges that are contrary to the Government's stated intentions;
  - (c) ill-conceived Planning and Development (Project Facilitation) Amendment Bill 2014;
  - (d) lack of consultation regarding the Planning, Building and Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2014;
  - (e) growing complexity of the Territory Plan;
  - (f) lack of detail and awareness about the development of light rail; and
  - (g) lack of regard for stakeholders including builders, designers, planners and the community at large; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

- (a) undertake an independent and holistic review of the Territory Plan; and
- (b) ensure relevant stakeholders are consulted prior to changes to the planning system.

I rise today once again to call for certainty, confidence and rationality in the territory's planning system. The planning system here in the ACT unfortunately is a mess. Planners, architects, engineers, builders, developers, property agents, certifiers, proponents, banks, neighbours, residents—everyone—are suffering as a result of the uncertainty with the current planning system here in the territory. It is time for the government to review the territory plan and to undertake genuine consultation.

The government has a very poor record in the planning portfolio. The list of failures continues to grow and the community is becoming more and more frustrated by the lack of consultation, in particular the lack of consultation by the planning minister. My motion today lists some—just some—of the problems we have witnessed in the planning portfolio in the last year or so. If we were to be more comprehensive and were to try and list all the problems, not only during the last year but during this minister's reign, the list would go on and on.

Last year the government brought in DV306, despite significant community concern about the impact it would have on development in the ACT. Major industry groups and community councils all raised concerns about the effect of the variation. We heard from the MBA, the HIA, the Institute of Architects, the Institute of Landscape Architects, the Property Council and the Planning Institute, who all had serious reservations with DV306.

One of the reasons for that is that it stifles innovation. The government was warned repeatedly that if it passed, parts of it would be unworkable. However, the government stubbornly proceeded and have since had to roll back parts of the variation through amendments. The negative impact of DV306 was quickly felt when the government was unable to sell the land at Denman Prospect. Developers were so concerned about the impacts of DV306, they were not willing to buy that parcel of land for what the government wanted.

They wanted around \$100 million. The price kept getting lower and lower and lower as people became more aware of the impact of DV306, until eventually it simply did not sell. Then, in true Labor government style, they decided to nationalise it and they are doing it themselves. This is a bad result for the territory. I repeat that it is a bad result for the territory. As I said last year, property is one of the most competitive sectors of our economy.

Yet this government arrogantly thinks it can do a better job than the professional private sector. When Denman Prospect failed to sell, the message to government should have been: what can we do to make this more attractive? How can we remove obstacles? Instead, the ACT Labor government took it as an opportunity to further taint the market.

The fees and charges in the planning space are prohibitive and are holding up investment and positive change in Canberra. Of course, the extension-of-time fees and lease variation charges are at the top of the list of counterintuitive fees. Those fees are holding up good projects and restricting development in appropriate areas. In the last few weeks we have seen the ultimate example of this government's arrogance when it comes to planning policy in the ACT. We have had an attempt by this government, by this cabinet—with the full endorsement of Mr Rattenbury—to make Mr Corbell the town planner, architect and developer for any site of his choosing.

The government introduced the Planning and Development (Project Facilitation Amendment) Bill in March without consulting stakeholders. The bill was supposed to support investment in the territory, yet the government did not talk to people who would have to work within these new requirements. Instead, it tried to push the bill through the Assembly before it had properly explained its bill and its implications.

The bill was brought in on 20 March with no prior notification to concerned stakeholders. Then in early April they tried to ram it through and then it got pushed over to a committee inquiry where in just 11 business days some people in the community—mostly volunteers—frantically put together submissions. Every single one of the submissions and every single witness said that the bill was no good and that it should be chucked out.

As late as last week, Mr Rattenbury and others were saying how good this bill was. Then on Thursday night, at the 11th hour, we hear that a decision was made within the government that they should pull a bill that should never have been put on the table. As we all know, the community was concerned about the impact of the bill. It was referred to the planning, environment and territory and municipal services committee for inquiry. It was a sham inquiry. The committee had less than a month to receive submissions, conduct hearings, consider the bill and write a report on it. This was not sufficient time for members of the community to properly understand the bill.

Even so, all those who were involved in the inquiry raised concerns about the bill, and nobody—nobody, Madam Deputy Speaker—recommended that the bill should be passed. Despite these widespread concerns, the government was still determined to push it through. The government was determined to give the minister the power, in effect, not only to call in DAs but to call in variation plans as well. It was only at the very last minute, after increasing pressure from the community and, who knows, perhaps Mr Rattenbury, that the government decided last Friday to withdraw the bill.

Of course, the community was advised through Mr Rattenbury's email that there might be some hope that the call-in powers were going to be pulled. That was not quite true. It was not true at all. And Minister Corbell told the committee that. He said that there was no intention to alter the call-in powers, but simply add to them through what the government was proposing to do with regard to special precincts and major projects. The community, including Mr Rattenbury, felt let down by the government simply because the bill was not up to the standard.



Not only did the government not consult on its project facilitation bill, but it also did not consult with the industry about significant changes to the development application process. Last week the government tried to increase the requirements for developers, including families who are doing renovations, to submit variations to development applications as part of an omnibus bill which should only have included minor and technical changes. The MBA and HIA had no idea that the government was trying to make these huge changes without letting them know.

When they did find out, they were disappointed that the government would try to make these changes without consulting stakeholders. The government, I understand, has now decided to withdraw part of the bill in response to the industry's concerns. I hope that is the case. It is disappointing that the government has had to be pressured to do the right thing in the planning portfolio rather than choosing to do what is best for the territory. This government talks about stimulating the economy and encouraging development but in actual fact it is increasing red tape and penalising the people who want to do the right thing. This government is centralising power with Simon Corbell at the expense of the community.

The government is determined to build light rail it seems. However, despite the huge amounts of money it is pouring into the project, the government is unable to provide extensive details about the project. It does not even know how much it is going to cost or how much it is going to cost to run. The government has not even looked into which route should be built first. It simply went ahead and said, "Gungahlin to the city." Only now is the government doing a master plan. Now it says that the staging of the network is important, yet before it chose the first route without any consideration for the staging.

How is it possible? In what planning system in the world, what public transport system in the world, is there no consideration for the staging of a \$600 million leg? It seems absolutely crazy that the government would be so flippant with taxpayers' money when it comes to this \$614 million project, and escalating. How can people trust this government on planning when it is determined to proceed with the project whatever the cost?

There is no doubt that the territory plan is a complicated document. It is too complicated. The territory plan is supposed to guide development in the ACT so that people are provided with an attractive, safe and efficient environment in which to live, work and have their recreation. This is a noble aim. However, the size and complexity of the territory plan means that it is extremely difficult to navigate or to understand. The territory plan has become so complicated that it is, in effect, incomprehensible. It is nearly impossible to ensure compliance with its requirements.

Stakeholders have become frustrated and development is being stifled. Power has been shifted from the community to the minister and to bureaucrats. It seems that if ACTPLA want to, they can stop any project of their choosing. The regulations, the code, the territory plan are so precise, so detailed, so difficult to comprehend that it is near impossible to comply with everything. Therefore, the power is such that if the government wants to make it difficult for any proponent, then it can do so.

The ACT needs a planning system that encourages investment, institutes certainty, encourages innovation and creativity, empowers industry and gives confidence to neighbourhoods. A comprehensive review of the territory plan is required to ensure that development and investment in our community is encouraged. Not only does the territory plan need to be reviewed; this government must ensure that it consults with relevant stakeholders before any further changes to the planning system. The government needs to consult with industry before legislation is drafted, otherwise we will continue to see backflips and amendments when the government suddenly discovers that its changes are not workable and in fact stifle development in the ACT.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is time for the government to take planning in the ACT seriously. Consultation and transparency are essential to any good planning system. This government has a terrible record for both of these. It is for that reason that my motion today calls on the government to arrange an independent review of the planning system and to finally start consulting on the future of our territory.

**MR CORBELL** (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations and Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development) (4.37): The government will not be supporting this motion today. But I am disappointed that once again Mr Coe is questioning the planning system in the ACT. The system is in place to implement the long-term environmental, social and economic goals of the territory and is a system that achieves contemporary best practice that other jurisdictions aspire to.

Let me turn to the different elements of Mr Coe's motion. Yet again we see Mr Coe questioning the process associated with variation 306. I refute his claim that variation 306 was mismanaged. It was prepared as part of the review of the territory plan following the introduction of the restructured territory plan in 2008. The policy content was reviewed and updated as a result of changing economic, social and environmental circumstances. This review related to all forms of development in residential zones and the subdivision of land.

Mr Coe chooses to continually highlight largely unsubstantiated negative comments that were previously made by some in the housing industry and some professional organisations in regard to this variation, but he fails to concede that the variation introduces many worthy planning initiatives, not the least being significantly improved solar access policies at both the subdivision and building stages. These must be embraced as vital components in the quest for a more sustainable city.

Mr Coe also fails to acknowledge that there was and still is strong community support for a range of key initiatives introduced in this variation. The community has embraced new policies that were introduced with the variation, including those in regard to secondary residences, the new rules applying to multi-unit residential development in RZ2 zones and the new solar policies. These were moderate and sensible policies built largely on rules that were previously in existence.

There is, of course, a diversity of views in planning debate, even within the same industry and professional associations, and the government has been listening to these

differing views in considering further adjustments as needed. Most recently this involved a workshop held to discuss the issue of the solar envelope, and this workshop was well received by members of industry that attended. A subgroup from the workshop has been set up to address future options. This is a good demonstration of the ongoing stakeholder engagement that this government is committed to.

Turning to the issue of fees and charges, in response to industry concerns the government started a new system for the payment of fees associated with leases that had not commenced or where development was not completed within the time frames prescribed in the crown lease. These fees are not contrary to the government's stated intentions. From 1 April this year, new leases no longer include commencement dates. A completion date will be included for standard single-residential leases and the completion covenant will be 24 months. For all other leases, the completion covenant will be 48 months or longer if that is considered appropriate for that particular development. In addition, fees for breaching the lease completion covenant will not be charged until the lease has been in breach for a further four years or 48 months.

The effect of this change is that a standard single-residential block will have a period of up to six years for construction to be completed before any fees will accrue. All other leases will have a period of up to eight years or greater for construction to be completed before any fees accrue.

If a development is not completed within the extended periods of six or eight years and a fee is charged, the extension of time fee will be set at the value of the general rates for the lease from the year that the breach commences, and this means that for single-residential leases the fee will not accrue until the seventh year after the lease was granted and, for all other leases, not until the ninth year after the lease was granted. There will no longer be a requirement to agree to a new complete date, as EOT fees will be charged with the rates until the development is completed.

To further stimulate the industry as part of a package announced by the Chief Minister, the government has agreed to provide a waiver and refund of EOT fees accrued between July 2012 and March this year. This measure is particularly targeted at leases that have accrued significant debts. Lessees who receive a waiver will still be required to nominate a new completion date, because that is important, and for all leases which are already in breach, the revised fee, which is a value of the rates, will be used to calculate the fee going forward. This again is a great example of the government listening and responding to the issues that are raised by stakeholders in the planning system.

Mr Coe's claims about the project facilitation amendment bill are fundamentally ill conceived. The Planning and Development (Project Facilitation) Bill would have cut building industry red tape. It would have fast-tracked priority developments in the territory, with the aim of helping the development sector through what are tough economic times. The bill had two main attributes: transparency and efficiency. The bill would have enabled the government to continue to make open and accountable planning decisions while improving efficiency and reducing delay for major projects in the territory.

The current powers available to the minister under the act, the so-called call-in powers, do have their limitations. There is no requirement for such decisions to be advertised publicly in advance and given to the Assembly before they take effect. In the government's view, a much more transparent and public approach would be a great benefit for major projects or precinct areas that are of importance to the whole Canberra community. And this bill would have put such a process in place. The bill that was before the Assembly would have provided for greater transparency, efficiency and a systematic approach to dealing with major projects within the planning framework.

I would like the Assembly to note that other jurisdictions also have special project legislation in place. Jurisdictions including Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia all have in place mechanisms at the state level to recognise the priority projects of critical importance to the community. The government will be revising its bill and will bring a special projects bill back to this Assembly this year.

I would now like to respond to Mr Coe's ill-conceived criticisms about the Planning, Building and Environment Legislation Amendment Bill. This bill was developed in response to concerns raised by the community about the appearance of a building once construction is complete. Currently the planning and development regulation allows the external materials and the appearance of a building to be changed during construction from what was nominated in the approved version. This change can only occur during construction if the change would have been considered to be exempt development if it were a stand-alone project undertaken once construction was complete.

There have been legitimate community concerns about this loophole in the legislation. Concerns have been raised with the government which suggest that in practice these types of departures from approved plans have proven highly problematic. Concerns suggest that the permitted changes can result in construction that differs noticeably in appearance from the development as approved and as was notified to the public. For example, the exterior wall of a residence might appear as stonework on the approved plans but be constructed with other material. The property fence might be approved as a Colorbond fence but end up being built as timber.

Clause 18 of the bill would have removed the ability to make such changes, ie, the builder would have to build as approved. In doing so, the clause would have ensured that the appearance of the development as built did not differ significantly from the development indicated in the building plans which had, in many instances, been publicly notified, provided to the public and subsequently approved through the development assessment process.

I see and I know that there are concerns raised in relation to this change by the MBA and HIA. But let us understand why this change was proposed. Buildings should be built as approved, and Mr Coe seems to be concerned about that. We will engage in further discussion with the industry about this matter. And we will bring back a revised provision following those discussions.

Mr Coe has raised his concern regarding the alleged growing complexity of the territory plan. Any statutory planning document is inherently complex. It requires provisions that cover a broad range of development activities. It is a legal document and must be robust in legal review, in judicial review. The territory plan is comprehensive, and it needs to be. The territory plan is, nevertheless, developed to be a user friendly document.

Development controls and provisions are separated by the zone they apply to and, for residential development, by the type of development proposed. Area-specific policies are grouped together in precinct codes, making it easier to find the planning requirements applicable to the block. Given the range of information the territory plan must necessarily provide, I challenge Mr Coe to suggest a more appropriate structure. Other statutory and policy instruments can also be interpreted as complex, but to protect life, property or human rights, they need to be. And it is the same with the territory plan.

I must say that I do not understand Mr Coe's concerns about the alleged lack of awareness of the light rail project. The city to Gungahlin corridor has been identified as a route suitable for rapid transit through the transport for Canberra strategy. Following consultation and discussion with the community, light rail has been identified by the government as the preferred solution for the corridor due to its urban renewal benefits and transport benefits along the corridor.

Last year in the very early planning stages of capital metro, community and stakeholder views were sought through the light rail integration consultation. Findings of that consultation have been used to inform the project brief that is guiding the work of the technical advisers, a highly experienced consortium of engineers and designers, including the world-leading firms ARUP, Hassel and Parsons Brinkerhoff, alongside local Canberra consultants.

Since the establishment of capital metro, its senior staff have spent significant time engaging with stakeholders, including the MBA, the NCA, the Planning Institute, Engineers Australia, the Property Council, the chamber of commerce, the Canberra Business Council and many more. Our project director, Ms Emma Thomas, has attended many community council meetings across Canberra, briefing community members on progress and plans.

Capital metro has worked in partnership with other groups in the community, including Archives ACT and the Australian Railway Historical Society, to raise awareness of the important role that tramways played in Burley Griffin's original vision for our city and how light rail will help to build many of the attributes that Griffin wished for his city in his original design. The government will continue to engage with stakeholders through this important process. And I strongly refute the claim by Mr Coe that the government has a lack of regard for stakeholders.

Every day the work undertaken by government agencies needs to balance the views and concerns raised by diverse and different stakeholders. The assessment of a DA needs to balance the rights of a property owner with the rights of surrounding lessees

in relation to amenity. Master planning processes include consultation with relevant stakeholders, including business owners, local residents and other interested parties.

A territory plan variation involves consultation with other government agencies as well as the broader community. And the planning system affords scrutiny of variations, including through this Assembly and its committees. If the standing committee decides to hold an inquiry, of course, there is an opportunity for even more direct input. Given this ongoing and daily regard for stakeholders' concerns demonstrated by the staff of ESDD, the Planning and Land Authority and other agencies, I find Mr Coe's motion quite silly.

In conjunction with the community, the government will continue to review the territory plan to ensure it reflects contemporary best practice. As the principal assessment document, the plan is the key instrument in shaping the settlement pattern for our city, and variations to the plan allow the government to refine its strategic planning objectives by providing for more opportunities for development in residential areas and in adjoining commercial centres.

The government will not be agreeing to this motion today. The government has a comprehensive and a strategic planning framework informed by the ACT planning strategy and transport for Canberra, and reflected in the territory plan, informed through a detailed master planning program. That is this government's commitment to the future of our city, and the government will not be accepting this motion today.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (4.51): I will not be supporting Mr Coe's motion. As he said when he stood up, it does make the same points he has made on a number of previous occasions, and I do not think his arguments have improved on any of the points that he continues to make.

The ACT Greens support the framework of the current ACT planning system and have consistently and actively advocated for greater community consultation in the planning process, which we have been able to achieve through measures such as improved notification and pre-DA consultation requirements. Last year in this place, for example, when we debated draft variation 306, we asked the government to actively engage further with industry stakeholders and the broader community to work through some of the concerns about the unintended consequences of the changes.

I also asked Minister Corbell for further consultation on a technical amendment relating to the definition of the "northern boundary" in relation to solar envelopes for housing. That has since been done through a community and stakeholder workshop in March. I understand from those who were in attendance that this was a successful session. From the feedback we have had, I understand that both the Griffith Narrabundah Community Association and the MBA indicated they found it to be a very useful and well-organised session involving a constructive conversation about how best to meet the goal of good solar access for all Canberrans.

I think this underlines the point that government is constantly striving to work to get these things right and, where good conversations are had, we usually get better outcomes. That is the benchmark that we need to be striving for—to get those

conversations happening so that we get the best possible outcome. Whether it is at the conceptual level or the quite detailed technical level, it is certainly a culture that I am seeking to instil in my agencies—that is, to have a very open dialogue with the community. I believe a lot of knowledge can be derived, especially a lot of local knowledge when it comes to planning issues, that can be very useful in getting the best possible outcome for the community.

The reason I have touched on this point in particular is that it is the one part of Mr Coe's text that I broadly agree with—that is, to ensure that relevant stakeholders are consulted on the planning system. I completely agree with that, and I certainly think it is an important component.

With respect to some of the other issues around the points that Mr Coe has raised, I think this is the third sitting week in a row in which we have seen one of these grab bag motions where he thinks of all the things he can complain about and rolls them all into one, without having any substantive analysis of the particular points that are there.

I want to reflect on the project facilitation bill, because I think Mr Coe's false characterisation of the legislation, and continued false characterisation of the legislation, does him little credit. To suggest that it actually gave Mr Corbell all the planning powers really defies exactly what the legislation did. I have been very clear in this place and with the public about the basis for saying I felt this legislation was an improvement on the current situation.

The first point that Mr Coe made was that it gave Mr Corbell a lone hand. That is simply not the case. I can only assume Mr Coe knows that because I know he has spent time thinking about the legislation. He must have, having been on the committee. It is quite clear that yes, it did give the minister power to initiate certain things but it also gave the Assembly the power to stop those things if it saw fit. It provided a statutory public consultation time frame. It provided a whole series of steps and, ultimately, it provided this place with the ability to override the minister if it saw fit.

Mr Coe conveniently forgets that and leaves it out of the story to suit his political narrative when he talks about it in this place, and when he is out there talking to constituents I do not imagine he is saying to them that, ultimately, he could have had a vote on it. He wants to distort it to something that suits his own political narrative—or perhaps it is because he has discomfort with having to take responsibility when this matter ultimately comes to the Assembly. I am not sure what it is, but the fact that he keeps conveniently leaving that out of his narrative does a great disservice and discredits his own argument.

There was some reference to the fact that community groups felt that the way in which I had characterised the legislation created a false impression around the call-in powers. I took that on board when that came up in the course of the committee hearings—because I was listening to the committee hearings—and following the submissions that came in. I do not believe that is what I said, and I have gone back and checked the text, but that is what people have told me they took from it.

What I actually said was that I thought this provided an alternative pathway to call-ins—that it provided an opportunity to see less use of call-in powers and provided a pathway along the lines that I have just talked about. I felt that was a more transparent and democratic pathway. Members may disagree with that, but that was the perspective I took on the legislation and that was why I thought it was an improvement on some of the options that were available.

However, in light of that feedback, I have taken the opportunity to write to the community members I had written to on a previous occasion. I will quote from the email I sent them, although Mr Coe probably has it as well:

I would like to take the opportunity to clarify a point that has arisen from my previous communication about the project facilitation amendment bill. In particular, I have had feedback that some people have found my comments about call-in powers confusing. My clear intention was to communicate that the project facilitation bill provided an alternative pathway to call-ins. Some people took this to mean the full removal of call-ins, which is not what the legislation proposed.

For those that misunderstood my earlier communication, I have hopefully now made it very clear to them. I think any further suggestion about some deliberate attempt on my part to give people a different impression is unjustified.

In terms of the rest of the motion today, as I said, I will not be supporting Mr Coe's text. With respect to the various assertions in the motion, such as the "lack of detail and awareness about the development of light rail", that is just silly. On reflection, that is actually the word that Mr Corbell used, but it is the word that springs to mind. There is an enormous level of discussion going on. There is a significant amount of public information already available. As we have discussed repeatedly in this place, more information will become available. It is a large project. There is a lot of work to be done. I think the community will get access to extensive amounts of information. They already have it and they will get more of it. It is an odd reference, in the context of a discussion about DV306 and the planning system, to throw in. But there is never a bad moment to criticise light rail if you are Mr Coe.

We have had several discussions about talking this town down. Yet if we reflect on the need for infrastructure in this city and the economic stimulus that something like light rail will actually provide for this town, it is quite extraordinary the way in which the Canberra Liberals have decided to take a blanket opposition to it rather than look at the economic opportunities which other cities across the world have derived from these sorts of developments and which will undoubtedly flow in this city. Having made those few remarks, I will not be supporting this motion today.

**MR COE** (Ginninderra) (5.00), in reply: The more times that Mr Rattenbury goes in to bat for this government, for Mr Corbell and for the ACT planning system, the better it is for the ACT opposition. I just hope Mr Rattenbury keeps nailing his mast to Simon Corbell. That is what we on this side of the chamber want. We want Mr Rattenbury and Mr Corbell to be in lockstep when it comes to the ACT planning system. And we want Mr Rattenbury and Mr Corbell to be in lockstep with regard to



the project facilitation bill, because as we heard from every single witness and as we read in every single submission, there are serious problems with this bill.

Yet Mr Rattenbury blindly supports this government. This was a golden opportunity for him to differentiate himself from the Labor Party. It was a golden opportunity for him to say, “Do you know what? I’ve got a bit of integrity. I am independent. I am impartial. I am going to step back from this one.” Instead, not only did he give them a blank cheque on this bill, but he continues to back them on this bill.

It took Ms Le Couteur to write a submission to the planning committee and say:

The new Bill will clearly make planning more political as the planning for possible large, and certainly important, areas of the territory can be basically determined politically. If the government has a majority in the Assembly then using the ‘major project’ or ‘special precinct’ powers will mean that it can operate the planning system without significant public consultation, if it so chooses.

It is interesting that Mr Rattenbury accused me of peddling these myths, but I wonder if he goes to the Greens meetings and says, “I’ll tell you what, Caroline, you’re peddling some myths about this project facilitation bill.” I wonder whether he does the same when he goes to all the community councils. I wonder whether he tells them, “You know what? You keep peddling myths about this project facilitation bill.” I wonder whether he has written a letter to the Walter Burley Griffin Society and to Mr Odgers, who said:

In the society’s view, the major problem of the draft Planning and Development (Project Facilitation) Amendment Bill 2014 is the specious claims about transparency and accountability, when in reality they threaten a marked decline in democratic processes with inevitable consequential poor outcomes in terms of environmental heritage, design and social outcomes.

I wonder whether Mr Rattenbury has written to the Walter Burley Griffin Society about those comments, which I presume Mr Rattenbury thinks are outrageous. I wonder whether Mr Rattenbury has picked up the phone and given Dr Stewart from the Woden Valley Community Council a call. Dr Stewart said:

The second point is that the bill gives the executive—not the parliament; the executive, that is, the planning minister and the cabinet—excessive and unaccountable powers over development associated with projects of significance or special precincts. Even the role of the Assembly is watered down because all the Assembly can do is vote to disallow the instruments that give effect to the proposed fast-track legislation.

It is fascinating. Even if Mr Rattenbury does in fact support this kooky bill, even if Mr Rattenbury does in fact think that Simon Corbell is doing a good job in the planning system, even if he thinks that the community does like what the government has proposed, you would think politically he would say, “Do you know what? On this one I’m better off just giving a little leeway with regard to the Labor-Greens alliance.” But, no, they are in lockstep.

The opposition very much welcomes having debates like this in the chamber where the eternal strength of the Labor-Greens union is on display. This is a marriage which is so intertwined in love that I cannot see a divorce ever happening. This is a union which is so strong that Mr Rattenbury will take political bullets for Simon Corbell over the project facilitation bill and the planning system more generally.

The opposition urges the ACT government to undertake an independent review of the planning system and to properly consult on any future changes that they propose to make to our already shoddy planning system.

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.

## **Infrastructure—maintenance schedules**

**MR DOSZPOT** (Molonglo) (5.10): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that footpaths in Canberra's older suburbs, including Yarralumla, Deakin, Griffith, Forrest and Campbell are in a serious state of neglect, with many cracks and uneven surfaces;
- (b) that these same suburbs and others have similar issues with overgrown and overhanging street trees and poor lighting; and
- (c) this makes access for many residents, especially older Canberrans, difficult and dangerous and is preventing many from using walking as an exercise to keep fit and agile; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

- (a) publish current maintenance schedules up until the end of this calendar year by the next sitting period in June 2014;

- (b) publish updates to maintenance schedules quarterly; and
- (c) urgently prioritise older suburbs for improvements.

Last year Canberra celebrated its 100 years since establishment, so it is inevitable that we have a number of suburbs that have infrastructure that dates back nearly that long. I am privileged to be an MLA for Molonglo, which includes some of Canberra's earliest and most historic suburbs. Their history of development makes for fascinating reading and puts paid to the claim that Canberra is a new city with no history or soul. Indeed, you only need to roam through some of Molonglo's oldest suburbs to see the historic links that Canberra has to Australia's early history.

Yarralumla was officially gazetted in 1928. Europeans first settled the area in 1828, and it was named Yarralumla in 1834, from the Indigenous Ngunnawal people's term for the area. The Griffith area was previously known as Blandfordia, named after the Christmas bell. Settlement of the Blandfordia 5 precinct south-west of Manuka began in 1926 and 1927. In 1928, southern Blandfordia was renamed Griffith and northern Blandfordia became Forrest. Ainslie is another early suburb, having had the first housing constructed around Corroboree park between 1925 and 1927 to accommodate tradesmen for the construction of the city. The suburb was gazetted in 1928, as was Deakin. Campbell is a more recent addition, having been gazetted in 1956, but it, too, has strong links with Canberra's early history, being originally Duntroon station. I could go through and list a dozen other suburbs, not just in Molonglo, that have similar histories and similar vintages.

It is inevitable that as our city ages and matures we will start to see maintenance and infrastructure issues. We have seen it in some of our older schools, many of which were constructed using asbestos materials, requiring upgrade or replacement.

As a city, we make proud claims to being Australia's bush capital, and the early decision to give free trees and shrubs to every home builder has certainly reaped rewards. The wide streets and numerous open spaces also allowed for mass tree plantings, and we see the benefit of those early decisions in our four seasons—the beautiful autumn colours, the blossom in spring, the shady parks in summer, the tall eucalypts of several varieties. All these add to the appeal this city has to residents and visitors alike.

However, there are downsides. Deciduous trees shed masses of leaves; eucalypts shed bark and drop limbs; and our large streetscape trees have massive root systems which, over time, inevitably lift up footpaths and produce limbs that overhang pathways.

As a local member in a local legislature, I think it is important to concentrate on the things that we can affect and the things that matter to our constituents. Footpaths are probably the most consistently complained about issue, followed closely by streetlights that either do not work or are ineffective, especially in suburbs like Forrest, where the lights are older and the trees are bigger. At certain times of the year, shedding trees and loose branches are a serious trip hazard, especially for our older residents.

Canberra residents are not unreasonable people; they understand that as Canberra grows, demand for services will also grow. They understand that they may have to wait a little longer than they once did. But when I talk with constituents, and indeed residents from all parts of Canberra, I can see that the problems are getting bigger, the wait is getting longer, and sometimes nothing happens at all. Let me quote from a few constituents. One says:

The footpaths in Forrest, Griffith and Yarralumla are terrible. They rarely have a proper curb lip and often end abruptly halfway across a block, requiring you to cross the grass and road multiple times. This doesn't encourage people to walk or run and makes it virtually impossible if you have either a wheelchair or a pram.

And this from another:

The whole of MacDonnell Street is very dangerous. As I go to work and return in the dark I generally have to walk in the road, ducking to the edge to avoid cars. There are no sidewalks at all between ... the Iceland Embassy [and] the Chinese Embassy. There is limited lighting in Arkana Street; no safe sidewalks in many areas.

Given that these are suburbs that were gazetted in the mid-1920s, it is not unreasonable for residents to expect kerbing and guttering 86 years later.

But it is not just a lack of kerbing and guttering that is of concern. The number of paths that are cracked, uneven and positively dangerous to even the most sure-footed pedestrian are an OHS liability of enormous proportions. We have cracked footpaths along main roads that lead to shopping centres, paths that are used every day by residents of all ages—by people in wheelchairs, people using mobility scooters and walkers, and young mothers with prams. They all have to battle the cracks and uneven surfaces on a daily basis.

But they are possibly the lucky ones, because there are many more roads that do not have any footpaths at all. A major road like Stonehaven Crescent at Deakin does not have a footpath on one side; yet it has had houses for probably 50 or more years, and people use it as a main thoroughfare to go to the Deakin shops. It is not an isolated case.

When we go to the issue of lighting, the story is the same. The lights are old; of period but ineffective design; unreliable; and often covered and smothered by overhanging trees. And because they are old, they go out of service more often. As one resident informed me last week:

The street light in Mueller Street has been out of service at least 3 times in the past 2 years. It is very dark at night. I last reported it on 28 March.

We have many enjoyable parks, reserves and grassed areas in Canberra, but, again, too often they are overgrown, untidy and littered with rubbish. A Yarralumla resident told me this only yesterday:

I live opposite a reserve and near the primary school. It is not uncommon for me to collect rubbish, bottles and broken glass where it is appropriate. However I have noticed that glass is everywhere on the roads from the south side to the north side.

I was moved to write to the minister only the other day because, on two recent shopping centre visits, I was asked about street sweepers and when they would be operating in their suburb. On asking more residents, I discovered many had never heard or seen a street sweeper in their area. Others did not even know Canberra had such services.

With a growing population and new suburbs coming on board, I think we need to review how maintenance issues are being managed and what resources are being directed to them. Last week in the Assembly, Mr Rattenbury, in responding to Mr Hanson's motion about the need for government to get its priorities right, criticised my motion. Let me quote what he said:

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?

Mr Rattenbury, we would like to believe you when you say you care for all of Canberra, but I know from experience that the rhetoric does not always match the reality. I have to question why a suburb like Crace, which is all of five minutes old, should require repairs to footpaths and overhanging trees and require the level of maintenance that the older suburbs do. And rather than suggest it is a matter of parochialism, surely it is more a case of the government not doing the job it is elected to do. That job is to serve the needs of its residents, to concentrate on things we can influence and improve.

The very point of Mr Hanson's excellent motion last week was that this government has its priorities wrong. How well Mr Rattenbury's response demonstrates that. Is it parochial to want to have better services for your constituents because such things as affordable rates, clean streets, lights that work, footpaths that are safe to walk on and shopping centres free from graffiti are the things that matter to Canberra families? You just have to be out there at the shopping centres to know that.

Of less concern to even fewer people are such things as light rail, wind farms, piggeries and renewable energy targets, because they will do little more than drive up the cost of living and do little to improve the daily lives of Canberrans. Mr Rattenbury and his government impose rates in the thousands of dollars on the homes of ordinary Canberrans, simply because, 50 years ago, they built their homes in what are now regarded as prestige suburbs. I wonder whether that is the fate of some of our newer outer suburbs as they become the new inner Canberra in 50 years time—unaffordable rates, broken footpaths, filthy streets and unmown open space.

Some may believe that these issues are far too trifling for us as MLAs to be taking up Assembly time discussing. But let me remind this Assembly that this is what concerns

Canberrans, and it goes to what makes them enjoy living in Canberra. That is why we were elected to this place.

Mr Rattenbury last week went to great lengths to assure the Assembly that he was here for all Canberrans. He said:

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.

Mr Rattenbury, what happened at Mirinjani at Weston, with older citizens in a middle-aged suburb? Let me quickly bring the Assembly up to date with this particular footpath issue. When I visited Mirinjani village in September 2013, residents pointed out the state of the most used community footpath from Namatjira Drive to Cooleman Court—a route frequented by Mirinjani retirement village residents, some of whom are able to walk without assistance, others who use mobility scooters or walkers.

We wrote to the minister in early September and outlined two problems. One was the state of the community footpath I mentioned; the other was the gradient, angle and incline of another footpath from the walkway up to the bridge, which was dangerous for residents who ride mobility scooters. The minister replied in November, advising that the work to remove trip hazards along the community pathway had been completed, and that he had instructed Roads ACT to undertake investigations about the gradient problem. He wrote again in December to give an update on constructing an alternative path that would be disability compliant and further advised that it would be in the 2014-15 footpath program. I know the residents are happy with that.

However, his claim that the community footpath had been repaired is somewhat wide of the mark. Residents asked me to visit again to see what work had been done, because they could not see any—and, frankly, neither could I. There had certainly been no work done on the most obvious and main pathway, the one first complained of. I wrote again to the minister in early March to point this out and I also included photographs. It was six weeks later that the minister admitted they had got it wrong. Frankly, how anyone could have failed to notice the blatantly obvious cracks and the dangerously uneven state of disrepair of this path is beyond belief. However, he admitted his department's mistake and promised that the work in question would be finished by the end of April 2014. As of today's date, it remains in the same dangerous state of disrepair as it was when I first brought it to the minister's attention in September last year.

So much for the minister's claims that all footpaths are treated equally. And so much for his suggestion that we Liberals should try and decide which should come first—the older suburbs or the forgotten suburbs. I suggest that Weston can lay claim to both categories, just as older suburbs like Deakin, Forrest, Yarralumla and Campbell are fast becoming the forgotten suburbs. We appreciate that not every problem in every street, in every suburb, can be repaired immediately. We also recognise that maintenance must fit within a budgetary time frame.

I know the minister would prefer that Canberrans not contact their local MLAs and instead just utilise the “fix my street” facility on the ACT government website. But not all Canberrans, and especially not older Canberrans, are comfortable doing that. As Minister for Ageing, he should appreciate that. But even when residents use that facility, such as for street light repair, and even when they write to their local MLA, as Mirinjani residents did, they still do not get things fixed. These are the same Canberrans who are paying increasingly high rates.

Our motion today calls on the government to become more transparent in their management of such issues. We have asked that the government:

- (a) publish current maintenance schedules up until the end of this calendar year by the next sitting period in June 2014;
- (b) publish updates to maintenance schedules quarterly; and
- (c) urgently prioritise older suburbs for improvements.

This is not an unreasonable request, Mr Rattenbury. It does not have budgetary implications but it does urge transparency. There is no reason why both the Greens minister and Labor ministers and MLAs should not support it. It goes to good governance and transparency in service provision—nothing more, nothing less. That is what we are asking for.

Mr Rattenbury, I urge you to consider the motion that we put before you, which is, as I said, not an unreasonable request. We are simply asking for more transparency so that people can see and know when to expect the things that they are told would be fixed, so that they can see that the government has planned to do just that. Governance and transparency in service provision are something we are asking for, as I mentioned—nothing more, nothing less than that, Mr Rattenbury. I commend this motion 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) (5.24): I would like to thank Mr Doszpot for bringing forward this motion today because I think it is a welcome opportunity to speak about the upkeep of our paths. I should say, of course, that I am happy to organise a briefing for Mr Doszpot, or any other MLAs, at any time so that he can discuss issues like this with TAMS officials and get the complete detail, including all of the complexities about it.

At the beginning of this year I invited all MLAs to attend a session with Roads ACT here in the Assembly. The session was notionally about how Roads ACT deals with the prioritisation of residential traffic upgrades but also how it prioritises safety upgrades as well as other infrastructure like footpaths and shared paths. I thank the MLAs who attended. Ms Lawder was there from the Liberal Party and several MLAs attended from the Labor Party. Staff members from other Liberal offices attended, including from Mr Doszpot’s office, but, unfortunately, Mr Doszpot was evidently not

available. Can I suggest that this would have been the perfect forum for Mr Doszpot to get all the information he needs about footpath repair and prioritisation.

It is clear, unfortunately, from Mr Doszpot's motion and from what he said in the chamber today, that he does not have a complete appreciation of how the footpath prioritisation and maintenance program works. To give the Assembly some idea of the extent of the network, there are some 4.1 million square metres of community paths in Canberra, comprising three million square metres of footpaths and 1.1 million square metres of bicycle paths or, in terms of total length of paths, 2,715 kilometres, with 2,295 kilometres of footpaths and 420 kilometres of bicycle paths. They play a very important part in the lives of the residents of our city now and into the future.

Pedestrian and bicycle movements are an important part of creating sustainable transport in our city. Thousands of Canberrans, young and old, use the path network every day for convenience, recreation and exercise, so the task of maintaining paths so they are safe and available is very important. It is also valuable that Mr Doszpot and other members of the Assembly understand some of the challenges that face the government when taking responsibility and a long-term approach to this maintenance requirement.

The age of paths varies from suburb to suburb. However, with Canberra celebrating its 100th birthday last year, it is clear that some of them are quite old. The areas which are old are being replaced over time. Roads ACT has had in place for more than 10 years an ongoing regime of systematic inspections of paths. This produces an annual program of repair and renewal works which seeks to get the best overall benefit from the resources available.

Mr Doszpot refers to particular suburbs in his motion, so let me offer the following detail on the areas and ages of paths in these suburbs: Yarralumla has 78,000 square metres, originally built in 1942; Deakin has 53,400 square metres, originally built in 1946; Griffith has 58,700 square metres, originally built in 1943; Forrest has 32,800 square metres, originally built in 1938; and Campbell has 28,400 square metres, originally built in 1944.

What Mr Doszpot may not know is that there is an extensive inspection program for paths based on the greatest risk areas having the highest priority. I think he would agree that this is a sensible approach to managing a community asset rather than, for example, deciding where upgrades should occur based on particular Assembly motions that may come up from time to time. This is designed to be a more strategic approach.

In its program, TAMS gives more regular attention to high use areas, for example around shopping centres, schools and aged persons institutions. For example, in Civic, paths are inspected on an annual basis. In high need suburbs the commercial centres and community facilities, such as hospitals and schools, are inspected between every two and three years. In these suburbs the residential areas are inspected at four-yearly intervals. As I said earlier, we are talking about over four million square metres of community paths across Canberra. It is a very large area to inspect and that, of course, impedes the ability of TAMS to inspect each area with great frequency.



What we have done, however, is make a significant investment in a call system for all residents to report infrastructure issues. This includes reporting faults in paths using the internet-based fix my street or directly referring matters by telephone or email to Canberra Connect. This augments the regular inspection regime. I think that most Canberrans, certainly plenty of people that I talk to, recognise TAMS does a good job in responding to reported issues. Going to the earlier remarks about accessibility of these services, I am cognisant of these things as the Minister for Ageing. I am quite mindful of it.

By providing a telephone service through Canberra Connect, it certainly moves away from anybody needing to have access to the internet. We have got the full range. There are those who are incredibly tech savvy—and not even incredibly tech savvy; anyone who is vaguely tech savvy can download a fix my street app. That offers the added capability that if somebody is out there with their phone, as plenty of people are these days, they can take a photograph with the GPS coordinates attached to it and this gives TAMS the absolute information of the location of something. So rather than having to go and maybe have a bit of a search based on someone saying, “On such and such a street,” it locks in the coordinates. That is one end of the advance. But for those who are less comfortable with technology a telephone service through Canberra Connect exists as well. I think the full spectrum of opportunities is there for people to report issues.

As I say, the feedback I get from a lot of people is how quickly the response often comes. I often write back to people saying that TAMS will usually go out and inspect something within a couple of days of receiving a report. It may then take some time to get on the program. I will come back to that a little bit later. There is the odd occasion when things fall through the cracks. Mistakes get made and things get dropped.

The extensive example Mr Doszpot gave about Mirinjani is perhaps an example that fits into the exception rather than the rule where, if it was put in, it seems somebody got it wrong, but then TAMS and I have been willing to say, “Fine; the effort is continuing to get it right.” I think that a measure of somebody is their willingness to say, “Oops, we did get it wrong. We’ll have another go. We’ll get it sorted.” I have no qualms with that.

Certainly, members of the public make good use of the facilities the government offers to report issues with the paths they use. Well over 2,000 requests have been received in this fashion in just this financial year. Think about the scale of that work. All of these reports are assessed and the resulting repair work is added to the program. Maintenance of paths is based on immediately repairing hazards using a variety of methods such as patching gaps and holes and grinding of edges.

In addition, sections of paths are replaced over time when they have failed. The programs for replacing paths are based on need and inspections. They are not necessarily based on age. I do not agree with the suggestion that priority should be based on age. A proper maintenance program should be based on factors such as risk and usage. It would not be right to simply base maintenance decisions on age. TAMS

assessment does tend to result in the older suburbs in the inner south and north attracting more attention as their needs are greater.

I note Mr Doszpot's call in his motion for the government to publish maintenance schedules. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that TAMS already publishes details of the planned program of work on its website. So the transparency is there. Currently, there are details available of the work that will be undertaken over the next two months at 561 sites in 27 suburbs, including 4,434 square metres of renewed path and a range of associated improvements. Additional information about footpaths and cycle path requests will continue to be placed on the website during 2014-15.

Of course, contractual arrangements, budget cycles and the continual inflow of needs that must be prioritised limit how far into the future this sort of detailed information can be reliably forecast. As new packages of works are prepared and contract periods are locked in, the information available on the website is updated. If there is a request for a different way to provide the information—and I suspect members may have views—noting some of the limitations I have just explained, I am happy to have a discussion with members and consider alternative approaches.

For the interest of the Assembly, I note that the government expects to spend \$3.7 million on footpath maintenance alone in 2013-14. In the last full year, 2012-13, about 38,000 square metres of path was replaced. In addition, grinding machines treated about 20,000 metres of cracks and raised edges and 800 other repairs were made by patching.

Part of the joy of walking and cycling on our large network of paths is the leafy surrounds. So part of the challenge of maintaining the paths is the management of the path-side vegetation. A feature of some of our older suburbs is the presence of many well-established and much-loved hedges and boundary plantings. Where plant growth from leases encroaches onto public paths, the city rangers and Roads ACT work closely with leaseholders to find the right balance in keeping paths clear for use, as well as for maintenance, and preserving the character and sustainability of plantings as far as possible. A similar balance is required where tree growth encroaches or roots are a problem in breaking up paths. Roads ACT takes advice from urban treescape officers on each of these cases to find ways to carefully trim roots and branches and/or redesign the path to allow renewal without endangering the tree's health.

Lighting, of course, also plays a key role in making paths an attractive, safe and practical option for every day and evening use. In addition to the illumination provided by street lighting, there are about 45,000 public street lights that serve paths. The first lights in Canberra were installed early in the 20th century. However, light standards have obviously developed and changed since then. This means that for many of our older suburbs they are not lit to the standards that would apply today. Street lights in the inner suburbs were generally installed to provide light primarily to paths.

When lights are upgraded in inner suburbs there is an improved result for both paths and roads as they are to a higher modern standard than those previously installed. However, there are still areas that would benefit from upgrade. There is a capital

upgrade program that targets infill lighting of paths and streets. These programs are developed from requests from the public and are based on a warrant system. During 2013-14, for example, \$250,000 has been committed to lighting infill.

There has also been an ongoing light replacement program where inefficient lights have been replaced in the inner suburbs of Canberra with highly efficient energy saving lights. Of the 3,000 lights upgraded this financial year, over 20 per cent were within the inner Canberra suburbs. Of course, this has the added advantage of reducing our carbon footprint.

It is worth noting that with the redevelopment of inner suburbs, where new developments are built, such as multi-storey apartments, the developer is required to upgrade the lighting around their development to current Australian standards. Of course, members will also have noticed when they go past these developments that the footpath gets upgraded. There is also a significant capital works program for the building of footpaths in new locations in existing suburbs to encourage walking and to improve neighbourhood amenity.

All of the identified missing links and requested additions to the network are assessed using a warrant system that takes into account factors such as safety, connectivity to community facilities, including schools, group and local shopping centres and public transport, as well as traffic desire lines. During 2013-14 over \$1 million has been spent to build around 3,400 metres of the highest ranked priorities.

As I have said before, the path maintenance work is based on need, not age or particular suburbs, and for reasons of equity and efficiency this must continue. The path needs of all suburbs are being addressed in a systematic and planned manner for the benefit of residents and as part of our plan to increase walking and cycling as an integral part of our transport system.

Given the points I have just made, I will be moving an amendment which gives both a realistic assessment of the state of footpaths in Canberra and a fair and objective approach to footpath repairs and maintenance. I simply conclude my remarks before moving the amendment by saying that I actually think this is very important. I also get representations through Canberra Connect, who receive many reports that are directly dealt with, and, of course, through a number of MLAs who write to me.

I reassure members that I read each and every one of those letters. I do my best to make sure the answer coming back from TAMS is forthright. We cannot meet everybody's requests all of the time. I am usually pretty forthright with members about that. I will say, "This is actually down the ranking list because of where it is." We get all sorts of requests. There has to be some sort of ranking. I am more than happy to receive further requests from members. I cannot always guarantee an immediate fix.

As I was observing before, sometimes a request comes in and it will be put into a works package that takes six or eight months. What I actually find when I write back to people and say, "Look, it will be done; it will take six months because that's the most efficient way to get the contract to work," is that members of the public are very

understanding. They appreciate that it has been noted and they accept that there is an efficiency in leaving it that long to get the work done just so that a whole suburb can be done at one time for efficiency's sake. It is an ongoing piece of work and one that I will continue to make sure TAMS delivers on as effectively as it can. I now move the amendment circulated in my name:

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

"notes:

- (1) footpaths in all of Canberra's suburbs require ongoing maintenance and upgrading over time to ensure Canberrans, particularly older residents, are able to use them for transport, recreation and exercise;
- (2) Territory and Municipal Services Directorate (TAMS) uses a detailed system of investigation, reporting and prioritisation to decide on upgrades and maintenance schedules, analysing factors such as usage rates and safety; and
- (3) TAMS publishes planned works programs for community path maintenance on its website."

**MR CORBELL** (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations and Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development) (5.40): Labor members will be supporting Mr Rattenbury's amendment this afternoon, because I think he has outlined that, as a government, we have a very comprehensive program and a reasoned and rational framework for the maintenance of this important community infrastructure. I was particularly struck by Mr Rattenbury's mention of the fact that Territory and Municipal Services do actually disclose their maintenance program. I have been able to call that up.

There is an online reference here for upgrades to north Canberra footpaths, including the suburbs of Ainslie, for example, one of the older suburbs that Mr Doszpot mentioned, Downer and Watson, also older suburbs, as well as newer suburbs like Weetangera, Holt, Charnwood, Flynn, Spence, Melba, Evatt, Mackellar, Ngunnawal, Gungahlin and Macgregor, and includes things such as removing existing 75 to 100-millimetre footpaths and replacing them with 100-millimetre concrete paths in places such as 3 Angas Street in Ainslie, outside Goodwin Village. It includes repairs at the corner of Sherbrooke and McColl streets in Ainslie. It includes upgrades outside 11 Atherton Street in Downer. So it highlights very clearly the maintenance program in place by the government to respond to the concerns raised by the community.

That is entirely appropriate, as Mr Rattenbury says. The maintenance of assets should be based not solely on their age but on their condition and worthiness and the safety risks and hazards that they may present if the asset has deteriorated. I commend Territory and Municipal Services also for putting online their policy in relation to footpath maintenance. There members of the public can see clearly the rationale for maintenance of footpaths, in what circumstances action will be taken, in what time frames and the types of actions that will be taken. All that is publicly available for members of the public to see.

Of course, there are other schedules, as Mr Rattenbury mentioned, also available online. There are grass mowing schedules available online. There is the daily road resurfacing schedule made available to members of the community to review. And there is an annual street sweeping program in place. Again, that is available online.

I think in relation particularly to the street sweeping, it is worth highlighting that street sweeping occurs usually on an annual basis, certainly in the suburban context. And it may be the case that people who have not seen a street sweeper simply were not home or not aware that on the particular day the street sweeping program occurred, because it only occurs, on average, once a year. And that is, of course, a reasonable service standard. But if people do not notice it, of course they are going to say they have not seen a street sweeper. But it does not mean that it does not occur and the program is online so that members of this place and, indeed, the broader community can review it.

So the government does take these issues seriously. It is a challenging task, as Mr Rattenbury alludes. It is a challenging task to maintain the large amount of built infrastructure in our city. Because we have an extensive pedestrian path network, footpath network, cycle and shared path network and because we are a garden city, we face, on average, many more tasks of maintenance than perhaps an equivalent urban area does.

These are the issues that we continue to work to address. But the programs and the policies are well and truly in place to address them and to respond to complaints in a reasoned and consistent manner when they are raised by members of the community. So I commend the amendment to the Assembly and indicate that I and other Labor members will support it.

**MR DOSZPOT** (Molonglo) (5.44): I must say that I am disappointed in Mr Rattenbury's amendment because, as we have just been discussing as well, the fact is the motion that I have put before the Assembly here is basically covered in a lot of the ambitious statements that Mr Rattenbury makes, or commitments that he is giving. Yet he is not willing to accept the motion which calls on the government to:

publish current maintenance schedules up until the end of this calendar year by the next sitting period in June 2014;

If he saying that they are already doing it, what is so difficult about that? The motion calls on the government to publish updates to maintenance schedules quarterly. If he has got all that information, that should not be too difficult. It also calls on the government to have urgent prioritisations for older suburbs for improvements. These are not difficult issues to look at. From what Mr Rattenbury is saying, his department is looking into aspects of that.

What we are trying to do is give the people, the older citizens especially, some comfort in the fact that we understand that the everyday issues they confront are very serious. We have got streets in the older suburbs, Deakin and Yarralumla, where if you walk out at night and if have not got a very strong torch, even a totally able individual will find it difficult negotiating some of those dark street corners and

streets to get to the shops. I have had neighbours who have complained to everyone that will listen to them, and yet still nothing has been done about the inadequacy of the lighting.

Mr Rattenbury has mentioned that, yes, some of the infrastructure and some of these lights are fairly old and obviously are not of the same quality as they are elsewhere. So there is an admission that, yes, we have got this problem. But what are we doing about it? What are we doing about providing some upgrade to the infrastructure, to the people in the suburbs, where now they are paying the highest rates in Canberra, and growing each year? Yet we are asking them to accept inferior infrastructure within their own communities.

It is, I think, incumbent on Mr Rattenbury, as the Minister for Ageing as well as for TAMS, to have a look at and have a good listen to what has been said here today on behalf of the constituents that we represent. And they are his constituents as well. We have called on the government to do certain things which are certainly not outside of the scope of his ability to do. That would give some relief to the people who are concerned about the issues that they confront on a daily basis.

I cannot accept his amendment, because the amendment basically simply wipes out a lot of the points that we have noted, and that is:

that footpaths in Canberra's older suburbs, including Yarralumla, Deakin, Griffith, Forrest and Campbell are in a serious state of neglect, with many cracks and uneven surfaces;

But according to his amendment, footpaths in all of Canberra's suburbs require ongoing maintenance and upgrading over time to ensure Canberrans, particularly older residents, are able to use them for transport. He is rewriting history, in a way, as to what is actually happening at the moment and what the intentions of the government are. We are looking at these same suburbs that have issues with overgrown and overhanging street trees that obstruct the poor lighting. What are you doing about that?

We are asking the government, with this motion, to carry out certain acts, acts that are absolutely available to the government. I call on the government once again to:

publish current maintenance schedules up until the end of this calendar year by the next sitting period in June 2014;

I am asking the government to publish the updates to maintenance and schedules quarterly and to urgently prioritise older suburbs for improvements. So I cannot accept the amendment Mr Rattenbury has put here. I call once again for the government to have a look at what we are asking for. It is nothing more, nothing less than the community demands, and that is good governance and transparency in the provision of services.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9		Noes 8	
Mr Barr	Ms Gallagher	Mr Coe	Ms Lawder
Ms Berry	Mr Gentleman	Mr Doszpot	Mr Smyth
Dr Bourke	Ms Porter	Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall
Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury	Mr Hanson	
Mr Corbell		Mrs Jones	

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

### **Administration and Procedure—Standing Committee Membership**

Motion (by **Mr Smyth**) agreed to.

That, notwithstanding the provisions of standing order 16, Mr Smyth be discharged from the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure for the duration of the Committee's consideration of a Citizen's Right of Reply lodged by Mr Gardner and that Mr Coe be appointed in his place.

### **Parks—facilities**

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra) (5.54): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes the:

- (a) investments by the ACT Government into improving the outdoor amenities, parks and facilities of the ACT;
- (b) importance of investing in urban facilities that support the changing ways Canberrans use their community infrastructure;
- (c) need to examine ways of ensuring that Canberrans have access to quality recreational areas to maintain a healthy lifestyle;
- (d) commitment by the ACT Government in the 2013-2014 Budget to invest in drinking fountains and barbeque upgrades in parks across the ACT; and
- (e) commitment by the ACT Government in the 2013-2014 Budget to build a new off-leash dog park in Canberra; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) continue to invest in outdoor recreation areas such as off-leash dog parks, skate parks and community recreational irrigated parks; and
- (b) investigate the best uses for and partnerships for ACT parks to ensure that they are providing the best utility for the community.

I rise today to move this motion that recognises our wonderful parks and recreational facilities and this government's efforts to maintain their quality and accessibility in our community. In the face of one of the largest attacks on the role of the state that has been seen in 30 years that we saw in the federal budget last night, I think it is timely that we talk about public spaces such as parks and green spaces as a symbol of the positive role that government plays in our society.

The ACT is blessed with an abundance of neighbourhood parks, playgrounds and recreation spaces. Of these parks and facilities, Canberrans probably identify most closely with their local parks and playgrounds. Dotted through suburban Canberra, these small parks, ranging in size between a quarter of a hectare and two hectares, provide local families with access to fun and safe places to play and enjoy leisure time. What is great about most of these parks is how, in many parts of our community, the neighbourhood have adopted their local park as something they, as a community, can be responsible for.

The ACT government has been consistently upgrading these playgrounds, making sure that our playgrounds and parks remain safe and fun. In 2014 Territory and Municipal Services are upgrading parks across the ACT, including Corroboree park in Ainslie, Point Hut park in Gordon, Howell Place park in Gowrie, Boswell Street park in Florey, and Jacobs Street park in Evatt. These upgrades follow the parks that were upgraded in 2013, which included the wonderful John Knight memorial park and its much-loved snake house playground.

Another upgrade that I have been proud to see happen in western Belconnen has been the upgrade to Umbagog park in Latham. Umbagog park is a wonderful space that is an integral part of Belconnen's open space system. Umbagog park is also home to ancient axe-grinding grooves which were discovered in the late 1970s and early 1980s. These grooves, which can be seen on both sides of Ginninderra Creek, provide Canberrans with a direct link to our Indigenous history.

I was pleased to be able to join Aunty Ruth Bell and her two sons during Heritage Week and go for a walk along Umbagog park trails. Unfortunately, on that day the axe-grinding grooves were underwater because we had had some rain recently. But having lived in Latham for 10 years, I have been a regular visitor to that area, and I know how important it is to our community. Indeed, I know a number of community groups who organise trips and tours through the park to educate children and members of the community about the history of the Ngunnawal in Belconnen.

Not only are we lucky to have so many great playgrounds and parks in our community, but we are also very lucky to have some world-class recreational facilities for use by



the public. From dog parks to skate parks, exercise equipment to cricket nets, the ACT provides large numbers of amenities that encourage Canberrans to get out and to be fit and healthy. In my electorate we have seen good investment by the ACT government in building Australia's largest skate park and more recently a new off-leash dog park facility for small dogs.

The ACT and federal governments have invested millions of dollars over recent years in developing and constructing 20 skate facilities, including six major parks in Woden, Gungahlin, Weston Creek, Civic, Tuggeranong and, of course, Belconnen. These skate parks see consistently high levels of usage throughout the day, even into the night at those parks where lighting is available.

The ACT government is also exploring new ways of providing green spaces and recreation areas that are cost effective, maximise the utility of available land and provide high-quality facilities for our community. One example of this new way of thinking is the community recreation irrigated park in Crace. In the original planning for the suburb of Crace, a site was allocated for the construction of a traditional neighbourhood oval with approximately 2.5 hectares of irrigated playing surface. The suburb of Crace, though, has no school; therefore the neighbourhood oval would have provided very limited formal sporting options due to the size of the facility. A better community outcome was sought through the development of a community recreation irrigated park.

The park concept forms part of a new sportsground provision model for greenfield suburbs. The new provision model details that equipment should be provided in suburbs where there is no district playing field, district park or a government school oval. The facilities that are provided in the Crace community park include a basketball or futsal court with perimeter lighting and fencing, a netball half-court, a tennis wall, a synthetic cricket wicket, outdoor gymnasium equipment, a range of structures and design—

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

**MS BERRY:** I think I was up to the design treatments for skating and rollerblading in the park, a children's playground, a picnic area including barbecues, shelters and toilets, and a flat irrigated open grass area of approximately 0.8 of a hectare for a range of recreation activities. The Crace community park has been designed to attract a broad range of users rather than just organised sporting groups, and to promote physical activity for the health and wellbeing of residents in that local region. I know from my own experience, as my children and I have been fairly regular visitors to the park, that it is quite a popular place for families to travel to, to use some of those fantastic facilities.

Larger district playing fields will continue to be strategically provided to cater for the training and competition requirements of the sports industry. The provision of further community recreation irrigated parks in Casey and yet to be determined suburbs

formed part of the 2012 ACT Labor sports policy. These additional irrigated parks will be subject to future budget appropriation.

Access to outdoor recreation areas encourages healthy living through physical activity and social connectedness. An active lifestyle can reduce the risk of preventable disease, including coronary heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, obesity and some cancers, and may also lower blood pressure and prevent falls in the elderly. Outdoor recreation areas can also stimulate people to get more involved in community life and strengthen social networks.

Rising rates of overweight people and obesity require a multifaceted response. The built environment is influential in either encouraging or discouraging active living. Active living has been defined as a way of life that integrates physical activity in daily routines. Good design and people-friendly places can promote active lifestyles, and this includes active recreation.

Investing in various outdoor recreation areas, including skate parks and off-leash parks, will attract different sections of the community to enjoy recreation, but it also increases levels of physical activity. This appeals to older residents, families enjoying recreational parks with their children and other families, and young people who are increasingly engaged in passive forms of recreation.

As I previewed at the start of my speech this afternoon, I am pleased to be able to move this motion in order to talk about public places such as parks and green spaces as a symbol of the positive role that government plays in our society. Last night's budget was a sign that the federal government does not believe that the state can play a positive role in society. Clearly, this is wrong. It is based on the idea that everything is judged on its economic rationalist credentials, and that is simply not how normal human beings live their lives, or how people interact in their communities.

Parks, playgrounds, sporting fields, dog parks, skate parks and walking tracks would almost never be considered viable if we only based our decisions from an economic rationalist perspective. It simply would not happen. But we know that people are more than the sum of their economic parts, and that they need public spaces in which to socialise, to exercise and to enjoy leisure time.

By supporting this motion today we in this place are recognising that governments have a wide-ranging role in our community, and I commend this motion to the Assembly.

**MR COE** (Ginninderra) (6.04): The opposition welcomes the opportunity to talk about what we on this side of the chamber would call core business. The opposition firmly believes in the role of the ACT government doing things that would traditionally be council services.

It is very easy sometimes in this style of government that we have here in the ACT, with a combination of both state and local responsibilities, to wholly focus on the state government responsibilities; meanwhile those core duties of the local jurisdiction sometimes can be forgotten. They can be dwarfed by the big end of spending. The

opposition firmly believes that we need to refocus our commitment to the territory so that core municipal services are appropriately brought to the attention of the ACT government.

It is interesting that Ms Berry would bring forward this motion today, given the government's track record. Of course, she flags the situation in Crace. When Crace was rezoned, in effect, to do away with the playing fields, the government tried to spin it as this being a real victory for the people of Crace, despite the fact that they actually lost urban open space. It was a real victory because they would do a tiny bit of landscaping. Well, they were going to do landscaping before. So the addition of landscaping came at the expense of landscaping. Therefore I think it is pretty hard for the ACT government to say that this was a real boon for the people of Crace.

Of course, one of the debacles when it comes to urban areas of interest would be that of Green Square in Kingston. Those of us who were in the last Assembly would remember Mr Stanhope kicking up a song and dance about how inappropriate it was to have grass there, and about how inappropriate it was to have irrigation at Green Square in Kingston.

However, several years on, as with so many things that happened after Mr Stanhope left this place, the government decision changed and, once again, Green Square is in fact green. It was the ACT government who pretty much said, "This is always the way we've thought about Green Square. It should always have been grass." Well, it was a different story just a few short years ago.

Another issue of concern to the opposition is the delay within TAMS to reproduce the map for where dogs can be off-leash. This is something which I understand has been in development for many months—well over a year now—yet the map for where dogs are allowed to be off-leash is still not published. I do not think we have even seen a draft form of it, in fact. It would be very handy if Mr Rattenbury in his address today could give some clarity as to where things are at. As it stands at the moment there is actually an area of Lake Ginninderra where you are not allowed to take dogs. It is absolutely impossible to walk around Lake Ginninderra and to comply with the current map with regard to where dogs are allowed to be taken. That is certainly something that the opposition believes should be clarified as soon as possible.

Another interesting issue which has recently been brought to my attention is Mr Gentleman's lobbying efforts. You would think that Mr Gentleman would have the ear of the government, the ear of the Chief Minister and perhaps the ear of the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services. But it seems that Mr Gentleman cannot quite cut through with regard to his pet issues. He cannot quite cut through on behalf of his community in Brindabella and he needs to set up a petition to lobby the government to restore Theodore oval.

I am not sure how many people have signed his out-of-order petition at [ipetitions.com](http://ipetitions.com), but it is quite interesting that the citation is that Mr Gentleman cares for the people of Theodore and Mr Gentleman is going to lobby the ACT government. He fails to mention that he is in the ACT government and he fails to mention that it is his party room which should be deciding who the minister is and what the priorities are. Instead

this has all been outsourced to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Mr Rattenbury; therefore it seems that Mr Gentleman does not have the pulling power in the government that you would think an MLA of the Labor persuasion might have, and, in actual fact, he has to go to the extent of setting up a petition to lobby his own government.

This government only pays lip-service to the municipal services about which we receive constituent concerns on a daily basis. Whenever we are out at local shopping centres or out doorknocking or letterboxing, the response we get from the community more than 50 per cent of the time would be about traditional council services. It would be about the grass not being mowed. It would be about the footpaths not being maintained. It would be about the streetlights that have gone out. It would be about the graffiti which has not been cleaned. These are the core services that an ACT government can and should be doing. But as it stands at the moment, it is simply not a priority for this government.

The opposition welcomes the opportunity to discuss this today and we thank Ms Berry for bringing this motion to the Assembly for discussion. We hope that this motion will help to refocus the government and ensure that greater resources and greater attention are given to the look and feel of Canberra.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for Ageing) (6.11): I thank Ms Berry for moving this motion today and I certainly welcome the opportunity to speak about the ACT government's commitment to outdoor amenities, parks and facilities and improving recreational areas. The motion provides a good opportunity to reflect on the improvements that have been made over the last few years and to promote future activities.

Canberrans certainly love their open spaces. So many families who move to our beautiful city do so because of our great open spaces, playgrounds, bike paths and ease of getting around. We have had many discussions in this place about the importance of encouraging people to get out into these parks and open spaces to encourage healthier lifestyles and, of course, encourage people to get out and play sport and have fun with their children.

As Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, my directorate is responsible for the management of open space in the territory. A core focus for TAMS is to encourage the use of open space and provide recreational activities and undertake rolling programs to upgrade facilities such as playgrounds, barbecues, skateboarding facilities, drinking fountains, tracks and trails and master plans for major district parks and, of course, dog parks.

Firstly on drinking fountains, there are currently only just over 80 operational drinking fountains in our public places across Canberra. As part of the Labor-Greens parliamentary agreement, the government will install 30 new drinking fountains in public places across Canberra. They will each be equipped with a water refill station in an effort to reduce use of disposable bottles and increase water consumption by

increasing the appeal, availability and access to drinking water at public parks and spaces across the city. Ten of the new fountains will be installed at preselected district and neighbourhood ovals in Canberra and the remaining 20 in areas with higher levels of pedestrian activity, such as town group centres, parks, and along major cyclist and pedestrian path networks.

Many members may be aware that the community consultation is currently underway as to where the final 20 drinking fountains should be located based on a shortlist of 30 potential sites. It is open for feedback until this Friday, so there is still time to vote. While there are a number of drinking fountains available across Canberra, not many allow people to easily refill a reusable bottle. This means they are likely to purchase bottled water or sugary drinks while on the go. The ACT government is encouraging people to choose water as the clear drink of choice in Canberra. We believe water fountains in popular public places like sporting ovals and areas with high pedestrian traffic will make it very easy to fill a water bottle with free clean water rather than buy a sugary drink.

The new drinking fountains will not only provide a convenient means to access fresh water for free but also aim to reduce the amount of packages being generated from purchased drinks. The government is taking the lead to implement initiatives that create an environment where making healthy lifestyle choices are easier. Encouraging people to carry reusable bottles and access tap water instead of purchasing sugary drinks is just one way we can achieve healthy weight outcomes.

The government will invest \$240,000 over two years in the project with the majority of new fountains to be installed by June 2015. The installation of these new water stations will not only provide the community with a more convenient means to access fresh free water but it will also encourage higher public use of parks and urban spaces by enhancing and improving the amenities that are available.

When it comes to parks and barbecues, as we have discussed in this place fairly recently, the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate currently manages 507 playgrounds. The Economic Development Directorate also design and manage recreational spaces and have created a new model of recreational space referred to as a community recreational irrigated park, or a CRIP. These community parks are smaller parks, generally containing barbecues, a half-size basketball court and seating. The first of them, as members know, is located in Crace with the next one being constructed in Franklin.

A number of community infrastructure projects are currently underway that will see major improvements across a number of parks in Canberra, and I will touch on a number of those. We have seen some recent improvements at Weston park where \$2 million was allocated for upgraded works which included a new shared cycle-pedestrian perimeter path, upgrades to car parking at Kurrajong Point and a renewal of the play pond area. Ongoing works include a new picnic shelter, landscaping and associated accessible path networks. The new facilities provide many benefits for increased recreational opportunities for people of all abilities with the new accessible perimeter path. The works connect Weston park with the Lake Burley Griffin circuit offering cyclists the opportunity to extend their rides through Weston park. The

upgrades to the play pond provide an opportunity for social gathering and imaginative and creative play as well as walking paths.

As to the Tuggeranong town park, with the investment of \$1 million over two years, the government will deliver a range of improvements following substantial consultation. These improvements include a new entry path and foreshore promenade from Bartlett Place car park to the lake foreshore with provision of compliant accessible car parking spaces and upgrading of lighting along the foreshore. Pedestrian access will be improved by suitable path surfacing and greater width to allow for a variety of users, including cyclists. Visitors will be encouraged to stay longer to use the existing facilities, for example, by providing new picnic tables and seating, shade over the play equipment and new, attractive, comfortable seating along the foreshore and in the barbecue area. The new path connection provides more opportunity for walkers to gently explore the path area by providing a short loop around the foreshore and back to the car park. These improvements will make existing outdoor facilities more accessible to a broader range of visitors.

Members may recall in November last year we debated a motion from Mrs Jones about playgrounds. I will take a few moments to refresh the Assembly on the commitment I made to improve playgrounds through the final agreed motion, which was:

... that the ACT continues to manage and develop playgrounds that respond to diverse needs; and ... there is an on-going capital works program aligned with an asset management strategy that focuses on improving ACT play spaces, in line with Australian and ACT standards and best practice contemporary play space design, which aims to improve health and recreational outcomes ...

This is an area the government remains committed to, and we are all in agreement that playgrounds are important to families across Canberra.

As Ms Berry notes, the government is committed to improving a broad range of recreational facilities, and one of those elements is that we have a world-class skateboarding facility network across Canberra. \$100,000 was provided in the TAMS capital upgrade program in the 2013-14 budget to undertake a safety audit of Canberra's skate parks and for upgrade works at Kambah district park and the Eddison park skate facilities. The works at Eddison park are already complete and work at Kambah district park is scheduled to commence in the near future to be completed by the end of June this year.

Skate parks provide many benefits as an alternative recreation opportunity for people of all ages where skills can be developed and improved. Skate parks encourage people, particularly boys, to engage in active outdoor physical activity, which is in line with maintaining healthy weight and healthy lifestyles. I recently met with a delegation from the skateboarding fraternity, and they challenge some of the stereotypes that many people would have of the skateboarding community. It was not just teenage boys; there were a number of more mature members of our community. They were very engaging and it was a very good discussion. They came very well prepared in terms of what their asks were and making their case about the skateboarding community in Canberra. I found it a very useful and interesting conversation. As a

result, TAMS and the skateboarding community are now working together to assist with future upgrades, maintenance and other operational matters to further improve the facilities.

It is worth noting these facilities, even though they are referred to as skate parks, are actually used for bikes and scooters as well as skateboards. This is important to know because work is beginning to coordinate with the skate park users in order to create a skate park strategy. It is in the very early stages and it will involve many stakeholders in the consultation process. I am encouraged by this because we have now identified a group of people the government can talk with on an ongoing basis about skate park maintenance and skate park care in the ACT.

Let me turn briefly to dog parks, because we know dogs play a very important role in people's lives in many households across Canberra. Perhaps their favourite is a dog. The government's funding for dog parks acknowledges the benefits dogs can have for people's physical and mental health. Many of these benefits are through active outdoor exercise often undertaken in our public open spaces. As well as a large network of off-leash dog areas Canberra is home to five dog parks at Lake Ginninderra, Lake Tuggeranong, Weston park, Forde and Casey. This is a great development as people in Canberra asked for these parks.

Also, as Ms Berry notes in her motion, the government has already committed to the construction of a new dog park in the inner north at a cost of \$450,000, which is scheduled to be completed at the end of next month. Work is also underway to provide lighting at some of the dog parks. That is a request that has also come to the government and we are now looking for the resources to get underway with that network.

Socialising and exercising dogs is an integral element in training dogs to give them the behavioural standards to be out there on the streets and for everybody to feel safe and happy around those dogs. Mr Coe raised the issue of the review of all areas across Canberra where dogs can be exercised and under what conditions. TAMS is about to embark on the review. The community will have input to the designation of areas through this review process, and the consultation will tease out competing interests and clearly identify areas where dogs can exercise off-leash and areas where, for safety or environmental reasons, they require some restraint. I will be announcing the details of this consultation very soon.

With regard to the concern about the delay, it has been a very complex exercise. We are going to see a massive upgrade in capability, and this goes with new technologies like Google Maps where TAMS has been working hard to identify exactly the right places and delineate the model that is easily understood so that people do not have to rely on a map as such and that there is an intuitive sense that this area should be off-leash or it should be on-leash. We are trying to work through the details of how to make that more obvious so there is not a dispute about a line on a map but a natural sense to the way this system works.

In relation to Ms Berry's remarks about the proposals to investigate the best uses for parks to ensure they are providing the best utility for the community and also her

observations around developing partnerships, I would like to canvass a few points because it is a very important issue. Canberra has a wealth of volunteers who are passionate about our parks and who work to keep our beloved common areas clean and in great shape. Many of these volunteers do their work through official volunteer organisations such as ParkCare, Landcare, Waterwatch, Frogwatch, Greening Australia or even Conservation Volunteers Australia. Some communities are lucky enough to have friendly, caring residents who love their park enough to create a community group to look after it. I know some areas in Canberra have street parties for the community in such parks.

Some volunteers contribute on an annual basis through organised events such as Clean Up Australia Day or National Tree Day, and both of those certainly have substantial school components too. Then there are the many wonderful people who simply contribute by looking after a little patch of park or unleased land that they love or by mowing a bit of unleased land adjacent to their block because they have a higher standard of lawn and they are willing to put the personal effort in, or by picking up the rubbish from time to time rather than waiting for the regular maintenance collection to come around. I really commend these people, however they want to contribute.

Canberra has more open space and urban parks per capita than most cities in Australia, so to be able to sustainably manage these areas it is extremely helpful for the community to weigh in with those extra efforts. I encourage people to continue to create local groups to look after their pocket parks. Adopting a park is one of the simplest ways for people to meet their neighbours and get involved in making their park work for them. This is the basis of great partnerships, and TAMS will continue its maintenance of parks through mowing, pruning, tree planting and maintenance, but that extra effort from the community is absolutely welcome.

In respect of the forming of those partnerships, TAMS is committed to working with the community and with community groups, particularly prior to undertaking construction works through public consultation. It is important before the works are done to make sure we build the assets the community wants. TAMS will continue as opportunities to develop working relationships to assist with ongoing maintenance and operational issues. I am encouraging the agency to explore this area because particularly with new technologies there are more and more opportunities to undertake these kinds of activities at relatively low cost and network with the community in really easy and effective ways.

In terms of future projects, the government is currently considering a range of improvements to outdoor amenities, parks and facilities across Canberra as part of the 2014-15 budget. Areas being looked at include age-friendly fitness equipment in parks, looking after our playgrounds and skate parks and more improvements to public spaces, including at local shopping centres.

The examples I have provided today confirm the government's commitments to improving recreational facilities right across the city, whether it is the installation of new barbecues, drinking fountains, working with park care groups, the full gamut of things that people really appreciate about this city, the government is committed to



providing them at the highest standard we can. I will be pleased to support Ms Berry's motion today.

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra) (6.26), in reply: I thank members for their comments on my motion. I thought—briefly, for about two secs—that we might have had complete support from members of the opposition, but unfortunately it went the other way. We had to keep talking about things that had happened in the past and that members of the opposition were not happy about.

I thank Mr Rattenbury for the detail that he went into in talking to this motion today. It is important to recognise members in our community that take responsibility for areas around their homes, their schools or their local parks, because it is more than just an ACT government responsibility; it is our responsibility as members of our community to take care of our open spaces and local parks.

People in the skate communities take very good care of that amenity themselves. I have seen them turning up with their brooms and dustpans to sweep out the leaves so that they can safely drop into the bowl with all their safety gear on. They take great pride in their park. I know that they will be happy to hear of the work that the ACT government is doing in making sure that they are safe and upgraded as much as possible.

With regard to the dog parks, I know that with the dog park in my area that I visit, it will be a wonderful thing to be able to exercise dogs other than by torchlight as our shadows get longer in these winter months. I know that people and their canine companions will look forward to being able to do that in their local dog parks.

I am very happy to have the support of the opposition for this motion. It is important that we look after our open spaces and parks. Whether it is my children or another family's children visiting the CRIP at Crace, whether it is the skaters visiting the skate park in Belconnen, Woden, Tuggeranong or Kambah or whether it is dogs romping around the dog parks, these are very important facilities for our community. I know that the ACT government is keen to make sure that we upgrade these and involve members of the community in partnerships, as Mr Rattenbury outlined in his speech. They are very important for bringing the community together.

I want to go to one last point, about whether members of the government, like Mr Gentleman, should petition members of their community about issues that are important to them. I do not think there is anything wrong with that—with gauging ideas from people in the community about whether or not they want upgrades, parks or something done in their area. I do not think that is something that is totally for the opposition to do. I think it is completely fine to engage with the community through a petition or a community meeting to seek their support—

**Mr Doszpot:** You can consult with them, but why should you consult with them, if you know what I mean.

**MS BERRY:** It is not about one individual; it is about the community.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, members! Address your remarks through the chair. You do not have to engage with Mr Doszpot, Ms Berry.

**MS BERRY:** Thank you for your advice, Madam Speaker. I will finish on that note and commend the motion to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to.

## Unparliamentary language Statement by Speaker

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Before I call the minister to move the adjournment, I would like to make some comments on some issues that arose in debate today. Earlier this morning, I asked Dr Bourke, who was referring to members of other parliaments by epithets other than their names, to refrain from doing so. I overheard some of the debate this afternoon in relation to that between Ms Lawder and Mr Corbell. I would like to go back to the ruling that I made this morning, to reinforce it and to give members some background as to why I think it is appropriate that we should do so.

Paragraph 10.37 of the *Companion to the standing orders* refers to an early ruling made by Speaker Prowse in relation to how we should comport ourselves in this place. It says:

Members should not use the Member's Christian name, given name or versions thereof when referring to another Member. A Member may refer to a Member by title, such as Minister, Chief Minister, or Leader of the Opposition, or may use the prefix Mr, Mrs or Ms.

When the member is entitled to some other honorific, they are entitled to use that. That was the thing that underpinned what I did this morning. It does not say how we should refer to members of other parliaments. There is a mixed view. *Odger's Australian Senate Practice*, in its rules of debate, says:

Certain institutions and categories of office-holders are specially protected by the standing orders against offensive words and personal reflections ... This protection is extended to—

amongst other things—

- both Houses of the Parliament and the houses of the state and territory parliaments
- senators, members of the House of Representatives and members of state and territory parliaments ...

*House of Representatives Practice* has a more lenient view. On page 520, it says:

The standing orders and practice of the House do not prevent a Member from reflecting on a State Government or Member of a State Parliament, no matter how much such a reference may be deprecated by the Chair.

I also refer members to continuing resolution No 7 of the Assembly in relation to freedom of speech. The general tenor of that is that people should keep in mind that if they are referring to someone other than a member of this place they do not have recourse to come back and they should keep that in mind when speaking about people in the Assembly and in committees.

So I would say, members, that the general tenor is, and as Speaker I will expect, that, as we refer to members in this place by their title and their surname—Mr Doszpot, Ms Berry, Minister Burch—while I am Speaker I would like that courtesy reflected to other members of parliaments in other places. People should be referred to by their title, and their surname if necessary.

I also noticed that in his comments today Mr Corbell referred to a litany of things that the Prime Minister is reported to have said. He concluded by saying that “they were all lies”. That would be unparliamentary in this place, referring to a member—what somebody said in this place. In accordance with continuing resolution No 7 of this Assembly, I would consider that it is unparliamentary to say that another member of parliament in another place had lied.

There endeth the lesson. Minister.

## **Adjournment**

Motion by **Ms Burch** proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

## **ClubsACT**

**MR COE** (Ginninderra) (6.34): Today I rise to speak about the work of ClubsACT. ClubsACT was established in 1974 and is the principal representative and advocate for the ACT club movement. ClubsACT aims to promote policies which maintain a dynamic and prosperous club sector, in addition to enhancing the club experience for the broader community.

As an advocate for the club movement, ClubsACT makes submissions and representations to the government. It also provides a range of services to members, including advice, administrative assistance, training and network opportunities. ClubsACT has 60 member clubs with over 200,000 Canberrans who are members of at least one club. Clubs in the ACT support charities, schools, aged care, art and craft groups and regional and ethnic community service groups.

The clubs industry has gone through a tough time in recent years, much of it unnecessarily so. However, I commend Jeff House and his team for their advocacy for 100 per cent of ACT clubs.

Last Friday some of my colleagues and I were pleased to attend the ClubsACT 2014 awards for excellence gala dinner. I would like to congratulate all the winners: CIT

best apprentice, Daryl Harris, from the National Press Club; ACTTAB chefs battle winner, Anurag Guatam and Bradley Howden from Southern Cross Club Tuggeranong; and chefs battle runner up, Joshua McCulloch and Finnian Power of Vikings Town Centre.

The best bistro was Vikings Town Centre. The best restaurant was Peppercross at Southern Cross Club Tuggeranong. The best conference and event centre was the National Press Club. The outstanding service award went to Greg Mitchell of the Canberra Southern Cross Club. The young achiever award went to David Lockwood of the Hellenic Club of Canberra.

The promotion of sport—medium went to Vikings Town Centre and promotion of sport—large went to Vikings Erindale. The community assistance award—medium went to Southern Cross Club Jamison. The community assistance award—large went to the Hellenic Club of Canberra.

Responsible gaming and gaming facility—medium went to Vikings Town Centre. Responsible gaming and gaming facility—large went to Southern Cross Club Tuggeranong. Member services award—medium went to Vikings Town Centre. Members services award—large went to Gungahlin Lakes Golf Club. Best ACTTAB award went to the Hellenic Club of Canberra.

Human resource management—medium went to Southern Cross Club Jamison. Human resource management—large went to the Hellenic Club of Canberra. The club of the year small went to the National Press Club, the club of the year medium went to Vikings Town Centre and the club of the year large went to the Hellenic Club of Canberra.

I would like to place on the record my congratulations to the executive and staff of ClubsACT: president Max Mercer, vice-presidents Ian Cameron, Tony Luchetti and Jeremy Wilcox, directors Denis Condon, Bob Garret, Lorin Joyce, John Lewis, Geoff Long, Anthony Hill, Paul Lewis and Athol Chalmers, to chief executive Jeff House, deputy chief executive Gwyn Rees, gaming policy and operations manager Louize Glenn, finance manager Trisha Arthur, in-house counsel Ian Meagher and office manager Bev Clench.

I would also like to place on the record my thanks to the corporate partners of ClubsACT, including Aristocrat, Clubs WA, OPCit, Lion, Carlton & United Breweries, Bradley Allen Love, Canberra Institute of Technology, Nexia Australia, Robert Oatley, 101 Web Technology, Canberra Elite, Zoo group, TransACT, Club Plus Super, Canberra Community Radio, ACTTAB, CanPrint, Fox Sports Venues, Schweppes, IGT, ActewAGL, Banktech, ME banking, Bally Technologies, Shuffle Master, Konami, Coca-Cola, the *Canberra Times*, Aruze Gaming, Ainsworth, Wordsmart Future, Sanyo Data Systems, Project Coordination, Cool Chilli, ICU Security Cameras and eBET.

I congratulate all those involved with ClubsACT and the award winners from last Friday. For more information about the work of ClubsACT, I recommend members visit the website [www.clubsact.com.au](http://www.clubsact.com.au).

## **Australian National Eisteddfod**

**DR BOURKE** (Ginninderra) (6.38): Last Saturday on a cold night I was greeted by the warm sounds of the Twilight Jazz Band at the Lyneham High School performing arts centre. I was there to be part of the launch of the 2014 Australian National Eisteddfod. The National Eisteddfod has been held since 1938. This year, piano, bands, orchestras, choirs, speech and drama, and singing will be showcased in five divisions between May and September.

One hundred groups with 3,000 local and interstate musicians will feature in the bands and orchestras division. About 500 musicians will be travelling from Tasmania, Victoria and New South Wales. Most will be spending at least two nights in Canberra, a great cultural gift to our community, and a useful stimulus for our local economy.

At the launch the Eisteddfod's new president, Sylvia Tulloch, told the audience of her experiences in eisteddfods as a child and the valuable lessons for life which she had learned in competition. The benefit of the Eisteddfod to the Canberra community is immeasurable. It provides a unique opportunity for our school students and community performing arts groups to take centre stage in world-class venues such as the ANU School of Music's Llewelyn Hall.

Past competition in the National Eisteddfod has been an important experience for many music, speech and drama teachers across the ACT. They have embedded the event within their curriculum, particularly in the public education system at schools such as Lyneham high.

Apart from Canberra schools having some of the best academic results in Australia, another distinguishing feature is the strength of music education here in all its forms. Many say both are directly linked. Students who learn to play music and perform so brilliantly representing Canberra in the Eisteddfod do better in their other studies because of it.

Winners in the 2013 National Eisteddfod included bands and orchestras from schools in my electorate of Ginninderra: Kingsford Smith School, Radford College and Melba Copland Secondary School. I am proud that the National Eisteddfod is supported by the ACT government through artsACT.

## **National Volunteer Week**

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (6.40): I rise tonight to speak about an important awareness week taking place this week—National Volunteer Week. This year marks the 25th anniversary of National Volunteer Week. There are volunteer firefighters and volunteers delivering meals to seniors, revegetating wetlands or cleaning up our parks and waterways. There are volunteers who tutor young people and doctors and lawyers who donate their services to those who cannot afford them.

There are volunteers with organisations that help sick children and their families, sporting groups or simply just being there for whatever needs to be done. In almost all

areas and walks of life you will find volunteers. They help build our society and provide invaluable support in areas where it otherwise may not be available. Last night I attended the 2014 ACT volunteer of the year awards at the National Museum of Australia, along with my Assembly colleagues Ms Porter, Mr Coe and Mr Wall.

I would like to congratulate the following winners in the individual category: the overall ACT volunteer of the year, Michael D'Elboux; ACT volunteer team of the year, St Nick's young carer program; individual art and environment winner, again Michael D'Elboux; community care and health, Fred Luskan; community services highly commended, Marty Burrows and the winner, Margaret McCulloch; education, science and technology, Noureen Rainsford; sports and recreation, Margo Wade; young person, Georgia Lee-Abbott; emergency services, Sandra Malnar; skilled volunteer, Garry Watson.

The following groups won in their respective categories: volunteer interpreter program, Covenant Care@Holy Covenant volunteers, Woden Community Services home and community care volunteer team, St Peter and Paul Primary School tutors, Arthritis ACT, St Nick's young carer program and the St Johns Ambulance Canberra division.

I would also like to acknowledge all the volunteers who were nominated, because a nomination in this area is enough to show what these people contribute to our society, for which I would like to thank them today.

The individual nominees were: Sharon Koh, Tim Booth, Jill Greenwell, Robert Johnson, Marilyn Brookes, Debbie Smorhun, Lorraine O'Brien, Joanne Kingsbury, Jamie Gray, Italia De Angelis, Gordon Scott, Joel Mallett, Laura Gad, Peter Bojkowski, Amanda Regan, Beverly Flint, Lavanya Oruganti, Tran Wilson, Stephen Curran, John Gloe, Rosalind Peterson, Clare Anderson, Maree Wilson, Margo Wade, Sue O'Donnell, Linda Muir, Sarah Yu, Darryl Perkins, John Harris, Mark Blake, Peter Hill, Trish O'Neil, Peter Davey and Phil Sealy.

Other groups who were nominated for a group award were: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Focus Group, Belconnen Arts Centre, Canberra area theatre awards judges, Friends of Glenburn, Kulture Break Gold Creek V team, Mapping our World guiding and front of house volunteers, the Friends of Aranda Bushland Inc, Calvary John James Hospital massage volunteers, intensive care unit volunteers, Ronald McDonald House Canberra, Centre4Seniors, Communities@work care&share, Communities@work connections program volunteers, Lanyon youth and community volunteers, Lifeline Canberra Bookfair and volunteers in policing.

This week we should all make sure that we take the time to thank the volunteers that we know and let them know how much we appreciate the work they do in their chosen area. Congratulations also to Volunteering ACT on their event last night and for all the work they do in Canberra. You can find out more about Volunteering ACT at [www.volunteeringact.org.au](http://www.volunteeringact.org.au).

## Public Education Week

**MR DOSZPOT** (Molonglo) (6.44): Next week, or, more correctly, for five days next week, from Monday, 19 May to Friday, 23 May, the ACT will be celebrating Public Education Week. Here in the ACT there is much to be proud of and to celebrate.

I have been fortunate to have visited many of Canberra's public schools over my time in the Assembly. I choose schools at random and not just those that are better known for one reason or another, and I can confidently say that at each and every one of them I discover something that is new, exciting and a great example of education at its best.

I thank Marc Emerson in the education minister's office for facilitating these visits. I think it is important that as shadow minister I do get an opportunity to see our schools and to meet the staff that do so much to make our schools as good as they are.

I have seen some great innovations over the years I have been doing this. Let me highlight just two. One is the introduction of the Stephanie Alexander garden program. I note an article in the current ACT AEU magazine by a teacher at Namadgi School who runs the Stephanie Alexander garden program for years 3, 4 and 5 at Namadgi and suggests it will probably be his teaching career highlight because of the many benefits it has brought to the educational outcomes of his students.

Another relatively new direction is the decision by some primary schools to offer the baccalaureate program. Speaking with students and teachers, it is very much enjoyed by those who choose to engage in this. And it will be interesting to see whether they continue that stream into their high school years. The availability of the IB program, together with the wide choice of languages now available at all schools, bodes well for ACT students being well prepared for tertiary studies.

I note there are a number of functions associated with public school week, and I also note it seems to be around the time that schools hold open days and information nights. I would encourage parents to take this opportunity to get to know what school choices are out there.

Unlike some, I do not believe there should be competition between the government and non-government sectors, other than all schools wanting to offer the best of education for their students. I find it less than helpful when comments from education professionals continue to fuel almost class warfare amongst school systems.

My attention was drawn to an article by an education researcher who won the 2013 AEU ACT friend of public education award. In this article she suggested that there is an increasing concentration of low income, hard-to-teach students in the government sector which was, in part, driven by middle-class parents sending their children to non-government schools because that was seen as good parenting. This sort of commentary just helps to feed the social paranoia that some have about the status of school systems and the social reasons believed to be behind the choices parents make. Parents should not be made to feel guilty about where they choose to send their child,

irrespective of financial circumstance. All parents want the best fit for their children, and that may be in any number of school settings.

There is too much evidence to suggest that one school system is superior in all circumstances to another. Let us celebrate the fact that in Canberra we have great schools and they are found in every suburb and in every system.

I congratulate the staff who work in our public schools and who take pride every day in the important and transforming role they play in the lives of the ACT's young people. I would also like to add my support to the national Walk Safely to School Day on Friday, 23 May. It is a great initiative and one that helps to keep children active and healthy. I note that 25 ACT primary schools have signed up to this initiative, and I would encourage others to do so.

Obesity is reaching critical levels in Australia, with one in four children now diagnosed as overweight or obese, and exercise is important in addressing that. That said, I find it staggering to this day why Rob de Castella's SmartStart for kids, a local program that addresses obesity in children with programs that engage and activate children, was axed by this ACT Labor government.

Not all families are in a position to walk their children to school, but I would encourage those that can, to do so; and those that cannot, to perhaps take their children walking after school or on the weekend. This time of the year is perfect walking weather in Canberra, and walking is a healthy, free activity that families can do together.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

**The Assembly adjourned at 6.49 pm.**