



Debates

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Wednesday, 4 June 2014

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Wednesday, 4 June 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.

Budget—services and infrastructure

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (10.01): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the ACT Budget provides for significant investment in the Canberra community by creating jobs and growing the economy through transformational projects;
- (b) the impact of the Commonwealth 2014-2015 Budget has put significant pressure on the ACT Budget, including funding to health;
- (c) notwithstanding this pressure, the ACT Government's priorities stand in stark contrast to the Commonwealth by our continued investment in health and education;
- (d) the ACT Budget delivers high quality municipal services;
- (e) the Commonwealth reduction of an estimated 6,500 jobs in the ACT has a disproportionate impact on the city—with a reduction of at least 2,000 jobs in 2014-2015 alone;
- (f) although the ACT Government represents less than 10 percent of spending in the economy, it does have an impact on economic activity in the region; and
- (g) the ACT Budget continues to grow and diversify the economy; and

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

- (a) provide high quality health and education services to the community;
- (b) support the community sector; and
- (c) support important infrastructure projects that will transform our city, grow the ACT economy and create jobs at a time that it needs it the most.

I am proud of this government's budget, prudently investing in the future of Canberra whilst maintaining services and ensuring the members of our community who are doing it tough are not left behind. This budget is built on an in-depth understanding of our city. The budget reflects knowledge of the needs and wishes of our families, the challenges and aspirations of our business community and the blunt-force trauma of the first budget of this Liberal federal government.

This ACT government understands responsible economic management and includes a respect for the hopes and dreams of our community, not a blind belief in the hopes and dreams of right-wing think tanks. We believe developing the policies of government includes listening to the community, getting out and doorknocking. To the federal Treasurer, Joe Hockey, and the Liberal government, it seems doorknocking is just the next conservative lobby group coming to call.

Our budget is about a belief in Canberrans and our ability to overcome the damage inflicted by the federal Liberal government. This federal government is taking \$375 million out of our economy over four years and the ACT budget because of their cuts. Another 6½ thousand Australian public service jobs in Canberra are estimated to be lost in the next four years due to the cuts.

We know that other cities facing such a scale of job losses have received a federal financial lifeline in some form to ease the transition. There is no assistance offered to Canberra due to the federal Liberal government's cuts. It is no wonder, then, that the Canberra Liberals have the distinction of being the most unsuccessful Liberal branch in Australia. Now is not the time for a hair-shirt austerity budget from the ACT government. Everybody knows that. And we kept hearing it time and again from our community in the last day.

Obviously the ACT government can only do so much to maintain our economy and maintain confidence while plotting a course back to a balanced budget in a few years time. We have a diverse, mixed economy. We are investing in public services, especially in health and education, and in the private sector through infrastructure projects that will generate jobs and maintain the momentum of our economy.

Our budget includes record funding for health, community services and education. We have covered the commonwealth's cuts to our health budget worth around \$248 million and have increased spending. This increase funds 31 new hospital beds, 500 extra elective surgery procedures a year, more staff and services at the Belconnen and Tuggeranong community health services and extra health services for women and children.

We are investing \$1.1 billion in education and training, including \$9.2 million for digital technology in our schools, a major new CIT campus in Tuggeranong, upgrades to childcare centres and the construction of the new Coombs school. We are investing \$2.5 billion over the next four years in new infrastructure, stimulating the private sector when it is most needed. It is also at a time of low interest rates while we have low debt levels and a strong credit rating.

Our infrastructure projects include the University of Canberra public hospital, the capital metro light rail, the Australia Forum convention centre, the city to the lake project, the Calvary hospital car park, the redevelopment of Woden bus interchange, new accommodation in the Alexander Maconochie Centre and the new court facilities.

We are spending more than \$45 million on new roads and road maintenance. There are some very important road projects but I am especially pleased that we will be

improving the intersection of William Slim Drive and the Barton Highway. Constituents on either side of the Barton Highway have highlighted the hazard for drivers and cyclists posed by this intersection. The problem has grown as the population in Gungahlin and along the Barton Highway has blossomed. Works include traffic lights, more lanes, on-road cycle lanes and a shared-path bridge across Ginninderra Creek. It will cost \$10 million over the next three years.

In addition to these infrastructure projects that will benefit the private sector and create jobs, we are investing in business support programs to ensure our small and large enterprises, and budding entrepreneurs with just a good idea, have access to the mentoring and know-how to succeed in these challenging times, because we know that the last time these kinds of federal cuts were inflicted upon Canberra by the Liberal government in 1996 it was small business in town that took the brunt of that. I know that. I was there, and I saw it happen.

Some increases to rates and charges in this budget will concern families and industries but doing nothing to maintain our economy would hurt them more in the long term. We are also continuing to reform our taxes, with cuts to stamp duty, which makes buying a home cheaper, payroll tax cuts to help businesses and the new over 60s home bonus, saving our 60-year-olds up to \$20,000 in stamp duty when they choose to downsize their home.

There is so much good news in this budget for all areas of Canberra. I would like to illustrate some of the great initiatives by highlighting some of the benefits for my constituents in Belconnen which I have not already mentioned. At Calvary hospital, besides the new 700-space car park and electrical works which will cost \$19 million, they will have an additional 15 acute beds in 2014-15, an additional intensive care unit bed, \$1½ million for birthing services, \$1.9 million to expand lymphoedema services and \$1.3 million to expand Calvary's ophthalmology services. Belconnen community health centre will be funded for the new nurse-led walk-in centre. The centre will also have an additional eight full-time equivalent staff in 2014-15, enabling other services to be expanded, at a cost of \$9.4 million.

The Belconnen High School upgrade planning continues, with \$250,000 in this budget. Disability access at the extensive Bruce CIT campus will be improved, with funding in this budget.

Constituents in Cook and surrounding suburbs, such as Aranda and Macquarie, who love the Cook shops but want them freshened up, will be pleased the design and consultation phase is beginning, with funding in this budget. The work should be completed in two years. Upgrades will include a combination of lighting, parking and landscaping improvement, a benefit to residents as well as the small businesses who tend to the shops.

Work will also continue on the upgrade to Charnwood shops and on Charnwood oval. Residents and businesses in east Belconnen will be safer and enjoy faster response times from ambulance and fire services, with the new \$20.9 million ambulance and fire station being built in Aranda. Construction is expected to start in late 2014 and be completed in mid-2016.

The \$2 million for ACTION buses over the next four years will deliver new weekend bus services to underserviced areas of west Macgregor and other suburbs. ACTION's new network 14 weekday services will also include west Macgregor. Bus stops along the major Belconnen transport axis of Southern Cross Drive will also be upgraded.

The recycling drop-off areas at Belconnen and west Belconnen will be improved, encouraging recycling and less illegal dumping. John Knight Park, one of the gems of Belconnen, by the waters of Lake Ginninderra, will be further enhanced with the addition of outdoor fitness equipment. This follows recent upgrades of playground equipment and picnic facilities.

Our public libraries at Belconnen and Kippax will enjoy computer and security upgrades. In addition to the William Slim Drive and the Barton Highway intersection upgrade which is so needed, Maribyrnong Avenue and Copland Drive will also be upgraded.

I will take some time to also mention the programs for Canberra's Indigenous community, which received a boost in this budget, with initiatives including \$1.4 million over four years to build five units specifically to meet the housing needs of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants. The Canberra office of the Aboriginal Legal Service will be funded to undertake a duty lawyer role in the ACT courts, with an additional \$416,000 over four years, contrasting I might say, with the savage cuts to Aboriginal legal services which had been undertaken by the federal Liberal government.

The ongoing programs for Canberra's Indigenous community are in addition to programs for the most disadvantaged in our community. The ACT government's commitment to working with Canberra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and the elected body is in stark contrast to the federal government's approach in their federal budget. Not only did they cut over half a billion dollars from Indigenous programs, they ceased funding completely for the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, the only independent national representative body for the Indigenous community in this country. It seems the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, only wants to listen to his handpicked advisers and ignore the voice of the people.

I commend this fair and responsible budget to the Assembly and congratulate all who worked on it.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Community Services) (10.15): I thank Dr Bourke for bringing the motion forward this morning.

There are, of course, few bigger priorities for government than supporting their community. The Gallagher government believes very strongly in the brilliant possibilities that our city offers for our residents. We believe very strongly in the resilience and the capacity to rise above the economic challenges that now confront us. We believe in our businesses, our community, and we believe strongly in the future of

our economy. As such, we will always do everything we can to provide the right support for our economy at the time that it is most needed. And the time for this support is now.

The commonwealth's cuts certainly will hit our city hard. As I mentioned in my budget speech yesterday and have spoken about in this place over recent times, the cumulative impacts of the last two federal budgets certainly will have an impact on our future economic growth.

Of course, all governments face choices in the delivery of their annual budgets. This year the government could have taken an alternative approach. We could have sought to protect our own bottom line and forwarded a hospital pass like we received on to our community. We decided not to do that.

We could have taken the path that conservative state governments elsewhere in the country have done and sought to impose austerity measures to reduce essential health and education services, and we could have dramatically increased the unemployment rate in the territory. But we have decided not to do this.

We will not sit back and wait for the commonwealth's cuts to lead to fewer operations and fewer beds in our hospitals. We will not sit back whilst the commonwealth throws people out of work. Instead we have taken a decision to invest in this community.

There are many initiatives that this budget has funded—initiatives that provide Canberrans with the range of services and facilities that they expect and deserve. I am sure that, during the course of this morning's debate, my colleagues will elaborate in detail on the specific areas within their own portfolios and that are relevant to their own electorates.

I would like to spend some time, though, touching on what this budget does to support the economy more broadly and social cohesion in our community, and why this is so important.

The city's economy is being impacted by the decisions of the largest employer and the largest contributor to economic growth. There is, of course, the direct hit that the territory budget takes from the commonwealth's hospital pass. This totals \$375 million over the forward estimates period.

In the 2014-15 fiscal year alone, the impact on our land program and the commonwealth walking away from the national health reform agreement hits our bottom line to the tune of around \$80 million.

Further, there is a range of flow-on impacts that these cuts have. Fewer jobs and greater concern about job security flows right through our economy, causing households to limit consumption—and we have certainly seen that in terms of consumer confidence surveys and recent retail figures—causing business to delay hiring and investing, and has the capacity to lead to an overall reduction in confidence in the economy. When faced with this economic outlook, it is important for the territory government to respond proactively to support the economy.

Of course, there are three main components of the territory's economic growth—that which is driven in the public sector by the commonwealth and, to a lesser extent, by the territory government and, of course, the private sector contribution.

The commonwealth are retreating and their forward estimates indicate a reduction in real terms in spending in the economy. This obviously has flow-on effects here in Canberra to moderating the rate of growth in the private sector. This leaves the ACT government with the capacity, though, to forge new partnerships with the private sector to drive growth. So now is the time for us to step up, to shield our economy from greater risk. That is why we have taken the decisions we have to support growth.

I will spend some time now going through the ways that the government will seek to support the economy in the coming 12 months. First and foremost, we need to remove the deadweight loss of bad taxes. Tax reform creates the foundations for the long-term sustainability of our economy and of the territory government's revenue base. Most importantly, it makes our tax system fairer, easier to understand and more efficient.

In the simplest possible terms, when it comes to taxes raised at this level of government there are bad taxes and there are efficient taxes. We are choosing efficient taxes over bad taxes, and the deadweight loss, the fiscal drag on our economy that this shift unlocks, is to the tune of \$170 million, Madam Speaker, over the first five years. If you look at the economic modelling of what 6½ thousand job cuts from the commonwealth means, that is a contraction in our economy of around \$600 million. Tax reform over five years frees up \$170 million worth of deadweight loss. So it is a significant factor in ensuring that our economy is able to grow in the future.

This budget cuts payroll taxes—not the worst tax we levy but by no means the best tax we levy. But we do so at a time when local business needs that stimulus and that incentive to employ more people. So the cumulative impact of the payroll tax cuts announced over my time as Treasurer means that more than 23,000 businesses maintain their exclusion from the payroll tax system. If they were operating across the border in Queanbeyan, with a much lower threshold, thousands—tens of thousands—of ACT businesses would be paying payroll tax. They do not because they are in the ACT and this jurisdiction has the best payroll tax regime for small and medium-sized enterprises in this nation. The cumulative impact of the cuts to payroll tax since 2012, in the last two years, puts around \$25,000 back into every Canberra business that pays payroll tax.

We are also cutting stamp duty on every single property in the territory, from the largest commercial properties through to the smallest of units. We have ensured that we are stimulating the high end of the commercial property sector as a result of these changes. The worst tax that we levy is two years from complete abolition—two years away. We have cut it by a third in this budget.

The Insurance Council of Australia CEO, Rob Whelan, pointed out in his comment on our budget:

The removal of stamp duties is of significant benefit to consumers in the ACT and we commend the government for leading the way on state tax reform.

We intend also to invest heavily in the opportunities provided by digital technology. This budget provides \$85 million for new digital technology investments to ensure that we are Australia's leading digital city.

We respect the role of the public service and, unlike those at the commonwealth level who have seen fit to slash public service jobs, the territory is maintaining the size of our workforce. We are getting behind local businesses through a range of initiatives to support young entrepreneurs and public servants making the transition into the private sector.

We are establishing new business support programs such as the Canberra innovation network to assist in growing our export base. This economy, 1.6 per cent of the nation's economic activity, is now generating 2½ per cent of our national exports in services.

The government has allocated \$2.5 billion for a robust infrastructure program over the coming four years to deliver a range of transformational infrastructure projects. This will keep people in work and ensure that our construction sector has a steady pipeline of projects that will improve the territory's infrastructure base.

Finally, we are investing in Canberra's social and human capital. We are supporting our community—keeping people in work, keeping business ticking over, supporting the most vulnerable and providing the growth and opportunity needed to retain the best and brightest in our territory.

The budget I handed down yesterday is a very clear statement of our values. It is a statement of the value the government places on community, on households, on businesses, on jobs and on supporting growth. It is a budget with a heart—a budget that supports our community.

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability, Children and Young People, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Women, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Racing and Gaming) (10.25): I thank Dr Bourke for bringing this motion to the Assembly. I think that it is a fine motion and it shows that this budget is the right budget for the right time for Canberra. As the motion notes, this budget is designed to see Canberra through some very difficult times indeed. We know that the direct result of the federal budget on the ACT books is \$375 million over the next four years. This does not include the indirect result of other commonwealth decisions such as public service job cuts.

It is a very challenging period but we as a Labor government will do all we can to support those in our community. We will work with community groups and businesses to ensure that the community comes together in this period and rises to meet the challenge. I am very pleased that as education minister I will be playing a part at this time. We will continue to ensure that the ACT is a nation leader in education. We will maintain our investment in education and training to provide quality education that improves lives and ensures that we have a skilled workforce population for the future.

This budget invests over \$960 million in our education system, an increase of six per cent on last year's budget. We have maintained and will continue to maintain our commitment to the national education reform agreement. We will increase the funding for our schools and have allocated capital funding of over \$82 million to our schools' physical infrastructure and ICT. This will include works to upgrade classrooms at Curtin Primary School and the school frontage and administration area of the Gilmore Primary School.

We have allocated \$47 million for the new primary school in Coombs to ensure that our public system grows with our population. The new school in Coombs will be ready for enrolments in 2016 and will accommodate 720 students from preschool up to year 6. I look forward to being able to announce in the not so distant future the successful tender for the construction of that school.

We will begin our modernisation of Belconnen High School to ensure that all students have access to 21st century learning environments. This is in stark contrast to the recent federal budget that saw \$80 billion ripped out of education and health across the country. I would ask those opposite, in their recent conversations with the independent schools and the Catholic schools here in the ACT, to tell us what their thoughts are on the federal budget that has seen cuts in the outyears.

The increase that was promised under a Labor government and that we were committed to will not be realised for the independents and Catholics. In recent conversations with them, that is resulting in a \$7 million and a \$17 million cut in funding to the independent and Catholic schools in the ACT. That is not my calculation. That is the calculation that they have offered to me.

This is also a budget that recognises the important part CIT plays in our community. Through this budget we will begin a campus modernisation plan to ensure that CIT has facilities to meet the needs not only of the students of today but also of tomorrow. We will begin work on the planning and construction of the new CIT campus in Tuggeranong to serve the thousands of people in the Tuggeranong Valley who look to CIT to learn a skill or a trade. We will also make sure that it has links to the recently opened trades training centre operating across the Tuggeranong High School and college.

Madam Speaker, this budget also continues our strong commitment to ensuring that Canberrans have access to affordable and quality child care. We will invest a further \$1.4 million into upgrading childcare centres in Chisholm and Kambah, to expand the number of places and to provide further amenity to staff, parents and children in those centres.

These upgrades at Bunyara and Salem childcare centres will ensure their continued compliance with the national quality framework. It is very pleasing to note that under this government we have effectively seen a doubling in childcare places across the ACT, with significant investment in maintenance, upgrades and new facilities but also in the workforce, which is so important in the early education sector. With that, we will extend the early childhood scholarship program with an investment of a further

\$500,000 and provide \$545,000 for the continued implementation of the national quality framework. This budget “Investing in Canberra” also recognises that support for vulnerable Canberrans is a must.

The ACT government is committed to the national disability insurance scheme and has committed additional funds to support people with a disability during the NDIS trial and beyond. The funding includes \$1.6 million over three years for a continued therapy assistance program, fulfilling a commitment made in the last election. The therapy assistance program is a very successful program. Of the 200-plus students that have been seen over a year, 40 per cent were young children who had not been seen by a therapist before access to the therapy assistance program through the school environment.

An amount of \$2.84 million over two years has been allocated for emergency responses for disability services for those who urgently need a greater level of care and support. There will be \$2.2 million for disability care providers who will continue to deliver their valuable services. This will assist them to be ready for the launch of the NDIS.

A further \$1.1 million has been allocated in 2014-15 to construct a new purpose-built respite home to provide modern respite services for children with a disability in the ACT. I think I have made mention in this place before of the fabulous community partner, Ricky Stuart Foundation, that is working with us on fundraising activities. They will be a strong partner in support of us. I note too the recent announcement around the non-government providers within respite services. Marymead was the successful tenderer and it will be providing respite services to children across the ACT.

In addition to our commitment to the national disability insurance scheme and disability support and services in the ACT, this budget also demonstrates our commitment to vulnerable children, young people and families. An investment of over \$4 million to support children and young people in out-of-home care is the centrepiece of the government’s commitment to meeting the needs of vulnerable Canberrans in this budget.

The budget will fund the ongoing increase in demand for out-of-home care and lay the groundwork for the implementation of the out-of-home care strategy 2015-2020, which will signal an innovative approach to the government’s support for children, carers and service providers.

Madam Speaker, in this morning’s paper there have been a number of comments on our budget. A media release from ACTCOSS states:

We think that it is the right approach to invest in infrastructure, the economy and services, rather than introduce a harsh austerity budget ... There are some welcome measures for low-income and disadvantaged people ... We welcome investment into the NDIS, additional resources in disability and support for the implementation of the Human Services Blueprint. We are also pleased to see additional funding for out-of-home care and increases in concessions for low-income households and investment in mental health and suicide prevention.

ACTCOSS concludes by saying that they:

... remain ... ready to work with the ACT Government on implementing innovative initiatives outlined in this Budget. We are particularly excited about the Human Services Blueprint, which will see a new way of working with people to ensure that they get access to the right services at the right time.

Additionally, in the *Canberra Times* this morning Rebecca Vassorotti said that there were good investments into the NDIS and she welcomed the payments for concessions as well. I think that they have also made reference to the federal government only committing to an additional year of funding for homelessness services. We have matched that funding through Minister Rattenbury, but it is a telling difference between the federal Liberal government and the ACT Labor government.

We have the heart and soul of our community at the forefront of our minds and we will do all we can to support them each and every day and through each and every initiative that we deliver.

MS PORTER (Ginninderra) (10.35): I rise to speak on this important motion today as the ACT starts to feel the impact of the federal government's austerity budget. I thank my colleague Dr Bourke for moving it. As you know, Madam Speaker, the ACT and its regions are facing a very challenging period as a direct result of the commonwealth's poorly thought out budget cuts. With the commonwealth government playing such a large part in our economy, the decisions they have made will undoubtedly have a considerable direct negative impact on our households, our businesses, our community and our economy.

As Dr Bourke said earlier, in the coming four years, the ACT government will lose \$375 million because of these poor decisions by the Abbott government. At the same time, it is estimated that 6,500 Australian public servants will lose their jobs in the four years up to 2016-17. This Labor government will not pursue policies that have been shown to fail and which destroy the very fabric of society. We know that if we cut spending we would only be compounding the pain of the commonwealth cuts and denying our community the services it deserves and expects.

This government's vision for Canberra has been and will remain that of a vibrant liveable city that continues to grow and change and to meet the challenges and opportunities of the future. It will continue to live up to its reputation as Australia's most liveable city. That is why I am glad to see that the 2014-15 budget continues to support our community and its economy even through this difficult period.

Madam Speaker, this government has made a choice to invest in front-line services and in transformative infrastructure that will facilitate job creation and stimulate economic activity because we know that, even during challenging times, with appropriate support there can be great opportunities for workers and business. What we see in this budget is one of the biggest ever spending programs by the ACT government on infrastructure—\$2.5 billion over four years. This is infrastructure that will not only provide important new facilities to the Canberra community but also boost growth through job creation.

Programs in my electorate that will benefit from this spending include the University of Canberra public hospital, a new Emergency Services Agency station being built in Aranda, William Slim Drive-Barton Highway roundabout signalisation, a capital upgrade program that will see computer security upgrades at both Belconnen and Kippax libraries, road upgrades at Maribyrnong Avenue and Copeland Drive, upgrades to Cook shops and work to continue on upgrades at the Charnwood shops, just to mention a few. I know that Dr Bourke mentioned these before.

This budget stands in stark contrast to that of the federal government which has cut millions of dollars from the ACT health system. In contrast, the ACT budget has delivered record investment in health. I congratulate the Chief Minister and the Treasurer for stepping in and funding this massive shortfall left after irresponsible cuts to health were made by the Abbott government. The government could choose to reduce health spending now, but we all know that this will result in great pain to many people, literally, and in far greater spending down the track as we try to address more serious health problems that could have been easily prevented.

That is why it is hard to believe the irresponsibility of this federal government's proposed \$7 GP co-payment. Internationally and in Australia evidence shows that the introduction of co-payments will likely lead to people not accessing primary healthcare services, obviously leading to a decline in health outcomes. The evidence goes on to show that there will be fewer visits not only for episodic care of minor illnesses but also for preventive care such as vaccinations and cancer screening or visits that could prevent chronic disease occurring, such as cardiovascular disease. It also shows a reduction in visits for regular care needed for chronic conditions such as diabetes.

Further to this, studies have shown that a large proportion of patients from all sectors of society delay or do not fill their prescriptions or do not comply with instructions on taking medication, including potential lifesaving drugs. A 2008 ABS study found that approximately 10 per cent of people delayed or did not purchase medication prescribed due to the cost, and this is likely to increase with additional price increases. A study by Blendon et al in 2002 found that approximately 15 per cent of Australians do not undergo a test, treatment or follow-up due to the cost of a procedure.

What will happen to our critical services like Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service, Companion House and the West Belconnen Health Co-Op, which rely heavily on bulk billing for vulnerable groups? They will obviously find it financially very challenging to survive if they do not institute co-payments. Yet these vulnerable patients are unlikely to be able to afford them.

The purpose of this co-payment proposal is to reduce the number of overall visits to the doctor. We all know that this has a real potential to harm many people, particularly those who are least able to pay. It will come with major health consequences into the future. That is why it is encouraging to see this Labor government investing a record \$1.4 billion in health and community care in 2014-15, and \$122 million over four years in capital funding under the health and infrastructure program, which I have talked about previously.

This record investment will see the Calvary Public Hospital benefit from 15 additional inpatient beds, which is part of the four-year program to deliver an additional 54 acute beds, a continuation of birthing services, an expansion of lymphoedema, endoscopy and ophthalmology services, better emergency department services and \$19.1 million for the Calvary Public Hospital car park.

Our other health services in my electorate will benefit from this record investment, including the University of Canberra public hospital, more services and more staff at the Belconnen Community Health Centre and nurse-led walk-in centre and an expansion of community nursing.

Madam Speaker, this is a true Labor budget, one that supports the less fortunate, one that creates opportunities even in difficult circumstances, one that supports job growth, one that supports Canberra. As I said earlier, this ACT Labor government has a commitment to Canberra and has achieved much success in ensuring that Canberra continues to be a diverse and vibrant place to live, work, visit and recreate. We will continue to do whatever we can to support the workers and families of the ACT. I urge everyone in this place to support this motion.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for Ageing) (10.43): I thank Dr Bourke for introducing this motion today to give us an opportunity to focus on some of the measures in the ACT budget, a budget that I think is quite appropriate for the circumstances we find ourselves in. I am very happy to support the ACT budget and I will be making some more detailed comments about my views in the budget in-principle debate tomorrow, but today I am supporting this motion. I will propose amendments to recognise some aspects of the budget that are particularly important to the ACT Greens and to me personally as well as to me as a minister, and accordingly I seek leave to move the amendments circulated in my name together.

Leave granted.

MR RATTENBURY: I move the amendments circulated in my name together:

(1) Insert new paragraphs (1)(h) and (i):

“(h) the ACT Budget maintains support for vulnerable groups in our community; and

(i) the ACT Budget provides for important measures to protect the environment”.

(2) Insert new paragraphs (2)(d) and (e):

“(d) maintain support for vulnerable groups in our community; and

(e) recognise the importance of the protection of the environment in developing the ACT Budget.”.

These amendments add references to the fact that the ACT budget maintains support for vulnerable groups in our community and provides important measures to protect the environment. These are two areas I would like to add some comments on because it is important that we remember that government should take the long and broad view as to what it should be doing to assist the community. This includes how we look after all members of the community not only through a range of structural measures already covered by other parts of this motion but also what we need to do for specific groups and even individuals. It means we look after those who are disadvantaged, and I would like to highlight some specific measures that I think are worth noting in the context of this discussion.

This budget does not lean on the poorest and most disadvantaged to achieve artificial surpluses. There is a range of sensible, long-term and evidence-based initiatives in this budget that will have deep and positive impacts for vulnerable Canberrans, initiatives that to date have not perhaps had the attention in the media they deserve. In particular, I would like to mention justice reinvestment. This is a concept and a methodology that is sometimes hard to explain but nonetheless worthy for that. In its simplest terms, justice reinvestment works directly with the common and known causes of criminal behaviour. This approach will see smart investment in targeted employment, education, training and health programs. It will enhance mental health responses and increase drug and alcohol strategies.

It is by no means a silver bullet or a panacea for all ills, but it recognises that, for many, the best crime prevention strategy is to reduce social and economic disadvantage and by doing so we are creating a fair and egalitarian society where those who need support can get it and where those that want opportunities can have them. I think this is at odds with the tone and reality of the federal budget that both directly and indirectly cuts off access to essential services for those that most need it. The justice reinvestment funding in the budget is particularly important, and I would like to emphasise for the Assembly where it sits.

We have, of course, in the budget seen a significant capital investment in the expansion of the Alexander Maconochie Centre. As I have discussed in this place before, this is something that is clearly needed based on the significant population pressures we have seen at the AMC. But at the time when I updated the Assembly on that, I stressed that the government was taking a multifaceted approach to responding to this. I am pleased to be able to come back to that point today in light of the budget funding and reflect on the fact that the government has a very clear objective to minimise the number of people who go to jail, not only in terms of ensuring that the capacity we build now lasts for a long time but also because it plays out for the benefit of the entire community. By reducing crime rates we obviously provide a safer community and we also minimise the number of people going to jail and, ideally, provide them with a series of better life opportunities that see them having productive and happy lives and not lives that see them ending up in incarceration.

The budget also allows for important projects such as the parliamentary agreement item Common Ground to progress. This project will support some of the most vulnerable people experiencing chronic homelessness. It will see them offered a home

and will support them to end the cycle of homelessness, for some people for the very first time. This project is bricks and mortar; it is concrete and it is real. It is well underway in the Gungahlin town centre, and this budget provides the recurrent funding that will add to that bricks and mortar contribution that has already been made. This is in real contrast to the uncertainty we see in the homelessness space that has been created by the federal budget.

I am appreciative that we have seen a one-year extension on the national partnership agreement on homelessness, but we have seen no outyear funding for that in the current federal budget. There is real uncertainty right across the housing and homelessness sector as a result of the federal government's budget. There is a real policy vacuum at the moment. I assume the minister is still working out the final policy direction in which he wishes to go, and I am certainly very keen to engage in discussions with him about that because we have got some very successful examples here in the ACT.

I am very conscious of the fact that the outcome of the federal budget is one of uncertainty. I am certainly hearing that from the NGOs working in the sector, those people who look at the policies of governments at the state, territory and federal levels very closely, and nobody really has a clear sense of where housing and homelessness policy is going. The sooner we can resolve that the better. I hope clarity will be provided as soon as possible from the commonwealth minister so that the community sector and state and territory governments can start to plan around what I suspect may be a significant change of direction. Certainly some of the measures highlighted in the commission of audit represent a very significant change. The lack of confirmation of any of those in the federal budget means there is uncertainty out there, and that is something we need to move past.

I am also very pleased about the way public housing has been discussed in this budget, and I welcome very warmly the words of the Treasurer about our need to renew public housing and to accelerate the renewal of that public housing. Clearly there has been a significant amount of media speculation about that, and I am concerned. I have had feedback from some of the public housing tenants across the territory about that media speculation. I can assure people of two things: one, the government is committed, as the Treasurer underlined in the budget presentation yesterday, to maintaining the number of public housing properties in the ACT. Second, for those tenants reading media reports, they can rest assured they will not be required to move until they have had very clear advice from public housing. They should not worry about the media speculation; they should focus on the fact that Housing ACT has a very clear program of working closely with tenants over a sustained period of time so they have real clarity about what they are doing. I think we will come back to that issue later today under the motion Ms Lawder will move.

One of the other areas I am very pleased about in the budget is the recurrent funding provided to the Aboriginal Legal Service, money that was originally intended to enhance the work this vital and well-evaluated service provides. I am sure this money will be even more welcome in the current environment as the federal budget strips funding from community legal services left, right and centre across the board, not just from the Aboriginal Legal Service but also from groups like the Environmental

Defenders Office and other community legal centres that we know provide an enormous role in plugging the gaps for people who cannot afford access to private legal services but who need legal support. We know community legal centres return a significant payback to government and the community by providing those services, and figures show that for every dollar invested in the community legal sector there is a significant benefit derived in avoided legal costs and disputes and other issues.

As Dr Bourke mentioned, we have seen over half a billion dollars being removed from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs. Again, there is a real lack of clarity about policy directions on exactly where the axe is going to fall and how the stated position of the Prime Minister to want to significantly close the gap and enhance the life of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians sits with the very significant funding cuts. Again, the people I am talking to in the community are uncertain about where this is going and what it will mean for key service providers like Winnunga, which we know delivers significant services to vulnerable members of the ACT community, not just Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the community but right across the board.

The long view the government has taken includes considering how we will look after the environment for current and future generations, and that goes to the second of my amendments. This budget maintains a range of environmental programs conducted through both the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate and the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate. These include doing work on planning for infill in our urban zone so that we reduce our footprint or at least stop it continuing to expand so that we have a city that benefits from the natural environment that is both around and within Canberra.

The budget also recognises other areas of environmental work, including in my portfolio funding for implementation of the plan for matters of national environmental significance in the Molonglo Valley. The Molonglo national environment significance plan, or NES plan, 2011 is an agreement with the commonwealth government which details the ACT's government commitment to protect matters of national environmental significance in the Molonglo Valley. These are the pink-tailed worm-lizard, natural temperate grassland, swift and superb parrots and yellow box red gum grassy woodland.

It is important that the ACT work with the commonwealth government to look after these matters of national environmental significance for both Australia and for the ACT. It is my very firm view that the commonwealth government has an ongoing responsibility to work with the states and territories to protect endangered and threatened species and habitats. The ACT is fortunate to have some of these species and habitats, and it is incumbent on us to protect and enhance them for current and future generations. We are certainly seeing from the commonwealth government a withdrawal from this space and abrogation of responsibility for the environment and for playing a federal role in looking after matters of national environmental significance. This needs to be a partnership and it is vital that the commonwealth government has an ongoing role in this space.

There is considerable detail about the work to be undertaken over the next four years under the Molonglo area national environmental significance plan: a range of

initiatives to restore degraded box gum woodland, research projects to better understand how to avoid and mitigate the potential impacts on the pink-tailed worm-lizard from urban residential development, and other matters around the biannual bird population and nesting surveys, finalising the statutory plan of management and operational plans for how we are going to do fire management and conservation strategies and time frames and how we manage the fuel load in a way that also protects those vulnerable species.

There are other areas in the TAMS directorate in particular that see a lot of environmental work going on, including the money for the enhanced biodiversity program which provides additional resources to tackle weeds, to further control rabbit populations and a boost for the park care groups across Canberra, groups that add enormously to the work parks rangers do. That is volunteer time and it is an enormous contribution. I am very keen that the government, by providing additional park rangers to support those groups, enables them to be very closely tied into the government's objectives so that there is a very strong partnership between park care and the parks service so that we look after our wonderful natural areas to the highest possible standard.

I also want to mention the parks and city services review which took place as part of this budget program. It is a real credit to TAMS that the expenditure review committee went over it with a fine-tooth comb—it is fair to say that ERCs are generally pretty rigorous—and found that parks and city services is operating incredibly efficiently. There are some suggestions for improvements in business and operating models, and TAMS will be taking those on board. But it recognised that, in fact, additional resources are needed for parks and city services to maintain the look and feel of our city and provide the urban amenity that Canberrans so treasure. I am pleased that over the next four years more than \$15 million is allocated in the budget to enhance the role of parks and city services to continue to look after this city in a way Canberrans expect.

There is much more to say about the budget and I am sure there will be further opportunities in this place to discuss those items. In summing up, I am happy to support the motion. As a Greens minister I will continue to work on developing budgets that recognise the needs of vulnerable Canberrans and that have confidence in the future of this city. Something that has come through very strongly is the way this budget says we have confidence in the future of Canberra and that the ACT government is getting right behind the city. I commend my amendments to the Assembly.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations and Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development) (10.58): I am pleased to join with my colleagues this morning in speaking to the motion proposed by Dr Bourke, which highlights the importance of this 2014-15 budget in providing for significant investment in the Canberra community, creating jobs and supporting our community and the services people need through a difficult economic period.

In particular, I am very pleased to see the focus on infrastructure investment in this budget. Infrastructure investment is needed to drive the delivery of the types of

services and capabilities our city will need to grow into the future—and, most importantly, to grow sustainably into the future, for ours is a growing city.

Even with a marked slowdown in the level of public sector employment at the commonwealth level and the flow-through impact that is having on other parts of our economy, particularly in relation to demand for housing and consumer sentiment more broadly, we recognise in these budget papers that overall the economy will continue to grow, albeit at a much slower pace.

Our city will continue to grow as well. There will remain demand for housing. There will remain demand for better services and better transport infrastructure, and there will be a whole range of expectations around schooling, hospitals and health care, which are critical for the future of our city, its sustainability and its place as a fair city for Canberrans to grow up and live in.

I am particularly keen to focus this morning, therefore, on a number of important infrastructure projects and the next steps that are being supported in this budget.

The first, of course, is to acknowledge the ongoing work in relation to the development of new justice infrastructure to meet the needs of a growing city. The government has been working diligently over the last three to four years on developing and finalising its business case and its assessment of the need for new court facilities to meet the needs of our community. The ageing ACT Supreme Court building, first built in the early 1960s, has reached the end of its current functional life, and there is a need to upgrade and modernise our courts precinct to meet the needs of a growing population. That work continues to be supported through funding available in this budget and previous budgets.

The delivery of the territory's first public-private partnership through the courts redevelopment project will give us a great opportunity to demonstrate the capabilities of the PPP to deliver value for money, to deliver innovation and to create a modern courts precinct that will meet the needs of our community well into the future.

We need more modern justice infrastructure. The court is an aged building. We do not have enough jury courts to support the range of criminal trials with juries that are needed. We do not have adequate separation of the various parties who will appear in a courtroom. Whether that is keeping the accused separate from prosecutors and vulnerable witnesses, whether it is making sure that juries have adequate facilities to retire in and for refreshment, whether there are the right rooms available for lawyers to consult with their clients during a trial, or whether our judges and their support staff have adequate office accommodation to meet their needs both outside the courtroom and within it, there are compelling reasons for a redevelopment of the courts precinct.

That work now will continue to be progressed over the coming financial year, and we will see the development of a specific proposal that will allow our courts to be redeveloped and to deliver contemporary modern justice infrastructure for our city.

It is also worth focusing on the funding made available in this budget for the future development of the capital metro light rail project. This is a major infrastructure

project for our city, one that will do much for local industry and business, one that will do much to improve transport in our city—better transport for all Canberrans.

The budget provides \$20.4 million to contribute to progressing the project to an investment-ready stage. This will allow the Capital Metro Agency to deliver critical elements of its project plan, including a reference design, an analysis of procurement methodology options, contract development, and the identification of appropriate enabling and associated works.

All of these works are needed to get us to the point to make the critical decision on how to progress this important election commitment. Capital metro is a project, a light rail project, that has a positive cost-benefit analysis, a cost-benefit analysis that stacks up well against other light rail projects around the world and around Australia. It is a project that will deliver better transport for our city, not just for those who use the project but also for those who travel along that corridor. It has network-wide benefits for the road network as a whole.

Reducing congestion on Northbourne Avenue by enabling more people to use public transport along the corridor means that other parts of the road network operate more efficiently and with less congestion. Think about roads such as Barry Drive. Think about roads such as Ginninderra Drive. Think about the Federal Highway itself, and traffic coming in from the Barton Highway. All of these parts of the road network, and the road users, benefit from better public transport provision—as well as those who use the service itself.

It is a project with a good, strong, cost-benefit analysis. It is a project with an effective benefit across the transport system as a whole. And we know now that it is also a project that delivers jobs into our local economy. The report released from Ernst & Young in the last few days confirms over 3,500 jobs being delivered into this project over the key period of its construction, and up to 50,000 jobs being enabled and realised along the corridor over the decades following its construction and completion. This is consistent with the experience of light rail projects in other cities. On the Gold Coast, stage 1 of that system generated around 6,000 direct and indirect jobs. Sydney's CBD and south-east light rail projects are projected to create 10,000 jobs.

These are big infrastructure projects, and they support jobs in our construction sector at a time when the construction sector is facing a very significant downturn. Many of these jobs are low-skill jobs. They are labouring jobs. But they are also skilled tradespeople's jobs—electricians, bricklayers, carpenters, all of the key skills that we want to support in our economy, particularly with young people working in these sectors as our economy is facing a significant downturn in other areas. This is a very important investment in terms of jobs, and it delivers on those jobs.

The project also delivers on providing business and investment certainty. In the long term, the economic benefits of light rail are associated with increasing the value of land along the corridor, increasing the opportunities for business to choose to locate their operations close to the corridor, because they value the reliability and the certainty that a light rail project delivers.

This is a project that is receiving good support. For example, the Property Council of Australia has said:

The ... project ... has the potential to create jobs, attract investment and provide economic uplift across the capital.

The Property Council of Australia ACT Division went on to say:

Critical infrastructure projects can build the nation and the economy ... We need our own critical infrastructure projects in the nation's capital—and a project that can help Canberra become a more liveable, efficient and sustainable city ticks a lot of boxes.

This is strong endorsement from a leading industry association about the benefits of this project. I welcome those comments.

We need to continue to explain to Canberrans the change that is being proposed, why it is important and how it is creating jobs, economic opportunity and better transport for our city. This budget allows us to continue that important work as we continue to support Canberra, its economy and its community.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education) (11.08): I speak to the motion and to the amendments at the same time, and I thank Dr Bourke for bringing this very important motion to the Assembly today, just one day after the tabling of the ACT's budget. The budget is the most important annual statement of any government. It outlines clearly the agenda that the government will pursue over the next 12 months and beyond. It also sums up in a very concise way the values that underpin the government.

The decisions that are reflective of that in the budget yesterday show that this is a government that cares deeply about our local community, that we want to provide stability, certainty and confidence across the economy in what will be perhaps the most challenging times this city has faced in the last 20 years, and the budget shows a government that is prepared to continue to invest in but also to support the most vulnerable in our community. It stands in sharp contrast, I think, to the budget that was handed down just three weeks ago at the commonwealth level which sought to reduce significantly spending across the country, here in the ACT at a disproportionate level, but which also targeted some of the most vulnerable communities across Australia.

The ACT government—and we had to consider our budget very carefully following the tabling of the commonwealth budget—has taken the decision to continue delivering on the commitments we made to the people of the ACT in 2012, continuing the commitments we made with Shane Rattenbury when we signed the parliamentary agreement post the election in 2012. We have sought to meet the internal pressures that invariably arise in a service-delivery government, where they do, and address those to ensure that there is a continuity of high-quality services across the board.

We have sought, where we can, to ameliorate some of the cuts and the impacts that the commonwealth reductions will have, whilst not necessarily taking responsibility to enter the field that they have so clearly left. We have also sought to continue along the path that we had set out on in terms of investing in the infrastructure that our city needs, that a growing city is demanding, whether it be in health infrastructure, in public transport infrastructure, in development opportunities to allow the economic opportunities for the city to continue regardless of the biggest player in town's intentions.

So this budget was an incredible challenge to put together and, for someone who has sat round the budget table now for a few years, I would say it is one of the hardest to balance up the range of competing priorities against the available resources that the government has and then carefully watch that and look at that in terms of the economic climate of the city. That changed dramatically three weeks before this budget was to be handed down.

The other important area in the budget relates to the continuing efforts we have to improve the efficient operation and the effective operation of our tax base. So we are looking at changes to how we collect our own revenue. This should come as no surprise to anybody. We went to the election outlining our agenda in this regard. We are continuing to implement it and we are prepared to debate that and talk about that with our opponents, as we no doubt will over the next few days.

Whilst there are changes and increases to rates across the territory, there are also continued reductions in insurance charges and payroll tax and the amounts that people will have to pay for stamp duty when they choose to move or downsize. These are all important elements of the tax reform package that must be acknowledged and, I think, is acknowledged outside this place as a very positive long-term reform agenda for the territory. I have no doubt that governments of the future, treasurers of the future, chief ministers of the future will look back at this time and acknowledge the important and necessary steps we are taking in relation to tax reform.

I also welcome the feedback that we have had on the budget to date. I cannot think of another budget that has been perhaps so eagerly anticipated, so heavily lobbied around. There is no doubt that the consultations the Treasurer undertook, the consultations I undertook, following the federal budget announcements, where we had people ringing up wanting to come to those roundtables to participate, made sure that when we were finalising the budget we understood exactly what those various interest groups wanted and needed and that we reflected that in our budget to the largest degree possible. I think the responses that we have received to date, the media commentary, the media releases that have been put out, have clearly shown there is broad-based support for the direction that the government has taken.

I nominate some of those leading industry groups who have been prepared to stand up and say that they think the decisions we have taken, whilst challenging, are pointing the territory in the right direction. They include the Canberra Business Council, the ACT Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Property Council, the Insurance Council, Medicare Local, the Mental Health Coalition, the ANMF—not always an

easy group to please but there they are—the Heart Foundation, the AEU, ACTCOSS, the Youth Coalition, Advocacy for Inclusion and even a mention from the Australasian Railway Association—all important feedback

Mr Hanson: Who would have thought?

MS GALLAGHER: It is nice to welcome the Leader of the Opposition here today in what appears to be an unprecedented silence for a private members' day motion to this point in time. I cannot recall actually ever attending a private members' day where there was absolutely no willingness to engage in the formal debate. Obviously there is continued interest to heckle, jeer, deride and interject, something that Mr Hanson knows how to do very well, but in an honest debate on the big issues that face this city we hear silence from the opposition. Maybe I have goaded them into speaking now. Maybe we will see—

Members interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Ms Gallagher, sit down. Stop the clock, thank you. Mr Hanson, I know that Ms Gallagher remarked that she had not heard from the opposition but I am hearing a bit too much from you at the moment. So could you keep your voice down, thank you. Ms Gallagher.

MS GALLAGHER: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I think the feedback that the government has received to date was shown by the feeling in the room earlier today, a packed-out room, a big audience to hear the Treasurer talk through in great detail the reasons behind the decisions the government took. There was standing room only at that function. In fact, I am told it is so popular now, perhaps because it does not have us parading on stage like we are actors in a game but actually because it is a legitimate discussion about the issues by experts, not political opponents, that we need a bigger room.

We have plenty of time for those debates, do not worry about that, but what we actually had today, the day after budget day—and you would have been more than welcome to attend, Mr Hanson, to actually hear from people who understand what is going on in this city and who are prepared to criticise where they need but in an actually informed way, backed by some expertise and with the removal of the political games that have fraught that event in years past—was a much higher quality event, with people willing to engage. Indeed, I am advised we need to find a larger venue to fit everybody in. We have not seen that before.

Mr Hanson: All of the insiders, is it?

MS GALLAGHER: I am not sure the audience there today would like to be referred to as Labor insiders. It is a professional event and it should be given the respect it deserves, even if you feel that you were uninvited to it.

Mr Hanson: You refused to debate it.

MS GALLAGHER: We never refuse to debate you, ever.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Just resume your seat, Ms Gallagher. Stop the clock.

Mr Hanson: That is what he said.

MS GALLAGHER: You cannot help yourself, can you?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Ms Gallagher, please. Mr Hanson, I have asked you to remain silent while Ms Gallagher is on her feet, and I ask you again. The next time you speak, I will warn you. Ms Gallagher.

MS GALLAGHER: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. So it is great that we have had the opportunity to discuss the budget to date. The feedback that I have received in the last 24 hours has been overwhelmingly positive, with the view that the territory government is steering the ACT economy in the right direction, underpinned by decisions taken in this budget that will stabilise the economy, that will instil confidence in the economy and that, importantly, will outline a vision for this city in light of the fact that there is no-one else prepared to outline a vision for this city. The commonwealth government certainly does not have one and the ACT needs one. And they get it from this budget.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella) (11.18): I, too, rise in support of Dr Bourke's motion supporting the ACT budget as being one of positivity for the ACT economy against the stark comparison of what the federal Liberals have provided for Canberra. Despite the fact that in this budget alone we see a loss of \$80 million from the commonwealth through cuts to grants for health and education among other items from the ACT's bottom line, this government is continuing to work to build and transform Canberra not only for the short term but for generations to come.

Brindabella continues to be a place for growth and development. Residents of this area will be able to see where the budget directly affects them through upgrades to local health, education and TAMS services locally while seeing the larger announcements that have been previously discussed.

Since opening earlier this year the rebuilt Tuggeranong health centre has been an outstanding success and a key asset to the Brindabella community. The government is committed to continuing and expanding these services, including the Tuggeranong walk-in clinic that will open this year. As part of the expansions to the health centre, the ACT government is injecting another 4.5 full-time equivalent staff members into the centre at a cost of over \$2 million. These additions to health services in Tuggeranong are just one part of the larger health budget, with an extra \$285 million going towards extra health services. This includes an extra 31 hospital beds and 500 elective procedures a year. This again shows a stark comparison between the ACT and commonwealth governments in their commitment to the people of Canberra.

The ACT budget allocates another \$1.4 million in upgrades to childcare centres in Tuggeranong. Bunyarra in Chisholm and Salem in Kambah are now set to experience

full-blown renovations, including an increase in size. These renovations will bring these two childcare centres up to meet the national quality standards for early childhood education and care services, meaning a higher quality of care and education for these children.

This \$1.4 million is in addition to the work currently underway on the Tuggeranong introductory English centre that is due to be ready for the start of next year's classes. The school will ensure high quality introductory English courses are able to be provided not only to the children of migrants but the entire family. This availability provides these welcome new residents in our communities an easier transition to life in Australia through the use of new language skills to facilitate access to local education, health and public transport services.

Along with the upgrades in health and early education, there has been another major announcement for my electorate, Brindabella, in the budget—provision for investigating the opening of a CIT campus in Tuggeranong. That has been a long-pushed program from Joy Burch. A campus in Tuggeranong would be a dramatic improvement for education services in the region. This will mean that those students who go into a CIT course after year 12 or as a mature aged student will not need to face the extra burden of a long commute to their educational facility. This represents a large contrast to the newly released budget from the federal Liberal government, which has used its first budget to announce major cuts and deregulation of the higher education sector, making it harder for students to obtain higher education.

Together with the educational and health benefits in the Tuggeranong area, we also see a major improvement in local services through territory and municipal services, as well as sport and recreation. After a long community campaign, the ACT government has taken the first step to working with the Theodore community on its local oval through the provision of outdoor gym equipment for the local oval. The provision of this gym equipment will assist the local community in their health and wellbeing, while continuing community pride. The Theodore oval has been very much an underutilised area since the irrigation unfortunately needed to be turned off during the drought, causing large damage to the facility.

In addition to the improvement of the Theodore oval, the Greenway oval will be receiving upgrades to the value of \$8 million. These upgrades will see the addition of several facilities on the site to assist local sporting teams utilising this facility as well as upgrades to the surface itself. Both of these upgrades will help the community in Tuggeranong to become more active and healthy, helping the progress of the ACT's healthy initiative program through direct government investment.

Local recreation will also see a major improvement with \$100,000 for design and planning works and \$500,000 for construction of a local water play park at the Lakeside Leisure Centre. This centre will provide Tuggeranong locals with additional aquatic facilities similar to those that can be visited at Dickson pool and the recently opened Gungahlin Leisure Centre.

This budget also sees the next step taken in the Erindale master plan. The Erindale bus station will see a \$900,000 improvement, and this is a local infrastructure project that has been long requested. Public transport continues to grow in popularity due to the

increase in car costs and a growing awareness of our need to reduce emissions. These improvements will assist in the continuation of more people jumping onto a bus for their day-to-day commutes with amenity and security upgrades.

I would also like to take this moment to congratulate the ACT government on what it is doing to invest in health care, specifically in regard to the important area of mental health and suicide prevention. \$2.1 million is going directly to suicide prevention. This is being done through the direct provision of services as well as the promotion of community awareness of suicide prevention. This works directly with the additional \$9 million worth of investments for mental health services and \$43 million for the secure mental health facility, with a specialised 25-bed facility available to appropriately accommodate those with a severe mental illness throughout their recovery process.

The government has continued to realise that Canberrans are not just numbers or ticks in boxes but individuals with needs and contributing members of their community. This budget is a true Labor budget. It helps to ensure that the people who are most in need have access to facilities and services to assist them with their daily and recreational lives.

In light of the federal budget in May, I offer my support to Dr Bourke's motion and the budget itself. Without the stimulus that is being provided by the ACT government, the impact of the federal budget would have a much larger range. Might I say that the grave impact on the local community after the federal budget would be similar to the situation we saw in 1996. The ACT government, with this budget and the rest of the work we do, will fight to prevent such an equivocal effect being felt. Once again, I commend Dr Bourke's motion and the budget.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (11.26): The 2014-15 ACT budget sends a signal to our community that the ACT government is investing in Canberra to grow jobs and look after our health and education systems. This is, of course, the bread and butter of any state and territory government, but this year, in the face of the biggest federal cuts in 20 years, these things matter much more than ever. The ACT budget is doing what is necessary to protect Canberra in the short term and to lay the foundations for prosperity into the future. This is, by and large, a progressive budget from a progressive government.

As we all know, Madam Deputy Speaker, Canberra is facing a challenging period because of the commonwealth cuts. We on this side know that this is not the time to cut services, and we are committed to supporting our community through this difficult time. That is why we are continuing to invest in projects like the human services blueprint that helps families access government services, especially when they are doing it tough.

To keep our city working we will be borrowing to invest in major infrastructure projects that will bring benefits to our economy in the long run. These include the UC public hospital, light rail, a new convention centre, city to the lake and new court facilities. These projects are important right across the ACT. For those seeking employment, the jobs created by these projects will offer opportunities in a market weakened by 6,500 federal public service job losses.

All of us will benefit from the economic impact of keeping employment and investment here in the ACT. Whilst this will be a challenging time, the ACT government is committed to keeping Canberra working and investing in this community when it needs it most.

In west Belconnen and my electorate of Ginninderra, this budget delivers a range of investments in infrastructure, community services and environmental protections. These initiatives include increases to the level of coverage for weekend bus services in Macgregor, which has already been touched on in speeches by my colleagues here today; trialling the human services blueprint to bring government services together to ensure that people get the services they need when they need them; continued work on the Charnwood shops and ovals to improve amenities; conservation management to start in the grassland surrounding new Macgregor, around Jarramlee, to encourage the sun moth to breed and flourish once more; and more services and more staff at the Belconnen Community Health Centre and walk-in centre.

Probably the most important aspect for west Belconnen to come out of this budget has been the commitment to trial the local services network in our suburbs. The local services network is a key plank of the new human services blueprint. The blueprint aims to make our human services system better integrated and people centred. The blueprint has three initiatives that will achieve this aim: the strengthening families program, the human services gateway and the local services network.

Under the blueprint, the strengthening families program will be expanded to include up to 50 families who have complex needs. Since its launch, the strengthening families program has successfully helped some of our most vulnerable families to lead stable and meaningful lives.

The human services gateway is critical to better integrating and streamlining access to government and community services. The gateway will bring services together under an accessible services hub which will mean that, as far as possible, people needing a range of services can be assessed and referred to appropriate services regardless of where they enter the system.

The local services network seeks to better integrate local delivery of government and community services to vulnerable people and families in our community. The local services network takes a place-based approach that will link local government and community service providers to build a strong network that is engaged at all levels of the west Belconnen community to give a real hand up to people and families who need it.

I am really proud of this achievement, Madam Deputy Speaker. I know how much work ACT public servants, community groups and service providers have done in coming up with this blueprint. They should be praised for their nation-leading work. I look forward to seeing positive results for the west Belconnen community from this new network over the years ahead.

The human services blueprint is a symbol of this government's commitment to build Canberra up. We are not just a government who wants to create economic prosperity

for those who are already doing well; we want to make sure that all Canberrans are able to access the benefits that come with living in this beautiful city.

As the Treasurer and others have said since the budget was handed down yesterday, our budget stands in contrast to that of the commonwealth's. We want to build Canberra up; they want to tear Canberra down. We are investing in health—we are building the UC public hospital and investing in walk-in centres and the centenary hospital; they are attacking our public health system by bringing in a Medicare tax. We are investing in education—we are building new schools and bringing a CIT campus to Tuggeranong; they are walking away from Gonski and saddling our youth with monstrous debt to go to university. We are investing directly in the creation of jobs and helping those who lose theirs; they are cutting 16,500 public service jobs and ripping jobs out of Canberra to fulfil pork-barrelling on the Central Coast. We are committed to Canberra; the Liberals are only committed to themselves.

Is it any wonder that the only real policy input we have heard from the Canberra Liberals this week has not been from those opposite but from the Young Liberals—something about corporal punishment in private schools? I did not know this was such a burning issue, Madam Deputy Speaker.

In conclusion, this budget delivers for Belconnen, it delivers for Canberra and it shows the rest of the country that progressive governments—that's right, Labor-Green governments—can deliver essential services combined with a commitment to social justice, economic responsibility and environmental sustainability. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

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) (11.34): I thank Mr Rattenbury for moving his amendments. It gives me the opportunity to speak further on the budget, particularly in relation to the Community Services portfolio, and, of course, to provide some further observations in relation to the reaction to the budget.

I think it is quite right to raise as an area of focus in this budget the government's commitment to supporting the most vulnerable in our community, because it does stand in marked contrast to the approach that we saw from the federal government only three weeks ago, where those who are doing it the toughest in Australian society have been asked to take a disproportionate share of the burden of what the federal government deems to be an urgent budget restoration task.

We can have a long debate—and I am sure we will—in relation to the need to slash government spending to the extent that the commonwealth government has. Equally, and perhaps most importantly, Madam Deputy Speaker, there is a very legitimate debate to be had about this: if you choose that public policy approach then who should bear the burden and pay the deepest cost associated with that course of action?

What we have seen from the federal budget and the approach of the federal government is that those who are in receipt of welfare payments or those who do not have the capacity to earn high levels of private income are the ones that are being

asked to take the greatest share of the heavy lifting, as it is described by those opposite.

It is concerning that we now have this approach to our national politics whereby picking on the most vulnerable in society—be they young people, pensioners or those in receipt of some form of government allowance—is now a new national sport for the conservative side of politics, for the Institute of Public Affairs and their fellow travellers, who deem that these people are the ones who should be targeted for significant pain and to have a significant withdrawal of support for them—all sacrificed on the altar of some sort of fiscal purity, particularly in the next couple of years.

So it is timely for the ACT to be able to deliver an entirely different approach in its budget, to ensure that we are making the investments in health and education, and in community services in particular, to ensure that we are offering a helping hand to those most in need, and that we are ensuring that service provision for those people who need it the most will be there.

When we received the hospital pass from the federal Treasurer and the Prime Minister, particularly on health spending, we were faced with two choices—either to significantly cut expenditure in health or to seek to maintain our effort to support the health and wellbeing of our community and wear that on the budget bottom line. We have chosen to do that this year. As the Chief Minister said, you simply cannot turn on and off health services like a tap. We are obviously being asked to undertake significant burden sharing by the commonwealth. It is not so much sharing here; the entire problem is now in the hands of the states and territories.

It is interesting to note the unanimity of voice from state and territory governments, regardless of whether they are Labor or Liberal. There is certainly a consensus across the states and territories that what occurred three weeks ago was not only a breach of a fundamental commitment that was made prior to the federal election but also it would hurt the most vulnerable and would put undue pressure on states and territories in the delivery of services.

That is why we have adopted an entirely different approach in the delivery of our budget. As a number of organisations have rightly observed, the budget announcements in maintaining current health services, along with the additional spending on clinical and community services, were in fact most welcome. It is a budget that very rightly put the welfare of the ACT community's most vulnerable first. Given the difficult economic environment imposed on the ACT government by the federal government, we made a very sensible decision in this budget to maintain health spending, and that should be recognised and acknowledged.

I think we are seeing that across the community services sector, from those as diverse as Medicare Local, ACTCOSS and ACT Shelter, amongst others, who have certainly made very supportive comments about the government's decisions with regard to community services.

As my colleague Ms Berry mentioned, last week we launched the human services blueprint in west Belconnen, with a particular focus on connected service delivery, as

part of a trial of this new approach, providing the right services for the right duration at the right time. Not only is this a sensible approach to community service delivery, but also it allows for co-design of programs and delivery with the community sector at a highly localised level in order to support families.

Minister Burch has particular initiatives—I am sure she will have the opportunity to talk about these in a moment—around strengthening families. The budget initiative to support an additional 50 vulnerable families in our community is a very timely and important budget investment that we have made in the 2014-15 budget.

Mr Rattenbury's amendments also raise the issue of environmental protection. I certainly acknowledge that, through his advocacy and the advocacy of the minister for the environment, there are a range of projects and programs contained within this budget that have a focus on protecting our natural environment, ensuring biodiversity.

There are also significant additional funds within the budget in relation to our nature parks, our urban parks and the urban playground that our city sits amongst. That is something that is very clearly a priority for the community, and something that Ministers Rattenbury and Corbell have worked very strongly together on to ensure that we have a good package of measures in this budget that protect the environment and ensure that we are making the right investments in the territory's municipal service base in particular.

The ACT government is, of course, unique in this country in providing both state and municipal level services. It is a very significant responsibility that we have to provide such a diverse range of services, Madam Deputy Speaker. In seeking to strike the balance between the community's highest priorities, which are always in the areas of health and education, it is important that we maintain a very strong focus on municipal level services. You see that in this budget with the additional funding in a number of areas.

In the remaining minute and a half of my contribution, I would also like to take the opportunity to highlight the investments that the government has made in this budget in sport and recreation, and in a range of initiatives to support an active and healthier community. Although we already lead the nation by way of participation in sport and recreation, there are a number of initiatives in this budget, from Tuggeranong in the south to Gungahlin in the north and throughout central Canberra, Belconnen, Weston Creek and the Woden valley, that go to support a more active community.

They are small in some instances, through to larger investments—for example, in the Lyneham tennis precinct, that rounds out what is a world-class sporting precinct now in that part of the city. They certainly will facilitate new investment from new investment partners, support our hard-working sport and recreation organisations to deliver quality programs and allow Canberra to continue to be Australia's healthiest and most active city. That is a record that we are very proud of. (*Time expired.*)

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (11.44): It has been an interesting morning so far. From the last 1¾ hours, the takeaway from the morning's debate is the lack of colour and the lack of passion from those opposite in selling their budget. It has been a drab affair. That is probably the take-out message of this budget.

Let me go to what Mr Gentleman said. It is good to see that Mick has now read the budget. Last night at the Tuggeranong Community Council meeting, he was asked a question as to what the aquatic funding for his electorate was for. Unfortunately, he could not answer the question. It is good that you have read it now, Mick.

Mr Gentleman, we noticed also that you said last night that this actually was not a transformational budget. Mick's take on it, Treasurer, was this. You might give him the speaking notes, because he obviously lost his copy. His take on it was: "It is just a steady as you go budget." He thought that was an appropriate summary of your transformational budget—steady as you go.

What can we take out from Mr Gentleman's comments? He said—and a number of them have said it: not all of them, but a couple of them—that it is a typical Labor budget. Yes, it is. It is a budget that is big on spending, big on borrowing and big on debt, with very few real pathways to sustainability. It is a typical Labor budget. It is full of adjectives, but there are few answers.

That is the problem for the people of Canberra. Mr Wall was there last night; Ms Lawder was there last night. Most of the people there were not impressed with the big borrowings and the fact that they end up paying for it. Not many people in Tuggeranong saw much in this budget for them. Indeed, a number were quite upset that key among the achievements of the government for Tuggeranong was different cells at the tip. And all the spending at the AMC is attributed solely as a benefit to Tuggeranong. A number of people were quite upset. That is what you get when you have to pad out your budget, when you have to pick and choose where you put things. That is the problem with this budget.

Mr Barr spoke about the endless possibilities, the brilliant possibilities. Again I am not sure where his brilliant possibilities and the transformational budget take us. It is interesting to note that the return of the budget to surplus is predicated on almost the same spending in 2015-16 as in 2014-15. Treasurer, that will be a task I look forward to you achieving with your colleagues in the ministry. There will be six ministers all paying for their fair cut of the budget.

This year, we see an increase in expenses of \$272 million. Next year, 2015-16, it is only \$36 million. In 2016-17 it is 176. In 2017-18 it is 172. That is five times the following year, and seven times what it is this year. Therein lies the problem. The Treasurer cannot deliver that with his colleagues and his own approach to the budget. This mysterious sudden increase is simply predicated on the fact that in one year their increase in spending over the estimates will be \$36 million. They have never achieved it. It is hundreds of millions of dollars every year, year on year, but magically next year we will have restraint. And there you have it.

It is interesting to see the change in the rhetoric that we are getting now. Mr Barr yesterday actually blamed the Gillard government. He said that harder times began when the commonwealth started contracting their spending employment in our economy. That began in the last budget under the Gillard government. There you go. He went to on to say "not so much pushed, but responded to the impact of the budget 13 months ago, and it has been compounded". Yes, it has been compounded this year. But at least one member is now standing up and telling the truth.

Mr Corbell got it right yesterday when he said that we are in a situation where both sides of politics federally are dudding the ACT. So there is an admission from two. Remember that these are the members that were mute last year. They all had the chance to say this in their speeches last year. None of them did. Indeed, the Treasurer last year, when we had a motion on last year's federal budget, did not say a word. He pretended to be waiting for somebody else to speak, and when I got up to close he did not jump to his feet; he was mute.

In some ways, you could make the case that the budget being delivered this year should have been delivered last year, but that would be to acknowledge that the then federal Labor government—I cannot remember whether it was Gillard or Rudd who was in charge, because they changed so often—had abandoned the ACT in the lead-up to the federal election. Of course, they did not want that to happen. There we have it. That is the truth of the matter here.

Ms Gallagher got up and said, “This is a government that cares deeply.” You did not care last year. You were silent on these cuts, Chief Minister. You did not stand up last year and say, “Stop it, federal Labor government.” You abandoned the people of the ACT. You said that it was an incredible challenge. Yes. That is because you did not prepare in previous years, and you certainly did not prepare last year for what was coming.

There is the quote from Robert Macklin in the *CityNews*:

ANDREW Barr's sudden discovery that “recession” was looming was equally unimpressive. Bleating is not an option, Andrew. Did you really not see the Abbott/Hockey steamroller coming ...

And what did you do when the Gillard-Rudd steamroller flattened this town? Let us remember, members, that it is 14,473 jobs that the head of the finance department said are attributable to Labor cuts.

Let us have a look at the motion in detail. Part (1) notes:

... the ACT Budget provides for significant investment in the Canberra community by creating jobs and growing the economy through transformational projects ...

What are these transformational projects? Which one is starting today? Which one is shovel ready? Which one will deliver these jobs this year when they are required? The answer is: none of them are ready. Capital metro is not ready. The subacute facility is not ready. The stadium is not ready.

Treasurer, I have to say thank you for the either \$1.5 million or \$9.5 million that may or may not appear for the convention centre. I know that you could not bring yourself to make it a neat 10, because you voted against the motion in the last sitting week, but at least there is a bit of dedicated money—1½ clearly; the rest is obscured by being not for publication in the budget. But even the convention centre will take some two years to get to shovel-ready status. That is the hallmark of a government that was not

prepared. All of these transformational projects are in the never-never. There are no time lines for them. We do not know when they will commence. We do not know which of them are actually shovel ready.

We talked about the big infrastructure budget, but what about even the minor projects, things like the additions to Alexander Maconochie Centre? The question is: will a single sod be turned there this year to allow that to happen? I suspect the answer is no. When you go through that list of projects, not very many are shovel ready. That is the problem. This is the government on the never-never; it is always playing catch-up. I think it is unfortunate.

Let me look at the capital works program for this year, 2013-14, and prior year programs, a total of \$446 million; 2013-14 rollovers and reprofiling, \$149 million. So there is 25 per cent not delivered, again. This is the hallmark of this government. I always enjoy it when Mr Corbell wants to get up and talk about his delivery of capital works. We all know that Mr Corbell and infrastructure go together; they are the real deal! Mr Corbell and his GDE—on time, on budget? Six years late and four times the cost. There was the prison, the false opening of the prison. This was the prison that was going to last 20 to 25 years, Mr Corbell proudly told people. What is happening now? We are going back into a prison to build. Then there is Mr Corbell's City Hill plan from 2005, not a piece of which has happened.

Let me go through some of the big items that Mr Corbell was talking about. There was the potential for a new court. We have been talking about the potential for a new court for as long as I can remember. Again, it is not delivered.

If we look at blowout in costs, we only have to go to the secure mental health facility, which was meant to be opened three years ago at a cost of \$11 million. Here we are today and it is going to cost \$43 million—and who knows when it will open? The problem for those opposite is that all of the people, and the families of those people, who needed that facility have been left in the lurch by this government—hairy government.

Mr Wall: The bush healing farm.

MR SMYTH: The bush healing farm is another one. Thank you, Mr Wall. What about the bush healing farm saga? The bush healing farm, because the government got the process wrong, is now pushed back by—what, another one or two years?

Mr Wall: Another year.

MR SMYTH: Another year? It is another year of indifference from an indifferent government that does not deliver.

It is all well and good to say that you care deeply. You did not last year. It is all well and good to say that there is an incredible challenge. Yes, there is, and most of it is because you did not prepare.

The Chief Minister went on to say, “We are living within available resources.” That is right, because you did not put away for the future. Then she made the most

extraordinary claim that she wanted honest debate on the big issues. We used to have an honest debate on the big issues; it used to be the breakfast that the Canberra Business Council ran. But the Treasurer went to the council and said: "I am not coming if they are coming. If you want me there for an honest debate, I want an honest debate with myself." He is afraid of the public criticism, because he knows that, in most years, the day after the budget, the budget died when it was put under critical analysis by the opposition. If you want to have a debate with yourself, go for your life, but you are not being honest with the people of the ACT.

Let me go to Mr Corbell again. If he blew the GDE out by about four times, what will he blow out capital metro by? Those opposite are letting Mr Corbell run this project. He has never delivered a project on time. I saw an email yesterday that spoke about Edinburgh, which is relatively the same size as the ACT. It just did a light rail; it is about half the size of what they promised and it is about double the cost.

On Mr Corbell's record alone, people should be very wary of things like capital metro. He has never delivered anything on time. I asked him in estimates to name a project he had delivered on time, on budget, on scope. There was silence. He later gave me a list—most of which were projects that I had started, but such is life. With capital metro and with this budget, who will be left holding the debt? Who will be left holding the liabilities? It is the taxpayer of the ACT. At the Tuggeranong Community Council meeting last night, people were not particularly impressed about the sorts of numbers that were being thrown around; they wanted to know how it was going to be paid off.

We talk about a transformational budget, but the government does not tell us what they are transforming the ACT from and to. The problem that we have, for those of us who sat here for many years and listened to Ted Quinlan's lecture on the budget cycle, is that yes, there is boom and there is bust. We all know that that is what happens in economies. Sometimes it is our fault; sometimes it is the fault of external circumstances.

The problem here is that I get a sense that this is a government waiting for the public sector to pick up again. They have said, for instance, that, for the 6½ thousand jobs that are going, they have a \$150,000 fund for all of those public servants that want to go from the public sector into the private sector. What does that work out to be with 6½ thousand jobs?

Mr Wall: I think it is about \$18 a head.

MR SMYTH: It is about \$18 a head. Altogether, it is \$18 a head. That is a coffee and a croissant with your career adviser. That is all it is.

Mr Barr: So all 6½ thousand jobs are coming next year, are they?

MR SMYTH: I do not know.

Members interjecting—

MR SMYTH: The number is 2,000 in the budget. That will make it three times that, so it is about 60 bucks a head. There is your problem. This is not a government that is serious about growing the private sector here in a real, long-term, meaningful way.

We did it in 1995 to 2001. There is a debate about it later this afternoon in which I am sure we will get lots of diverse views and hear what people's vision for Canberra might be. But if we want to beat the boom and bust cycle, the best bulwark against the federal downturns, whether it comes from a Labor government or whether it comes from a Liberal government, is to have a strong, vibrant, growing private sector, as well as maintaining the public sector. This is not against the public sector, but it is keeping and growing the private sector as a defence against the downturns that come.

If you look for that defence, if you look for those gains, there are a few crumbs here. There is a bit of money for tourism; there is a bit of money for the convention centre; there is a bit of money for the convention bureau; and there is \$150,000 in the first year to get people from public to private. But there is not a vision for this city where you can say that we will move away from the dependence that we have had. We heard it from Jon Stanhope: "We will always be a government town." It is there in the *Hansard*. We have heard it from the Chief Minister, Ms Gallagher: "We will always be a government town." We know that the government do not believe that they can do a strong stimulus job. We had the comments from Ms Gallagher, when she was Treasurer, that we are too small to stimulate. I have spoken to people in the business community; they do not see a significant stimulus in this document.

If you want to be a transformational government, what you want to do is say, "Let us transform ourselves away from the public sector." Cities like Washington have done it. They have brought more business in to make themselves more sustainable. If you want to be transformed or transformational, that is the sort of budget you should deliver. (*Time expired.*)

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability, Children and Young People, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Women, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Racing and Gaming) (11.59): I will just add a few words, and thank you, Mr Rattenbury, for your amendments that we are clearly supporting. It seems that those opposite have taken the Prime Minister's instructions very clearly. The Prime Minister has said that the role of the opposition is to complain, and Brendan Smyth spent 10 minutes complaining there and then. The Prime Minister has also said that it is the role of government to make decisions, and this is what this government has done. It has made a series of decisions, and those opposite have stood here and have just complained.

I find it interesting also that the Leader of the Opposition, Jeremy Hanson, came to the chamber late in the debate. It was an orderly chamber, one that allowed members to speak without interruption or without any jeering or sniggering. Mr Hanson came in. Within minutes the heckling started. Within minutes, he was actually pre-warned that if he continued he would be warned. His response to that was to pack up his laptop and leave. And he left in charge Brendan Smyth, the once leader, the once deputy leader, now third down the line, to run the complaint for the Canberra Liberals.

Let us go to some of the clear statements that this budget has delivered. This budget shows a government that is investing in Canberra, investing in our economy, investing in our people and investing in jobs. The 2014 budget invests almost \$5 billion in the Canberra community, with record allocations to priority areas of health and education, as well as a four-year \$2.5 billion infrastructure program designed to create jobs and to boost the economy. The budget has been framed by substantial commonwealth cuts, and the ACT government has had to respond to the significant impacts on our economy and on our own finances.

We have made the choice not to compound the pain already being felt by Canberrans after the commonwealth's cuts, and the ACT government have not sacrificed the essential services for the sake of the budget bottom line. We have made the choice to invest in front-line services and to deliver transformational infrastructure to create jobs and economic activity.

If I were to look at some of the media releases coming through just on this, the Canberra Business Council has described the ACT budget as striking the right balance. The Canberra Business Council said that business gets a boost in this budget. The Property Council of Australia described it as a budget for the times. The Insurance Council of Australia said that the insurers are pleased with the ACT tax reform commitment. Medicare Local ACT said that the ACT budget was a prudent, community-building budget. The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation said that the nurses welcome the ACT budget. The Heart Foundation ACT said that the ACT government is tackling the big health issues. The Youth Coalition describes this budget as intending to soften the federal budget blows for young people.

I will go now to Mr Rattenbury. He drew attention to some of the aspects around our most vulnerable in the community, and I would like to also add some words to that. This budget contains funding for us to continue to support the ongoing provision of sexual assault support and counselling and crisis support and court support for victims of domestic violence. That is a critical and a needed facility and a needed service and is well valued by many women in the ACT.

The budget also commits more than \$9 million for housing and homelessness. This is through \$5.8 million to build public housing for around 20 older tenants, allowing them to downsize into housing that is more suitable for their current housing needs and freeing up the larger homes for other families. This work will be delivered over four years. It builds on work that was undertaken when I had the pleasure of being housing minister and having that portfolio and it was absolutely the right policy. It allowed the right property for older folk, environmentally designed, good energy efficiency and it released, quite rightly, larger properties so that families could get on with their lives.

I remember talking with an older Canberran, a woman who had raised her entire family and a number of her grandchildren in what she considered a family home. She recognised the importance for her to move into a more suitably built property and also be able to hand over her property so that another family can grow and have the memories, the loving memories, of a family in a home suitable to grow a family.

There is \$1.4 million to build units specifically to meet the housing needs of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants, and this work will be delivered over four years. The government is working very closely with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations. I know that the Indigenous elected council have often raised with me the need for accommodation for older Aboriginal folk in our community, and I am sure they will be pleased with this budget. And it just highlights the difference between the federal government, where we see many millions of dollars pulled out of support for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and this government, where we see support to those in need in our community.

We have also provided funding of \$156,000 for common ground, which will see the first tenants move into this initiative in the not-so-distant future. I am very pleased to see that project come to fruition, because I started the development work looking into that, and to see Mr Rattenbury coming to a conclusion with that, to have the facility being built, to have a budget line that will see those vulnerable Canberrans supported, is very pleasing indeed.

When we look to investing in our suburbs, we all have a keen interest in our suburbs, our local shops and playing fields where our kids can play safely, where we can buy the necessary groceries for our family. For the local shops upgrades, there will be \$2 million over two years for Cook, and I am very pleased to see some investment in Mannheim Street in Kambah in this budget. That includes a combination across those shopping areas of improved lighting, parking and landscaping, improved safety and accessibility to those shopping precincts.

To allow our children to play safely is an important aspect of raising a family but it also gets the kids out and having an active, healthy lifestyle. Play is an important part in a child's health and development. And through the playground safety program, we will be providing safe and accessible play spaces for our families. The program will continue by providing an additional \$500,000 towards ensuring that equipment in our play spaces is safe and fun to use.

There are parking upgrades to Weston Creek but also it is worth noting for us—for Mr Gentleman and me—the investment in the Isabella spillway upgrade which will provide funding of \$10 million invested to increase the capacity of the Isabella weir as part of the water quality protection system for Tuggeranong Creek.

In closing, as minister for education—and I made mention earlier of the significant investment that we are providing—a concern expressed to me, and it ought to be of concern to those opposite, is the question over the continual funding growth for the independent and Catholic schools. A media release from the Australian Independent Schools ACT recognises the record levels of investment in health and education. They say that the government has maintained its commitment for schools funding according to the agreement signed with the commonwealth last year and this affords a degree of certainty to independent schools till the end of 2017, which is welcomed. AIS ACT looks forward to working with the government as it negotiates post 2017 the funding model with the commonwealth government because that is where their concern lies,

that the federal government has indeed reneged on funding certainty on the funding growth for the independent and Catholic schools. That is an absolute shame, and it should be a shame for those opposite as well.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (12.09): I think it would be remiss of me as the shadow minister for small business not to say a couple of words about yesterday's budget. We all got the history lesson of what happened in the early 1990s or the mid-1990s when Hawke and Keating and then Howard made similar decisions on the federal public service based here in the ACT and the impact that had on the ACT economy. It was, as history shows us, the private sector that led the charge, carried the ACT economy through those tough, dark days and made the ACT economy all the better for it in the long run. Again, though, we are here, and we have got this tough situation where the commonwealth is making cuts that are in many ways very detrimental to the territory's economy, and I think there is a unanimous vision or view as to what impact these changes are going to make.

But an interesting titbit that has just come across my inbox, which I thought was fairly appropriate to speak about today, has been the launch of the entrepreneurial index. The entrepreneurial index is a tool for jurisdictions to review their policies, with the aim of enabling entrepreneurship. It assesses government policies in terms of whether or not they encourage or diminish the capacity for an individual to be self-employed and hence enable entrepreneurship. The foundation of this is not a new one. Since the 1930s, economists have subscribed to the general theory that economic development occurs through innovation, and innovation is the result of business activity.

This entrepreneurial index rates jurisdictions over Australia, New Zealand and Canada against each other—similar Westminster-based parliaments, similar evolution of the economies—and it is interesting to see where the ACT actually places. The index rates a jurisdiction out of 100 on a percentage basis, and there are some very interesting results. Alberta in Canada has a 74.9 per cent rating. It is one of the top jurisdictions. There are a couple over 75. Australia starts the ranking with Queensland, which is up there at 60 per cent, and New South Wales, which is at 65.7 per cent. But when you go searching for the ACT, we are the only jurisdiction to be below 60 per cent. In fact, we are the lowest jurisdiction when it comes to self-employment and entrepreneurship as a result of government policies.

Yesterday's budget, I think, is no different, and Mr Smyth has already touched on the \$150,000 that was in there to help public servants transition into the private sector. That \$150,000, even if it is only 2,000 job cuts next year, equates to about \$60 per head. I think although the vision is there, the lip service is there, the rhetoric is most definitely there, the actual evidence in the budget papers, the money, the funds, the support that is required to drive the private sector in the ACT into the future is simply not there.

Confidence is the number one thing that will drive the ACT economy through the future, and we have had, year upon year, budget after budget, this government talking down the ACT economy, talking down what may happen should there be a change at the federal level. They have had their hands on the levers for many years. They have had the opportunity to insulate the ACT economy against these changes. They have

had the opportunity to diversify the revenue base in the territory, but they have failed and, as a result, we are going to see many more hard luck stories, of the kind that Ms Berry likes to often talk about here: families that are doing it tough, families that are struggling to pay their bills as a result of businesses closing. And that is purely as a result of this government's inept handling of the economy.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (12.13): I welcome Mr Rattenbury's amendments. They re-emphasise the benefits of this budget in maintaining support for vulnerable groups in our economy which I spoke about this morning, and the amendments also stress the importance we place on the protection of the environment in developing the ACT budget. I especially welcome in my electorate the \$872,000 allocated over four years to conserve an area in west Macgregor to offset the impact on the golden sun moth and natural temperate grassland of the Lawson south residential development. This funding will help the long-term condition and sustainability of natural temperate grassland and the golden sun moth population within the offset site.

A further \$462,000 is provided over three years to extend the Gudgaderra grassland nature reserve by 21.6 hectares and the Mulangarri nature reserve by 22.8 hectares. Both reserves support striped legless lizard and golden sun moth habitats and will be used to offset the impact on these species from development at Exhibition Park in Canberra. I thank Mr Rattenbury for those amendments.

Concern for the vulnerable in our community and our environment was not just missing from the Liberals' federal budget but were the areas targeted for the most savage cuts. Constituents have been loud and clear to me in their hatred for the mean-spirited, short-sighted, incoherent federal budget. Parents are worried about having a job. They are worried about their children's schooling—will they be able to afford to study or go to university? What if they do not get a job and have no income for six months?

People nearing retirement are worried that the Liberals are breaking their promise of no change to pensions. Will their access to superannuation be changed? Will they live long enough to reach the pension age? Moreover, will they be able to work in a decent job as they get older and older?

People tell me that the co-payment for doctor visits will be another hit on the hip pocket when they least need it. The medical research fund this tax goes towards was not even mentioned to the federal scientific adviser, nor were the ignorant cuts to the CSIRO. These cuts will hit Canberra and the staff at Black Mountain very hard, but it also shows the lack of the federal Liberal government's vision. It seems to be a payback from climate deniers against the scientific community.

From the position of the Canberra Liberals, what can they say? They are caught in the headlights of this bitter pill of the federal budget with nowhere to go. But then we start to get a bit of clarity on their position from Mr Smyth—the number three, of course, in their line-up—and he was the acrobat of adjectives this morning. Personally, I was disappointed by his sloppy commentary on the ACT budget. It seems to me that he just does not get the big picture. Either he does not grasp the situation that has been imposed upon us by the federal budget or he really wants to have a turn at the wheel of the steamroller driven by Joe Hockey and Tony Abbott.

Mr Smyth tells us he cannot find the stimulus in this budget. Well, Madam Speaker, I am just looking at a press release from the Association of Independent Schools. It applauds the ACT government's initiatives in stimulating the ACT economy. The association can find it; I do not know why Mr Smyth cannot.

The Chief Minister correctly contrasted our budget with the federal budget, a federal budget designed to hurt the poor, the sick and the young. Our budget invests in Canberra's future. It is a budget for the times. Those commonwealth cuts, particularly in health, take \$375 million over four years out of the ACT economy with 6,500 jobs to go and with no federal assistance at all, unlike what we have seen provided for other states. The Canberra Liberals cannot engage; they will not engage.

Our budget is about growing infrastructure—infrastructure which Mr Smyth could not seem to find in the budget papers—through the University of Canberra public hospital, the Coombs school, the Australia forum—a subject which should be very dear to his heart since he bleats about it so often in this place—the capital metro and tax reform. And let us talk about tax reform. It is the foundation for building a strong ACT economy. It is a tax reform which is simpler, fairer and more efficient. There are cuts to payroll tax, cuts to stamp duty, cuts to insurance duty and a land tax which is fairer for residential landlords.

The budget allocates \$2.5 billion for health and education, \$328 million for economic growth, \$693 million for urban renewal, and \$968 million for further liveability and opportunity for all Canberrans.

In the health budget we have heard more about more beds, more cancer care, more elective surgery and more infrastructure, such as the car park for Calvary hospital and the secure mental health unit. Supporting those health budget initiatives are the healthy lifestyle initiatives: the healthy weight initiative, in particular combating obesity; \$4.8 million for walking and cycling infrastructure; \$10 million for sport and recreation; upgrading the tennis facilities at Lyneham sports centre; funding to run the new Gungahlin Leisure Centre; and continuing the Active Kids Challenge.

In education there is more money for childcare centre upgrades and the smart schools ICT upgrade, bringing the 21st century into our Canberra classrooms. As to the CIT, how can I go past the fact that the Canberra Liberals actually forgot the CIT in their 2012 election commitments? They did not know it existed, but \$69 million has not been forgotten by ACT Labor as part of our study for Canberra initiative. Then, of course, we have digital Canberra: ICT, \$75 million over four years; iConnect, bringing a better, more efficient and more effective way for citizens and business to interact with government; and smart parking machines, not only solar powered but credit card ready.

Then we look at the community commitments: \$1.6 million for more school-based therapy, \$2.2 million for disability care providers, and \$4.1 million for out-of-home care services. As the Property Council said, and I reiterate, this is a budget for our times. I commend the motion.

Question put:

That the amendments 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.

Question put:

That the motion, as amended, 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.

Sitting suspended from 12.26 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice Canberra Hospital—infrastructure

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, ACT Labor previously promised \$800 million to develop the tower block at the Canberra Hospital. Your 2011-12 budget press release stated that \$41 million was appropriated to “progress the next stage of planning and design for new infrastructure such as a new tower block at the Canberra Hospital”. Minister, will your promised \$800 million tower block project proceed at TCH?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. The government will be continuing to implement the health infrastructure program over a number of years, as we have done in the years previously. It will include a new tower block at the Canberra Hospital. The detailed decisions around that will be taken probably within the next 12 months. In the meantime we are proceeding with the construction of the new public hospital at the University of Canberra, which this budget makes provisions for.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, when will this project commence?

MS GALLAGHER: It will commence once the project has been agreed to by cabinet.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, when will this project be completed?

MS GALLAGHER: The construction timetable will depend on the decisions taken by the cabinet. That is linked to the date of commencement. So those decisions have not been taken. But I would say that this budget provides \$122 million for the continued implementation of the health infrastructure program, funding a range of different projects including refurbishments at the Canberra Hospital. We are continuing to review and revise the health infrastructure program as we need to based on the decisions we take year by year.

For example, when the health infrastructure program began, there was not agreement around a new subacute public hospital. So we have agreed to that and that requires us to reconsider other elements and stagings. Basically, we need to ensure that we have the maximum bed capacity in 2021-22, which is the peak of the demand for beds across the public health system. We are planning to reach that bed requirement by that date.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Chief Minister, how will this \$800 million project be funded?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Mrs Jones for the question. I think the budget has shown the preparedness of this government to make provision for large infrastructure projects. We have made provision, and we have also made space within the budget to fund those projects. The health infrastructure project is the largest infrastructure project being run by the government and it will require continued capital investment over the next 10 years to ensure that we have enough capacity to meet the peak in demand for health services in the territory.

Transport—light rail

MR COE: My question is to the Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development. Minister, can you confirm that the rapid business case prepared for the Capital Metro Agency encourages the government, when considering developments in the ACT in relation to the Gungahlin to city corridor, “deliberately favour it over other precincts in the ACT”?

MR CORBELL: That document is a cabinet-in-confidence document and has not yet been released by the government.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, can you confirm that the rapid business case suggests to the government that the Gungahlin to city route is not feasible and that the government should look at building only the EPIC to the city route?

MR CORBELL: I refer Mr Coe to my previous answer. I would add that the government's commitment in relation to this project is very clear. The development of the Gungahlin to the city corridor is an election commitment of the government, an election commitment of the Labor Party and a subsequent agreement between the Labor Party and the Greens, as reflected in the parliamentary agreement. This route is being developed and will be delivered through the Capital Metro Agency.

MR SMYTH: Supplementary.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, can you confirm that the rapid business case suggests that public transport usage from Gungahlin to the city would have to quadruple in order to achieve the desired level of patronage?

MR CORBELL: I refer Mr Smyth to my previous answer.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, how can you provide over \$43 million in this budget to a project which deliberately favours one area of Canberra over another but which all Canberrans, through their increased rates, will have to pay for?

MR CORBELL: It is no different from investing in a public hospital that predominantly provides services to people who live on the north side of Canberra. It is no different to investing in a road that services people who live in the district of Gungahlin. The development of these pieces of infrastructure, whether they are roads, whether they are rail, whether they are hospitals or whether they are schools, are funded through the budget as a whole and contributed to by rate payers as a whole.

The suggestion would appear to be that, unless you are able to utilise that piece of infrastructure on a daily basis, you should not be asked to pay for it. Well, that is not the way infrastructure is developed or financed in any jurisdiction anywhere in the world.

Budget—proposed sale of street lights

MR SMYTH: My question is to the Treasurer. The budget papers note that the government's infrastructure investment program will be supported by the sale of existing assets, which may also include street lights. What is the anticipated value of this initiative?

MR BARR: It will be subject to interest in the commercial market.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Treasurer, what analysis has been done of the potential impact of this sale on electricity bills for residents of the ACT?

MR BARR: The government's consideration of asset sales under the commonwealth government's asset recycling initiative is ongoing, and we are proceeding with our sale of ACTTAB as the first priority under that program.

MR WALL: Supplementary.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Treasurer, what is the government's process in selling its street lights?

MR BARR: Over the course of the commonwealth government's asset recycling initiative, which expires on 30 June 2016, the government will undertake bilateral negotiations with the commonwealth in relation to that particular initiative. The initiative of the national partnership that has been entered into between the ACT and the commonwealth requires commonwealth government approval of both the asset for sale and the new asset that the proceeds of the sale will be directed towards. The government would intend, obviously, to have an open and competitive process in relation to the sale of assets in order to maximise the return to the community and then seek, obviously with the 15 per cent bonus that the commonwealth government is providing, to invest the proceeds of that sale, or of any sale, in new community infrastructure.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Treasurer, what discussions has the government had with ACTEW with regard to the proposed sale?

MR BARR: ActewAGL would be a party that I imagine would be interested in such an opportunity.

Budget—health funding

MS BERRY: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, can you outline for the Assembly the funding that has been provided in the ACT budget for health services in the ACT?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Ms Berry for her question and for her interest in health services in the ACT. As members will see from the budget paper, the government's number one priority continues to be our investment in health. It delivers more than \$164 million over four years for growth and new initiatives in the ACT health system. The government is making a record investment in health, allocating almost \$1.4 billion in 2014-15.

The budget will also deliver \$122 million over four years in capital funding to a range of different programs within the health infrastructure program. These investments

together will deliver more doctors and nurses, more hospital beds and an expansion of service in state-of-the-art facilities. In particular, there is \$54.6 million in funding for more general inpatient beds at both Canberra and Calvary hospitals and more bed equivalents in the hospital-in-the-home service, which a very popular service offered in the ACT.

There is also \$34 million towards expanding our elective surgery program and also for the first time bariatric surgery is offered. There is \$15.1 million for the expansion of intensive care and critical care services, which will provide funding for additional intensive care unit beds at Canberra Hospital and one additional ICU bed at Calvary Public Hospital.

There will also be investments in health services for women and children. The expansion of services there includes five additional beds and 15 staff allowing for our graduated ramping up in the neonatal intensive care unit, the paediatric inpatient unit, some extra services for paediatric day surgery and the expansion of the delivery suite and birthing centre by an additional bed.

There is also money going to increase cancer services to employ staff as the demand for cancer services continues to grow. It will allow us to increase those services once the Canberra regional cancer centre is opened later this year. Also, there is \$3.5 million to provide more resources in our emergency departments. Two additional emergency department positions will be employed, one at each hospital. These will be senior positions designed to reduce waiting times and, again, to meet that growing demand.

Importantly for your electorate, Ms Berry, there is money in the budget to open the walk-in centre at the Belconnen Community Health Centre, as there is money to flow through to open the Tuggeranong walk-in centre at the newly refurbished community health centre in Tuggeranong.

There is money also to expand our community nursing service to ensure that we are able to care for people in their homes and to keep them out of hospital, and additional resources are going into mental healthcare services. Again, there is money for the community mental health treatment teams, some money for suicide prevention services and some money to ensure that we are able to deal with some of the consequences of the Mental Health (Treatment and Care) Act that will commence once it passes the Assembly.

Also, there is money to expand services at Calvary with the ophthalmology services there. There is more money for endoscopy services and money to extend our outpatient and imaging services. So you can see there just in terms of the growth of those services the importance the government has placed on our health services in terms of meeting the needs and growing demand. I think this has been welcomed by all of those stakeholders who know and understand the ACT health system.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, how has the ACT government dealt with the reduced health funding in the recent federal budget?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Ms Berry for the supplementary. As members would know, the federal budget has reduced commonwealth funding to the ACT for health services in the order of \$240 million over the forward estimates, and \$40 million of this in the next financial year is directly attributable to the removal of the funding guarantee under the national health reform agreement, which will kick in from 1 July 2014. The Abbott government has walked away from key commitments contained in the health reform agreement, which was signed in good faith in 2011 and which included commitments for funding guarantees, indexation and payment for interstate patients treated in our hospitals.

There has also been a number of national partnerships which have been cut, and I note that the Queensland government yesterday in handing down its budget also identified these as pressures on its budget when looking to fund the health system.

Our immediate response in this budget has been to maintain and stay on the path we were on prior to these cuts being delivered. We did not change our initiatives in health because of these cuts, but they will require us to consider how we meet these funding reductions into the future. Whether that be met through the health system or other parts of the budget remains to be seen, and the cabinet will have to consider that over the next 12 months. But we will have to also look at the level of service we provide through the ACT health system, because if there are services that do not stack up in an activity-based funding environment, we will have to reconsider those services.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, how many jobs will this budget deliver across the health system?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Mr Gentleman for the question. I remember during the election campaign in 2012 we were asked a lot about jobs and job reductions and what would be the size of the ACT public service overall. The commitment this government gave was that we would maintain public sector employment levels, and you can see that reflected in the decisions outlined in the budget tabled yesterday.

The budget continues to provide for an increased workforce of 154 full-time equivalent positions; 129 of these positions are related to new initiatives in the budget, including 10.3 medical officers, 77.5 nurses, 25.3 health professionals and 16 administrative positions. This does not include the health positions that would be added to the Calvary Public Hospital as a result of the initiatives included in the budget, because they will make their decisions about staffing according to the contract.

The budget also increased staff across the health system, including staff to support increased services at the walk-in centres at Belconnen and Tuggeranong community health centres, additional health professionals, nurses, medical and support staff to operate the Canberra Region Cancer Service, increased staffing for the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, additional community nursing staff, additional emergency department physicians, health professionals to expand the lymphoedema services and, of course, staffing for the additional inpatient beds.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, given the \$1.4 billion of health budget spending—

MADAM SPEAKER: Preamble, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: why are Canberra's EDs and elective surgery waiting times the longest in Australia?

MS GALLAGHER: It is interesting to read the latest report on the NEAT and the NEST targets that was released by the COAG reform council, and which came across my desk yesterday. It shows that the ACT is again performing the strongest under the NEST targets, meeting eight out of the nine targets under the national elective surgery targets, and under NEAT I am seeing improvements all the time.

Mr Hanson: The targets are the lowest in the nation. The bar is the lowest.

MS GALLAGHER: Mr Hanson can continue to talk down the staff, who are working—

Mr Hanson: Oh!

MS GALLAGHER: You cannot have it both ways. You cannot talk down and say it is the worst performing ED and elective surgery in the country and then, all of a sudden, say, "But I'm not attacking anyone who's actually delivering those programs. It's not anyone else's fault." So it has nothing to do with the actual delivery of the program. You cannot have it both ways. Every time you say it, staff in those areas talk to me about how unfairly targeted they feel, and how victimised they feel, from the negativity around how hard they are working to deliver improvements. They are delivering improvements every time.

Mr Hanson: You're a failure. You're a failure, Katy.

MS GALLAGHER: If you had a look at last week's report and actually looked at how the health system is working here, and compare it to the John Hunter Hospital in Newcastle—

Mr Hanson: You're a failure.

MS GALLAGHER: I am not a failure, Mr Hanson. You have said that four times now—"Katy, you're a failure, "Katy, you're a failure", "Katy, you're a failure"—across the chamber. I am not a failure.

Opposition members interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: People need to hear what you are saying. You do not have the courage to actually stand up and say it, Mr Hanson.

MADAM SPEAKER: Chief Minister, could you address the chair.

MS GALLAGHER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. He does not have the courage to actually say it into the microphone. People should hear you and the venom that you spit across this chamber. They should know who they are dealing with. The reality is that the Canberra Hospital is performing amongst its peers. *(Time expired.)*

Disability services—autism spectrum disorder

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Disability, Children and Young People. Minister, a fax sheet on the NDIS and early intervention that appears on the Community Services Directorate website states:

An example of non-government service providers entering the market in the ACT and already working with families include ASPECT or Autism SPECTrum and Aspire Early Intervention.

Minister, what capacity do these service providers have to meet the early intervention service delivery needs from 2015, after you axe existing services?

MS BURCH: I thank Mr Wall for his question. There are a number of providers that are willing to support the early intervention program. House with No Steps and the Cerebral Palsy Alliance have also come forward and have shown a very strong interest in working with the NDIA in providing early intervention services for Canberra families and for Canberra children.

We are not axing this service. We have made the decision that government will withdraw from being a direct service provider. That is a policy position that has been endorsed and, indeed, described as Liberal Party policy by Mr Wall himself. So we are merely transitioning out of being a direct provider and we are doing that because we need to remove ourselves from this space, to allow the non-government sector to come in and provide greater choice and flexibility and a deeper response to the needs of our community.

Mr Wall: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, on relevance, the question asked specifically what capacity do these two service providers have to meet the service delivery, namely, ASPECT and Aspire. The minister has not yet answered that question.

MS BURCH: I have finished my answer.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, have you or officials from your directorate spoken to Aspect or Aspire about their role as a service provider in the territory into the future prior to this week?

MS BURCH: I know that the directorate has spoken to a number of agencies. We are working through KPMG, who are doing some market soundings around a number of providers. There have also been a number of forums held over the last number of months, particularly those auspiced and managed through National Disability Services.

Mr Wall: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order.

MS BURCH: I am answering.

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order, Minister Burch.

Mr Wall: I am going to get in early this time before the answer. I will get in early on a point of relevance again, Madam Speaker. Again, it was relating directly to Aspect or Aspire, not discussions that may have been held more broadly.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Wall did specifically mention two organisations and asked whether you or your department had spoken to them before this week, or words to that effect. So I do uphold the point of order, Minister Burch. Could you be directly relevant to the question.

MS BURCH: Thank you. I am answering the question. In addition to those broad conversations across many providers, it is my understanding that, as part of this market sounding, Aspect and Aspire have been spoken to. I am sure Mr Wall is going to jump and make reference to a representative from Aspire who spoke at the forum on Monday. She has since clarified that indeed she was wrong. We have been in contact through Aspire, through the chief executive officer, and she was not aware of that contact.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, what undertakings have Aspire or Aspect given to you or your officials that they have the ability to be operational by the end of the 2014 school year?

MS BURCH: I am not privy to those direct conversations. That is the purpose of market sounding, and that is also the purpose of some of the grants we are offering to community organisations in preparedness. There are grants valued from \$20,000 up to \$50,000 for organisations to help them be prepared. As I understand it, organisations are increasingly coming forward for access to those grants. I am quite happy to come back with an update about what organisations have accessed those grants to date, But that is directly to prepare those organisations and to work with those organisations and the national disability insurance agencies to make sure that organisations that have an interest in providing a whole range of service beyond early intervention—which is certainly a very important service—are prepared. The range of new providers and existing providers will certainly grow into the market.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, you have not answered the previous questions in totality. I hope you can take it on board as you have given an undertaking.

MADAM SPEAKER: Preamble, Mr Doszpot.

Dr Bourke: On a point of order—

MR DOSZPOT: Can you either have Aspire or ASPECT—

MADAM SPEAKER: I am sorry, Mr Doszpot; Dr Bourke has a point of order.

MR DOSZPOT: On preamble, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think you already heard me, Dr Bourke, raise the same point of order, so it was unnecessary. Mr Doszpot, I did raise it with Mr Hanson as well. Can I remind members that supplementary questions do not have preamble. So can you ask your question?

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Minister, have either Aspire or ASPECT accessed any of the \$12.5 million allocated to sector readiness and what undertakings have Aspire and ASPECT given to you or your officials that they have the ability to be operational by the end of the school year 2014?

MS BURCH: In my previous statement I said I was quite happy to come back with an updated list about organisations that have accessed those grants around sector preparedness. As I also made comment in the earlier question, I am not privy to those discussions between the agency, the NDIA and KPMG that are doing the work on market sounding.

Budget—infrastructure

MS PORTER: My question is to the Treasurer and Minister for Economic Development. Treasurer, can you outline to the Assembly how yesterday's budget invests in Canberra and strengthens our economy?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Porter for the question. There are two key ways that yesterday's budget invests in and strengthens our economy—firstly, through infrastructure spending of \$2½ billion over the forward estimates period, and also in a range of recurrent measures to grow our economy.

The infrastructure projects that are funded as part of the budget have wide benefit across the ACT economy and across our community. In health and education, projects that are advanced include the University of Canberra public hospital, a new school for the Molonglo valley in the suburb of Coombs, and the further development of the new CIT campus in Tuggeranong. There will also be new public buildings, including the new Gungahlin office block for the ACT public service, the new Supreme Court facilities, further work on the convention centre project, and the city to the lake project. These all help to support private sector employment, in terms of both professional services associated with project development and through the construction phase with those engaged in the construction sector.

The government is also improving public infrastructure throughout the territory, with new investments in road and light rail infrastructure, a significant investment in new

cycling and walking infrastructure, and of course the renewal of town and group centres and local shopping centres—the Woden town centre upgrades, the Dickson group centre upgrades and local shopping centre upgrades right across the city.

This funding, particularly that associated with transport initiatives and initiatives that improve the health and education of our community, certainly enhances the long-run productive capacity of the economy, in addition to creating jobs during the construction phase.

The budget also includes a number of recurrent measures that build upon the government's business development strategy to help local businesses grow and to create jobs. Specifically, there are initiatives to support the Canberra brand. There are a series of significant major event funds available for the support of the Cricket World Cup coming to Canberra in 2015, a further extension of our cooperative airline stimulus fund, additional funding to Invest Canberra, the establishment of the Canberra innovation network, a new program to accelerate the development of young entrepreneurs in the city, support for public servants making the transition into the private sector, and support for small business, particularly through the innovation network, to assist business to access new markets.

We will continue to accelerate innovation in the territory and build on the very close relationship that the territory government has with our tertiary education sector and our research institutions, who are already contributing hundreds of millions of dollars in economic activity to our economy.

In the long term, our relationship with NICTA and its capacity to focus on supporting innovation in the economy is very important, as is the partnership with the ANU that has led to the regeneration of city west as a world-class, vibrant tertiary education precinct, the development of ANU's Advanced Instrumentation Technology Centre at Mount Stromlo to deliver a world-class space and spatial precinct, the support for the CSIRO and ANU in developing the formation of the global sciences innovation precinct at Black Mountain, and, of course, the partnership we have with the University of Canberra, both in the soon to be opened sports commons and in the new public hospital.

Through this budget, we are investing in the city and laying the groundwork for our long-term economic future.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Treasurer, what transformative infrastructure projects is the budget investing in?

MR BARR: There is a range of projects, from city to the lake, the convention centre and the capital metro project. The work is underway on the city to the lake project, and there is further funding for the design of the arterial roads—about \$7 million has been committed to the next stage of the development of that project. We have, of course, provided funding to progress the detailed business case development for the Australia forum. We are looking also to the future in relation to the Gungahlin to city transit corridor and have provided funding to the Territory and Municipal Services

Directorate to undertake a range of upgrades in that transit corridor. As I have indicated, the budget also invests in the new subacute public hospital at the University of Canberra and, of course, makes provision for the Supreme Court precinct.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Treasurer, how does this investment grow the economy?

MR BARR: Obviously, through investment in infrastructure comes the creation of jobs in our economy. There are direct and indirect benefits, clearly, from a significant boost to construction activity in the territory. The nature of each of the individual projects that we are supporting leads to ongoing employment and ongoing investment opportunity.

For example, the Canberra Business Council has estimated that the Australia forum could add three-quarters of a billion dollars to ACT gross state product and deliver over a thousand jobs with a long-term goal of trebling the number of conference visitors to Canberra each year. Another government project, capital metro, is estimated to create over 3½ thousand jobs during the construction phase. Similarly, the city to the lake project, with the creation of a new stadium, public aquatic facilities and a range of mixed use commercial and residential developments, will generate thousands of construction jobs and ongoing economic activity.

Through the longer term, we are seeking to build an environment where people want to live, people want to work and people want to undertake their recreation activities—a more vibrant city centre which grows our economy now and into the future.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Treasurer how does this budget support our business community by tempering the impact of the mass sackings from the commonwealth government?

MR BARR: There are a series of specific initiatives in response to the federal budget, particularly developing opportunities through a business program that assists former public servants to enter into the private sector. The youth business connect program aims to assist young entrepreneurs to develop ideas for establishing local businesses. The supporting business fund will help businesses and individuals to obtain professional and strategic business service support. These programs, along with our ongoing allocations in the economic development area will strengthen the private sector and maximise the potential for new job creation.

The government's support for business is evidenced in the reaction to the budget. For example, the Canberra Business Council said that the ACT budget struck the right balance and very warmly welcomed the funding for the Australia forum. The Chamber of Commerce said that the Treasurer had managed a difficult situation well. I am always pleased to receive the support of the chamber. The Property Council of Australia says there are some very strong positives in the budget, particularly the strong investment in infrastructure which will help create jobs for Canberrans and stimulate the economy.

There is quite a contrast now in the approaches of the two political parties who seek to form government in this territory, and I think it is very clear which party is investing in Canberra and under which party this community does better. As a former Chief Minister said at the Chamber of Commerce function directly to the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow treasurer, now is not the time for opposition.

Transport—light rail

MR GENTLEMAN: My question is to the Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development. Minister, how does this budget progress the capital metro light rail project?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Gentleman for his question. This budget makes a significant commitment to progressing work on the development to investment-ready stage of the capital metro light rail project. We know around the world light rail is renowned for its ability to stimulate the economy, to support jobs and to alter the development pattern of cities. It is for all of these reasons, as well as, of course, including providing better transport connections and better transport systems for all Canberrans, that the government is investing in this important project.

We are, as a city, blessed with the fact that, thanks to the deliberate planning of our city by those who have come before us, there are effective mediums in place that make provision for this type of transport infrastructure.

In the most recent budget, \$20 million has been provided to support the next stage of work to be undertaken by the Capital Metro Agency. This work includes progressing the project through to investment-ready status, delivering critical elements of the project plan, including a reference design, procurement methodology options analysis, contract development and the identification of enabling and associated works.

These works will allow us to ensure that we have the complete picture in relation to the development of this project. Economic and financial advisory services will be required to assist in the development of a financial and funding strategy, and commercial advice will also be required to develop robust guidance on optimal contractual arrangements for the procurement, delivery and ongoing operations of this service, as well as specialist legal advice to support the Capital Metro Agency in navigating complexities around tender development and evaluation.

This work all highlights the very significant investment being made by the government in this project. We know that further detailed quantity surveying is required and cost estimation services. We are engaging in deliberate risk management to ensure that this complex and high-value project is managed with a high level of monitoring, auditing and advice around potential risks. Technical advice and design services are also being engaged to provide the skill and experience needed in determining the parameters for the reference design.

So the budget allows us to progress all of these very important pieces of work. The government will lay out for the community a detailed proposal and methodology for

its delivery. We will lay out revisions and assessments around all of the issues that are, I know, matters of significant public interest before making a final decision on this project.

This project is important for Canberra, because it is about delivering better transport, not just for those who use it but for everyone who is using the transport network. It is about reducing congestion, reducing travel delay. If you are coming down the Federal Highway, if you are coming down Northbourne Avenue, if you are coming down the Barton Highway, if you are coming down Ginninderra Drive, if you are coming down Barry Drive—these are all roads that will see their overall performance improved by reducing congestion on Northbourne Avenue.

But, at the same time, we are also about delivering jobs. This project delivers jobs during construction—over 3½ thousand jobs that are going to be so important at a time when our economy is facing a significant downturn. (*Time expired.*)

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, how much progress has been made so far on this project?

MR CORBELL: The government is moving rapidly and in a very determined way to ensure that delivery of this project meets the time frames set out by the government. The Capital Metro Agency has been established. It is now up and running and we have a fantastic team of highly skilled and experienced people—both people who have come from other parts of Australia and bring their experience and expertise to Canberra as well as those who have deep knowledge and experience of issues and transport planning and transport delivery here in the city itself. So that is a fantastic capability that has been ramped up very quickly.

The light rail integration study has been undertaken by SMEC consultants and this allows us to start doing the modelling on integrating light rail with other public transport services, in particular the bus network, which is going to be so important in terms of connectivity. This is a project that is not light rail or bus, this is about light rail and bus. This is about integrating the transport network as a whole. This is about making sure that people can move more efficiently around the city.

Of course, we commenced the light rail master plan exercise that is identifying the land use planning considerations for future extensions of the Gungahlin to city line so that they can be properly taken into account in our strategic and statutory planning documents. And there has been detailed work on base case designs and on scoping assessments.

All of this work is now coming to the next stage where the government will be reaching out to the broader community and giving them further details about design issues, station stops and locations, designs of stations, frequency of service—all of the issues that the community needs to have their say about so that we can progress this project. (*Time expired.*)

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, what benefits will there be for the wider Canberra community?

MR CORBELL: There will be very significant benefits for the wider Canberra community, Madam Speaker. I have talked about the jobs sphere. Of course, the report released from Ernst & Young, EY, confirms direct and indirect benefits of over 3,500 jobs over the construction period between 2016 and 2019 for this project. That is comparable with the level of employment generated by the Gold Coast project and by the Sydney projects.

I noticed just today that the Premier of New South Wales endorsed work on the development of planning for an extension of their light rail network to Parramatta. So we see other governments recognising the benefits—indeed, other coalition governments recognising the benefits—of investment in this type of transit infrastructure.

But, of course, the benefits are not just about a jobs figure. They are about supporting people in a whole range of occupations. The bulk of these jobs will be local. Many of them will be labouring jobs, construction sector jobs, professional trades jobs, electricians, carpenters, plumbers, bricklayers, labourers—all the types of jobs that we should be welcoming in this city.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members!

MR CORBELL: That is a city-wide benefit. There are electricians, plumbers and a whole range of other trades that we need to be engaged in this project. It is an example of how this government's budget shores up the economy, supports jobs in our economy and delivers the infrastructure our city needs for the future. *(Time expired.)*

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, will you guarantee that tracks will be laid in 2016 as promised, or has no final decision been made?

MR CORBELL: The government has made its commitment very clear. That is: tracks in the ground, work commenced in 2016. That is absolutely a commitment that this government has put very clearly on the table. That commitment is important. It is important particularly at a time when there is a need for confidence in our city, when there is a need for job replacement in our city. It is also important when we look at the need to improve transport services in our city. We have a plan for the future of transport delivery in our city. We have a vision for how it can be achieved. We have a commitment—

Members interjecting—

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

Ms Gallagher interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Chief Minister, you don't help either.

Parking—fees

MRS JONES: My question is to the Attorney-General and it is in relation to parking. Revenue from parking fees is expected to rise by \$4 million to \$17.8 million in the next year. This represents a 30 per cent increase in parking fee revenue. Minister, by how much will parking fees across Canberra have to increase in order to achieve this additional revenue?

MR CORBELL: The increase in percentage terms is approximately three per cent across the board based on the WPI. The government is also investing resources in additional enforcement capability, and a further eight parking inspectors are employed in this budget to deliver improved enforcement. The government is seeing an increase in the number of complaints received from residents about illegal parking, whether that is in the suburbs, whether it is on the nature strips—

Mr Coe: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, the Attorney-General is going way off track. I am not sure whether he actually understands the question, because he was talking about WPI. The question that Mrs Jones asked was: by how much will parking fees across Canberra have to increase in order to achieve this additional revenue? That is nothing to do with WPI or illegal parking.

Mr Rattenbury: On the point of order, Madam Speaker, I think Mr Coe would have struggled to hear the answer because he was so busy interjecting. Perhaps he might listen more closely to the attorney.

MADAM SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members! I am attempting to make a ruling, Mr Hanson. Mrs Jones asked a question about how much the fees would go up, and I heard the attorney talking about how fees would go up. He mentioned WPI, which I thought was perfectly reasonable in the circumstances, and I do not uphold the point of order. Attorney-General.

MR CORBELL: Of course, they were not listening; that is the real problem. They ask the question but they are not interested in the answer. The government is also collecting more revenue because we are putting more inspectors on the beat because we are seeing more and more complaints from residents and we want to respond to those complaints. We see an unacceptably high level of illegal parking occurring in the city, particularly in the suburbs, particularly on nature strips and other areas of concern to residents. Extra parking inspectors will assist us to respond to those complaints, to enforce the road rules as they currently stand and respond to complaints raised by residents. I know that extra enforcement, whilst not welcomed

by those who are going to get a ticket, will be welcomed by residents who are sick of illegal parking in the suburbs—parking on nature strips and parking in other places where it should not be occurring and damaging their neighbourhood amenity.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, will pay parking fees only increase by a maximum of three per cent?

MR CORBELL: Yes, the fee determinations reflect the three per cent increase in parking fees.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, will pay parking be introduced in new locations in order to achieve the projected increase in revenue?

MR CORBELL: No, the government has not agreed to any expansion of existing pay parking arrangements at this time, and that is not reflected in the budget bids.

MR COE: Supplementary.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: How will the government receive a 30 per cent increase in revenue if fees only go up by three per cent?

MR CORBELL: Revenue is composed of both fees and fines. It is important to recognise that if you have more enforcement activity you collect more fines. Further, the installation of new parking machines is improving the reliability of collection. There are fewer breakdowns and therefore there is more certainty in those revenue figures. A combination of those factors is leading to a more beneficial outcome in terms of revenue.

Canberra Institute of Technology—campus modernisation

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the minister for education. Minister, in your media release following yesterday's budget you announced that the government would develop a campus modernisation strategy for CIT, including developing a new campus in Tuggeranong. Given the upgrading of the CIT campus in Tuggeranong has been discussed by ACT Labor since the 1990s and was one of the 2004 election promises, what assurances can you give that the government actually intends this time to build a new campus in Tuggeranong?

MS BURCH: I thank Mr Doszpot for his interest in CIT Tuggeranong. I am absolutely 100 per cent committed to building a CIT in Tuggeranong. There are moneys held in provision for the development of the campus at Tuggeranong, and I think it is the right and proper thing to do. It is part of a modernisation strategy across a number of CIT campuses. As we all know, particularly Woden is quite a large,

ageing campus and costs quite a bit to maintain. If we look at the student enrolments at the Woden campus, there are not, indeed, from that precinct. They are from Belconnen or from Tuggeranong. So it makes sense to have that strong investment in CIT Tuggeranong, and I hope that everyone on the other side gets behind and supports us as it develops and comes to realisation.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Delighted to hear, minister. When will this project be construction ready? When will building start? When will it be completed, or will it become yet another recycled election promise for 2016?

MS BURCH: I think you may have—I am not quite sure whether it is reported in the *Canberra Times* but certainly my comments about this are that we are finalising the modernisation strategy over the coming months and that I would hope to see construction start in the latter part of next year because that is a timely and proper process. As to the completion date, you have got to start something before you end it. But I remain 110 per cent committed to getting this project delivered for the good folk of Tuggeranong.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, why do the budget papers advise that details of the financial commitment for this new campus are “NFP”—not for publication—given that the 2012 election commitment by ACT Labor was publicised as being \$7.5 million?

MS BURCH: There was a commitment of \$7 million. I actually believe we need to rethink that if you look at a whole CIT campus modernisation, and I think there is a stronger investment to be had in that. I am sure the Treasurer explained to many the reasons why it is not for publication—that is, we will not go out to the market with a fixed price because, if you do, the market comes back—surprisingly!—attached to that price.

MR WALL: Supplementary.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, will asset sales of other CIT property be used to finance the Tuggeranong campus?

MS BURCH: Whilst the details are yet to be finalised, I have not been backward in saying that the Woden campus is an ageing large campus and it makes sense—it does make sense—to unlock that resource and to use that resource and invest it back into vocational education and training. If that means that you have a valuable piece of property, an ageing campus that needs modernisation and needs a lot of money put into it to get it up to a modern educational campus, there is good sense in unlocking that—to sell it off, to redevelop it and other attributes, and to reinvest that into vocational education and training.

The other concern that I know people from Woden will have is about what happens to the learning campus and the learning site for CIT in Woden. That will be considered. I think that if you look between Woden, Weston and Molonglo, there is a need to have a learning campus around. I look to Gungahlin, which has a very modern learning centre attached to the college up there. That is a model we could explore.

Children and young people—out-of-home care

DR BOURKE: My question is to the Minister for Children and Young People. Minister, could you tell the Assembly how the budget is investing in out-of-home care in the ACT and how this additional investment will help reduce the number of children coming into care in the ACT?

MS BURCH: I thank Dr Bourke for the question. The government is committed to investing in out-of-home care services across the ACT. I am pleased that in this budget we have included \$4.1 million to support children and young people in out-of-home care. The budget will fund the ongoing increase in demand for out-of-home care services and lay the groundwork for the implementation of the out-of-home care strategy 2015-2020, an innovative approach to the government's support for children, carers and service providers.

Among the initiatives funded is a piloting of therapeutic assessments and planning for children and young people in care; training for foster and kinship carers, service providers, and care and protection staff to support the implementation of a therapeutic, trauma-informed care system; and establishing an accreditation and monitoring system for out-of-home care. These initiatives represent the first deliverable of the government's new direction for out-of-home care in the ACT.

I am pleased to see that the initiatives have been welcomed by the community. Rebecca Vassarotti from ACTCOSS, for example, said that she was, "pleased to see additional funding for out-of-home care and increases in concessions for low-income households and investment in mental health and suicide prevention".

Christina Ryan from Advocacy for Inclusion said that the new out-of-home care strategy was "very welcome". The out-of-home care strategy aims to avert any future crisis in out-of-home care service provision in the ACT. If we do not act now, in 10 years time we will have more than 1,000 children and young people in out-of-home care in the ACT.

This is not unique to the ACT. All Australian jurisdictions are experiencing growth in care numbers and all are experiencing difficulties in attracting and retaining carers. The out-of-home care strategy, with its additional funding, will help divert children from entering care by supporting parents to safely care for children at risk and by providing greater support for families.

It will deliver improved outcomes for children and young people who cannot live with their families, including finding alternative permanent placements wherever possible. It will improve the operation of the out-of-home care system to ensure that the services which are delivered meet the needs of the children and families.

This additional investment will also allow for the piloting of therapeutic assessment and planning for children and young people in care and an accreditation and monitoring program for out-of-home care services. The government is committing to reducing the number of children in care and this budget continues our support for the most vulnerable in our community and those that care for them.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: How will this investment help foster and kinship carers in the ACT?

MS BURCH: Through this investment and the out-of-home care strategy, we will see a marked change for foster and kinship carers. This government engaged with carers throughout 2013 and this year to hear their views about out-of-home care, including through ministerial roundtables to which carers were invited.

Carers have told us they want to make a difference in a child's life, to have greater recognition and respect, to end communication difficulties generated through our current system, to have better information about a child who is placed with them and to have improved access to both assessment and intervention services.

This investment will see training for every carer to help them understand the effects of trauma on children and young people. This initiative will see a trial of comprehensive therapeutic assessments and plans for all children. A child health passport which will accompany children and young people in care will also commence. The health passport will provide carers with important information about a child's health needs.

The trauma recovery service for children will commence service from 1 July this year. Additional funding will support carers by working with the child, the carer and the school and other significant people in a child's life to support their recovery.

I am sure all members are aware of the work done by our foster and kinship carers on behalf of the government and for the whole community, and I am pleased this government will continue to support them. If I may be so bold, I offer my thanks at this moment from all members in this Assembly for the work that kinship and foster carers do.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, how will this investment support young people coming into out-of-home care?

MS BURCH: I thank Ms Berry for her question. The ACT continues to see growth in the numbers of children and young people in care and, as I have mentioned, we are not alone in facing this challenge, with all states and jurisdictions looking to improve the outcomes for children and young people and reduce the number of children coming into care.

This additional funding will cater for future growth by providing stable placements and support services for these very vulnerable children. The out-of-home care strategy

proposes that all children and young people in care receive a therapeutic assessment. The funding allocation will enable the Community Services Directorate to develop the assessment model, employ assessors and commence assessments.

Children and young people will also benefit from improved management of their personal information and the commencement of the health passport. Children and their carers will also benefit from the commencement of the trauma recovery service which will commence in July this year.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: What consultations have you had with the community and families around this investment, minister, and how has this been received?

MS BURCH: I thank Ms Porter for her question. When it does come to achieving positive outcomes for children and young people in out of home care, it has been essential that the government consider the views and the voices of those in the community who are providing this care. The government committed to developing an out of home care strategy and we have been working with many of the carers in developing that strategy.

The Community Services Directorate undertook a number of engagement activities, hosting carer roundtables, requesting submissions to an issues paper and subsequently a discussion paper and working with birth families, young people in care and agencies and carers through a co-design process. In May of this year, the Community Services Directorate held numerous engagement sessions with stakeholders to gain their feedback on the proposed policy directions. This has included the out of home care sector, a carers roundtable and birth parent representatives, as I have said.

The strategy has been well received to date and the feedback from the sector has been encouraging. Carers have told us that they have felt included, that they have felt listened to and that they have felt they have been able to contribute in a meaningful way to the desired outcomes of the strategy. And carers can rest assured that this government, through this additional investment, is committed to supporting them in this often difficult, yet very rewarding, contribution to our community. Again, I thank all the carers for investing in our community.

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

Personal explanation

MRS JONES (Molonglo): I seek leave to make a personal explanation under standing order 46.

MADAM SPEAKER: Do you claim to have been misrepresented, Mrs Jones?

MRS JONES: Yes.

MADAM SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

MRS JONES: Today in question time it was asserted that a question that I asked referred to the employment of eight new parking inspectors. I meant to say that, in order to fix the parking issues on the nature strips, what we need are eight new police officers—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Jones, this is not a matter to be raised under standing order 46.

MRS JONES: on the streets of Narrabundah to catch the tyre slasher.

MADAM SPEAKER: Sit down, Mrs Jones. You can use the adjournment debate. Do not abuse the standing orders.

Disability services—providers

MR WALL (Brindabella) (3.34): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that the ACT Government will withdraw from providing services that will be met by the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), including early intervention and therapy services for pre-preschool age children, from the end of the 2014 school year;
- (b) the level of anxiety amongst parents, carers, teachers, therapists and advocates about what services will be operational by the end of the 2014 school year to replace existing early intervention and therapy services;
- (c) that the ACT Government has failed to provide adequate assurances to families affected by the changes to early intervention and therapy services;
- (d) that the ACT Government has failed to detail how early intervention services will be provided in 2015 after the Government closes the existing services; and
- (e) that the ACT Government has received \$12.5 million in Commonwealth funding to develop the market and build capacity among non-government service providers in the lead up to the commencement of the NDIS trial; and

(2) calls on the:

- (a) ACT Government to continue to provide services through Therapy ACT and DET, including early intervention services for a further 12 months from December 2014, or until adequate replacement services are fully operational, before withdrawing from its role as a service provider; and

- (b) Minister to report to the Assembly on details of non-government service providers intending to replace existing early intervention and therapy services in the ACT by the end of August 2014.

Today I stand here in this place once again in support of an overwhelming number of families affected by a decision made by the current ACT Labor government. Only a month ago, I stood here in this exact place voicing the concerns of anxious and frustrated parents, carers, teachers and therapists and brought a motion into this Assembly on this same issue. At that time the groundswell of discontent had only just begun, yet now it is at a full-blown roar.

Last week, in the wake of an increasing amount of correspondence being made to my office about this issue, I held a forum here in the Assembly. The intent of the forum was not to politicise, scaremonger or grandstand in any way; it was simply a mechanism to bring a group of like-minded individuals together to give them an opportunity to share their concerns and their personal stories. An invitation was also extended in good faith to Minister Joy Burch, to give her the opportunity to explain the situation and provide her solution, but she did not attend. Not only did she not attend; she failed to give me or any of the attendees an apology or an explanation for her non-attendance.

That meeting, which consisted of about 30 representatives of families receiving assistance through early intervention services, therapists, service providers and advocates, including organisations such as Autism Asperger ACT, shared their frustration at the lack of information being provided to them.

The idea of a forum or a community meeting must have been a contagious idea, because just this week another meeting was held—this time convened by the government—to discuss these changes. This meeting may well have been one of the 80 information sessions that the minister proudly points out so often when she talks about communication around the NDIS. However, I do fear that it may just have been a hastily convened, token attempt to communicate with many disappointed and anxious families about a decision that has already been made. This meeting was sold to the community with the words “an opportunity to provide accurate information regarding early intervention programs and Therapy ACT”. Unfortunately, I am not sure that those in attendance at the meeting agree that the outcome reflected this intent.

Many questions were left unanswered. What was glaringly obvious was that the minister and ACT government officials seemed somewhat ill-prepared for the onslaught of questions from the crowd. They simply did not have the answers that were required. Some of those questions have since been raised with me again by families. I wish to quote from some correspondence that has come in from parents. The first email reads:

How many children were on the waiting lists for the early intervention units? These numbers should have been the basis for an open market **with the inclusion of the current Department of Education services who were unable to meet these children’s needs**. The decision to blow away 300 positions from children who may have benefitted from this type of operation without **anything** in place was a poor business strategy. If the needs for the government services started declining, then a strategy could have been put in place to withdraw.

How many **regional** students have had access to these facilities over the years—this will now no longer happen as children in NSW, even if they are in the ACT school system, will not have access to the NDIS for a number of years.

What is the point of having parent focus groups **after the decision to close a service**?

Has the department spoken to specialist teachers to find out what sort of behaviours, self care, sensory needs, safety issues, building modifications, the need for consistency, familiar staff etc that these new providers are going to **have** to provide and whether they are even happy to take some of these high needs on?

Another question is:

Have they spoken to the preschools and day care centres about the above issues to ensure that:

They are aware of the high needs children that are going to start flowing through their enrolment process

They will be required to do things they had not previously done or provided support and infrastructure for.

The need for transition—for both the child, parent and staff—which can be a lengthy process, especially if specialised equipment or modifications need to be done before the start of the school year.

Are these services going to be able to provide 4-6 hours a day, 2-3 times a week (which is what is offered at the current EI units through the Department) and at what cost to the NDIS or parent?

What about the children who have **no** official diagnosis yet but would benefit from these types of services—how are they going to afford these?

How are these private centres going to liaise with the schools for transition from ‘preschool’ environment to school environment.

The Early Intervention preschool groups (3 and 4 year old) did cost the government, however, were extremely low cost (voluntary fees) for parents. There is **nothing** like this system in Australia.

Some of these facilities are shared, how is that going to be managed

Some are on school premises (eg Turner School), how is this going to be managed, will they have access to school facilities, playgrounds etc, who will have responsibility for maintenance etc who will do the upgrades to ensure they are suitable (fencing, resources, electronic equipment, computers etc)

There is word out that therapists in Therapy ACT have been told to start looking for jobs from December 2014 even though Therapy ACT state they will continue to operate until end of 2016.

How many therapists does Therapy ACT currently have?

How many have left since the announcement in April?

How many does Therapy ACT expect to have after December 2014 and how many do they need to ensure that children who require therapy are not left behind.

A figure of \$80 million was mentioned in the forum yesterday incorporating supported accommodation and early intervention. How much is the government saving by withdrawing from:

early intervention units (all) within the ACT Department of Education, and

b. therapy services

A lot of questions from one very worried mother, Madam Deputy Speaker. Another email that I received from a concerned parent reads:

As a parent and a citizen I am writing to urge the ACT government to continue to maintain the current early intervention programs during the NDIS trial until it is clear that the private agencies are capable of offering the same calibre of learning and support that the Education and Training Directorate currently offers. ACT children must not be disadvantaged as a result of the teething problems of the NDIS.

When it comes to developmental delays, there is a small window of opportunity in which to help a child gain some of the skills they are lacking. It requires intensive assistance and draws from many different therapies. It is commendable that the government is attempting to address these deficits with the new NDIS. A lot of benefit will be gained from parents being able to choose which therapies and providers are best suited to their child. However, I think that before we go jumping off into a void, we need to be certain there is solid ground beneath.

I therefore urge you to pressure the government to maintain the current early intervention programs: Early Intervention Playgroups, Early Childhood Centres, Early Childhood Units, Early Intervention Units, Autism Intervention Units, and Language Units.

These programs were developed over a number of decades. They are best practice and evidence based programs that are insitu with the preschools because this is optimal for the children integrating in a mainstream program. The teachers employed for these roles have a deep understanding of the needs of the children and the importance of an Independent Learning Plan (ILP) to help target individual deficits. Without these programs, or suitable replacements, the local mainstream preschools will have a higher proportion of children requiring intensive assistance and monitoring, particularly those children who are not yet toilet trained or who abscond. Unfortunately children do not synchronise their habits to co-incide with their half-time support.

We were very lucky. My youngest son participated in the Turner Early Childhood Centre program based at Theodore, for two years (2011-2012). He

was in a program designed for eight children with one teacher and one Learning Support Assistant. My son was diagnosed as developmentally delayed, was relatively non-verbal, and had difficulty keeping his mouth and his hands to himself, he was also not toilet trained and was an absconder. Into his second year he began to gain some language. Over the course of the two years and with intensive therapy and constant behavioural reinforcement provided by the staff, he began to make progress.

My son is now in Year 1 in a Learning Support Unit at Monash School with a follow-up diagnosis of HFAD, and is reading and spelling at a Year 6 level. One thing follows another and I know with absolute certainty that he would not be at this academic level had he not experienced those two years at early intervention.

I want my son to grow up to be a taxpayer. It is all most of us want for our children. If children with delays are not supported correctly in their formative years their problems will follow them throughout their schooling and will likely mean they will not fulfill their potential. I urge you to encourage the government to leave these Early Intervention programs in place for now, using these two years of NDIS trial to slowly migrate them over to new providers as they prove their competency to support children with disability or delay.

I know you will weigh this carefully.

These emails clearly articulate the overwhelming sentiment expressed by many families.

At the heart of my motion today is a very simple solution—a solution that would see early intervention services that are currently provided to over 300 children continue until adequate services are in place and fully operational. This solution would provide at least a short-term answer to families so desperately in need of some certainty, as well as providing some much needed time for providers to get up and running.

In a matter of minutes I am sure that the minister, Joy Burch, will stand up and quote me regarding my support for the government's announcement to withdraw from its service delivery role. Again, I stand here and repeat that the opposition's position is that the move away from government provision of disability services in the ACT is an essential move as part of the NDIS. However, like all decisions, the devil remains in the detail.

There are simply too many uncertainties, too many unanswered questions and not sufficient time for these changes to be implemented. In this instance consultation is coming after a decision has been made and the community is the last to know the detail. Again, I reiterate my support for this decision in the long run but highlight that there are still some significant issues that remain unanswered.

What I firmly disagree with, however, is the approach that has been applied to consultation, communication and the provision of detail on the decision. It is also inconceivable that the decision was taken so late in the process with such a fundamental lack of preparation and support for non-government sector providers.

Since taking over the disability portfolio, I have continually called on the government and the minister to explain three principles—the role of the government as we move

into the trial phase of the NDIS, the phasing agreement which we are waiting for, and also the price that service providers will be paid. However, the issue we are talking about here today is the role of government service provision and, for that, there are still many unanswered questions.

We are now at crunch point. There are 26 days until the trial starts and it is lucky that the ACT Labor government have a federal Liberal government to lay the blame on. It seems that, for everything that is wrong with the world, the minister—as occurred again on Monday at the meeting—squarely lays the blame at the feet of the federal government, saying that decisions that have not been resolved have become the federal government's problem. This minister is always playing politics and losing sight of the people she represents—the people who ultimately bear the brunt of these decisions and this poor process.

Whilst it is not my intent to play politics on the issue, I will do everything in my power to ensure a good outcome for families in desperate need of reassurance. I would ask the minister and her colleagues, as well as Mr Rattenbury, to do the same today.

I have made no secret of my support for models such as the AEIOU model of early intervention for autism—support that I know is shared by members of Mr Rattenbury's office, if not by Mr Rattenbury himself. My colleague Steve Doszpot and I went to Queensland to see the results for ourselves. What we saw was impressive and the results speak for themselves. Just yesterday, I spoke with the director of AEIOU in Queensland to ensure that a conversation was being held with them about service provision in the ACT. What he told me was astounding. It seems that he was only contacted in the previous couple of days, when he received a call from KPMG asking for a meeting about the provision of services. AEIOU have been trying in good faith to engage in and orchestrate a facility for children with autism here in the ACT, but the government has made the proposition of starting up any kind of facility or service in Canberra near impossible for this organisation.

In stark contrast, AEIOU have begun their negotiations locally with the Queensland government in preparation for their NDIS rollout in 2016. This preparation and planning will ensure that Queensland are in better shape for their transition than the territory, with the time they have on their side. This is not happening here, and the blame can be laid squarely at the feet of this government and this minister.

Another provider of autism intervention services, Aspire Early Intervention—again, specialists in service provision for children with autism—has not been contacted by anyone in the government prior to a meeting this week. I understand the minister has had some further discussions, but the fact that there were no assurances regarding the correspondence highlights that there are some significant failings in this process.

We have an obligation to these families. At this time I ask all of my Assembly colleagues to put aside politics and think of the kids that are so desperately in need of these services. (*Time expired.*)

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) (3.49): I thank Mr Wall for bringing this motion to the Assembly, but I move the amendment circulated earlier because it reflects reality a tad better than Mr Wall's motion. I move:

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

"(1) notes:

- (a) that in order to ensure the widest possible choice of service for people with disability, the ACT Government is transitioning out of service delivery as part of the move to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), and that this will include:
 - (i) early intervention services by the end of the 2014 school year;
 - (ii) therapy services by December 2016; and
 - (iii) group homes by June 2017;
- (b) National Disability Insurance Agency offices will open in Canberra on 1 July 2014 and will be responsible for assessment and development of individual plans for those eligible under the NDIS;
- (c) a proposed NDIS transition plan has been negotiated between the ACT Government and Commonwealth officials;
- (d) despite the scheme commencing on 1 July, no formal announcement of a detailed phasing schedule has been possible due to administrative delays at the Commonwealth level;
- (e) these major reforms, meaning significant change to disability services, have generated a level of anxiety among some in the community who will be affected;
- (f) the Government has engaged with, and will continue to engage with parents, carers, teachers, therapists and advocates on the implementation of the scheme and transition arrangements for early intervention, therapy services and other elements of the NDIS;
- (g) the Government's commitment to ensure that details of non-government service providers intending to replace existing early intervention programs will be made available to the community at the beginning of the Term 4 this year; and
- (h) the Government's commitment that no child currently receiving government early intervention services will be left unprovided for in regards to early intervention services in 2015; and

- (2) calls on the Minister for Disability, Children and Young People to:
- (a) continue to involve the community in the development of non-government early intervention programs in the ACT in readiness for the beginning of 2015;
 - (b) ensure that Directorates specifically engage with the families affected by the transition to non-government early intervention services in 2015;
 - (c) facilitate families receiving timely information about the early intervention services available by hosting an expo of providers in the first three weeks of Term 4, 2014;
 - (d) report to the Assembly in the first sitting week of Term 4, 2014 with an update of the readiness of early intervention non-government service providers to commence in the 2015 school year; and
 - (e) provide regular reports to the Assembly on the implementation of NDIS disability reform in the ACT.”.

Mr Wall has said that he has concerns on three planks: the role of government, the phasing and the price. I am pleased to know he understands at the get go that the principle of phasing out of government responsibility for service provision would be Canberra Liberal policy. It is only now that he wants to come in, at the eleventh hour, and play politics on this.

He has also raised the question of phasing. Let us be very clear about this. I am pleased to share a letter from Senator Fifield to my office today that in many ways gives us for the first time the freedom to announce the phasing structure. That is one thing that has been—

Mr Wall: Hear, hear! Twenty-six days to go and it has come.

MS BURCH: You can blame that on the in-tray of somebody up on the hill. It certainly has not been in my in-tray. You have also raised the matter of price.

Mr Doszpot: How often do you clear out your in-tray?

MS BURCH: It has been sitting in the Prime Minister’s in-tray, if you really want to know, Mr Doszpot. So if you have got a complaint about that, send it up there to make that—

Members interjecting—

MS BURCH: He has to sign it off.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Minister Burch, resume your seat. Stop the clock, please. Mr Wall, Chief Minister, stop having a conversation across the chamber. Ms Burch, refer your comments through the chair. Thank you.

MS BURCH: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. On price, the NDIA, the National Disability Insurance Agency, came very late to our officials and said that they will be applying the New South Wales pricing structure here for the ACT. That is not enough. Those structures and pricing are not sufficient. They do not compare to New South Wales; so we continue to have that argument with the NDIA. It is not for the want of trying, Mr Wall, to get that information out to the providers and to the families concerned. We are doing everything we can. We will continue to do that.

You made mention of AEIOU. You put the blame squarely on me. Can I tell you that they have sat in my office? We have had a discussion with them. They left my office saying, "We understand the NDIS and the constraints that that puts on a government." We are not able to provide them with block and grant funding. They said to me, effectively, that they will come back when they can stack up the business case. They have not come back to me. They have not approached me since then. That is a decision for them. I will not stand in their way should they come into the ACT and establish a service.

I turn to the amendment. I want to thank Mr Rattenbury for some contributions he made to this amendment. It shows the work that we are continuing to do. As I said, I believe we are getting close to not necessarily a sign-off at official level between the first ministers on this, but certainly Senator Fifield has very clearly finally understood the need for us to get information out to our families.

In response to Mr Wall's motion, I would like to point out that the transition to early intervention services provided by the Education and Training Directorate will phase out at the end of 2014 and Therapy ACT services will continue for another two years until December 2016. So I am a little confused about Mr Wall's paragraph (2)(a) that calls on the government to continue to provide therapy services through Therapy ACT for a further 12 months from December 2014, when Therapy ACT will continue to provide services until the end of 2016. You should do your homework on that, Mr Wall.

We have made the decision to support the intent of the NDIS because Canberrans overwhelmingly support it. It is the right thing to do for our community. The early intervention services such as the intervention playgroups and the autism intervention units will continue to the end of this year. So we are very clear about the programs that we are talking about. They are early intervention playgroups for 2½ hours a week, early intervention units for five hours, language intervention units for 4½ hours, autism intervention, early childhood centres, early childhood units, and early intervention home education programs for children, in respect of which the hours are based on individual circumstances.

From 2015 support for children who have accessed the government intervention programs will be provided by non-government agencies. Importantly, programs for four-year-olds will continue as preschool programs at Cranleigh and Malkara where children meet the criteria for those schools. Programs and units for school-aged children that run in our public schools will continue as they operate now.

I understand that early intervention is a highly valued service. In a way, it was very pleasing to hear on Monday the regard in which many families hold these services. There is no doubt about it; they see them as very valuable services. There are a little over 300 children currently accessing these services. Of those 300 children, more than half—I think 160—will transition into kindergarten next year. So they will transition into kindergarten as part of the normal transition through their schooling years.

A further third of the children currently in early intervention programs are of a preschool age and can access 15 hours of preschool to which all Canberrans are entitled. Where it is needed, this will be resourced through the supported preschool program. I understand that schools have been delivering information sessions for parents for some time. We have about 50 children who are not old enough for preschool or school who will continue to be able to access early intervention services.

Whilst I am talking of numbers, I am very conscious that these are wee little ones. These are little children aged two, three and four. Families need certainty. Rightly, I understand their anxiety about wanting some definition and some understanding of the services that will be in place from January of next year.

This is a very big change. It is understood that 5,000-plus Canberrans cannot step out at once and move through to the NDIA. I do not think anyone would see that as a practical or sensible way to go. So we need to transition these 5,000 Canberrans in a sensible way. Importantly, as I have said, Therapy ACT services continue up to the end of 2016. Many children who are currently attending early intervention programs also receive services from Therapy ACT. This will continue as we transition through to the NDIS.

I return to the essence of Mr Wall's motion. If we continue as a government to run early interventions, even for another 12 months as this motion suggests, I believe we will be denying the sector the opportunity to grow and in turn denying Canberra families and Canberra children the opportunity to have access to what is deeper and more flexible than the current arrangements. This is not about saying that we do not value first-rate, top-rate, evidence-based early intervention programs. But it is very clear that the government must move out of the way so we have community providers that can come into this space.

There is a slight contradiction. It was only just before lunch when Mr Wall stood and wanted this government to do more to get out of the way for private providers. Here he is now actually asking us to stand in the way of our community and private providers coming in. Simply to put this off for another 12 months will send a message that we are not serious about growing the non-government sector. It is my strong belief that if we start building the non-government sector now there will be deep and meaningful opportunities for children and their families.

We have secured \$12.5 million to help prepare the community for this transition and a number of organisations have taken advantage of grants worth between \$20,000 and \$50,000 so they can prepare for this. These grants have already been allocated to providers here in the ACT to help them provide and prepare for the NDIS.

A number of these services have expressed an interest in delivering early intervention programs here in the ACT. This is an extremely positive movement. Providers that have put their names forward and that are quite happy for me to name them today include Northcott, Yooralla, House with No Steps, and the Cerebral Palsy Alliance. We will continue to work with KPMG to develop a responsive sector as we withdraw from these services at the end of this school year. I am pleased to say that we have a healthy list of more than 25 providers who we will be targeting in the next few weeks to step into this space.

From the beginning of term 4, I have made a commitment to be able to provide the families with concrete information about what and who will step into this space to provide early intervention services. I have said that publicly. I said it on Monday and I have reflected it in the amendments to Mr Wall's motion. KPMG will be conducting focus groups with families who use early intervention to help inform them about what the future services will look like. Some will want the services not to change in any way, shape or form. But some parents I have spoken to value the opportunity and look forward to the opportunity of having something different on offer that may be provided through the NDIS.

At the Monday forum it was clear that parents and families wanted quality early intervention services, but it was also clear that parents were anxious. I take that point. I have mentioned, and I will continue to do so, to people I meet in my office and people I meet out and about at various community forums and elsewhere that we know and understand the value and the importance of early interventions in the early lives of young children with disability or with developmental delay.

Providers need to come to the ACT and give families the certainty they need about future services. The NDIS provider registration, which has only just opened, already has lots of people and organisations that are getting on board. We want to see more of this. This is why the government is targeting funding to ensure that early intervention providers are ready for the beginning of 2015.

We are also working with providers to plan for 2015 and we welcome ongoing conversations as more come on board. At the forum I said that we will do all we can to support new providers entering the ACT. If this means maintaining a presence within schools, then we will do that.

I will reflect on one of the questions I was asked about the schools by a very strong advocate of support for autistic children and their families. Currently, where we have a program running that has an appropriate and adequate playing area and internal equipment in the rooms, it is right for us as a sensible government and, indeed, as a good community citizen to continue to provide that space if a provider wants it and if it suits the family, particularly in these transition periods.

I have made commitments to families to have information about the providers, as I have said, by term 4. I have no doubt in my mind that we need to make the NDIS work for children with a developmental delay or with a disability and for their families. This involves creating the conditions for the success of the non-government providers.

The ACT will do what is needed. Delaying the start in this final area I think will be detrimental to those children who stand to benefit most from the early intervention. The NDIS offers new opportunities to families that previously have not been possible. Yes, I understand their concern; yes, I understand their wanting information, which is why I have moved this amendment which goes very much to the heart of that principle. I have no hesitation on this at all. It calls on me to continue to involve the community in the development of the early intervention programs and to ensure that the directorates engage with families affected by this transition.

It calls on me to facilitate families receiving timely information about the early intervention services by hosting, for example, an expo of providers in the first weeks of term 4 so that parents can meet these providers, have a sense of assurance and have questions answered about the opportunities that they will provide.

I will be more than happy to come back to the Assembly in the first sitting week of school term 4 with an update on readiness and the community organisations that are stepping in here. As I have done before, I will continually provide regular updates to this place on the transition to the NDIS, because it is significant reform indeed.

In respect of the phasing stage, in the first six months it will be the very young children, the preschool and pre-preschool children. We will work with the school children year by year from 2015 and transition those young ones through to the NDIS. We will also work in the back-half of this year with the school leavers.

In the general population, we will work from the oldest to the youngest. For example, 63 and 64-year-olds will transition through from July to December of this year. When we look to supported accommodation, we will work from the youngest to the oldest. (*Time expired.*)

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (4.04): It gives me pleasure to speak to this motion in support of Mr Wall, but it gives me no joy that such a motion is necessary. Becoming a parent and raising a family is a challenge for those of us with children. Even when your children are born healthy and meet all their development milestones, make good progress at school and are socially and emotionally well adjusted, parenting is still at times a challenging burden. When you are confronted with a child that might have a developmental delay, a physical disability, or worse—perhaps both physical and intellectual disabilities or undiagnosed issues—the stress for parents is beyond comprehension to those who have not experienced it.

We on this side of the chamber have at times been critical and questioning of the lack of consistency and cohesion in the provision of diagnostic services for parents trying to find out what it is that ails their young child. When I was shadow minister for disability I met with frustrated parents who told me of the often long drawn-out process to get a diagnosis. They would go from one waiting list to another of a range of professional services, hoping that a diagnosis would be determined before the child was too old to benefit from assistance.

Years ago parents had few options. Today there are a range of wonderful services available and a range of therapies. It is no secret that before the last election the

Canberra Liberals championed the establishment of an early intervention learning program delivered by the AEIOU Foundation, designed for children with autism.

It is also no secret that those opposite threw up every obstacle possible, both before and since the election, to prevent that particular service being established to assist Canberra families. Minister Burch, I just hope it is not to your eternal shame that this situation is going to exist. There is still time to correct the issue with what should have been addressed quite some time ago. It is very difficult for parents to cope with these issues. We know of at least one family who moved to Brisbane because they wanted their child to benefit from that therapy that this government refused to allow them to have. But putting that failing aside, what was in place and is currently in place has benefits and is appreciated by parents who access the range of programs.

If you go to the current ACT education directorate website, families can see the full range of options currently on offer under early intervention programs and services. There is an early intervention playgroup designed for children aged two to three with a developmental delay or disability. The early childhood centres are for children from three years to school age with a mild to moderate developmental delay or disability. They are small classes in a mainstream setting.

The early childhood unit is for two years to school age children and is in a specialist school setting such as Malkara, Cranleigh and Turner. The early intervention unit is for three years to school age children in a small group in a preschool setting. Then there are specialist autism units and language intervention units for children with a diagnosis of ASD or with a severe delay in what is called “expressive and receptive language areas”. Again, they are in a small group in a preschool setting.

The majority of the programs I have outlined are delivered in a mainstream school setting by teachers with particular additional training in developmental and disability issues. Parents have known what is available, whether it is one or two sessions a week. They have known what preschools offer these services and the preschools have known the capabilities of the students they were enrolling the following year. They were able to plan their classes and roster their specialist teachers.

But all that is to change. In what appears to be indecent haste and when the hundreds of affected Canberra families have had no information, little time to adjust and the schools themselves also do not know where they stand, services are to stop at the end of this calendar year. That was the information that the parents were aware of.

Was it two years ago that the minister first announced with a fanfare event at the Canberra Theatre that the ACT would be one of the pilot programs for the rollout of the NDIS? Two years later, with little real thought to a sensible transition, information events and dialogue with parents, we get a short statement on the directorate website that states:

There will be no changes to early intervention programs operating in the ACT in 2014.

From 2015 early intervention services will be provided by non-government organisations.

Almost as an afterthought, and coincidentally only after my colleague Mr Wall held a forum, did the government advise it was also hosting a forum for interested and affected families. Just on that, I would like to congratulate Mr Wall on taking the lead on this issue. It is regrettable it was necessary. It was pleasing that the minister thought it was such a good idea that she copied it, but it should not have been necessary.

The minister did conduct a forum at which a whole two hours was made available for departmental officers to try to answer some of the hundreds of questions families had. Interestingly, and I would expect it annoyed and offended parents as much as it did me, Ms Burch was heard on Monday morning radio spruiking the forum and saying it was intended to—and I quote—“start a conversation”. Minister, a conversation has two elements: one of those is listening, and you have form on not listening. The latest episode further underlines that fact.

Minister, the conversation should have been started; it should have been done and dusted 12 months ago. The outcomes of those conversations should have been known before parents had to make choices about preschools for their children. The conversations should have been started by the minister and her officials last year with parents, one on one or in groups, to offer help and assistance to vulnerable families who face burdens that most families do not have any understanding of.

The forum staged on Monday was well attended, as well it might. Families and service providers all want to know what is going on and why the rush. To suggest the minister has been communicating flies in the face of the response from the people at the forum on Monday.

To have a child with a learning or development difficulty and not know what to do, where to go and how to access support is bad enough; but you have a minister who, true to form, puts her figurative fingers in her ears and does not want to know about it until the cries for help become a thunder. And it is only after the shadow minister points out just how wanting the minister is on this issue that she decides to do something—and that is, to start a conversation.

Families have no idea which non-government organisations will deliver these services. Many specialist service providers have no idea what they might be able to deliver. Almost again as another afterthought, the government has announced to very few people, if any at all directly, that there are business grants available to help these service providers—speech therapists, occupational therapists—to set up businesses.

Families with children entering preschool next year had to submit their names by the end of May to their school of choice. For families with children with a disability, it is not as simple as picking the one in your area. You choose one that offers the best-fit intervention program.

Equally, the school was able to determine what resources they might need. Now all that is to change. So we have families totally lost and frightened as to where they go. They know that early intervention is critical to their children reaching their full

potential, but they have currently nowhere to go. They do not know what or when non-government organisations will be offering them something or have something suitable for their child.

Equally, there are teachers employed within the education directorate that have chosen to gain specialist skills and training. Presumably they will not lose their jobs, but what happens to their years of training? Is it to be parked on a shelf and they start out on another skill set?

According to the minister and her team on Monday, children with developmental difficulties could next year be enrolled in any one of the many preschools around Canberra, but how then will the specialist skills of these teachers be best utilised? And what a wasted resource they will be if they are not located where they can best use their skills.

That seems to be just another of the dozens of unanswered questions that apparently parents are to accept will be resolved and sorted before the start of term one in 2015, just as the resources within the current preschools hosting children with special needs will be sorted and provided where needed. All this is to be done in a matter of a couple of months during the school holiday shutdown in a city that is notorious for closing down in the Christmas-January break. As one parent said to the minister and her panel:

Our kids are not mainstream. God we wished they were. The fact that the Directorate has wiped their hands of preschools for our kids is an absolute travesty.

This is not from me, minister; you heard this yourself. The minister tried to assure the very concerned parents and the particularly worried service providers that “no child will be left behind”. Few in the room believed her, and well they might not. As one parent pointed out, the government has a poor track record of delivering anything on time or on budget.

Minister, it absolutely disappoints me that here is a chance to show leadership, to show compassion, to demonstrate understanding for parents with problematic children, and you are failing them. There was not one rational explanation as to why the transfer of services to non-government providers could not be delayed until everything was in place, until everyone knew what services were available and where.

Mr Wall’s motion simply supports the call of those hundreds of parents who just want certainty, who just want to be certain that their children’s best chances for a normal mainstream education are not being put into jeopardy by the actions of this government. I would have thought that was a reasonable request. I support Mr Wall’s motion. (*Time expired.*)

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (4.15): I welcome the fact that we are having this discussion today because we have talked about how the implementation of the NDIS is probably the most fundamental change to the provision of services to people with a disability that we have ever seen. I think there is little doubt about that. The funding

model shift will entail individuals and families being able to make their own decisions about where to access their services and decide where they want their support to be allocated. Today's motion is about the implementation of that shift in regard to early intervention services that are currently provided by the government through the Education and Training Directorate.

As we get closer and closer to the time when government will withdraw from providing services, understandably there is anxiety in the community from those people who are affected about how the change will impact on them. There is also anxiety about whether the new system will be up and running in time to ensure a smooth transition for their children. We must remember that planning a transition for a child with a disability is not always an easy thing. It can take weeks to settle a child into a new care environment at the best of times, let alone when that child has anxieties about changes to routine or has significant difficulty understanding what is happening.

There is no doubt that there have been some hold-ups with the implementation of the NDIS in the ACT and that some announcements have been late coming. For me, the delays in the agreement being reached with the federal government have certainly been of concern. And I have only just heard the update on it today, which Minister Burch has provided, about receiving a letter. Those sorts of things are part of trying to roll out a new system. Perhaps delays are excusable. I do not seek to come in here and label blame at anybody but we are having a discussion where there is a lot of blame being thrown around, and I am not sure that that is the most helpful approach to this.

When we last spoke about the implementation of the NDIS in this place I noted that with a better level of empowerment for those with a disability and better choice of service delivery models came a number of risks and challenges, particularly in regard to the commencement of the scheme, which is always going to be the most difficult time for parents, carers and providers. I noted those risks, and there were three main ones that I highlighted.

Firstly, people with a disability are not as informed as they could be and are not supported and empowered to make the decisions that they need to make. It seems reasonable that there is still a level of misunderstanding or lack of information about the scheme and how it will operate. The cycle of money is not fully understood. The government funds go to the NDIA, and are then allocated to the person with a disability, in their package, which then gets spent on services. To some people, this probably seems a little circular and a little confusing, but it is all about giving extra control to those with a disability about how that money is spent.

The second risk that I noted is that there are implications of accessing private services that participants have not realised, such as extra unanticipated costs, perhaps.

The third risk identified was that the service delivery agencies would not be up and running or that the options available inside the ACT are limited.

These are all issues that are very clearly there with the transition to the new model. And that is what is at the heart of this motion today. Parents of children currently in

early intervention services are concerned that they do not know what the options for next year are for their children. Indeed, they have not even commenced their interactions with the NDIA or started to prepare their packages. No wonder, in light of that, they are concerned.

The Education and Training Directorate provides a number of early intervention programs for different groups of children between three and five years in the ACT. These include early intervention units, autism intervention units, the language intervention unit, early childhood centres, early childhood units and the early intervention playgroups. The criteria for each of these groups are different, with some being run by the local school and some by the special schools, Cranleigh and Malkara. There are around 300 children currently accessing those services, and I understand approximately 160 of those children will move into primary school next year, which leaves around 140 children for whom placements next year are unclear.

There has been some discussion about the forum held on Monday, which I was not able to go to, but one of my staff did. It involved the Community Services Directorate and the Education and Training Directorate. It was abundantly clear, I am told, that at that meeting there was concern. At its heart, that concern seemed to be about the readiness of services for the 2015 school year and the availability of suitable services for individual children. Given that at that time the government had not been able to announce who the new service providers were, that was not surprising.

What I understand is that some parents have expressed a concern that even with a term's notice, they will not have time to prepare their child for the transition to a new service. That is probably a reasonable concern, given that the time frame has to not only include a transition but also include time to identify services available and meet with service providers to discuss services in detail, and for parents to ensure that they are appropriate for their child. On top of this, parents will have to start engagement with the NDIA. It is a lot to get done in one term, although in real time it is just under four months between then and the start of the new school year. However, while considering whether the solution to this problem was to delay the transition by a term or even a year, I decided that I thought not. I can appreciate that this may seem like a simple solution for parents and carers, but this is a big decision to take in regard to delaying the service delivery change, a big decision to effectively delay the rollout of the NDIS to an entire group.

I would prefer to see the rollout continue and for the directorates involved to ensure their very best efforts to make this happen in a way where parents feel heard and in an orderly way, such that children are able to transition effectively. It appears that the subtext is that the government will need to vacate the field of early intervention service provision in order for new providers to step up. So we are caught in a circular place here. There is an imperative to get those new providers at the table, but extending the provision of government services for another year may only result in a delay in bringing those providers on board, and therefore we may find ourselves in a very similar situation next year.

It certainly is not feasible, as Mr Wall's motion suggests, that those alternative services are fully operational prior to the government services closing. It is an

impossible business start-up model where you have no clients and no money coming in, because all your clients are operating in a different system. We must also remember that a large chunk of funding for the NDIA is coming from the ACT government, and the government cannot fund both of these systems at the same time. We clearly need to have a transition point, and that is something that I think is what we should be working towards here in a way that is not about really putting the frighteners up people, or drumming up points of concern, but simply trying to methodically work through the issues.

That brings me to the motion specifically. Firstly, there are some factual errors in the motion that made it difficult to amend. I understand the rationale for the amendment to the motion brought forward by Ms Burch rather more comprehensively. However, there certainly were some clauses in the original motion that the Greens would have supported in their entirety had these other errors not been present.

The main issue, of course, is that Mr Wall appears to have misunderstood that Therapy ACT is not withdrawing from the provision of service in December 2016. This affected clause 1(a) and clauses 2(a) and 2(b), and I do hope that that information is now clearly understood and has also been clearly communicated to parents who may have been given the wrong impression.

Having made those comments, I am pleased to be able to support the amendment that has been brought forward by Ms Burch. I am pleased that Ms Burch's office has been very open, certainly in the discussions held with my office, to including some of the suggestions that we made to be specific about accountability, consultation and reporting back to the Assembly. I did not suggest these inclusions in the amendment because I had a concern that the minister and her directorates were not on the path of consultation, accountability and reporting back. Indeed, it appears to me that there is a great deal of work being done here, and the feedback I received from the forum that was held at the beginning of the week was that the directorates and the NDIA were very open to questions, comments and concerns, to hearing from parents about what they wanted, to working with parents about their needs and concerns.

The message, loud and clear, was that this was going to be a team effort, and all input was needed. That is, indeed, the very spirit of the NDIS, that parents and those with a disability have a say and have control. That is what is at the heart of this reform. So the attitude of the directorates at the forum, from the reports I received, was very heartening.

I suggested the inclusions because I feel it is important that parents, carers and therapists feel assured that their concerns are not being swept under the carpet, that they realise the assurances they are being given will be fulfilled and that they have the commitment of government that they will not be left behind in the transition. This is absolutely crucial. The government is not working to abdicate its responsibility here. Rather, it is working to improve outcomes and funding for people with a disability. But right now, at this time of change, parents need assurances that the government is very focused on their concerns and that government has a clear plan.

The change that I suggested—and I appreciate the support this received—was that the directorate engage specifically with those families affected by the transition to non-

government early intervention services in 2015. My understanding is that this was the directorate's intent and, indeed, that this has already started. But I certainly welcome the confirmation in the amendment for providing parents with assurance.

The second observation refers to families receiving timely information about new service providers available in the area of early intervention by holding an expo of providers early in term 4, giving parents the opportunity to investigate and research and have conversations with the people that they will be entrusting the care and development of their children to. It is crucial that parents feel at ease with their choices, and that their choices are as wide as possible. An expo may not be the only opportunity parents have to investigate services but, with the time frames involved in this, parents need all the assistance they can get as quickly as possible. Any shortcuts to this that the government can facilitate, I think, are to be welcomed.

The third observation that my office contributed was that the government report to the Assembly with regard to readiness of early intervention providers as soon as possible after the start of term 4. If there are not enough providers with their hands up, if there is not a full suite of providers to meet the needs of the current early intervention clients, then we need to know, and we need to know well before the end of the school year.

I welcome the minister's public commitment, made also at the forum on Monday, that no child in need of early intervention services in 2015 will be left not provided for. This is an important assurance for parents, carers and families to hear. It means that the government is not walking away from its responsibilities. Rather, the government is aiming to facilitate what was always going to be a tricky transition but understands that that transition is entirely their responsibility.

I note one of the Liberal members in their earlier remarks—I forget who—was quite cynical about that undertaking and quite dismissive about that undertaking from the minister. When it comes to really trying to summarise my remarks today and think about where this conversation leads, I think it is easy to ask all the questions. It is easy to be cynical about comments people are trying to make. But this is a major transition. There is no doubt it is difficult. There is no doubt there are some unanswered and unanswerable questions at this point in time.

That does not mean that the staff in the directorates are not working their insides out to make sure that this is done well and as smoothly as possible. I have chatted to some of the staff. I know how hard they are working. I know that they are really conscious of the fact that there are questions that they do not have all the answers to yet, and I know, in talking to the minister this week in preparing for this motion, that she has the same considerations.

I do not doubt the enormity of this change. I do not doubt that people are nervous. But I think the important thing, and the reason I will support the amendment that has been brought forward today, is that it sets out some clear undertakings and sets out the information that is available and processes to try to close the gaps where the information is available.

I do not think delaying is the right answer. I think that we need to work hard to get to the deadline. Delaying simply delays all of the good sides of the national disability insurance scheme that so many people championed, that so many people think is one of the most significant reforms seen in Australia in a very long time. That is what we are striving for. I do not doubt that it is difficult, but what I am interested in is working through those issues so that we get to that place as quickly as we can, in a timely way, and with people feeling as confident as they can.

On that basis, I will be supporting the amendment, because it seeks to set out some of those steps and some of those assurances that I think carers, providers and parents are looking for.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education) (4.29): I welcome the opportunity to talk on the national disability insurance scheme and the motion that Mr Wall has put forward today, and specifically the amendment that has been moved by the minister, Ms Burch.

This is a very significant reform to the way disability services are provided, not just in the ACT but across Australia. I am very proud of the work the ACT government has done with the commonwealth government to prepare our city for the transition to the national disability insurance scheme. I have worked closely with the minister on this since the commonwealth really indicated their desire to establish a national scheme for the provision of disability services in 2012.

The ACT government has been, I think, one of the first to really put our energy and weight behind this transition to new arrangements, fundamentally because we believe it is the right thing to do and because we believe that it will provide people with a disability, of whatever age, a better level of service, more say in the services they get and an ability to determine the support they receive.

We have been very keen to make sure that the transition to the new scheme is orderly and is done in a way that our service system can manage. We do not underestimate the challenge that is presented by the changed arrangements both to the service sector as a whole and to the individuals that use it—and, to be honest, to the government, which has been a very significant provider of disability services since self-government.

I speak to this subject with a level of expertise and understanding in that this is the sector that I worked in before coming into the Assembly. I spent probably 15 years working in the disability system in the community sector in various roles. The first of those was working with children with a disability from the age of nought to five. I then moved into working with younger adults with very significant disabilities before moving into the advocacy area, where I worked with adults with intellectual disabilities on their transition out of Bruce Hostel and John Knight Hostel, and the closure of the sheltered workshops in the city.

So I have been a support worker working with people who had never left an institution. I vividly recall spending months working with a young man of my age at

the time—and he would be my age now—where we would walk down the path of Bruce Hostel because he had never, ever lived in the community. I remember discussions I had with family and friends of those individuals who were beside themselves about the changes that were underway.

There are many similarities to the anxiety and apprehension that parents are having now over the first transition stage for young children to move into the new scheme. I understand the concern of parents. It is a change, and any change, when you are a parent of a person with a disability, is exacerbated and tenfold to what parents who have children without a disability experience. But that does not mean that we cannot manage that change and that we cannot support those families.

We have been very keen to get information out as soon as possible. I know in the last couple of months we have been pressing for the implementation and transition plan to be approved by the commonwealth. That has been approved today, as I understand it, thankfully before the Prime Minister went on his trip overseas. We are now in a position to talk in very concrete ways with families and with the providers that have already shown interest in coming into the ACT to support families.

The reason that we have started with children under the age of five, essentially, or young children, is that from 1 July anyone born here in the ACT with a disability which is eligible for the national disability insurance scheme will go straight into the scheme. When we looked at how we transition to the full scheme rollout in the ACT—and we are the only jurisdiction doing this, largely because of our size—to 5,000 people, ultimately, we had to look how to transition in a very careful and orderly way. So it is no surprise that we looked at the youngest group and the smallest group to start that transition. The babies that are born from 1 July will move into the scheme. We then look at the next youngest population, children under two or two to four-year-olds not starting school until 2015. That is a reasonably small group relative to the larger group that will come as we progress through the age groups.

That allows us to work pretty much individually with those families. There has been an incredible amount of work done with families. I just cannot accept some of the criticism that has been put to the government today by the opposition. There has been a task force established. Community forums were undertaken. There was information on websites. The Community Services Directorates really did go as hard as they can to get information out to people in the best time available. There have been various meetings. I have seen the reports of the meetings, the discussions, that have been held.

I ran into a mum on the weekend whose child I looked after probably 20 years ago now—maybe a bit more than that—a child with a very severe disability, probably the most severe disability that I ever worked with. I was talking with her about how her child was going, her now young woman, and how she felt about transitioning into the national disability insurance scheme. She acknowledged that it meant change and that was a challenge, but she thought that ultimately it would be good for the sector as a whole.

There is more money going in. There are more resources being brought to the city. There will be jobs created here. There will be jobs for young people. When we look at areas of growth in the economy, the disability sector is going to be one of them. Aged

care is probably going to be the other. These are all on the positive side of having this change with the NDIS coming to Canberra.

What the mums who were in the public gallery today wanted—and I did take the opportunity to go and speak to them—were some firm commitments that on day one of term one their child would have somewhere to go or they would not where to take their child. They are commitments that the government can give these families. There may be a change in who provides that service, there may even be a change in the days that service is offered, but it is up to us to work out over the next few months with the families and the providers how that is to be done.

It is not our intention that anyone would be worse off under the national disability insurance scheme. That is the opposite of the intention of this government going into this. It was to give families more say about the services their children receive, to give them the resources to do that and engage in that directly, and to improve the services provided. Otherwise, what are we all here for? That was very much the thinking behind the government being the first jurisdiction to sign up. The fact that we have a small number of children to transition first into the scheme means that we will be able to individually case manage those families and make sure that we are addressing all of their concerns.

I think, overall, families are positive about the change to the NDIS, but it is a different way of doing things. We acknowledge that. Any change in this sector comes with anxiety and apprehension and we need to address that. But we are doing everything we can, and we will continue to do so. As problems and questions arise—and people will, I think, as the information rolls out, have more questions—we stand ready to help those families and make sure that they are comfortable with the changes when they come into effect at the end of the year. We will work with those families.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (4.39): I am pleased to speak about the services provided by disability, education and Therapy ACT and to remind the Assembly of the government's plans for a future of choice and control for people affected by disability. On Monday, Minister Burch met with families, providers and staff who have an interest in early intervention services.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a time of change, as we have heard, and forums such as this are a very important way to hear the comments and concerns of the community and for the government to give clear information that can assist people affected by disability to feel less anxious about the future.

During the forum the changes that will take place to increase choice and control were clearly outlined. It is very important to distinguish between early intervention programs which have been provided within the education setting and therapy services which are provided by Therapy ACT. Making this distinction will assist families to feel less confused about the support they will receive during this transition period.

So, to be clear, let me state again that early intervention, small group programs are being transitioned to the non-government sector from the end of 2014. Early intervention is in the scope for the NDIS as it is a service specifically to support children with developmental delays or disabilities.

From January 2015, the Education and Training Directorate will no longer deliver early intervention programs and supports. Already work has progressed. KPMG have begun a series of industry soundings with established agencies who are interested in providing these services. In other jurisdictions, some providers are already providing inclusive, integrated and effective approaches to support children and their families.

These effective, evidence-based, multi-disciplinary programs have excellent outcomes for children with developmental delays and disabilities, and to date they have not been available for families in the ACT. It is reassuring to hear that Northcote, Yooralla, House with No Steps and Cerebral Palsy Alliance have made clear their intentions to provide or expand early intervention services that families want and need.

I know that families have so many things to consider, and the government takes very seriously its commitments to keep families involved in the planning. For this reason, KPMG is also conducting a series of forums with parents affected by these changes so that we can hear what they value and hope for in new services. Families affected by changes to the early intervention programs will be invited to meet with KPMG and give their expert advice on the programs they want to see in Canberra.

The next step in this staged transitioning of early intervention programs to the non-government sector will be the programs provided through Therapy ACT. The Assembly will be aware that Therapy ACT will continue to provide therapy services until December 2016. The government is carrying out this staged approach so that we can work with providers and the ACT community to support the sector to develop with the progressive introduction of the NDIS.

During this time the same services families have used in the past, such as speech pathology, physiotherapy and occupational therapy, will continue to operate. As children phase into the NDIS and have their planning meeting with the agency, Therapy ACT will provide current clients with continuity of care to ensure that early intervention goals continue to be identified and supported.

The NDIS is a social change. Its introduction will change our understanding of the services available to people with a disability. The NDIS is not intended to replace mainstream services within our community. All mainstream services have a responsibility to make reasonable adjustments to enable community members, regardless of disability, to access them. For example, the intake referral and assessment services now provided by Therapy ACT are mainstream services that anyone in the community can access.

Children will have access to therapy services via the physiotherapy or speech pathology drop-in clinics beyond the NDIS trial, so families into the future who have concerns for their child's development will continue to have access to specialists who can advise them and assist them on the path to early intervention where this is required.

Mainstream services will continue to be provided by the ACT government in the future, although the location and how these services look may change. We are working at developing a whole-of-government approach to these vital services so that mainstream services are accessible for everyone in the community.

Therapy ACT provides services to many people with developmental delays and disability each year. Of necessity, these services are time limited and rationed so that as many people as possible can have some level of access to the service.

Despite the highly valued work of Therapy ACT, people with disability are not always able to access the services they need or, indeed, the services they want. Families want to have the right frequency and intensity of service for their child so that they can meet their early intervention goals.

In providing a trial site for all residents to the NDIS from July 2014, the ACT government has acknowledged the need for greater choice and control for all people with disability. Individuals and families who live the experience of disability know best what they need, when they need it and how they wish to access services.

By gradually withdrawing from providing government therapy and early intervention services, the ACT government means to create the room for the non-government sector to expand and deliver the choice of service provision to people with disability that the NDIS promises.

The ACT government understands that early intervention for children is the most effective way to support children, providing the best possible outcomes. This philosophy is supported by the NDIS, and children with developmental delay and disability will have the opportunity to discuss their early intervention needs with planners from the National Disability Insurance Agency and put in place the services that best suit them and their family.

While we acknowledge that families who have valued the early intervention programs provided and the staff who have delivered the programs, this is an exciting opportunity to expand the impact and effectiveness of early intervention. There has never before been such a large investment into the areas of early intervention and therapy services, which means successful elements of current programs and more will be available in the new programs.

Families rightly want to have choice and control of the services they access for their family members with a disability. This is the key principle of the NDIS, and we understand that system reform will be needed to deliver this new response.

The flexibility of the NDIS presents a significant change for all of us, but in embracing this change the government is committed to making a service system for children and families who need the best services so that they can enjoy life's opportunities.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (4.47): An experience the Chief Minister shared with us is an appropriate story to reflect on—the opportunity she had over an extended period of time to walk with a young man down the path at the Bruce Hostel to build the familiarity and the confidence required within this individual to cope with the change he was about to face. Time is the essence of that anecdote, and it is time many of these families are not going to necessarily have to prepare their children to move into the future.

Leaving it until term 4 to provide alternatives for these families is leaving it to the last minute. Term 4 is a time when families are winding down. Late October, potentially early November, is the start of term 4. We all know how much happens in the territory through December, and then in January Canberra is traditionally a ghost town. So the window of opportunity families are going to have from when these potential service providers are established and available to start talking to families about the services they are going to be able to provide in 2015 is very limited, especially by the time a family figures out who these service providers are, engages with them and then makes an informed decision as to what is going to be best for their child under the NDIS. This choice is a key aspect that I think everyone is supportive of, but with choice also comes the need for time to reflect and deliberate on what is the best option available for you.

The evidence is clear that a lot of the planning aspects have been left until the last minute. I admit that it is better late than never, but still late nonetheless. The idea that we are starting a conversation with the families these changes will affect in the month before the new scheme begins is something that is hard to comprehend. This is the biggest reform to the way disability services have been provided in this country and in this territory, yet in the month before they come into effect we have “started a conversation”.

“Consultation” is a very rubbery word that is often thrown around by all sides of politics but, ultimately, consultation is sitting down and having a collaborative conversation with someone else, a conversation where an idea might be floated, feedback is taken and future discussions are based around the input that has been put together. It seems in this instance that the consultation has been, “We have made a decision. We as the government are going to cease providing these services. And now we’re going to consult you and tell you what we have decided.” It is informing on a decision; it is most certainly not collaborative consultation.

I am going to remind people of the movie *Field of Dreams*—there is an element of, “Build it and they will come,” here. As Mr Rattenbury said, ending services is about having a transition point. But the way these early intervention services are being ended is not so much a case of a transition point where a new provider comes in and the government withdraws but, rather, a guillotine with the government saying, “We will not provide services beyond this date. It’s up to the private sector.” These are people’s lives we are playing with, and the simple adage of “Build it and they will come” does not fill people with confidence.

An indication of the haste to start getting the sector ready is the announcement of grants of \$50,000 for service providers to go towards preparing businesses or organisations to provide services under the NDIS. That is part of the \$12.5 million contributed to the territory by the commonwealth, yet many of the grants have only just been announced in the past week—again at the last minute before this transition begins on 1 July.

Questions need to be asked about the budget impact this decision will have on the government’s bottom line. Looking at yesterday’s budget papers, the documents in

regard to education say 400 children are accessing early intervention services at a cost of about \$4,843 per child or \$19.37 million. It concerns me that a budgetary concern may have led to this decision being taken.

Many members who have spoken today have said this it is about creating confidence in the families that rely on these services. Paragraph (1)(h) of Ms Burch's amendment notes the government's commitment that no child currently receiving government early intervention services will be left unprovided for in regards to early intervention services in 2015. Whilst it provides some comfort to those children who are currently accessing services, there is still no guarantee for those who require services for the first time next year. This goes to the capacity issue. Will these providers be established on time with the ability to meet the demand of next year's students? I am concerned that the answer to that question is no.

The motion that I have moved today calls on the government to maintain these services for an additional 12 months or until an alternate service provider is established in the market and able to cope with that delivery, essentially allowing for a phased withdrawal. As a service provider is able to take some capacity the government currently provides for, the government can transition those children into the new service and close the government-operated one, allowing a seamless transition. But it seems the guillotine approach, the cut-and-run approach, is what is being employed here. The lack of confidence that that has instilled in families has been felt by those opposite, yet there is still an intention to be inactive.

The role of opposition is to hold the government to account. While we ask these hard questions and continue to place pressure on the minister and those members opposite to ensure that no child is left behind and that the transition is done as effectively and as seamlessly as possible, they will feel uncomfortable. It will make the job of being in government difficult, but I do not apologise for making their jobs tough.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask that members opposite note the merit of the motion that I have moved today and the opportunity it will allow for a seamless transition to the new era of disability service provision. Failing to do that will be failing the families of Canberra.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 7

Mr Barr
Dr Bourke
Ms Burch
Mr Corbell

Ms Gallagher
Mr Gentleman
Ms Porter
Mr Rattenbury

Mr Coe
Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne
Mr Hanson

Mrs Jones
Mr Smyth
Mr Wall

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Question put:

That the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8		Noes 7	
Mr Barr	Ms Gallagher	Mr Coe	Mrs Jones
Dr Bourke	Mr Gentleman	Mr Doszpot	Mr Smyth
Ms Burch	Ms Porter	Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall
Mr Corbell	Mr Rattenbury	Mr Hanson	

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Economy—private sector employment

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (4.59): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) in 2001, 60% of employment in the ACT was from the private sector;
- (b) the ACT Government's position over the last five Budgets that the greatest risk to the ACT economy is a Commonwealth Government downturn;
- (c) the ACT Budget Review 2013-14 report noting the public sector's impact on other sectors due to the lack of diversification in the ACT economy;
- (d) the ACT Budget Review 2013-14 report noting the ACT economy's lack of diversification and its effect on private sector hiring intentions;
- (e) the decline in private sector employment in the ACT over the last 13 years;
- (f) the ACT Government's unfair tax and charges regime, which hinders ACT business growth and investments; and
- (g) the Treasurer's admission that "The private sector are not exactly stepping up to the plate at the moment..." (ABC 666, 13/2/2014); and

(2) calls on the Government to lay down a concrete plan to return the percentage of private sector employment to at least 60% in the next five years through private sector growth.

Those who were here when Ted Quinlan was Treasurer and minister for economic development would remember the economic cycle arguments that we used to have across the table as opposed to electoral cycles. One thing we can all agree on in this

place is that the boom and bust cycle of the economy is often felt most harshly here in the ACT. Now that we have had Mr Corbell's revelation that both federal governments have duded the ACT, there really is a question about how we address the cycle and minimise the impact of the fiscal ups and downs of the Federation. And can we actually have a truly transformational approach to the future of the ACT rather than simply saying, "We're building some big capital works and they'll transform the economy and the town"?

It is without a doubt a one-horse town. This is a city that depends on public service, on government expenditure, and, to a large extent, the majority of the private sector is dependent on that expenditure. The Federation gets a cold, the commonwealth gets a cold—or it has a sneeze, and we get a cold.

With respect to carving our own path, it was interesting to hear Mr Barr say the other day that, out of adversity, you have opportunity, or you have to make opportunities for yourself. There really is a need for a discussion about what sort of opportunity we want.

I think the problem for the government is that it is well and good to announce a string of capital works, none of which appear to be truly funded, none of which are shovel-ready, and which in many ways will simply shuffle the pieces on the shuffleboard rather than building a genuinely independent economy over which we have much greater control. And if we are to have much greater control of our future and ameliorate the impact on ordinary Canberrans of the ups and downs of the commonwealth, the only genuine way to do it is to build a private sector economy.

In 1995, when Kate Carnell and the Canberra Liberals came to office, public sector employment was about 60 per cent of the economy. When we left office in 2001, it was 40 per cent. What we did, though, was grow the private sector to take up the slack. And it was pleasing to hear the Chief Minister say that one of the first things she was doing after the federal budget was to talk to Kate Carnell about what she had done. I think Kate's answer to that was, "The first thing I did was I didn't talk down the city." Unfortunately, there has been a bit of talking down of the city as the government postures and positions itself for its budget, and that really does not help anyone—least of all the government, I suspect.

The point of this motion is to say that if we are to become masters of our own fate, as it were, the only way we can do it is to have sources of income other than the commonwealth, and the only place those sources of income will come from is the private sector. So in part (1)(a) I note:

- (a) in 2001, 60% of employment in the ACT was from the private sector.

One can see the foundation that the current government inherited through a number of things—that 60 per cent private sector, the introduction of the GST, the regrowth of the public service under the Howard-Costello years, as well as the building of a number of cultural icons for the territory and to service the people of Australia, and the expansion of other cultural icons.

It is interesting that in 1913, at the unveiling of the commemorative stone and the naming of Canberra, following on from Burley-Griffin's fabulous words, "Let's build an ideal city," Prime Minister Fisher said that it needed to be a city of "government, education and the arts". I think we have concentrated very much on government, and I think we all appreciate education—we certainly did when we were last in office, and to their credit this government has also concentrated on it—but there is that third element called the arts. The arts are big drivers in creative economies, through design, through the museum sector and through the cultural pursuits that make cities attractive to people. It is about time that we looked at that.

Part (1)(b) is a summary:

- (a) the ... Government's position over the last five Budgets that the greatest risk to the ACT economy is a Commonwealth Government downturn.

Who would have thought? But there it is in black and white. But what we have not seen is a strategy in the last five years to genuinely diversify the ACT economy, to say that the private sector is not some sort of bulwark that we turn to when the economy goes a bit sour because the commonwealth has cut spending. Why don't we genuinely increase the size of the private sector so that we ameliorate the impacts?

Parts (1)(c) and (d) note that, in the ACT budget review given to the public accounts committee, there is the comment that we are exposed because we have not diversified. I quote:

Due to the impact of this sector—

it is talking about the commonwealth fiscal consolidation, the chosen words of Mr Barr—

on other sectors and due to the lack of diversification in the ACT economy, this may also affect private sector hiring intentions.

There it is laid out by CIE, the independent adviser to the PAC, that we have not done the job. And it really is important that we now set ourselves a target.

As I said, when Kate Carnell came to office in 1995 it was 60-40. They turned that around in five short years to 40-60, and I am suggesting today that that might not be an unreasonable target, in order to start a conversation, a discussion, about what sort of transformation could genuinely occur in the ACT over the next couple of years.

Part (1)(e) refers to the decline in private sector employment over the last 13 years. It may have gone up in raw numbers but as a percentage of the economy it has gone down. We on this side believe that a number of things have affected that, but there are a number of analyses now. Indeed there is one that appears to have come out today from the frontier centre, which have released their first annual entrepreneurial index. This has looked at which jurisdictions—and they have looked at Canada, New Zealand and Australia—really have in place policies that help to create entrepreneurs. There are a number of measures which look at various things, and then they give a score.

It is quite interesting that the highest in the entrepreneurial index for 2013 went to New Zealand as a nation—they obviously do not break it down to states for New Zealand—and the very last was Canberra. I think that is an interesting indication of how others see us as a place where one would come and do business.

The entrepreneurial index for 2013 had New Zealand, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Alberta, Prince Edward Island, Western Australia at No 8, followed by Saskatchewan, Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario, South Australia at 13, Nova Scotia, Victoria at 15, New South Wales at 16, British Columbia at 17, Quebec, Queensland at 19, equal with Tasmania, the Northern Territory at 20 and the ACT at 21. The range of scores had New Zealand at 77.9 per cent and the ACT, unfortunately, at 59.1 per cent.

It is important that we have in place a framework that allows entrepreneurship, because they are the creators of wealth into the future. That is the wealth that gets taxed, that pays for hospitals, education, policemen and nurses.

We have to look at the ACT government's unfair tax and charges regime, which hinders business growth and investment. There is no more fatal tax in the ACT at the moment than, of course, the lease variation tax, which is affecting a lot of development in this city. This is turning rapidly into Andrew Barr's mining tax, because it promised much and it is delivering way under what it was meant to deliver.

If we look at the lease variation tax for the coming year, for 2014-15, it is now down to \$14,580,000. If we look at what it was meant to deliver in 2014-15, according to the 2012-13 budget, it was meant to deliver \$26,365,000 of revenue to the government. So it is not achieving what it was meant to do. All the advice from business is that it is stifling redevelopment, having regard to allowing the city to become what it should become, with a much greater population density in the centre of the city, which everybody agrees with.

Of course, you then have the commercial rates on top of that. The commercial sector did not get slugged much in the first couple of years, but they have certainly had some hefty hikes in the last couple of years, which again is affecting investment.

If we truly want to make this city work, we have to put the regime in place. We have to start with a target and, if it is a time of adversity, which I think we all know it will be, now is the time to have this discussion.

It is interesting that an article in the *Canberra Times* had "Canberra light rail to deliver 3,560 jobs during construction" as its title. But it did not paint such a good picture in the long term. It said:

But another 560 people will be in work as a result of development in the corridor.

So 75 will be employed on light rail, with 55 operating the line, and another 560 people will be in work as a result of the work in the corridor. It is a huge investment for so few jobs in return. What capital metro does is skew the market again. The article states:

The Ernst and Young report makes a startling prediction for overall jobs brought to the city by light rail, predicting a “footprint” of 50,000 jobs by 2049 when the corridor is a hive of ... activity.

But the authors urge caution in interpreting the figures, warning that they are the “gross employment footprint”, and most of the jobs are not new to the territory but drawn from elsewhere in the ACT.

This is the problem with a lot of the development that has gone on in Canberra. It is particularly the problem with this government in the way they develop the city, in that we are constantly moving the focus of the city to anywhere but the city, and that has implications.

Every time we move the focus, they are not new jobs. As the Ernst & Young report says, these will not be new jobs; they will be taken from somewhere else. So to make capital metro work and to get the full benefits of capital metro, what is it that other areas of the city must sacrifice?

What I am saying today is that we must have a process that allows us to have employment and concentrations of population where they logically are, and we have to stop shifting them every time the government want to open a new land release front, because this is a government with an addiction to land sales. They have to constantly shift where they are going and open up a front.

For instance, we currently have about eight development fronts—Gungahlin, Molonglo, Riverland is coming, the brickworks is coming, the next phase of Kingston Foreshore, city to the lake, city plan, the Northbourne capital metro corridor, and then, of course, the infill. The problem is that you cannot keep shifting it if you do not create new jobs to support the population.

What we are saying in this motion today is that it is time to genuinely start to grow the private sector in the ACT for the long term. My belief is that you must start with the city and you must stop avoiding the city, primarily in and around London Circuit, which is still pretty much empty. We know Mr Corbell had a plan, nothing of which has happened a decade later. Suddenly, we have abandoned City Hill, although we have the city plan, which is a spatial plan. We have city to the lake. We now have the Northbourne corridor.

Where are the people coming from and where are the jobs coming from to support these people? The only place they can genuinely come from in the long term, so that we have long-term, sustainable jobs and thereby create a long-term, sustainable city, through which, of course, we hope to improve the wellbeing of all Canberrans, is through the private sector.

To do that, we need to make sure that we build the city. Great cities have great city hearts. We then must find the sectors and the markets in which to build our private sector, and then we must make sure that we sell the message. “Confident, bold, ready” is not selling the message. People like Simon Anholt who have done a lot of work on the identity of places say you have to have a strategy. You must back it up with substance and then you must have significant actions. If you do not have all three of those, it is just propaganda, it is just spin or you end up being anonymous.

I think that much of what this government does is propaganda and spin, and what we must do now is move towards a private sector economy, pulling in tandem with the public sector, to give Canberra a fabulous future. (*Time expired.*)

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Community Services) (5.14): I thank the shadow treasurer for raising this issue today. I regret that the government cannot support the motion as it currently stands because it is riddled with errors. Mr Smyth is perfectly entitled to express his opinion, but he is not entitled to twist facts. Let me begin by correcting some of the errors of fact in Mr Smyth's motion.

I begin with point (1)(a). In 2001 private sector employment was 57.5 per cent of the territory economy, not 60 per cent, as Mr Smyth indicated.

Point (1)(b), about the ACT government's position in relation to the last five budgets, is indeed correct: a significant risk for the territory economy that has come to fruition is that the commonwealth government would contract its expenditure. The ACT government has supported the diversification of this economy, though, and the facts bear out that reality.

The largest concern I have with Mr Smyth's idea of simply measuring ratios of employment is that there is no resemblance at all then to the total level of employment. In theory, Mr Smyth, we could have 100 per cent private sector employment if every public servant was sacked. That would well and truly achieve your target—it would exceed it—but it would be a stupid way to achieve it. I do not believe that is your intent, but to claim that the Carnell government achieved 60 per cent off the back of growth in the private sector—when that growth, if it was driven, was driven by direct outsourcing, so it was the same people performing exactly the same tasks for government but doing so as private contractors—is just sheer folly. That is not a more diverse economy.

The key points to note here are these. What is the total level of employment in your economy? How much has employment grown? From the government's perspective, that is what we are interested in—the total number of jobs in our economy. The facts are that between 2001 and 2011 there were 12,751 additional private sector jobs in our economy. Over that same period, the commonwealth increased its employment by 12,425. So both the private sector and the commonwealth government grew employment to the tune of 12,751 extra jobs in the private sector and 12,425 in the commonwealth sector. Across the territory government, there were 474 additional positions.

So all three players, if you like—the territory government, the second largest employer in the ACT; the commonwealth government, the largest employer; and the private sector, made up of 26,000 firms—contributed to employment growth.

Where did growth come from? It came in professional, scientific and technical services that increased from 13,100 jobs in the mid-90s to nearly 23,000 jobs in 2012-13. Education and training grew from 14,300 jobs in 1995-96 to over 19,000 jobs in

2012-13. The construction sector grew from 9,000 jobs or thereabouts in 1995-96 to over 14,000 jobs in 2012-13. And the strongest performer over the period between 1995-96 and 2012-13 was the tourism and hospitality sector, which grew from 4,500 jobs in 1995-96 to 11,500 jobs in 2012-13 and is still growing.

We now have 43,000 people in our territory employed across the education, scientific and technical and ICT sectors, with more than 6,000 new jobs created in those areas in the last decade. Tourism, incorporating the accommodation and food sectors, has been growing at an average annual rate of 2.3 per cent, well above the national average. These are all areas where this economy has clear strengths and where employment has been growing at phenomenal rates.

Prior to the federal budget, the ACT economy recorded its all-time record level of employment, Mr Smyth, and it recorded growth across the board. All sectors contributed to growth.

What is exciting about this jobs growth has been the range of innovative companies that have been driving it—firms like Aspen Medical, the Australian exporter of the year. Datapod have just won a major contract to export their technology to the US. There are firms like Windlab Systems, Lithicon, Bearcage, Seeing Machines, CEA Technologies and QuintessenceLabs, all of whom have won various awards in the export of, particularly, services.

The services sector in this economy has nearly doubled the value of its exports over the last six or seven years. For a large part of the 1990s and through into the mid-2000s, we were exporting between \$600 million and \$800 million of services each year. In 2012-13, it was \$1.3 billion. Some 2½ per cent of the nation's exports in services came from this small economy. Everyone—the Canberra Business Council, the chamber of commerce, the Exporters Network and everyone associated with export—has verified and said on the public record on numerous occasions how much more diverse this economy is in 2014-15 than it was in 1996.

Another part of this story, though—Mr Smyth might even agree with me on this—is that we are a young city. We have been around for 100 years, for the first 75 of those essentially as a protectorate of the federal government. They did not have a real focus on our economic development. The city was here to meet their needs. It is only in the last 25 years, when we have had self-government and our own focus on our own economic development, that we have seen significant gains for this economy. We are 200 years behind some other cities in Australia, some other states, in terms of having a focus on our own economic development, because we have only had self-government for 25 years.

What has been phenomenal, and what I am very proud of, is efforts, particularly in the last five or six years, through partnerships with the Business Council, the establishment of the Exporters Network and the establishment of the Canberra innovation network in recent months, with the growth we have seen and the potential that is there for it.

In two weeks time I will be leading what I understand to be the largest ever ACT trade delegation to Singapore. It has both an ICT and a tourism focus. The ACT Brumbies

will be playing at the new Singapore sports hub, representing Australia in the world tens rugby championships. It is a fantastic opportunity to bring together our new brand, our tourism partners and our ICT partners. The universities are attending. There will be alumni events in Singapore for the ANU and the University of Canberra. It is a significant opportunity in a really important market for us. There has been an overwhelming level of support and desire to be part of this trade mission. It demonstrates that the government's direction is correct, and it is strongly supported by the business community. We saw that this morning in the nature of the debate at the breakfast function, with the ideas that were put forward at that function, and also in the various roundtables that the Chief Minister and I have been holding on business and economic development.

There is excitement around the innovation network, a desire to work collaboratively. It is an opportunity, in my view, to utilise the government's infrastructure program to leverage private sector co-investment. As I said this morning at the budget breakfast, that co-investment does not have to be in the hundreds of millions of dollars or even in the tens of millions of dollars; at a local level in this community, any co-investment will be welcomed and supported by this government, particularly in relation to improving the productive capacity of the economy and opening up opportunities for this economy to sell more—services predominantly, but some goods—to the rest of Australia and to the rest of the world.

This economy is too small to be insular. It is too small to operate in isolation from the rest of the nation or the rest of the world. Our future lies in high value exports in our knowledge-based industries and in partnerships with our national institutions, particularly the universities and the research institutions, NICTA and the CSIRO. They are the exciting opportunities for this economy. They are the opportunities that this government is seeking to pursue.

We see that through the innovation network, through the business development strategy and through the measures in this budget, particularly measures such as the cut to payroll tax that ensures that, with the previous cut just two years ago, \$25,000 a year less payroll tax is being paid by those who pay the tax, and the overwhelming majority of businesses in this territory pay no payroll tax at all. Our threshold, I understand, is approaching three times the one that applies across the border in New South Wales. So businesses in the ACT with a payroll of up to \$5.1 million now have the most attractive and competitive payroll tax arrangements in the Australian Capital Territory. We are seeing businesses taking advantage of that and employing more people. It is clear from the data contained within the most recent snapshots of the territory economy that those opportunities are being taken up.

Ultimately, what we need to do is support job creation across the board. I am delighted when there is more private sector employment in this economy, but I do not have an aversion to more public sector employment. I want to see more jobs in Canberra, full stop. It is as straightforward as that. It would be fantastic if every month we could set a new record for employment, but the reality of the next two or three years is that, in striving for that goal of another new record every month, the largest employer will be shedding staff. We have to make up 2,000 jobs in the next 12 months before we can get back to where we are now.

That will be a challenge for this government and it will be a challenge for the private sector. But, interestingly, the 30-year long-run history of employment in this economy demonstrates that the private sector can and will take the opportunity to employ more people if we can restore confidence in the economy. At the moment the decisions that are emanating out of Capital Hill are driving down consumer confidence. Unfortunately, we are at a stage in this nation where consumer confidence appears to be highly partisan. When the previous Labor government was in office federally, coalition voters had very low levels of consumer confidence. We have seen a complete inversion of that now, with the change of government federally. Now it is Labor voters whose consumer confidence has crashed. But it would appear that the impacts of the federal budget have spilled over beyond just Labor voters' view of the economy and are impacting more broadly, because consumer confidence has taken a massive dive.

What we intended to do yesterday, and what we will continue to do, is support this economy through that difficult period. We want to ensure that we do so and that we have the opportunity to encourage new growth.

Having said that, I want to move the amendment circulated in my name, which corrects some of the errors in Mr Smyth's original motion. I hope it is something that everyone can support. I move:

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

"(1) notes the:

- (a) growth in the number of private sector workers in the ACT since 2001;
- (b) diversification of the ACT economy since 2001;
- (c) growth in exports in the ACT, which is outstripping the national average;
- (d) ACT Government's support for businesses in the ACT and the implementation of the Business Development Strategy;
- (e) Commonwealth's reduction of spending and employment, which will have a significant impact on private sector businesses in the ACT, and reduce employment by 2.9%; and
- (f) continuing taxation reforms by the ACT Government, which are making taxes fairer, simpler and more efficient; and

(2) calls on the Government to continue its plan to support the ACT's private sector, to encourage job growth and to diversify the ACT economy."

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (5.29): The Greens have always agreed with Mr Smyth's concept that the ACT economy needs to be broadened. I think the question has always been: what exactly does that look like and how is it to be achieved? I have heard Mr Smyth make this comment many, many times. I have heard Mr Seselja make it at various times, particularly in the last election. But I have never really been clear where that diversification is going to come from.

I think the conversation we just had was quite instructive about the shift in the Carnell era and around the changes that the Howard government brought to the ACT. People simply went from being public servants to being consultants doing largely the same role. I must say that to me that does not seem like diversification of the economy. It is just a shift from the public sector to the private sector. That is not really the kind of diversification the Greens have had in mind when we have talked about the economy.

The ideas that we have put on the table have been, I think, rather more broad than that and I think much more about diversification than shifting. We have certainly consistently called for work to be done on greening our ACT economy and trying to position the ACT to be at the forefront of future industries and evolving industries that are about delivering green technologies, green services and green products in a world in which we increasingly need those things.

But it is not simply limited to the green economy. We certainly have always said that there are other areas where changes can be made. We certainly think that is one place where there are significant opportunities. I believe some of those measures are already underway and some of them certainly warrant further work.

Before I go into what some of those ideas are, I was looking at the issue of data and the comments in Mr Smyth's motion. I noted what Mr Barr said. Certainly, the information that I have been able to obtain on the composition of the ACT workforce comes from ABS census data. What it points to is what Mr Barr cited. In 2001 the private sector was 57.5 per cent. In 2006 it was 60 per cent and in 2011 it was at 56.4 per cent. What we actually see there is that it moves around a little. I suspect that in the ACT the number of jobs that we have probably largely reflects the shifts in the commonwealth government.

Mr Barr presented some graphs at the budget breakfast this morning. I am pretty sure they are in the budget papers, although I cannot recall which page. They show that around 2011 we saw a very substantial increase. We had seen over a period of time a very substantial increase in the number of people working in the commonwealth public service. That is likely to have pushed those figures around. I think it is probably a more in-depth analysis than just a proportion. As the biggest employer in town, I think the behaviour of the commonwealth is going to have a significant impact there.

Mr Barr also spoke about the total number of persons employed. If you look at these ABS stats, you can see the numbers moving around quite substantially. Again, the number of people employed I think will play out in that. I think it is much more subtle, or at least more nuanced, than just a figure of 60 per cent, 55 per cent or something like that. For me, it is much more about what are we actually striving to achieve.

I think there are a number of issues. There are certainly things that I would particularly emphasise in the way I think the ACT economy could be reformed and the places in which some of that diversification would come. For me, one of them is government investment in large projects that make Canberra more sustainable, and I put light rail into that category. I heard the comments Mr Smyth made earlier about

the specific number of jobs that come from that, but what is also clear—we have seen it in every other city in the world that has done this—is that you get other things happening around light rail.

You get the agglomeration concept that I have talked about in this place before where other industries take shape. Having modern infrastructure systems actually draws a particular demographic to a city. There is a great level of discussion out there about modern young professionals and the sorts of cities they like to go to. I have certainly moved in those circles at times in the expat community where people look around the world at cities and what sort of transport and lifestyle opportunities they offer as well as job opportunities.

For me, something like light rail will actually provide the kind of living environment that certain types of professionals will want to live in, as well as obviously the different types of jobs that come with having that infrastructure, both in its construction and delivery phases. I think that improving some of the ACT government policies, regulation and the business environment will allow for major private sector growth in green industry. Renewable energy investment, energy efficiency investment and the resource recovery sector are places where I see opportunity.

That would not come as any surprise. Certainly, I have said this before, and my former colleagues have made similar comments. Having something like a feed-in tariff scheme which drives the uptake of solar energy has created a diversity of jobs in the ACT. We saw additional electrician and solar installer positions being created. Unfortunately, we did get to a bit of a phase where some of those positions were coming from outside the jurisdiction, but I think a well-done policy would create a range of jobs. Energy efficiency is certainly an area where there is potential for job opportunities. The retailer scheme that was passed by this Assembly last term will drive jobs in those spaces. There is no doubt about it.

Clearly, when it comes to the resource recovery sector, without opening up the whole Nowaste discussion, we have got work to do to find ways to deal with waste streams that we have not yet successfully dealt with. We still have quite a significant amount of our waste going to landfill. I think there is scope for an enhanced resource recovery sector.

I might say that it is a very difficult sector, particularly now with my portfolio responsibility in TAMS. It is a difficult market. We have seen some very significant changes, for example, in the price of recycled glass in recent times and the way that has moved around. They are areas that still warrant work and they are not entirely settled, but I think they are areas that warrant increased effort.

I think that creating an environment that makes it easy for small businesses and social enterprises to exist in a profitable way is a good way of ensuring local ongoing employment. I support the measures the Treasurer has moved through with in respect of payroll tax. Payroll tax is one of those penalties on human resource. The Greens have long held the view that we should put less penalty on human resource and more penalty on polluting resources. So I certainly support those sorts of things. They encourage small business and we know that small business is a real driver of both diversity and economic activity. So I certainly support that.

I think there is plenty of room for government to simply make life easier for small businesses. Again, I am looking closely at some of the areas in my portfolios to see where we can make life simpler by government being less in the way, frankly. I see it in a number of places, whether it is communities organising events through to businesses trying to simply make things happen. There is no doubt that we can make improvements there. My door is always open to anybody who has got concrete suggestions. I am regularly out meeting with industry players trying to identify specific and concrete things government can do.

I think that facilitating the knowledge economy to grow is certainly a key area of potential in the ACT. That is not just the universities, although they have obviously been a very significant growth area in recent years, but also the research institutions, our national institutions and, of course, cultivating the Australia forum. I think that all of these things blend together to create a very powerful sector.

Members have probably heard me say in this place before that I really think the thinking Canberra model driven by the Canberra Convention Bureau is a great example of how to generate activity and momentum in this space. That program has pulled together the research and national institutions in the ACT to create a powerful model for bringing people to Canberra and creating a model where the ACT is a place of thinking, ideas and collaboration.

It has been a very powerful model and a very successful model. It is the sort of thing that we really should get behind. I am certainly pleased to see the money in this budget for the Australia forum to continue to move forward. I hope we can get to a place where we can collaborate with the federal government to make this a success. Putting all the politics of it aside, and whether the current federal government is really into Canberra or not, this is the sort of project that is not just a Canberra project; it is actually a national project. It is one that historically a federal government would have invested in in Canberra, recognising our unique and special role as the national capital.

I hope we can get to a place where we can sell the Australia forum on that basis to the federal government as a partnership, possibly a three-way partnership—the private sector, the federal government and the ACT government. But we need to get that project across the line. It is not going to be easy but I think we can do it, and I have confidence in it because of the significant energy that is being put into it by the business community in the ACT in partnership with the government.

I think enabling the creative and night-time economy to grow is another area of diversification. We have extremely high quality artists and art facilities in Canberra. Along with a strong live music centre and a range of community and artistic markets, we can ensure that Canberra is a place where people enjoy living and where there is, again, greater diversity.

I have commented to a few people recently that I have really noticed a big change in Canberra in the last five years—it feels like about five years to me—where a lot of that scene has really taken off. There are a lot more events around and there is a dynamic group of younger people really driving these kind of opportunities. Perhaps

that is a bit of a critical mass issue as our population grows as well, but I think there is significant opportunity here where again government might look at the role it could play in making it easier for people to run events.

I would cite a small example of that, but it is one that illustrates perhaps how easily some things can be done that make a real difference. I refer to the Albert Hall and Yarralumla woolshed, which are owned by the Property Group. The Property Group has actually put in place an insurance policy where instead of an individual hirer having to take out public liability insurance of \$20 million, Property Group has taken out the insurance policy and now just charges people a component of it.

They know that they have roughly a certain number of hires a year. The policy costs X amount. They have just divided it up and they charge it out to each person. That really saves people a lot of time, a lot of effort and probably quite a bit of expense in taking out their insurance policy. That means that people can put on a show, a performance or an event that will draw people. I do not want to overplay the significance of this example, but I think it is a good example of where government agencies can play an enabling role that facilitates that kind of diversification of activities going on in our city.

Finally, an area I would like to mention is local food production. I recently hosted a forum, a ministerial roundtable, of key stakeholders in the food production and food processing areas in the ACT. The objective of that was to try and increase the amount of food that is grown and processed in the ACT region. I did this under the auspices of being the ACT's minister for primary industries through the TAMS portfolio. It is fair to say that we do not have a large number of primary producers in the ACT. It sits in the region of 160, give or take, depending on your definition. But it is a vibrant sector. There are some great opportunities there and I think there is opportunity again to expand that.

The issues raised there included things like the fact that there is not an abattoir in the region. People have to send any that they have grown quite some distances. That reduces the economics of it. So people were canvassing whether we could do something to change that. I am not sure whether it would be right in the ACT or somewhere in the region. But the question was: how can government play a role in facilitating that? How do we provide the marketplace where people can sell their produce? The local farmers markets have been incredibly successful. Are there other steps we can be taking? Again, there is a range of ideas there. It is never going to be the biggest sector in the ACT, but I do not think there is a single answer to this.

There are a series of areas in which we have considerable opportunity to expand the initiative and the innovation that is out there in our community by having confidence in Canberra—by government, in places, just facilitating things or removing roadblocks. The ACT government is never going to have huge buckets of money to splash about to industries. But I think a lot of what we can do is to enable, to remove barriers, to collaborate, to link people up. Those are the sorts of things I think the ACT government has to play to its capabilities on. We are a small town. A lot of us know each other, or we can pretty quickly introduce people to the right person. That is where, again, I think there are opportunities.

Having made those general remarks, let me turn quickly to the motion and the amendment. I will be supporting Mr Barr's amendment today. As I said earlier, 60 per cent is probably not quite where I would land, but I think the general spirit of Mr Smyth's motion is right. We do want to diversify the economy. I think Mr Barr has picked up the key points there and I will be supporting his amendment today.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (5.44): At least we have some certainty out of Mr Barr's speech. He does not like ratios and he does not like rounding. And that is unfortunate. He is upset by my writing 60 per cent. Under the rounding laws, 57 per cent gets rounded up. Again, we could talk 60-40. If you want to talk 57½ versus 42½, we can do that. Is it 50-50 or 49-51? There is the problem. This is a man that does not like ratios and does not like rounding. And if that is his argument against my motion, it is a fairly feeble argument.

I would agree with much that Mr Barr and Mr Rattenbury said. It is a young economy. We have got a long way to go. It is a time forced upon us, but it is a time when we can actually be a bit bold and a bit ambitious about where we go. I would agree that in the late 1990s a lot of the jobs were shifted. It was just simply shifting. But they are counted in the statistics. That may be where they ended up, but the question is: where did they stay? Some of the stats I have seen would suggest that—and I would hate to round something—we ended up with 50-50 at one stage. It was actually 49.3 per cent and 50 per cent on the other side. But it was approximately 50-50.

The point is: if we are going to fund all the projects that the government wants to fund and find people to use them and have jobs to support those people, then we really need to have a good, hard look at ourselves as a city. Again, I make the point from the *Canberra Times* article about the Ernst & Young report:

But the authors urge caution in interpreting the figures, warning that they are the “gross employment footprint”, and most of the jobs are not new to the territory but drawn from elsewhere in the ACT.

That is the shuffling. Civic is like a donut. It gets broken every now and again, it gets pulled and stretched. It was east Civic, then it was west Civic, then it was city to the lake, and then it was back to the city plan. Now it is going to be spread all down Northbourne Avenue. At the same time we are going to do the brickworks, Kingston foreshore, Riverview, while continuing with Molonglo and Gungahlin and having some liberal spattering of infilling around the territory. Where are the people coming from? Where are the jobs coming from to support those people? And I am saying you have to have a greater look at what is happening and what could happen and work on the potential.

Mr Rattenbury said, “What does it look like?” I would agree. I do not think there is a simple answer. Some of it will be big industries. For instance, in the 1990s, Kate Carnell and the government went after ICT. There is a lovely article, I think it is in the March 2002 *St George George* magazine, that says that the ACT has become the IT capital of the country. It did not just happen. It was something we worked at. We got some of it wrong. We got a lot of it right. But we did work at it. But at the same time, I think you have got to play to your local strengths.

Picking up on some of the things Mr Rattenbury said, it is about what it feels like, it is about young professionals that are willing to go places, it is the work of the Charles Landrys and the Richard Floridas, it is about the creative class and it is about new industries for the ACT, for instance jewellery. The School of Art here produces a large number of, and some of the best, gold and silversmiths in this country. Within six months of their graduating, most of them do not live here.

I have mentioned FIVEFOLD before. Four graduates and a lady from California, five young females, have set up their own jewellery shop in the ACT, in Braddon. I said to them, "Most people would say you are foolish. Your colleagues have all moved away." They said, "But we like Canberra. We want to stay here and we want to make it special." And that is what we have got to be encouraging. So it is in small industries like jewellery.

Mr Rattenbury said that the Greens have always been keen about sustainability industries. They talk about it. They have had a number of opportunities, and they have fallen over. There were discussions before the 2008 election and after the 2008 election about who would support, for instance, Spark Solar, who wanted to set up a plant here to make solar cells. We said we would, the government said they would not, and the Greens supported the government. As a consequence, we do not have a solar cell manufacturing plant in the ACT, which would have produced some semi-skilled and blue collar jobs. That has gone begging. Spark Solar still continues and looks for opportunities, but it did not get any help from this government and it did not get any help from the Greens.

NOWaste by 2010 is a strategy that the Greens let down, and they let the government get away with walking away from that strategy. Part of that strategy was to do with, when you got to the hard end of the waste stream, the things that were difficult to get rid of. By the time we got to 2010, having started in about 1996, we would have had companies that were working on solutions to track those problems. You take the pressure off by not having the target, and it does not happen. And that is the case. So that is what it can also look like, Minister Rattenbury, when opportunities are squandered or simply walked away from.

It is about diversifying the economic base. The Centre for International Economics says in a report that due to the impact on this sector and on other sectors and due to the lack of diversification in the ACT economy, this may also affect private sector hiring intentions. Those outside us, looking at us, think we are not diverse. We need to work on that, and we need to improve their understanding of who we are.

Back in 2002 I put out a press release that we should have a film industry. Give the government some due, they have had some assistance there and it was great to sit down at the preview of *The Code* the other night and watch the first two episodes, filmed predominantly in Canberra. It was fantastic. It is a great industry for us.

I have said over the years we should have something like a fashion industry, and was it not great to see something like FASHFEST, a private sector initiative, highlight what is good about the fashion industry in the ACT? I have gone to FASHFEST both

years and sat next to ordinary Canberrans who are absolutely delighted about it. I have sat next to a diplomat who said that it was as good as anything he had seen around the world in his diplomatic career. We can perform at an international standard in this city.

It is about the racing industry and the future of the racing industry—hopefully the minister will get a report shortly about that—and perhaps co-locating all of the different forms of racing at a different location. But let us make sure that when we do it, what we do is build a facility that allows us to capitalise on it and gain market share in some of those markets. Sky TV now has three racing channels. They are looking for product. We should be in a position to capitalise on that and at the same time not just the racing industry, the entire equestrian industry. Canberra probably has more horses per head of population than any city in the country. But we do not work off that.

We used to have the dressage events on the lawns in front of Parliament House and they were beamed around the world, and we do not now. The question is: why do we not have them? What is required to have them so that you get vertical integration from the absolute top of the pile, from racing and equestrian all the way down to kids with ponies in the horse paddocks? But you cannot do that unless you have a commitment to the industry.

The split between tourism and business events, I think, is being talked about more widely now. I do not think we have ever reached our potential or got anywhere along the path to reaching our potential on tourism. It is the same with business events, which has been absolutely hindered over the last 13 years by not having a new convention centre.

But at the same time it is arts and culture. Father John Eddy, who was a Jesuit here in the local community, said that the thing that changed Washington was the establishment of the Kennedy Centre. He said that Americans suddenly were interested in their own culture. Washington in the 1960s was the murder capital of America—400 weapons murders a year in Washington. And it has moved away from that as they have got involved in their arts and culture and as they have highlighted education and have moved on to commerce. Washington peaked at just over 800,000 people at one stage and is now down to just over 600,000. You do not want to go through a boom and bust cycle like that. But it is about capitalising on what is your core brand and making sure that you make it work.

Mr Rattenbury mentioned food. That is an excellent opportunity. We have more restaurants per capita in this city than probably any other city in the country. We have excellent restaurants here. We have an excellent primary produce sector which is growing. Let us make sure they have got the infrastructure to support them, whether it be truffles or whether it be olive oil. There is plenty going on.

We all know the local wine industry. We claim Clonakilla as our own, even though they are just across the border. It is a worldwide brand now. I have hopes that one day there may even be a whiskey distillery in the ACT. Who knows? It is a growth industry. But you have got to work at it and you have got to talk about it.

There are so many industries that we could be involved in. Canberra is built on the knowledge that we have. It is built on the great educational institutions that we have. But I think without a target, to simply say you have got a strategy, which is basically a rename, a rebadge or a relaunch of things that have gone before, and say that is enough, I do not believe that is what the people of the ACT want or what the people of the ACT now need. (*Time expired.*)

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Health—ACT Medicare Local

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella) (5.54): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

(a) the ACT Medicare Local is an important organisation in the ACT's health system and across the ACT community service sector; and

(b) the ACT Medicare Local plays a key role in driving and delivering many preventative health programs across the ACT and employs 60 local Canberrans;

(2) expresses its concern at the decision of the Commonwealth Government to cease funding for the ACT Medicare Local from July 2015;

(3) expresses its support for the work the ACT Medicare Local is doing delivering crucial programs to improve the health of our community, including in childhood obesity, mental health, advanced care plans and homelessness primary health care services; and

(4) calls on the Speaker to write to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Health on behalf of the ACT Legislative Assembly to express support for the ACT Medicare Local, its board, staff and the continuation of its programs.

As we know, health services across Australia are under threat by an unprecedented attack on the system by the commonwealth budget. Despite the misleading line being run by the Prime Minister, the federal health minister, Senator Seselja and others, they cannot deny the facts—a \$240 million cut from health funding to the ACT over the next four years, the unilateral termination of nationally agreed health and hospital funding reforms, the undermining of Medicare as a free and universal service through the proposed GP co-payment and, as my motion points to, serious threats to the Medicare Local network.

But do not take my word for it—here is what some of the Liberal Premiers had to say at the urgent first ministers meeting held on 18 May. The Queensland Premier, Campbell Newman, said:

The unilateral termination of agreements between the Commonwealth and the states is completely unacceptable ... These cuts are firmly and unequivocally rejected ... Contrary to what the Prime Minister has said, there are immediate funding impacts.

New South Wales Premier, Mike Baird:

The future expectation was that the Commonwealth would be absorbing about 40% of hospital funding across the country. The budget projections reduce it to 14% ... If there are problems that need to be addressed in the longer term, let's do that collaboratively and constructively. Let's not bring down a budget that says, 'by the way, the money's gone, good luck with that.'

Of course, our Chief Minister has been equally clear about this government's response. Both publicly and privately she has been fighting for the thousands of Canberrans and people from around our region who depend on the ACT health system. We have heard little from the other side of this chamber. In our budget yesterday the ACT Labor government made our values on health care clear—we have absorbed the hit to our bottom line in 2014-15 so Canberrans do not go without vital health services. And as we move ahead, we need to look further at ways to support our health system through the challenges it is facing.

The ACT Medicare Local is a vital part of this discussion. I call the Assembly's attention to it today and ask members for a unified position on at least this element of our health system. The establishment of the Medicare Local network was the result of a national agreement, an agreement made by all jurisdictions at the COAG meeting on 13 February 2011. States and territories agreed to further reform of the national health system, committing to new funding and governance arrangements to deliver better patient outcomes and help secure the long-term sustainability of Australia's health system.

The new national partnership agreement was developed and signed by the parties on 1 July 2011. Under the 2011 agreement, the commonwealth proposed the establishment of local primary healthcare organisations, or Medicare locals, to support health professionals improve delivery of primary health care and provide better access to after-hours primary health care.

The commonwealth government used the then divisions of general practice as platforms from which Medicare locals were established. In 2011 at a special general meeting of the ACT Division of General Practice, a strong majority of 82 per cent of members gave approval for their constitution to be amended to enable the division to transition to the ACT Medicare Local.

The Medicare locals took on the role of the prior divisions of general practice but with an expanded scope that included linking with local hospital networks, the community and healthcare providers such as GPs, allied health professionals and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services. The ACT Medicare Local was formed in August 2011 and currently has around 1,300 members, including GPs, nurses, allied health professionals, consumer and carer organisations and community organisations as well.

The Medicare Local is locally governed and run. It ensures strong GP, allied health and community engagement through its committees and board structure. By ensuring the establishment of the Medicare Local worked in parallel with the ACT local hospital network, comprising the Canberra Hospital, Calvary public hospital, Clare Holland House and the QEII Family Centre, the ACT government has helped facilitate a close working relationship between the two structures.

Let's have a look at the vital work of the ACT Medicare Local in our community today from the view which sees people as patients and clients with individual needs, not as heartless consumers.

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.

MR GENTLEMAN: I was talking about the vital work of ACT Medicare Local in our community. Some of the core functions Medicare Local carry out include making it easier for patients to access the services they need by linking and better coordinating care between local GPs, nursing and other health professionals, hospitals and aged care, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health organisations and community service. They work closely with ACT Health, the local hospital network council and non-government organisations as key partners to make sure primary healthcare services and hospitals work well together for their patients. They identify where the ACT community is missing out on services they might need and looks at ways to address those gaps. They support local primary care providers, such as GPs, practice nurses and allied health professionals, to adopt and meet quality standards. Also, they are accountable to the ACT community to make sure the services are effective and of high quality. And, of course, they coordinate commonwealth-funded primary healthcare initiatives in the ACT.

Further, the ACT Medicare Local has been a high performing Medicare local and a close partner with the ACT government in a number of joint initiatives. The HealthPathways project currently being implemented has funding from ACT Health and Coast City Country General Practice Training. HealthPathways will provide online information to GPs on how to assess and manage medical conditions and how to refer patients to local specialists and services. It will also include information for patients, reference materials and educational resources in line with best practice rolling out in a number of jurisdictions.

The GP aged-care day service currently run under a service funding agreement with ACT Health provides an in-hours locum medical service to people who are homebound or in a residential aged-care facility where their GP is unable to attend. The diabetes link program funded by ACT Health aims to optimise communication and referral pathways between the ACT Health diabetes service and primary care services. In addition, the program provides education to GPs, practice nurses and other relevant health professionals and trainees to better utilise primary care to prevent and manage diabetes.

The “Be my voice” campaign promotes advanced care planning. This is an advertising campaign designed to raise awareness of end-of-life issues and advanced care planning, a program delivered by ACT Health to provide a quality assurance system of discussing, recording and documenting a person’s healthcare wishes.

Medicare Local is also part of the human service task force overseeing the human services blueprint project, another important element of yesterday’s budget. Finally, the partners in recovery program supports Canberrans living with enduring mental health concerns to develop their own plans for sustained recovery and to facilitate access to local services and support.

The work of our Medicare Local does not stop there, and I would like to list a few more valuable functions it has provided for our health sector and our community at large: comprehensive studies to identify gaps in primary healthcare services for the community, such as the 2013 health needs assessment—a population health profile, regional health service mapping, extensive consultation with health service users and analysis of where efficiencies can be made in handling data.

Of course, much of this work faces an uncertain future due to the announcement made three weeks ago on commonwealth budget night. The commonwealth announced that it intends to replace Medicare locals with primary health networks from 1 July 2015. At face value the role of the primary health networks will be positive in the community. They are expected to establish clinical councils with significant GP presence and local consumer advisory committees that are aligned to local hospital networks to ensure primary healthcare and acute care sectors work together to improve patient care.

A locally coordinated and governed system of primary health care plays an important role in containing the rapid growth of hospital and other high cost care in the face of challenges such as avoidable hospital admissions and ED care, chronic and complex disease and ageing population and mental health issues among many others. This general approach enjoys widespread support. However, the new commonwealth policy will demand a major transition process across the country, and the ACT will not be immune.

The ACT Medicare Local has told its members and stakeholders that work will continue as planned in the short term. But its work will be affected by the tender process the commonwealth has announced. The commonwealth has indicated that an open tender process will occur later this year in which both public and private sector organisations will be able to apply to deliver the primary health network role. As with many elements of the commonwealth’s budget, there are consequences which were not properly thought through. It may be that as part of the tendering process Medicare Local will need to reconsider its current objectives, structure and set-up.

Over the next 12 months the Medicare Local will endeavour to continue to deliver programs and services as usual, but some adjustments may be necessary as it monitors its financial situation, manages uncertainty about future arrangements and positions itself in the tender process. Put more simply, the tender process puts important work

of Medicare locals around the country on ice. It neglects the fact that many health programs, particularly in preventative health, often take several years of planning and a strategic rollout to achieve maximum effect.

Further, we know for a fact that some of the best value for money governments can achieve in health systems is through preventative health programs which reduce the incidence of chronic conditions such as obesity before they start hitting the health system in high cost areas of acute care. These facts have not been properly considered by this policy change being forced on Medicare locals and, as with other cuts to commonwealth health funding, the burden inevitably falls to the states and territories and to ordinary Australian families.

In short, the uncertainty of this tender policy process puts the future certainty and effectiveness of vital health services at risk. It also puts the jobs of skilled health practitioners under a cloud as Medicare locals are forced to divert attention and resources to a tender process in which there are no guarantees. The ACT government believes our world class health professionals should be able to continue their work with far greater certainty.

We are strong supporters of the ACT Medicare Local, its board, staff and programs which serve our community well. That is why my motion calls on the Assembly to join together in support of Medicare Local and that you, Madam Speaker, write to the Prime Minister to express the Assembly's view to him. I ask all members to show support on this important matter, and I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (6.08): I am pleased to be able to speak today on the vital role that primary health care plays in keeping our community healthy and the initiatives currently being proposed by the federal government to modernise the delivery of primary health care.

In the past, the Canberra medical community has been at the forefront of the coordination of the delivery of primary health care. Canberrans have been the beneficiaries of these initiatives.

For almost 20 years the ACT Division of General Practice established and delivered programs which set important new health priorities and values. The previous coalition government worked constructively with the divisions of general practice to drive change in general practice, including increasing levels of immunisation and computerisation in general practice.

As part of the Council of Australian Governments, COAG, national health reform agreement of 2011, the then Labor government replaced the divisions of GP with Medicare locals. They promised that they would improve the coordination and integration of primary health care in local communities, address service gaps, make it easier for patients to navigate their local healthcare system and so on.

Medicare locals were expected to fully engage with the primary healthcare sector, communities, the Aboriginal community, the controlled health service sector and local hospital networks. Their establishment broadly was based on an expansion of the existing divisions of general practice.

In the ACT, the Division of General Practice became the ACT Medicare Local in August 2011. It is my view that this organisation, not without challenge, has made great efforts in embracing the challenge of engaging in the delivery of quality primary health care in the ACT. I have had numerous meetings with the Medicare Local. I have spoken to the ACT Medicare Local, to Rashmi Sharma, twice, I think, within the last 48 hours. I have reasonably regular contact with her. I would be interested to hear what engagement Mr Gentleman had with the ACT Medicare Local in the lead-up to this motion.

Mr Gentleman: She is my personal doctor.

MR HANSON: No conflict of interest then. The ACT Medicare Local has worked to improve the health of all Canberrans by connecting primary healthcare services. The local staff have worked hard and made this model as successful as it could be.

I think that it is true to say that when this model was first devised by the former federal Labor government, there was significant confusion about what the model for the Medicare local would be. If the minister was going to be honest, I think she would agree with that. It took a significant amount of time for Medicare locals to work out what their role was going to be, how it would all bolt together and how it would interact with the rest of the primary health community, local hospital networks and so on.

There is no doubt that in the past our health system has generally been designed for episodic care. That was a model that served us well 40 years ago, but it does not necessarily suit the structure for current health service delivery. Many illnesses are chronic and complex and require multiple integrated and coordinated services centred on the ongoing needs of patients. To enable this, we need organisations that can work in partnership with the broader health system and facilitate better integration, coordination, access and care pathways.

In 2011 the Medicare locals were supposedly the response to that challenge. However, in their current form, as a national network, they are not proving effective, generally speaking, or successfully achieving many of their objectives.

The Medicare local model has not been without serious problems. A Deloitte audit of Medicare locals found evidence of variability in expenditure on administration, with 40 Medicare locals spending more than 25 per cent of their core funding on running costs. That is money aimed to be delivered to front-line services. Twenty-five per cent being spent on admin! That is unsustainable and it is grossly inefficient. Deloitte also discovered that there were varying levels in funds allocated to front-line services, inconsistencies between planned and actual budgets and cross-program funding, and variable accounting practices.

This all pointed to mixed financial capabilities across Medicare locals. The federal government commissioned a review of Medicare locals by Professor John Horvath, previously the commonwealth chief medical officer. His report found serious deficiencies. I will say that again: he found serious deficiencies in the coordination

and administration of primary health care by Medicare locals. Australia-wide, Professor Horvath—who, I will repeat for the Chief Minister’s edification, as she chats around the chamber, was a previous commonwealth chief medical officer—

Mr Rattenbury: You have always got to dig, haven’t you—always?

MR HANSON: Sorry; you are interjecting.

Mr Rattenbury interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members! This is not a conversation; it is a debate. Mr Hanson, direct your comments to the chair.

MR HANSON: Madam Speaker, I apologise. Ironically, someone interjects, having a dig, by accusing me of having a dig. It seems strange.

Mr Rattenbury: I have reduced to your level, Mr Hanson. It is unfortunate.

MR HANSON: You have?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson and Mr Rattenbury, desist.

Mr Rattenbury interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Desist, Mr Rattenbury.

MR HANSON: Anyway, let me go back to the issue at hand. Australia-wide, Professor Horvath—as I said, the former chief medical officer—found that Medicare locals had delivered inconsistent outcomes, faced dispirited stakeholder engagement and had poor network cohesion. I will quote from the review:

... without addressing fragmentation—both within the primary health care sector, and more broadly across the health care system—patient care will continue to be compromised and the health system investment will not be maximised.

It is of concern that patients with chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease and respiratory disease did not receive optimal care, in many instances due to the fragmentation of services. Broadly, the review found that many patients were continuing to experience fragmented and disjointed health care that negatively impacted on health outcomes and increased health system costs. Let me quote from the recommendations from the review:

... a small number of regional entities is required to link up the parts of the health system to allow it to operate more effectively and efficiently. Such entities must focus on improving patient outcomes through collaboratively working with health professionals and services to integrate and facilitate a seamless patient experience.

Professor Horvath was scathing in his observations of the high-level framework for current models. He said:

In their current form, Medicare Locals cannot fulfil this role.

This is the former chief medical officer. He said:

In their current form, Medicare Locals cannot fulfil this role. They are constrained by their lack of clear purpose, variability, conflicts of interest (provider vs. purchaser) and lost goodwill with general practice. New entities in this space must have a clearer purpose and role, and focus on being system enablers.

Any attempt to improve integration in the primary healthcare system requires general practice to be front and centre. The Horvath review recommended that general practice needed to be “the cornerstone of integrated primary health care”. However, the experience generally across Australia with Medicare locals is that general practice has not seen itself as central for the new delivery model. Indeed, in many cases, attempts by Medicare locals to broaden the net of professional engagement appear to have come at the expense of GP goodwill. That is certainly the experience of a number of GPs I have spoken to here in the ACT. It is vital that this goodwill be rebuilt if any future organisation is to be successful. It must be recognised that GPs are, by their nature, the first authoritative point of contact for primary health care. They start the patient on their care pathway and remain critical to their ongoing care.

Research shows that communities with well-developed primary healthcare systems have healthier populations and reduced healthcare costs. Anything that can reduce our unsustainable dependence on repeated high-level, high-cost hospital-delivered medical interventions in chronic disease management must be a significant priority for all governments.

The experience of Medicare locals has highlighted the system’s shortcomings and inefficiencies and provided a guide for evolution to a new model of primary health care. There is a vital need to reduce fragmentation and improve integration across the healthcare system, using clinical pathways across sectors to improve individual patient outcomes. A new model will need to work with GPs, private specialists, local hospital networks, private hospitals, aged care facilities, Indigenous health services, NGOs and other providers to establish clinical pathways of care that arise from the needs of patients, not organisations, and that would necessarily cross over sectors to improve patient outcomes.

We on this side of the chamber are pleased to embrace the new primary health networks to be established by the Abbott government. This will be an evolution from the division of GPs and replace the Medicare locals set up by the previous Labor government. We are glad to see that the primary health networks reflect the recommendations of the review into the Medicare locals undertaken by Professor Horvath.

It has been announced that the primary health networks will be established following a tender process in 2014. Organisations will be able to apply and there will be strong emphasis on minimising bureaucracy and red tape to ensure that activities are focused

on improving services for patients. New primary health networks will start operating from 1 July 2015. The federal government has announced that Medicare locals will continue to be funded until then to ensure continuity for individuals receiving services.

We look forward to the creation of primary health networks, which will work with local health providers and stakeholders to ensure that local services meet the needs of local people, including supporting individual general practices to encourage high-quality services. They will be responsible for improving patient outcomes in the ACT region and ensuring that services across the primary, community and specialist sectors align and work together in patients' interests.

I applaud the work of the ACT Medicare Local. They have done a good job. They have had a significant challenge in navigating what on earth they were meant to do when these things were set up without any clear direction. They have done well to untangle that mess. They probably did so because of the goodwill of their members, the hard work of people like Rashmi Sharma and her staff, and the fact that we had a strong division of GPs from which that originated. I have every confidence that we will find greater strengths as we move towards the primary health network.

In the motion put forward by Mr Gentleman, there is a lot that I would be quite comfortable with and agree with. But there are a couple of points I do not agree with, particularly those expressing concern at the decision of the commonwealth government to cease funding for the Medicare locals from July 2015. As I have expressed, there is a new system taking over. It will be based on the recommendations of the Horvarth report. It is a more appropriate model. It is a better model. This is a national issue. This is not just about the ACT; this is a national issue. It is going to fix up a lot of problems nationally that do not necessarily exist in the ACT.

Secondly, the motion calls on the Speaker to write to the Prime Minister. I think that is not appropriate. I will be moving an amendment shortly just to express the intent of that. The amendment, which has been circulated, highlights the fact that the Medicare locals came out of the division of GPs, and it highlights the recommendations of the Horvarth report that found that the Medicare locals across Australia had delivered inconsistent outcomes, dispirited stakeholder engagement, poor network cohesion, and reduced sector influence. The report recommended that the government reinforce general practice as the cornerstone of integrated primary health care, and I agree. General practice is that cornerstone. It recommended that government establish new organisations.

My amendment also recognises that an important contribution has been made by Medicare locals and the hard work of their staff. There is no need to write to the Prime Minister. I support the new and improved networks that will be set up. I applaud much of the work that has been done by our Medicare locals. I move:

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

"(1) notes:

- (a) Medicare Locals were set up in 2011 having transitioned from Divisions of General Practice;

- (b) the recommendations of the review into Medicare Locals, undertaken by former Chief Medical Officer, Professor John Horvath:
 - (i) found that Medicare Locals had delivered inconsistent outcomes, dispirited stakeholder engagement, poor network cohesion and reduced sector influence;
 - (ii) recommended that the Government reinforce general practice as the cornerstone of integrated primary health care; and
 - (iii) recommended that the Government establish organisations tasked to integrate the care of patients across the entire health system in order to improve patient outcomes; and
- (c) there has been an important contribution by the ACT Medicare Local and the hard work of its staff;
- (2) recognises the need to efficiently align Primary Health Care across the community; and
- (3) supports the implementation of the Horvath Review through new Primary Health Networks to be established by the Australian Government.”.

I commend the amendment to the Assembly.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education) (6.23): I welcome the opportunity to talk about the ACT Medicare Local and to indicate that the government will not be supporting Mr Hanson’s amendment to Mr Gentleman’s motion. Whilst it looks fairly innocuous, by supporting this amendment we will be supporting the significant withdrawal of funding from the ACT Medicare Local, and I will not be agreeing to that. I do not think that is a good idea.

The federal government have indicated that when they establish the primary healthcare networks, those networks are not to be delivering services; they will essentially be an advocacy body, or an industry body, of some sort. They will not be actually delivering services. That is at the heart of the success of the ACT Medicare Local here.

What Mr Hanson does not say when he moves this amendment is that, by agreeing to this amendment, we would be agreeing to probably 50 of the 60 jobs at the Medicare Local going. This is a reasonably large employer in town now. They have 60 staff delivering their programs. They have been excellent in ensuring that they have a broad support base in terms of the programs and the connections they have across the ACT community.

I would like to see them remain unchanged. I do not care if they change their name from the ACT Medicare Local to the primary healthcare network. What is happening from 1 July 2015 is that the Medicare locals, as we know them, will be defunded. There will be a competitive process. Presumably, there will be a number of people

tendering for that work, to apply to be the primary health care network, but none of the programs that the Medicare Local are currently delivering for the ACT government will continue.

It is such a shame because we have just got them to the point, I think, after the last couple of years, where they are actually making a difference. They are established as an organisation, they have staff on board, they have created the partnerships and they are doing the work with organisations like beyondblue and the Heart Foundation. They are working on the human services blueprint with the government. They are doing the work that is needed in the hospital to delineate between patients that are coming to the hospital that do not need to come to the hospital and how they can be cared for in general practice.

All of this work is at risk by the decision of the Abbott government. I think it is one that this Assembly should reject. It is not going to be good for the primary healthcare system here. It is not going to be good for the healthcare system as a whole. It will place more pressure back on the hospitals, which is something that we are trying to reduce, not encourage.

For an organisation that we all speak so highly of in terms of Mr Hanson's presentation—I note he speaks highly of the staff—there are 60 staff there all potentially losing their jobs on 1 July next year. You cannot have it both ways. You cannot support the individual staff but then say, “Yeah, let's push forward with what the commonwealth government wants to do,” because that will remove 60 jobs from the Medicare Local. They will not exist. They will not be service deliverers. That is exactly where they have been building up.

I met with the Medicare Local last week. I do not know whether Mr Hanson has met with them recently. But they are now going to have to spend the next 12 months winding back, essentially trading down, because they cannot, from a good governance point of view, operate as though there are no problems and then turn the tap off on 1 July next year.

There is no assurance that the Medicare Local will become the primary healthcare network. I am already aware of probably three or four private and NGO organisations that are interested in tendering for that work in a role which remains undefined. I can honestly stand here as the health minister and probably the most experienced person in this chamber on health matters and say that this is not a good step forward for the ACT health system. To support Mr Hanson's amendment would be to support the destruction of a local organisation that has spent the last two to three years building up its capacity, its reputation and the services it delivers and put, potentially, 60 people out of work. That is what Mr Hanson is asking us to do today, and it is not something that we will agree to.

I also understand that in the jurisdictions where there is only one Medicare Local—the Northern Territory and Tasmania—their Liberal governments are actually supporting them to be maintained as a Medicare Local in that jurisdiction. Those premiers have the courage to actually say, “This is the wrong thing to do,” and want to advocate for change to the decision. But, unfortunately, here we have an opposition that is just going to accept whatever Tony Abbott says and hope that it works all right.

Well, this one is not going to work. This will destroy the coordination that we have spent years working with the Medicare Local to build in this city. It will ensure that people lose their jobs. It will see an end to programs in preventative health and it will push more pressure onto the hospital system, without a doubt. That is what we are going to see if this change happens on 1 July next year. For all we know, a private health insurer will take over as the primary healthcare network for this city, driven by different motives, perhaps—different outcomes they want to seek. But that is potentially the scenario.

So do not blindly follow a review path just because Professor Horvath saw problems in other jurisdictions. He did not see those problems in the ACT Medicare Local. Just because there might be the need to consolidate the model and not have as many Medicare locals around the country, the fact is that the one in the ACT works. It works because of the staff who have invested so much time and energy. It works because the Health Directorate has helped to make it work by partnering with it, and because other NGOs in this community who have also embraced the model have campaigned and advocated for change in the primary healthcare system.

All of that is now at risk. We cannot just simply stand by as a legislature, as a parliament, to represent the community, and accept that those jobs should go, that the programs should go, that all the work that has been done in the last two years should be discontinued because the commonwealth government wants to save some money in the health system.

The reality is that the health system is expensive. It is going to continue to be expensive. If we have these short-sighted decisions which seek to return some small amount of savings to the budget then we have got bigger problems afoot, because the preventative health area is the key to ensuring that our hospitals do not buckle under the pressure of the burden of disease that is presenting itself in a tsunami-like way, heading for our shores. That is the big issue here. This is very short-sighted. We should be right to support the Medicare Local, support those local jobs, support the programs they do, support the work they do, and be brave enough to stand up, united, 17 of us, and say, “We don’t think it’s a good idea.”

I do not think you are going to lose too many friends over that, if you actually stand up for Canberra and say, “This is not a good idea.” Maybe it is a good idea in parts of New South Wales, but it is not a good idea here. We should be unanimous in our voice of opposition. It would certainly send a strong message to the ACT Medicare Local that we are prepared to fight for them and fight for the jobs that they perform in our city. Anything less than a unanimous vote is not good enough in this chamber.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Rattenbury**) adjourned to the next sitting.

Adjournment

Motion by (**Ms Gallagher**) proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Cerebral palsy—fundraising night

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (6.32): On Friday 23 May at the Hellenic Club Woden in Canberra, over 200 people generously gave up their time, their dollars and their energies to take part in a trivia night fundraiser that I organise each year for a disability-related charity. This year it was for the Cerebral Palsy Alliance. As many would know, the Cerebral Palsy Alliance, previously known as the Spastic Centre, have a very active fundraising arm—as well they might, as 150 families living in Canberra are faced with cerebral palsy related issues 24/7. Their needs are constant and ongoing.

Scott Cass-Dunbar, one of the parents involved, gave a very passionate insight into what some adults and parents and their children experience and the assistance they receive from the CPA. Funds raised from the night are being put towards a new purpose-built centre in Scullin, which is currently under construction. The alliance is working hard to raise funds to complete the building to ensure it is a state-of-the-art facility providing therapy services, programs and specialised equipment for children, teenagers and adults with cerebral palsy in the ACT and surrounding regions.

It was a most enjoyable fundraising night and nearly \$17,000 was raised thanks to the generosity of the attendees who purchased various items. These annual fundraisers are not possible without the support of many organisations and individuals. I would like to place on record my thanks to them all. Thanks first of all to the board and staff of the Hellenic Club Woden for their support of the charity fundraisers for many years. Thanks also to Kellie Edwards and Christine Le Reuz from the Cerebral Palsy Alliance and their many volunteers who helped on the night; Greg Bayliss from Radio 666, who acted as an excellent master of ceremonies; Tony Barilaro as auctioneer; and Maureen Doszpot, Amy Doszpot and Ed Spence and Noah Doszpot, who acted as scorers of my convoluted trivia questions.

The products and services sponsors included the Brassey Hotel, Belluci's restaurant at Manuka, Gabriel Saccardo from Barter Card, La Scala Restaurant, Capital Travel Manuka, Caphs at Manuka, TG's Hair Studios, Rama's Fiji Indian Restaurant at Pearce, Yarralumla Heritage Nursery, Janelle from Cottage in the City, IGA Supermarket Yarralumla, ACT Olympic Council, Robin Poke, Westfield Belconnen and Woden for a Raiders jumper, Doug Edwards and the UC Brumbies for a signed Brumbies jumper, Club Super for golf clubs, a cricket bat from Cricket ACT, a signed Wallaby ball donated by Honkytonks, and signed bottles of wine from the Prime Minister, the Hon Tony Abbott, and the Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP—the latter kindly donated by Sally McDonald. Other sponsors were Robert Oatley Vineyards, Dendy Cinemas, Canberra Day Spa, 4 Pines Brewing, Anne's Legacy and Sandra Orszaczky for a beautiful hand-stitched quilt, ActewAGL, Hamperesque, His Excellency Marcel Stutz, Ambassador of Switzerland, iPlay Belconnen, IGA Ainslie, Lollypotz, Richard Rolfe Audi, Baz Giampaolo and Video Ezy Woden, Shane Hugg and Carlton and United Breweries, Club Super, and the Dinosaur Museum.

Other donors and supporters included Nick George, Stephen Argument, Cade Brown, Paul Murphy of Project Coordination, Dino Nikias, Jerry Tipping, Sandy Vincent and Garry Murphy.

I would also like to thank the many table organisers, such as Melita Flynn and Capital Chemist who formed three tables, Sam and Graciette Ferreira of Pacific Formworks ACT, Robert Westropp-Evans from Luton Woden, Jim Roberts and ACTSport, the Catholic University, Rosary Primary School, Robert Howdin and Wendy Mason, Ian McLeod, Jacob Vadakkedathu, Sue White and Paula Nash from my office, Joe Prevedello, and Jeremy Hanson MLA, Brendan Smyth MLA, Andrew Wall MLA and Giulia Jones MLA. I would also like to thank John and Lee Hillier for coming along and supporting the night.

The teachers from Rosary Primary School ended up winning the trivia night in a very close call that was actually decided on the toss of a coin. It would be immodest of me to mention which table came second on the night, but I thank my staff and their table guests for their efforts and intellectual input.

Organ donation

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella) (6.37): I rise this evening to talk about a very important event which I attended on behalf of the Chief Minister on 17 May. The DonateLife ACT service of remembrance and thanksgiving is an annual event held to remember those who have donated organs after their deaths and saved the lives of many people from all parts of the community. I was proud to be able to light the remembrance candle on behalf of the Chief Minister.

The act of donation is a selfless act which can save more than 10 people who are in need of a transplant, provided that all the organs are viable for transplant. In 2013, 391 organ donors gave 1,122 Australians a new chance in life. The effectiveness of this process is seen purely in the numbers, let alone when the personal impact of such giving is seen through the eyes and stories of those who have received transplants and been given a priceless second chance at life.

Within the ACT last year there were six solid organ donors, which helped 23 individuals overcome their illnesses. Forty eye tissue donations were made for the aid of 83 recipients, more than two recipients per donation.

For the families of donors, the process can be quite stressful and traumatic, especially if they do not know of your intention to donate in the event of an accident or sudden death. It is important to follow the national theme for DonateLife for 2014: "Have the chat that saves. Discover, discuss and decide."

Essentially, it is important, firstly, to keep your loved ones informed about your wishes so they know what to tell the appropriate authorities when the time comes. Registering on the Australian organ donation registry is also a very important step. This registry can be found at www.humanservices.gov.au. The form takes no more than five minutes to fill out and provides the appropriate authorities with your consent for your organs to be transplanted to help someone else in the event of your unexpected death.

The best way to understand the positive legacy that one leaves through organ donation is by hearing the stories of recipients and the families of donors. This was a very

moving part of the ceremony at the event, and I would like to share some of their stories in this place with you, Madam Speaker.

Rory Chevalier spoke about the day his mother passed away. His mother, Julie Hart, had a brain aneurism of which she was unaware and which ruptured. Julie was an organ donor and in death was able to give life to six people who may have died without transplants. She also was able to give the gift of sight to four other people through eye tissue donation.

Bradley Stanley spoke of receiving a liver transplant at the tender age of three. He is now a well-developed teenager with an articulate mannerism and a positive, zesty outlook on life. Without the transplant from a donor who registered themselves and kept their family informed, he may not have made it to his teen years.

I would like to thank all of the people who helped in the organisation of this event and also those who participated. In particular, these are all of the transplant recipients and donor families. Your attendance shows your commitment to others who find themselves in the position of either making the decision to donate a loved one's organs or needing a transplant and being able to receive one due to the selfless decisions of others. I thank Kylie Downes, manager of DonateLife; Dr Greg Hollis; Ms Yael Cass, CEO of the Organ and Tissue Authority; Chief Magistrate Lorraine Walker; Mr Ray Dennis, CEO of Calvary Health Care; Shaune Gillespie, CEO of Calvary John James Hospital; Dr Andrew Skeels, director of Clare Holland House; Ms Holly Northam, associate professor at ANU and previous donor coordinator; Brad Rossiter, president of the Eurobodalla renal support group; Steve Williams, co-founder of Aussie Transplant Mates; David O'Leary, president of Gift of Life; and all the staff from the ACT Health Directorate, including the staff from the ED and ICU, and the theatre staff.

And, of course, I thank Rory Chevalier, Bradley Stanley and the other people who told their stories, for bravely sharing in the effort to promote organ donation and save lives in the future.

Australian National University—School of Art

MR COE (Ginninderra) (6.41): I rise this evening to speak about the ANU School of Art. The School of Art is located in the Research School of Humanities and the Arts at the ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences. The school provides a pathway for students who are looking for careers in visual arts and media arts and design. They achieve this through offering various undergraduate studies, postgraduate coursework and research programs, as well as honours degrees. These qualifications prepare students for a life in art, and allow students to undertake courses in art history, art theory, ceramics, furniture, glass, gold and silversmithing, painting, photography, media arts, print media, and drawing, sculpture and textiles.

The quality of the teaching at the school has encouraged the ACT Legislative Assembly to award prizes to two graduating students from the school since 2011. Students receive \$500 and their artwork is hung in the Assembly for a year. I would like to congratulate last year's winners, Harrison Tucker and Kael Stasce, as well as previous winners Emma Geddes, Sarah Hellsing, Sarah Bainbridge and Jack Brandtman.

I speak today of the ANU School of Art because I had the pleasure of attending the school to view the *Made In Taiwan* exhibition last month. The exhibit was held at the school's art gallery and was organised by the school in conjunction with the Taiwan Academy of Fine Arts and the College of Humanities at the National Taiwan University of Arts. This exhibition followed on from previous Taiwanese exhibits held at the ANU School of Art, including *The Sight Of Formosa* in 2011 and the *Oriental Spectacle* in 2013.

The exhibit ran for three weeks, from 10 to 31 May. I would like to congratulate the curators of the exhibition, Dr Hsin-Tien Liao and You-Hui Chung, on the wonderful job that they did. I would also like to congratulate everyone involved at the Taiwan Academy of Fine Arts. The Taiwan Academy of Fine Arts is an organisation devoted to improving art exchange and resource sharing between Taiwan and the world, and the promotion of art development in Taiwan. I congratulate them on putting on such a fine show.

I would like to take this opportunity to encourage members to consider attending an event at the ANU School of Art. Upcoming events include *Contemplating Crace: First Thoughts* from 11 June to 21 June, *Random 2014* from 11 July to 18 July, *Articulate Objects—Janet DeBoos* from 22 August to 13 September, and *Art and Morality*, which will run on 19 September and 20 September this year.

Finally, I would like to thank and congratulate the staff, lecturers, fellows and technical officers at the ANU School of Art. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the head of school, Associate Professor Denise Ferris, the school manager, Barbara McConchie, the school administrators, Krystie Innes, Amy Kerr-Menz, Anne Masters and Cindy DePina, the undergraduate convenor, Anne Brennan, the honours convenor, Dr Rachel Ormella, the graduate course convenor, Dr Alison Munro, the director of the Centre for Art History and Art Theory and convenor of higher degree research, Professor Helen Hennis, and the Professor of Art (Practice-led Research), Professor Anthea Callen.

I commend the ANU School of Art for holding the *Made in Taiwan* exhibition. For more information about the ANU School of Art I encourage all members to visit their website at www.soa.anu.edu.au.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.45 pm.