



Debates

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Tuesday, 12 August 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.

**Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee
Scrutiny report 21**

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo): I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Standing Committee—Scrutiny Report 21, dated 11 August 2014, together with the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MR DOSZPOT: Scrutiny report 21 contains the committee's comments on 174 pieces of subordinate legislation. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

**Estimates 2014-2015—Select Committee
Report—government response**

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Housing and Minister for Tourism and Events) (10.01): For the information of members I present the following paper:

Estimates 2014-2015—Select Committee—Report—*Appropriation Bill 2014-2015 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2014-2015*—Government response, dated August 2014.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

I present the government's response to the report of the Select Committee on Estimates 2014-2015. I take this opportunity to thank the committee for its report on the Appropriation Bill and the Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill. The report, spanning three volumes, has been prepared in a short time frame, and the government appreciates the effort that has been made by the committee and its secretariat.

The government respects and values the role played by the Select Committee on Estimates in scrutinising its proposed expenditure. The select committee's report touches on a wide range of issues, the outcome of which has been 138 recommendations to the government. I will touch on the merits of some of these recommendations in a moment.

I would also like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the effort and time spent by the Centre for International Economics in providing an independent assessment of the territory's 2014-15 budget.

The 2014-15 budget represents an investment in Canberra's future, a plan to deliver services and infrastructure to suit the needs of the territory both now and into the future. The 2014-15 budget represents the government's response to challenging economic circumstances, driven by a range of external events that are well beyond the territory government's control.

The budget supports our community, our most vulnerable, our businesses and our households. We face challenges now and going forward as a result of the commonwealth government's fiscal consolidation efforts. We have seen and continue to see the commonwealth reducing the size of the Australian public service.

The commonwealth budget also announced substantial reductions in funding to the ACT for health and hospital services. In response, the territory government decided to continue to invest in health. We saw no reason to exacerbate the impact of the commonwealth's decisions on Canberrans and decided to maintain service levels provided to the territory's population.

Understandably, this decision to invest in the territory's health has impacted on our net operating balance. As has occurred in the past, when circumstances have required we have supported our economy and our people, with a view to achieving an operating balance over time—offsetting temporary deficits with surpluses in other years.

Historic levels of infrastructure investment will result in job growth across the city, and reform processes initiated in prior budgets continue to make our tax system fairer, simpler and more efficient. Concessions to assist low income households have been expanded to ensure that we support the most vulnerable in the community.

We are facing difficult economic times, and the budget will be in deficit this year. The government has taken a specific course of action to support the economy and our community ahead of returning the budget to balance through severe austerity initiatives. We will provide the support that our city needs now to grow and prosper in the longer term.

The estimates committee report presents 138 recommendations. These recommendations, together with the findings of the Centre for International Economics report, cover a broad range of matters across the spectrum of government service delivery.

It is not my intention this morning to analyse each of the select committee's recommendations individually before the Assembly. The government's response serves this purpose, and I have tabled that this morning. However, I would note one particular issue. The government has received a range of responses from the community, including from the estimates committee, about the Payroll Tax Amendment Bill 2014, and we have decided to amend the start date for this bill to 1 January 2015.

For many years I have been a keen advocate of regulatory reform and the need to reduce red tape across government. Both of these activities are also high priorities for the government and we have been implementing changes to improve these areas whenever possible.

I was concerned, Madam Speaker, when I worked my way through the select committee's recommendations and it became clear that around half of them either seek to increase expenditure or impose unnecessary red tape through additional reporting and reviews, were the government to agree to them.

This additional burden could arise by way of additional reporting requirements, in terms of either providing ad hoc reports to the Assembly or undertaking work that would extend beyond normal day-to-day activities. The government will continue to engage and consult with the community, the Assembly and other stakeholders, and we will report on these deliberations through established mechanisms.

Current reporting requirements are considered to provide the right balance in terms of content and timing, and the government is therefore reluctant to agree to undertake additional reporting and reviews that are likely to divert staff from performing core service delivery across the territory.

Even taking a cautious interpretation to the report suggests that around 70 of the committee's recommendations, or about 50 per cent of the total number, would, if adopted by the government, worsen the territory's bottom line. A rough approximation of this cost is \$32 million.

In terms of the new initiatives, additional funding or revenue forgone being recommended by the committee, this would amount to around \$30 million over the budget year and each year into the forward estimates. The additional costs imposed through ad hoc reporting to the Assembly or through undertaking additional studies or review activities are estimated to cost about \$2 million over the same period.

In a period of economic uncertainty, of fiscal restraint, additional expenditure of this magnitude, particularly if these additional activities divert public servants from their core activities or effectively amount to additional red tape, is very difficult to justify. The government is therefore not supporting any recommendations of this kind.

Overall, the government has generally accepted or noted the majority of the recommendations included in the committee's report. In our response the government has agreed to 42 recommendations, agreed in principle to 13, agreed in part to 11, noted 60 and not agreed to 12 recommendations.

In instances where recommendations were not agreed to, the government has taken the time to assess what is being asked. In general terms the government has not agreed to these recommendations on the basis that the government does not wish to commit further funding for specific projects or items given the current fiscal climate; the activity requested by the select committee is similar to an existing product of government; the additional funding requested should be subjected to proper scrutiny through the annual budget process; or the government does not wish to undertake a

review or report to the Assembly in a number of areas where it is not considered useful or timely or could be considered as another layer of unnecessary red tape. A response has been provided, of course, to each individual recommendation.

The Centre for International Economics report provides a useful independent insight into the budget, and I would like to take a moment to highlight a few of their findings. The economic forecasts for gross state product, state final demand, employment growth forecasts, inflation and wage price index estimates and underlying macroeconomic assumptions are all considered reasonable.

Debt and liabilities continue to increase in 2015-16, albeit at a reduced rate in comparison to 2014-15, and, when measured as a share of GSP, liabilities are broadly in line with the current levels of other jurisdictions. The revenue projections are considered to be generally efficient and stable, with the taxation reform program seen as a stabiliser of taxation income in the forward periods.

The taxation reform program and the 2014-15 budget initiatives will increase the cost of living for some ACT households. Others, of course, are offset by increased concessions. The capital works program is considered stimulatory to workforce participation.

The centre also acknowledged that the 2014-15 budget seeks to offset the negative impact of commonwealth fiscal consolidation on the ACT. These findings are a testament to our commitment to reform of the territory's taxation system, our commitment to investing in our city's economic future and the government's dedication to responsible financial management.

In closing, I do not consider that the report of the estimates committee and its recommendations raise any issues that would prevent the passage of the Appropriation Bill 2014-2015. On behalf of the government, I thank the committee for its consideration of the bills and I commend the government response to the Assembly.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Smyth**) adjourned to a later hour.

Standing orders—suspension

Motion (by **Mr Corbell**) agreed to, with the concurrence of an absolute majority:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent order of the day, Assembly business, relating to the Government response to the report of the Select Committee on Estimates 2014-2015, being called on and debated cognately with orders of the day Nos 1 and 2, Executive business (Appropriation Bill 2014-2015 and the Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2014-2015).

Appropriation Bill 2014-2015

[Cognate bill:

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2014-2015

Cognate paper:

Estimates 2014-2015—Select Committee report—government response]

Debate resumed from 5 June 2014, on motion by **Mr Barr**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MADAM SPEAKER: I remind members that in debating order of the day No 1, executive business, they may also address their remarks to executive business order of the day No 2 and the government response to the report of the Select Committee on Estimates. If no-one wants to speak to the question that the bill be agreed to in principle, I will put it to the vote.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Detail stage

MADAM SPEAKER: Standing order 180 sets down the order in which this bill will be considered. In the detail stage, any schedule expressing the services for which the appropriation is to be made must be considered before the clauses and, unless the Assembly otherwise orders, the schedules will be considered by proposed expenditure in the order shown. With the concurrence of the Assembly, I am proposing that the Assembly consider schedule 1 by each part.

Given Mr Barr's proposed amendment to schedule 1, which omits the original schedule 1 and substitutes a new schedule 1 and schedule 1A, I am proposing that we deal with the total proposed expenditures by agency across the two schedules—both 1 and 1A.

Is this the wish of the Assembly? That being so, schedule 1 will be considered by each agency, then the clauses prior to schedule 2 and then the title.

Schedule 1—Appropriations.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Housing and Minister for Tourism and Events) (10.14): Pursuant to standing order 182A(b), I seek leave to move amendments to this bill that are minor and technical in nature.

Leave granted.

MR BARR: I move amendment No 13 circulated in my name [*see schedule 1 at page 2408*] and I table supplementary explanatory statements to the amendments.

MADAM SPEAKER: The question now is that Mr Barr's amendment No 13 be agreed to. As it is the wish of the Assembly, we will now proceed to consider the proposed expenditures of each agency across the two proposed schedules.

ACT Executive—

Schedule 1, Part 1.1—\$117,000 (payments on behalf of Territory), totalling \$117,000.

Schedule 1A, Part 1.1—\$264,000 (capital injection), \$8,006,000 (payments on behalf of Territory), totalling \$8,270,000.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Housing and Minister for Tourism and Events) (10.15): I have just presented the amendments to the Appropriation Bill 2014-15 and the updated 2014-15 budget statement documents which accompany them. These changes are necessary to align the bill with the current administrative arrangements and to facilitate debate of the bill and the Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2014-2015 in the Assembly. I note that there are no proposed amendments to the OLA bill.

Since the release of the budget the government has announced a sixth minister and consequential administrative arrangements which came into effect on 7 July. Reflecting these changes, the government is proposing amendments to the Appropriation Bill 2014-2015 to align the 2014-15 budget with this new administrative structure.

The Administrative Arrangements 2014 (No 1) give rise to the following changes: the Commerce and Works Directorate and the Economic Development Directorate were amalgamated into the Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate to create the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate. Property Group was transferred from the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate to the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate; artsACT and community facilities were transferred from the Community Services Directorate to the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate; and the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate was renamed as the Environment and Planning Directorate. I table the following papers:

Budget 2014-2015—Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 10—Updated Budget Statements following Administrative Arrangements 2014 (No. 1)—Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (incorporating former Economic Development Directorate and Commerce and Works Directorate), Community Services Directorate, Environment and Planning Directorate (incorporating former Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate), Territory and Municipal Services Directorate.

Supplementary explanatory statement to the Government amendments.

Madam Speaker, the amendments to the Appropriation Bill 2014-2015 do not impact on the overall total amount being appropriated to government agencies. They simply involve a reallocation of appropriations between agencies to reflect the new organisational structure. The amount being appropriated therefore remains at \$4,422,306,000.

To enhance transparency of these legislative amendments, the original schedules 1 and 2 have each been split in two. The revised bill is now presented as follows: schedule 1 provides appropriation to agencies between 1 and 6 July 2014. This reflects the funds drawn by each agency during this period pursuant to the supply instrument.

Schedule 1A reflects the new administrative arrangements and provides agencies with the balance of the appropriation from the original schedule. Schedule 2 discloses the appropriation units and output classes for those agencies outlined in schedule 1. Schedule 2A reflects the new administrative arrangements and discloses the appropriation units and output classes for those agencies outlined in schedule 1A.

Madam Speaker, the updated 2014-15 budget statements also reflect these new administrative arrangements. The document provides a summary of the appropriations contained in the original Appropriation Bill as well as those contained in the amended bill. This allows a ready comparison of the overall amounts proposed to be appropriated to each agency.

It is important to stress that there is no change in the capital works program per se. However, the government considered that given the material amounts of capital funding being transferred between agencies, in particular the transfers of the former Economic Development Directorate and Property Group to the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, an updated capital works program would assist members in identifying those movements.

The revised ministerial portfolio structure and details of ACT government directorates are also set out in the consolidated document. These include the transfer of ACTEW Corporation, ACTTAB Ltd, the ACT Insurance Authority and the home loan portfolio from the former Commerce and Works Directorate to the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate; and the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission, Exhibition Park Corporation and the Land Development Agency from the former Economic Development Directorate to the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate.

Each directorate affected by the administrative changes has revised its performance and financial information and has published these in individual chapters. These include strategic objectives and indicators, output classes and accountability indicators. This includes the two agencies whose functions have been amalgamated into other agencies—that is, the Economic Development Directorate and the Commerce and Works Directorate—and the renamed Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate and the Environment and Planning Directorate.

In closing on these amendments, Madam Speaker, they update both the bill and the budget statements to reflect the new administrative structure and will, therefore, facilitate debate on the 2014-15 budget. I commend these amendments and the updated budget statements to the Assembly.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.21): I would like to start by thanking the estimates committee for the work that they have done. I participated on a number of days. I would like to say that I thought the report was very useful. I think that it was good that we did not have a dissenting report with 500 recommendations, a lot of which were just cut and paste. I look forward to reading the government's response, but based on what the Treasurer just said, I do not anticipate that we will get much joy out of the government in regard to actually taking note of and responding to the recommendations of that report.

I would also like to acknowledge the work done by CIE and the documents that they have provided. Again, I think that they have been most useful providing information to members of the Assembly. Last time when we talked about the budget I gave my budget-in-reply speech. We come back, in essence to what we talked about on that day, which is government priorities and the difference between those opposite and the opposition in terms of our belief in the future direction that the government should take in Canberra.

It has been interesting that since I spoke I have been out talking to lots of members of the community—people who, I suppose, you would describe as influential, who are engaged, who are impacted directly in many cases in business or in the community sector as well as people at local shopping centres and so on. There is a view of the government that is emerging that I thought I would share with this place. It might be of interest to members of the government.

There is a particular view of this government that you have a group of disparate ministers with their separate agendas. You have Minister Rattenbury and Minister Corbell in their endless squabble of trying to drag the agenda to the left, be it through capital metro, environment policy or social policy and some of the planning decisions that have been made which are impacting negatively on our community. I think we just saw again today in the media the impact of some of those planning decisions on the good people of Uriarra.

We then have Mr Barr with what he would describe as an economic reform agenda, which seems to be a grab for as much money as he can possibly take out of taxpayers. I think when you look forward to the bills on Thursday you can see again, be it payroll tax, land tax or through the AG's increase in penalty units, the government is not satisfied simply with what they are getting through the budget—the \$4.4 billion in the budget. There is a need from this government to get every single cent that they can possibly squeeze out of Canberrans, be it average Canberrans through their rates or from people who are actually trying to do business in this town—the productive elements of society which are trying to create jobs, create wealth for Canberrans.

It seems that this government continues on with its agenda, which is to pursue projects which are of interest to itself—for instance, new stadiums. We saw what Jack Waterford said on the weekend, Madam Speaker. I would recommend that people read that article about Mr Barr returning to his stadium like a dog to its vomit. It is an article well worth reading. Again, it was a dissection of the city to the lake agenda:

“Let’s every three or four months release another bunch of glossy slides, pictorials and vision statements and pretend that we have got a plan here that is going to be implemented.”

What I am hearing from people, be it in the planning sphere or elsewhere, is that the government has not so much got a plan as just a whole bunch of ideas or thought bubbles that are the disparate agendas of a disparate group of ministers that are dragging the city in every direction: stadiums, city to the lake, rebuilding Northbourne. You have got Simon and Shane trying to rebuild Northbourne while Andrew is off to West Basin and the sports stadium. They are all over the shop.

The view is that that is what is happening with this government with each minister driving their particular agenda, ruffling feathers throughout the community. The cracks in this government are getting deeper and wider. Meanwhile, we have a Chief Minister who lacks any purpose, vision or plan of her own getting out there and pasting over the cracks.

Ms Gallagher: That’s a bit rough. You’re nasty so early, Jeremy.

MR HANSON: I am just reporting back—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order!

MR HANSON: Chief Minister, I am reporting back for the information of ministers.

Mr Barr: You’ve been to a Liberal Party meeting, have you, Jeremy?

MR HANSON: No. You would be surprised who says this sort of stuff.

MADAM SPEAKER: Address the chair, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: My apologies, Madam Speaker; I should not respond to the ministers’ interjections.

MADAM SPEAKER: No, you should not.

MR HANSON: I do understand why the Chief Minister would be sensitive, because she may have heard—and this does extend broadly across the community—the view of where this government are at with their individual agendas which are about themselves and not about the community and a Chief Minister who is spending much of her time pasting over the cracks. I think we saw it with things like Mr Fluffy and other areas where the Chief Minister is forced to essentially take the reins, take the issues away from ministers who are not getting the job done. But people increasingly are seeing that.

What they do not see is any coherence of a plan or a vision for Canberra from this government; they see a series of thought bubbles that are taking us in every direction at the same time, and poorly thought through. That is reflected in this budget. When

you have people like Jack Waterford clearly identifying the incoherence of this government's strategy, I think it is worth reflecting on. We do have a different view, as I outlined in my budget reply.

It is also important to note that we would not be in the same situation we are in now if we had been in government for 13 years. We would not be in the situation where we have the level of debt and deficit that now burdens this government as it is trying to pursue its own agendas, needing to squeeze so much out of the community to pay not just for its shiny new toys that it wants to pursue but also to pay the debt deficit which it has accumulated over 13 years.

One of the great benefits of opposition is that you do have the time and inclination to go out and talk to the community—as I said, the people who are engaged with government, people who are affected directly by this government at the business end and the community sector. Also we have been going out on Fridays to local shopping centres. As we all know, we do not have electorate offices. We have been getting out on the ground talking to local Canberrans. When you talk to them, they will tell you that this government is not delivering what Canberrans want. On a whole, broad range of issues, this is not a government that is looking after the interests of Canberrans.

I think that the key issue amongst those is the issue of rates. Mr Barr needs to get down out of his ivory tower, get out of his economics for dummies or economics 101, or wherever he is getting his information from, or the Ted Quinlan tax manual, and go down to the local shops and talk to Canberrans about what they really think about his rates increases. I think he would get a very different picture than the slaps on the back he gets at his Labor Party meetings.

If Simon Corbell were to go down to areas of Canberra beyond some areas of the inner north, perhaps, and talk to people about what they think about light rail, I think he would get a very different picture of what people think about light rail. I look forward to what Mr Coe has to say about that issue later in this debate.

You talk to people about the rising cost of living and the impost that is being imposed on them by this government that is at every step and in almost every aspect of their life trying to squeeze more dollars out of them. Every time they turn on their power, every time they drive their car or park their vehicle, get on public transport or pay their rates—every time they do that, they find Andrew Barr there putting his hands in their pockets.

What we want to do is make Canberra the best place for everyone to raise a family, to make a living and to get ahead. (*Second speaking period taken.*) We have a different view and certainly it is not an oversimplification, but I want to break it down into three simple elements. What we want to see is greater growth in Canberra; we want to see a better connected Canberra; and a more liveable Canberra. When I talk to people in Canberra, that is what they want. That is what they want their government to do—less of the interference, less of the Andrew Barr thought bubbles or Shane Rattenbury banning pig farms and pursuing particular ideological agendas.

On the issue of greater growth in Canberra, we need to see greater growth in our built environment, and we certainly support growth in our town centres, growing a true city heart. But that growth has to be coordinated and it has to be appropriate. We have to make sure that when we grow Canberra, we are providing the densification in the right places so that it actually grows the city and makes the city workable, makes it viable, makes it vibrant, rather than trying to spread it all over the place—New Acton, west basin, city to the lake, all the way up Northbourne. Where is the coherence in that, may I ask?

When we are building in our suburbs, we need to make sure, as in places like Uriarra or Yarralumla, that the development that occurs is sympathetic with the character of our suburbs. Clearly, when you speak to the community, they are very concerned about what is clearly the government's agenda to squeeze every single drop of tax that they can get, money from the budget, on those developments.

We want to see economic growth. We want to make sure that the businesses in this town are not encumbered by regulation. If you talk to people that want to invest, particularly in the building sector in this town, what they will tell you is that the government does everything to make their life hard. When they want to actually build, when they want to develop, when they want to create jobs and create wealth and build our city, they find that at every step there is a government road block. We have talked many times about the planning regime in this town and how it is an encumbrance to development, and things like the lease variation charge that has proved to be a tax on prosperity, a tax on development, a tax on growth.

As I said, the second thing we want to do is have a better-connected Canberra. The government would say, "We are building light rail. That is better connecting Canberra." Light rail in 2020-21, from Simon Corbell's published figures, will, at peak hour, service less than one per cent of our population—hundreds of millions of dollars, \$600 million. I think that is a very conservative estimate that no-one believes. It will be closer to a billion dollars to service less than one per cent of the population, and that one per cent of the population are already, most of them, on buses. Most of them are already on public transport. So you are actually only talking about several hundred people in addition to the people that are already on public transport, for nearly a billion dollars. That is not a good way to connect Canberra.

If we are going to connect Canberra, we have to make sure that we are investing not just in the public transport sector—make sure that we have a much better ACTION bus network—but also in roads and parking, because if you go out and talk to people in our community about what they want, they want to make sure that there is available and affordable parking. Increasingly we see an agenda from this government to try to squeeze people out of their cars to try to make their light rail system or planned system more viable.

A more livable Canberra is about lower cost of living and improved government services. Cost of living is a real factor in people's lives, and I know that we had the statement from the Chief Minister a little while ago telling them to turn off their Foxtel. Andrew Barr's response to Mrs Jones's explanation of families living tough is:

tell them to go and get a good union and get them to negotiate more wages. That is the Labor response. What we want to do is make sure that we have less money coming into the government's coffers and more money going into the pockets of everyday Canberrans. It gave me great delight last week to talk about the repeal of the carbon tax which will do just that. It will put an extra \$550 into the pockets of Canberrans.

We want to see improved government services. We want to see that as a focus, and we will have much more opportunity throughout the course of this debate to talk about those government services: the health system, the education system and where we should be putting that as a priority and improving those services.

There is a difference between the government's agenda and our own. I have just outlined that in brief, and I outlined that in my budget reply. It will form the basis of the expression of what we are saying not just in this debate today but throughout the course of the next two years as we lead up to an election. We want to focus on the people of Canberra but we have a government that are focused on themselves.

This executive has grown, and I welcome that. It is nice to have Mr Gentleman here on the front bench. I look forward to interactions with you, Mr Gentleman, through you, Madam Speaker, over the next couple of years. But it is something that was needed. I do agree with the Chief Minister in this respect, and my side supported the legislation that enabled the Chief Minister to appoint as many ministers as he or she deems fit. That is appropriate.

Consequently, the decision was taken last week to better enable that through the increased size of the Assembly. I think that is welcome. I think that we have struggled in this place with the number of ministers and I think we have seen that reflected in the workload and in, I guess, the difficult decision that the Chief Minister had to make in appointing whom that minister would be. I would not have wanted to be in her shoes while she was making that decision.

Across the government more generally there are not just issues, though, in the executive, but a particular highlight I do want to consider is that of bullying. Reading the estimates report, it is clear that this is an issue that is pervasive across the ACT public service. There are a series of recommendations, recommendation 51 through to recommendation 55, that talk about bullying in the ACT public service. I think that we would all, in this place, want to make sure that that is something that we eradicate.

I would commend all ministers to do everything that they can to make sure that the ACT public service is a good place to work, has a good culture. We have seen, be it in Health, be it at CIT and other areas of the public service, there are clearly areas where the culture has needed to be improved. Part of that is a recommendation, recommendation 68, which states:

... that the ACT Government give consideration to establishing an independent Public Service Commissioner, for whom functions should include (i) developing and providing expertise in dealing with bullying matters; and (ii) centrally tracking, monitoring and reporting the incidence of bullying in the ACTPS.

As an example, there is the cultural survey that is done in ACT Health that the minister will not let us see. If people have problems with that, they can go to the ACT public service commissioner, the same ACT public service commissioner that works for the Minister for Health. You have this ridiculous situation where there is a problem with the culture and instead of being able to go to someone independent, go to someone who is free to look at things objectively, the same person that is meant to be doing that job also works for the Chief Minister. It is unworkable, and it is no reflection on any individual at all. We are well served by our public servants. But you cannot have a position where someone is wearing two hats; you may well have a situation where the responsibilities of those two jobs are diametrically opposed.

There are other areas that I could discuss here and that fit in other areas of government, and I will extrapolate more on the Mr Fluffy situation under the CMD line. But as a priority, I would like to note that I am in lockstep with the government when it comes to dealing with this matter. This is going to be a substantive issue in terms of government priorities, in terms of potential impact on our budget, and I reiterate that—and it is not a blank cheque; we will keep the government accountable—certainly the Chief Minister can count on our support when it comes to dealing with this difficult and complex matter that is so important to those families affected.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

ACT Gambling and Racing Commission—

Schedule 1, Part 1.2—\$177,461 (net cost of outputs), totalling \$177,461.

Schedule 1A, Part 1.2—\$4,436,539 (net cost of outputs), \$127,000 (capital injection), totalling \$4,563,539.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (10.42): The ACT Gambling and Racing Commission provide a valuable service to the community in overseeing gambling activity in the ACT, particularly in the work that they do in addressing the issues of problem gambling. We heard from the commission about the stigma of problem gambling and how they are working to address it. Indeed pokies seem to be the preferred method for many problem gamblers, and it is all about early intervention in attempting to deal with this problem and its effects on the community.

We had discussions with the commission about the sale of ACTTAB and the future of the racing issues, issues which I think will be clarified far more clearly after the sale. And we need to be aware of that. Discussion also looked at the co-location of the codes, thoroughbreds, harness and greyhounds. That report is being finalised and, again, will be something of interest to the Gambling and Racing Commission when it is available.

The commission informed us of their work on the sale of the ACT's casino, Casino Canberra. It is linked through Casinos Austria with the casino in Cairns, which is the subject of a bid by a developer. They are now going through a process largely being run by the Queensland gaming and racing commission equivalent so that the ACT

Gambling and Racing Commission will work with them to ensure that only people who are appropriate get the licences for both. We will have to await that outcome, which is due later this year.

The other issue that we discussed was the cap on poker machines. The allocation at the moment is 4,970. There are 50 machines unallocated. But the commission was unable to give us any indication of when the government's notional target of 4,000 might be reached.

The commission, as always, through Mr Jones, were very forthright with their answers, and I thank them for the work that they do. With that, we agree to the line.

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Racing and Gaming, Minister for Women and Minister for the Arts) (10.44): The ACT Gambling and Racing Commission is the statutory authority that regulates and monitors all the gambling activity in the ACT. This covers gaming machines, the casino, the totalisator licensee, racing and sports bookmakers, interactive gambling and minor gaming such as lotteries. The commission has a regulatory function, ensuring that all gaming taxes and fees are paid in an appropriate and timely manner and that licensees comply with the various statutory provisions.

The commission's role is much more complex than just a regulator. It also is there to promote the public interest by protecting consumers and reducing the risks and cost of problem gambling to individuals and the community.

The commission conducts research on social effects of gambling and problem gambling so that it can make informed decisions about problem gambling and minimising the harm that causes to some people. The ongoing relationship with ANU ensures that high-quality research is conducted, and recently the commission initiated a joint longitudinal study with New South Wales and the ANU to inform about people's entry into gambling counselling services and the long-term success of the formation of early intervention. The commission's role in harm minimisation also involves community education and provides counselling support services, and they recently entered into a new arrangement with Relationships Australia to support their problem gambling initiative and support.

I too recognise the work that Mr Jones and the staff at the commission do. I thank them for the work that they do and their diligence and the friendly manner in which they do it.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

ACT Local Hospital Network—

Schedule 1, Part 1.3—\$22,286,000 (net cost of outputs), totalling \$22,286,000.

Schedule 1A, Part 1.3—\$579,439,000 (net cost of outputs), totalling \$579,439,000.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.46): I indicate that I will be giving a more holistic view of what has been happening in Health when we talk about the Health line rather than breaking it into two segments. The local hospital

network is in many ways a structure that is there for accountability measures and has been imposed on us by the federal government as part of some health reforms a while back rather than any necessarily coherent structure that has been developed as part of the health system. Rather than trying to have two bites of the cherry—and I think the Chief Minister and health minister will be most relieved—we will wait until we get to the Health line. I will give a view of it there.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

ACTEW Corporation—

Schedule 1, Part 1.4—\$428,000 (net cost of outputs), totalling \$428,000.

Schedule 1A, Part 1.4—\$10,695,000 (net cost of outputs), totalling \$10,695,000.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (10.47): We had a fascinating discussion with ACTEW, and we welcomed the new CEO to his first estimates in that position. A large amount of the discussion rested on the growing debt ACTEW have and their ability to pay it. There are a number of recommendations in the report, including recommendation 57, that the government detail to the Legislative Assembly the government's time frame for the repayment of debt held by ACTEW Corporation. This was noted by the government, and we are simply referred to the budget papers.

Recommendation 58 is that following the agreement of a debt strategy by the ACTEW Corporation board the ACT government inform the Legislative Assembly of the strategy within four sitting days of the conclusion of the agreement. The government's response is:

Noted.

The level of information that can be provided in relation to the debt strategy will be determined by the ACTEW Board depending on relevant commercial considerations.

The third recommendation is that following any resolution of the ActewAGL debt facility the shareholders detail to the Assembly the effect of such decision. The response is:

Noted.

The level of information to be provided regarding the establishment of a new debt facility for ActewAGL and its impact on ACTEW Corporation will depend on relevant commercial considerations.

A large amount of the debt the government carries is through things like ACTEW, and when we see the debt over the life of this budget grow to \$4.7 billion with attendant interest payments, there should be some concern. What we do not seem to get from the government in answers to the recommendations from the committee or, indeed, in the discussion with ACTEW officials is a clear picture of how the debt will be repaid. They said they were happy with their gearing ratios; they felt they had a handle on it. But in the long term, if the government continues the policy of taking 100 per cent of the dividend, the ability for ACTEW to pay back that debt is severely constricted. Indeed one would question how they would do it.

There was discussion with the board. ACTEW as a shareholder of ActewAGL is looking at whether or not they can repatriate some capital from ActewAGL. One would then ask the question: would the government then demand that that money come straight through ACTEW back to the government coffers or will it be left with ACTEW to allow them to pay down some of their debt?

These are important issues, and I think the answers we got were less than clear. The government's response is to simply note each of these and insist in one case that it will be covered by commercial considerations. I can recall the former Chief Minister saying they would not hide behind commercial-in-confidence and that this was going to be a more honest, more open, more accountable government. But we certainly hear a lot these days of, "Well, we can't tell you because it's simply commercial." This is an organisation owned by the people of the ACT, and the people of the ACT, through their shareholders in this place, have a right to know as much as we can make reasonably available.

We also had a discussion on the brand. Some work is being done on brand differentiation—ACTEW versus ActewAGL versus ACTEW Water. There will be a report to the board apparently in September, and the expectation was that it would be rolled out in the December quarter. We look forward to seeing what that will do.

There was a lot of discussion about staffing and the structure and about how that would affect employees. Again, we will be keeping a very sharp eye on that. It is important that we protect jobs at this stage. But, at the same time, it is about making sure that the organisation is functioning properly and doing the job it was charged to do.

We look forward to some of the decisions that have to be made following the discussions with ActewAGL, and we look forward to the government coming back to this place and certainly telling us what they can. Whether that will be adequate or not, we will find out when we get that information. The debt strategy I think becomes increasingly more important. If members look at the chart in BP3, the debt just goes up and up. There does not seem to be a coherent strategy to repay that debt. It is well and good for the Treasurer to say, "Well, you know, read the budget papers; it's all in there." But what is in the budget papers is clearly a line that just increases.

You can constantly say, "We're happy with the level of debt and we can cover the interest payments." That is true. But every cent you pay in interest is money that is not being saved or money that is not being used to provide the services that we might need or money that is not left in the pockets of the taxpayer. It is a novel concept that people should spend their own money in the way they see appropriate.

ACTEW is one of the big holders of debt for the territory. I refer members to the chart on page 294 where you can see quite clearly that the public trading entities are picking up a large proportion of the debt. It is important that we get it right; it is important that we are informed; it is important that people understand what their utility is doing for them.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (10.54): I, too, want to add my concern regarding the state of the financial statements presented in the budget annexed to ACTEW Corporation. The fact that we have interest which is capitalising should be of tremendous concern to all people of the ACT but especially to those in the Legislative Assembly. To have spent as much money as we have on the enlarged Cotter Dam—well over \$600 million—and to not have a strategy in place as to how to deal with the debt goes to the core of this government's mismanagement when it comes to the financial affairs of the territory.

As can be seen in table 4 of the ACTEW budget statement, to have interest bearing liabilities going from \$1.42 billion to \$1.48 billion to \$1.59 billion, to \$1.41 billion with an addition of \$325 million in current liabilities and then out to \$1.78 billion in 2017-18 should be of tremendous concern to the people of Canberra. At some point I would think the government will either have to write down the assets or write off some of the debt. One way or another, we have something which is going to drive up the price of water for all Canberra households.

We saw that just in the last year when the ICRC said, "Now we've got water security and, in effect, copious supply, we should be able to drop the cost." Instead the government and ACTEW kicked up a song and dance to say, "No, you can't do that; we're banking on the price going up and up and up," because they overspent on the Cotter Dam. That is why Canberra households are already paying too much for their water and will continue to pay too much, and I would suggest it will be at an accelerating rate in order to meet the very high interest bearing liabilities the government has on the books of ACTEW.

With that said, I join with others in eagerly awaiting the Auditor-General's report on the enlarged Cotter Dam. That is, of course, as you well know, Madam Speaker, a project by which the dam wall was meant to cost around \$119 million but has blown out to more than \$410 million. I understand that considerable remediation is being done on the dam as we speak due to excessive leaking of the dam wall. We may not have seen the last of the capital expenditure when it comes to the enlarged Cotter Dam project.

I reiterate the concerns conveyed by Mr Smyth about the state of the books of ACTEW Corporation, and I hope the government will articulate a clear plan as to how they plan to bring the interest bearing liabilities under control.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Housing and Minister for Tourism and Events) (10.58): ACTEW's strategies for the period 2014-15 to 2017-18 centre around six main areas: safety management, asset management, customer management, governance, workforce management, and financial management, which appears to have exercised those opposite. ACTEW's budget for 2014-15 was developed based on the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission's water and sewerage pricing determination of June 2013, with the new pricing taking effect on 1 July this year.

The new determination delivered reductions in water and sewerage prices that have impacted on the dividends and tax equivalents payable to the territory. The ICRC's price direction, which covers the period July 2013 to June 2019, is, of course, currently being reviewed by an independent industry panel and may vary. ACTEW's budget was developed during a period of change following the reintegration of the water business in 2012, and ACTEW is undergoing a significant business transformation program. Normal weather patterns have been assumed; however, changes in climatic conditions may result in variations to ACTEW's profits.

In relation to the recommendations of the estimates committee, I reiterate that the government considers that ACTEW's debt levels are prudent and appropriate and in line with industry standards, and they will continue to be managed carefully. The idea that a utility would have no debt at all is to suggest either no investment in infrastructure or that one generation would bear all of the costs of infrastructure development for subsequent generations. Debt is entirely appropriate and consistent with all other utilities in Australia and, indeed, in the world. Let us not have another one of these tedious scare campaigns about a responsible level of debt that shares the burden of a long-term infrastructure that lasts for centuries over successive generations.

Of course the ACTEW board is keeping a very close eye on the financial management of the organisation and will provide regular updates to shareholders and through the shareholders to the Assembly. There are appropriate scrutiny opportunities both in annual reports and in estimates for further questions to be asked. I commend this appropriation to the Assembly.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Canberra Institute of Technology—

Schedule 1, Part 1.5—\$2,586,132 (net cost of outputs), totalling \$2,586,132.

Schedule 1A, Part 1.5—\$66,261,868 (net cost of outputs), \$6,134,000 (capital injection), totalling \$72,395,868.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (11.01): As the minister highlighted in the estimates process, CIT is the largest RTO and public provider of vocational education and training in the ACT and the region, offering over 400 courses ranging from certificates, traineeships and apprenticeships through to diplomas and degrees. It is unique in that it operates in almost a monopoly market given that other RTOs in the ACT are of a much smaller scale. Notwithstanding the unique opportunities its status provides, CIT has trained an impressive 25,000-plus students and delivered just over 6.5 million training hours, and they should be congratulated on that.

It is no secret that I have been critical of management and its handling of allegations of bullying and workplace harassment and discrimination. I remain sceptical of the process that was followed, despite all the efforts of the minister and the commissioner to convince me of the fairness of the investigation. However, sadly and more importantly, it is not me that needs convincing; we still have many former CIT staff who feel aggrieved and not listened to, and I know they will not give up until they

believe natural justice has been served. I know they will continue their search for justice because they are not convinced that the process has been fair, equitable and transparent. While ever there are people who believe that, the matter will not rest, no matter that the minister, ETD or CIT senior personnel may wish it to go away.

Only on Monday—yesterday—I received a copy of an email sent by one of the complainants to the Chief Minister. They have appealed for her intervention. The Commissioner for Public Administration reports to the Chief Minister, and it is his investigation and their disappointment in his process and findings that drive them on. Chief Minister, I will quote from the email that was sent to you.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot, address your comments through the chair, please.

MR DOSZPOT: Madam Deputy Speaker, through you, I will quote for the Chief Minister's benefit the email that was sent to her and on which I was copied. The Chief Minister may have read the email—

Ms Gallagher: I've read it. It was sent to me. I don't need to hear it.

Mr Hanson: Madam Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, could I ask that the Chief Minister address her comments through you in accordance with standing order 42. I note that you were winking at the Chief Minister as she was making her comments.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: I beg your pardon?

Mr Hanson: I noted some interaction between the two of you.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: I was just asking her to be quiet, Mr Hanson. I was just saying to be quiet and stop interjecting. Have you any other point of order, Mr Hanson? No. Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: I am somewhat surprised the Chief Minister is saying she has read the email. I will read a paragraph from the email which I think deserves more attention than the Chief Minister has given it to date:

Chief Minister

On 24 March 2014 I wrote to the Chief Minister requesting a meeting to discuss the flawed investigation into allegations of improper behaviour by CIT. On 17 June 2014 I requested response to my correspondence and a reply was received on 26 June 2014. The response by the Chief Minister contained a number of inaccurate statements which were advised to the Chief Minister in follow up correspondence on 27 June 2014. On 21 July 2014 I wrote again to see when a response to by correspondence of 27 June might be received and was advised that the office would followup regarding my correspondence. To date, I still have not received a reply to my correspondence of 27 June 2014.

Through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Chief Minister should be aware that people are trusting her to have a look at the very serious issues they are trying to get

some clarification on. It is now nearly a month and a half since that clarification was given to the Chief Minister and the complainant still has not received any further information regarding their issues. I think it is very important for the Chief Minister to keep faith with the people who are actually trying to get their lives back in order. The intervention they are seeking from the Chief Minister is quite appropriate and timely.

However, back to the main issues regarding CIT, I acknowledge the very real efforts the Chief Executive Officer of the CIT, Dr Adrian Marron, has made to address the lack of staff training in learning to deal with workplace conflict to avoid a repeat of earlier years. I note the training now offered to staff across the wider ACT public service and especially at management level, and it is pleasing to see the presence of RED officers. I regret and, frankly, am a little bit surprised that such training and awareness was not available to the staff before.

Moving on, in coming months we will be debating the new structural arrangements for CIT and that will mark further opportunity for progress and growth to this city's major training organisation. During estimates, I raised a number of questions, and it has to be said that I was not always full of confidence or satisfaction in the answers I received. The ongoing issues of the cost structure at the CIT are still a little vague, and I am still not satisfied that a transparent process has been followed in assessing the financial value and content worth of some courses. Similarly, my questions on the rationale of and support for three bachelor degree courses offered—namely, games and virtual worlds, forensic science, and design—did not elicit any great detail and information about how well they are supported and whether they will continue.

The new facility at Tuggeranong is clearly still in early planning, post-election promise stage. I suspect the costings are not far from back-of-the-envelope calculations if the dialogue between the chair and the minister were anything to go by. That aside, if there is demand in the south, which the minister and CIT assured the committee there was, I look forward to hearing about developments with the new campus.

I have asked in successive estimates about accommodation for students. It appears, like the Tuggeranong campus question, to be on the wish list drawing board. CIT plays an important lead role in training in this territory and needs to be at the forefront of the skills required in the workplace. I think there has been a lot of distraction in recent years with talks of mergers and takeovers and dysfunctional staff issues. I trust that is now all behind CIT and they can look forward to new beginnings with the forthcoming new governance arrangements.

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Racing and Gaming, Minister for Women and Minister for the Arts) (11.09): It gives me great pleasure to speak about CIT and how the government, through the budget and other decisions, is positioning CIT for a strong and certain future.

CIT is the largest RTO and public provider of vocational education and training across the ACT, offering over 400 courses ranging from certificates, traineeships and apprenticeships through to diplomas and degrees. Last year, CIT trained over 25,000

students and delivered 6.3 million training hours. CIT is an important element in the government's commitment to assist Canberrans to be part of a well-trained and highly skilled workforce. It is because of the valuable contribution CIT makes, and will continue to make, that the government is committed to ensuring it has a strong future.

The vocational education and training environment is undergoing significant change. These changes include the introduction of income-contingent loans; the introduction of entitlement to training to certificate III level; and the implementation of the unique student identifier number. The changes have provided some powerful impetus for change at the CIT. CIT, I believe, needs to be positioned to be able to adapt to this new environment, to ensure its success and to ensure that the ACT economy continues to prosper.

This is why the ACT government has committed to developing and implementing revised governance arrangements for CIT, to give it a more business orientated structure, making it more flexible, responsive and competitive.

The CIT Advisory Council commissioned a review of CIT's governance and autonomy late last year and provided me with a report in January. Findings of the review indicated the increasing difficulty for CIT to operate under the current governance arrangements while operating in a competitive training market. The changes I announced a few weeks ago will result in a shift away from the current advisory council to a new governing board and a mix of private and public sector expertise.

To position itself for the future, CIT has developed a blueprint to meet the challenges ahead. The blueprint includes the 2014-16 strategic plan; a new organisation structure, with teaching centres consolidated into four teaching colleges and a matrix model of management made up of four divisions designed to provide leadership and support; and a campus modernisation strategy, which is being developed to focus on contemporary fit-for-purpose facilities and the latest technology.

The modernisation will include a campus in Tuggeranong to ensure that thousands of the current and future students of CIT in Tuggeranong valley have a modern vocational training facility in their local community. Mr Doszpot questioned whether the demand was there. Through the estimates we provide in very clear figures for demand, we see that the bulk of the students that currently travel to Woden campus indeed come from Tuggeranong. Perhaps Mr Doszpot should have paid a bit more attention to that. The new campus will provide a modern facility not only capable of being a hub of learning but offering full courses as well as mixed modes of delivery.

As our largest training organisation and our only public provider, it is in the interests of the people of Canberra that CIT remains a significant player in the training sector.

Other comments that Mr Doszpot went to included the issue of bullying. These have been well and truly investigated at the highest level with independent investigators. Mr Doszpot has received briefing after briefing and information on this; I find it disappointing that he still expresses lack of confidence in the ACT public service commissioner and in the executive of CIT. The report found that there was no systemic bullying there.

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MS BURCH: That is the finding, from a quite significant and thorough investigation. That is not to say that people are not feeling aggrieved, are not feeling hurt. That is not to say that at all, Mr Doszpot. But let us be very clear that the investigations were sound, rigorous, robust, independent and honest. The findings are there for all to see.

I want to congratulate the executive at CIT. They have had a challenging time of late. The executive officer was off for extended leave. He has now returned. They have gone through development of a strat plan. They have gone through refocusing of the structure of schools. And they continue to increase their student numbers and to provide, as I have just said, over six million hours of training to our community. That is something to be very proud of, and I look forward to their continued success in the years to come.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Capital Metro Agency—Schedule 1A, Part 1.6—\$23,535,000 (net cost of outputs), \$96,000 (capital injection), totalling \$23,631,000.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (11.15): This budget confirms the government's commitment to an unviable light rail project. Their commitment to this goes beyond rationality. The reason is that there are one or two ministers that are so emotionally attached to this project that they are unable to see the truth which is staring them in the face with regard to the facts of this proposal. Unfortunately, the fact that they are so emotionally attached to this project means that the taxpayers of Canberra may end up paying up to \$6,000 or \$7,000 per household for construction simply to take on a liability of \$100 million per year forever to operate the tram for 12 kilometres down Flemington Road and Northbourne Avenue.

The budget provides the Capital Metro Agency with \$23.6 million in funding. Elsewhere in the budget, \$20 million is given to TAMS to prepare the Gungahlin to the city corridor for light rail, while the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate, now the Environment and Planning Directorate, will spend over \$1 million in this financial year in completing a light rail master plan. That, of course, is part of the problem of this whole show regarding light rail: there is no clarity as to who is in fact responsible for all the expenditure which has taken place. That is one of the recommendations which I will come to later on. You have TAMS, which are, and should be, involved in the delivery of transport services. You have Mr Gentleman, who is apparently responsible for the transport policy. You have Mr Barr, whose tentacles go far and wide into anything with a dollar sign in front of it. And then you have got Mr Corbell, who has the emotional attachment driving this whole project, which is going well beyond rationality, as I have already said.

Overall, the government has now committed at least \$66 million to this project—\$66 million. So even if this government abandons light rail, which common sense would suggest it should, it may have spent up to \$66 million of taxpayers' money on a

project due to Minister Corbell's emotional attachment. The true monetary value of the government's commitment is likely to be much higher, given the occurrence of the commercial-in-confidence contracts which this government tends to engage in.

The funding for capital metro comes at a time when we still do not know the exact cost of the project, with the \$614 million cost projection used by the government now up to three years old. The government is also continuing to hide key details about the project. We still do not know, for example, whether the cost of relocating the pipes and wires that lie under the proposed route is factored into the government's \$614 million cost projection. The uncertainty of these costs has led the Centre for International Economics to say that light rail is a source of risk to the financial position of the territory.

What we do know, though, is that the project does not stack up. The government admitted as much in their own report when they first explored the possibility of developing light rail in the Gungahlin to the city corridor. The report said:

... economic returns that can be delivered through LRT—

light rail transit—

investment alone are likely to be economically marginal and the net economic outcome for LRT under even minor adverse circumstances is likely to result in negative economic returns.

Since this time, Infrastructure Australia, the Centre for International Economics, the Productivity Commission and others have all questioned the viability of the government's light rail project and encouraged the government to drop it.

Despite these warnings, the government has continued to push ahead with the project. The government last month trumpeted the fact that capital metro will be used 13,000 times a day in 2021. The reality is that less than one per cent of Canberrans will use capital metro to get to work or school every day. Even on the Gold Coast, where they originally projected 50,000 people would be using their light rail, they are now suggesting that only 17,000 to 25,000 will use it. If the Gold Coast can only get 17,000, I find it highly unlikely that the ACT will get 13,000. This figure confirms the suspicion of many Canberrans that Canberra simply does not have the population and the population density to support light rail.

For good reason, capital metro was an issue of considerable interest during the estimates discussion. This is going to be the biggest capital works project the ACT has ever seen. It is right for this Assembly, on behalf of all Canberrans to provide the scrutiny that such a project warrants. I fully endorse estimates committee recommendation 65:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government table in the Legislative Assembly, after the preferred tenderer has been selected, the final cost-benefit analysis, the estimated total cost to the ACT, and the delivery model for the Capital Metro project prior to the signing of any construction projects.

Further to this, recommendation 73 should be taken on board:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide further information to ensure that there is public consultation on all aspects of the Capital Metro project, so as to ensure it is viable, provides value for money, and meets the needs of the ACT community.

Recommendation 121 is about ensuring that the ACT public has a complete picture of all the costs associated with capital metro:

The Committee recommends that ACT Government aggregate the cost for works to the appropriate directorates associated with Capital Metro.

Recommendation 122, from a committee with two Liberal and two Labor members, shows the lack of confidence in the governance arrangements which are in place:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government define the relationship between TAMS and the Capital Metro Agency in regard to the delivery of proposed capital works associated with Capital Metro.

That recommendation is about trying to get to the bottom of the extreme doubt about who is actually responsible for light rail. Who is responsible? Is it TAMS? Is it Environment and Planning? Is it Treasury? Or is it Minister Corbell and his office, who seem to be project managing this personally? The fact that this recommendation is required after tens of millions of dollars of expenditure gives little confidence in the arrangements which are currently in place.

I commend the estimates committee for doing a thorough job and for identifying the enormity of the capital metro project. I believe that commissioning the Centre for International Economics to undertake additional analysis was a good move. The CIE report included the following:

The construction of the Capital Metro, in part, would reflect an assumption that the trends in population are temporary, and this is not evident. While population growth in Gungahlin may be relatively high, overall ACT population growth is soft, and thus the justification for the construction of the Capital Metro may rely on uncertain grounds.

The Capital Metro has not been placed on the Infrastructure Australia “National Priority List”, it may not present good value for money. The Capital Metro is not included in even the “Early Stage” national priorities, which requires those initiatives to “address a nationally significant issue or problem”.

The CIE report continues:

The funding of the Capital Metro has not been made clear, however press reports have emerged suggesting funding may be through a levy on home-owners living within a certain distance of the metro line. While it is prudent that the cost of the metro be borne more by those who obtain a private benefit from it ... this presents a risk and source of uncertainty given that the funding arrangement has not yet been detailed.

And it goes on.

The fact that this project is unviable appears to be slowly dawning on the government. This year, the government has considered imposing a city-wide levy to fund capital metro and is currently being lobbied by the Capital Metro Agency to deliberately favour development in Gungahlin. Who knows what other fanciful policy ideas the government will implement in order to try and make this project viable.

The Centre for International Economics has cast considerable doubt on the project. (*Second speaking period taken.*) The CIE report included the following sentence:

The cost of the Capital Metro is subject to a high degree of uncertainty and is a source of risk for the fiscal position of the ACT.

I will read that again:

The cost of the Capital Metro is subject to a high degree of uncertainty and is a source of risk for the fiscal position of the ACT.

We have heard a lot from the government about how many jobs will be created by the capital metro project. However, the CIE report points to the fact that any government expenditure on any capital works project is going to generate jobs. So simply saying that by spending money we are going to create jobs does not necessarily mean that this is a good project. There is always going to be an opportunity cost. As adjunct professor Leo Dobes pointed out in the *Canberra Times*, there is an opportunity cost for every dollar which is spent on capital metro. He pointed to health expenditure as a prime example where we could be putting that \$1 billion of expenditure and perhaps get a far better return for the people of Canberra than by putting \$1 billion into a tram line which does not have widespread support.

The fact that we have this risk hanging over the fiscal position of the ACT means that the capital metro project is a source of risk to our budget and therefore a source of risk to all Canberrans. With that in mind, we cannot support this budget.

In closing, this budget confirms the government's commitment to light rail. It confirms the government's commitment without a proper business case, without adequate consultation and on a political whim, to spend up to \$1 billion of taxpayers' money on a project that will serve less than three per cent of Canberrans. This should be a worry for all Canberra taxpayers. I urge the government to delay this project until a time in Canberra's future when our city is far more inclined to support and sustain such a system through a vastly increased population and a vastly increased population density.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (11.27): Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak to this line item in the budget because it is of such significance both in terms of the scale of the amount of money being appropriated and its impact on the future of Canberra. It is the most expensive project ever undertaken by the ACT government. Based on the estimates so far, that is about \$4,500 a

household, or \$1,600 a person, including children, and that is just for the infrastructure elements of it. But it does not include some elements. Again it is difficult, as Mr Coe just pointed out, trying to work out who is doing what and where the money is going. There are bodies of work being undertaken by TAMS, \$20 million of the budget for TAMS, to do works on the Gungahlin to Civic corridor in preparation for light rail. So the full cost is yet to be identified.

We can look to international experience to understand where these budgets can blow out. On 31 May on BBC News, there was a piece about Edinburgh's new tram service, and I quote:

In the decade since the first money was allocated to the project, the price has doubled, the network has halved, and it has taken twice as long to build as originally planned.

Now that sounds like just about everything that this government does, doesn't it? It is an anticipation, I think, of where it is likely to go with Capital Metro, based on the performance of this government.

The Centre for International Economics prepared a report for the estimates committee, and they implied similar problems. They talked about the future cost risk:

A substantial amount of expenditure on the University of Canberra Public Hospital, Capital Metro and the Courts project has been provisioned ...

That totals \$1.3 billion. The report goes on:

No detail on total costs or cost rollout have been provided. It makes it difficult to make an assessment about the merits of investment, or the impact of such investments on the financial strength of the ACT Budget.

I think that that is a good point, that there is not much coming out of this government, and what has come out of this government has been debunked—debunked by not just Mr Coe but by the Productivity Commission, by Infrastructure Australia, and by transport experts everywhere. It is appropriate to commend Mr Coe for the work that he has been doing in the absence of any substantive useful data or business cases from the government on light rail. Mr Coe, with probably a hundredth of the resources that have been allocated to this project, has been able to provide an equivalent analysis, and in some cases he has provided better analysis than that which has been provided by the government.

The report goes on:

Overall ACT population growth is soft, and thus the justification for construction of the Capital Metro may rely on uncertain grounds.

And further:

The Capital Metro has not been placed on the Infrastructure Australia "National Priority List", it may not present good value for money.

And so on. With regard to the funding, CIE said:

The funding of the Capital Metro has not been made clear, however press reports have emerged suggesting funding may be through a levy on home-owners living within a certain distance of the metro line. While it is prudent that the cost of the metro be borne more by those who obtain a private benefit for it ... this presents a risk and source of uncertainty.

These costs are difficult to estimate, and the CIE report makes that point:

... concerns are being expressed in the media about a tendency for costs of light rail programs to exceed expectations. In particular, the ACT government has expressed the difficulty in estimating the cost of the Capital Metro.

Many problems and cost over-runs of major infrastructure projects have been shown to be due in large part to under developed Terms of Reference, inadequate understanding of community expectations and anticipated usage, as well as uncertain or ineffective risk sharing arrangements across governments, head contractors and subcontractors. This makes it difficult to anticipate total costs of a project such as this and any consequent impact for the underlying Budget position.

And they make the point:

The cost of the Capital Metro is subject to a high degree of uncertainty and is a source of risk for the fiscal position of the ACT.

Let me say that again:

The cost of the Capital Metro is subject to a high degree of uncertainty and is a source of risk for the fiscal position of the ACT.

This comes at a time, Madam Deputy Speaker, when the government is over \$4 billion in debt, when we see a deficit running at \$333 million, and when there is uncertainty in our economic situation.

This government's track record is not a good one when you talk about the price that they put on a project and then what we actually end up paying. Madam Deputy Speaker, I remind you that, regarding the Cotter Dam, in the lead-up to the 2008 election, I do recall, this government went out and said \$120 million, and that blew out to over \$400 million.

The GDE—a similar experience—which was going to be \$53 million with the original estimates, blew out to over \$200 million. Remember the infamous jail? Tens more millions of dollars are being appropriated in this budget for a project that was originally meant to cost \$110 million. It blew out to \$130 million, then they opened it on the eve of the 2008 election and said, "Right, this is open; it is ready to go." Minister Corbell said it would be good to go for 25 years. He said that to a committee: "It will be good for 25 years." And now they are back here with this appropriation bill, saying, "Give us more money." Is it \$54 million?

It is disgraceful, Madam Speaker. They are trying to ask us in this place to trust them when it comes to light rail. One of the problems that the government have is that they are out there in the community, saying, “\$614 million; trust us,” and not one person in Canberra trusts this government to deliver this project anywhere near the budget they are proposing or on time.

The Productivity Commission conducted an inquiry into this project, No 71, on 27 May 2014. Let me quote what the Productivity Commission said. It is a pretty conservative organisation. This is not an organisation that is wont to put out provocative statements. It said:

The ACT Government’s decision to proceed with a light rail project appears to be an example of where the results of cost-benefit analysis have been ignored without valid explanation.

Shame. It went on:

In summary, a cost-benefit analysis showed Bus Rapid Transit to be a greatly superior option than Light Rail.

That is the Productivity Commission—that is not Mr Coe—just on the infrastructure costs. We then have to look at what the operational costs will be. The point is that we do not know. We do not know what the operational costs will be. So although we are being asked to take this great leap of faith on capital metro, the minister himself—and this is in response to a question on 14 February—has said:

The operational arrangements and parameters for Capital Metro are being defined; therefore it would be premature, at this stage of the project, to provide an operational cost estimate.

That is Minister Corbell’s Sir Humphrey answer for “I’ve got no clue; I don’t know what it is; I can’t tell you.” But what I can tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that, whatever the government does come back to this place with an estimate for, you can probably double it. That is the experience. That is the evidence when you go back through their projects—the jail, the GDE, the dam and so on.

They are already spending a lot of money. There is a lot of money in this budget—\$43,000 a week or \$2.34 million a year—for staff wages. That includes a \$382,000 annual salary for the project director of capital metro; \$184,000 to a comms director. The spin coming out of capital metro is pretty extraordinary. If anyone is on Twitter and follows capital metro and looks at the lovely YouTube videos that they are producing, all the information and marketing that they are doing, they are spinning capital metro hard before this government says that they have actually made a final decision to do it. Some \$184,000 for one employee to spin capital metro.

I do not know what other staff that individual has got and what other resources as well. But all up, that staff resource is \$12.3 million over the next four years. Extraordinary. So it is reckless, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the government to be talking about spending \$640 million on a project when they cannot even tell us how much this is going to cost to run. *(Second speaking period taken.)*

What is the economic benefit of this? It does not seem to stack up. Simon Corbell was out there on the GDE one day in his orange hi-vis uniform, digging up the lines, a man at work. And then the next day I remember he looked very sour-faced when the Productivity Commission came out and said, "Hang on, there is no economic benefit; it doesn't stack up." He said, "No, no, no. Don't worry about the economics of this; it's the social advantage, the social benefit." So that is the social benefit for less than one per cent of the population. If you discount those already on buses, goodness knows how few people it is.

Let me quote from the government's own submission. This is the city to Gungahlin transit corridor Infrastructure Australia project submission. The ACT government states:

Economic returns that can be delivered through ... (Light Rail Transit) investment alone are likely to be considered economically marginal and the net economic return for LRT under even minor adverse circumstances is likely to result in negative economic returns.

However, on the option of bus rapid transit, the government's own report says:

Of the options ... (Bus Rapid Transit) is projected to deliver higher economic returns.

So even by the government's own analysis, by the government's own submissions to Infrastructure Australia, they are saying that bus rapid transit is going to deliver better economic returns and even a minor risk, even a minor adverse circumstance, means that light rail is going to be a problem. So, given those findings, I am not surprised, Madam Deputy Speaker, that Infrastructure Australia declined to commit the \$15 million to the feasibility study. They said:

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

It is just a bizarre situation where the government has gone to Infrastructure Australia, saying, "Look, all our evidence says you should do bus rapid transit. Can we have \$15 million for light rail, please?" It is a bizarre circumstance. So why, then, is the government investing this money in light rail? It is difficult to fathom. I think that Mr Coe pointed quite clearly to it. As I pointed out in my speech earlier, it is about the priorities of this government and the behaviour of the ministers. It is far more about Shane Rattenbury and his ideological pursuits and his political skin, and the same with Mr Corbell, than it is about the people of Canberra. If it were about the people of Canberra, if it were about the economic benefit, then anybody looking at this objectively would say no.

What did the government say? I recall it was a couple of weeks ago that former Chief Minister Kate Carnell came out and gave her view of light rail, unprompted. She said it does not stack up. And as is Simon Corbell's wont, Madam Deputy Speaker, he

always returns fire. Whenever someone comes out and says, “Look, we’ve had a look at this; it doesn’t stack up,” you can guarantee that the next day there will be an article from Simon Corbell having his return fire.

The problem in this case was what he thought was very exciting news about the number of people who would be catching the tram. The problem is it did not actually excite anyone. It amused people; it disappointed people. But he said that in 2021, at peak hour, 3,500 people—3,500. I am not sure how many are on the buses right now. Mr Coe might know the answer.

Mr Coe: Three and a half thousand on that same corridor.

MR HANSON: Right. So there are no extra people. There is no-one else getting on light rail. So essentially the people on the bus are going to get on light rail. That is the government’s own figures. Mr Rattenbury is shaking his head and smiling. He might be able to explain why it is that we are building a light rail system that is actually not going to increase the number of people getting on the bus and getting on light rail.

If you look at his figures—and this is where it becomes quite interesting—in the morning peak there are 3,500. But in the afternoon peak there are 3,400. So there are 100 people who get on the tram in the morning and go into Civic and decide, “I don’t want to go back on this system.” So they’re probably saying, “That’s enough of that for me.” Maybe Mr Corbell can explain where the missing 100 people are—whether they have decided to walk home or catch a taxi or what happened to the hundred people. Maybe they are trying to find a bus somewhere.

Even using the government’s own figures, when you assume that there are return trips, that is 6,800 travellers a day. I know that Mr Coe has talked about—and I have heard others talk about them—the cheaper option of buying everyone a Ferrari. Of course you would not, but it just shows the nonsense of the number of people who will be travelling on this system. It just does not stack up. And that is the point: we do not have the population density in the ACT to make this viable.

What Mr Coe is saying is not that one day light rail might not be viable—one day it may well be—but until we have that population density that means that you get more than 3,500 on this system, which is no more than go on the bus now, this does not stack up. That is what Mr Coe is saying, that is what Infrastructure Australia is saying, that is what the Productivity Commission is saying, and that is what just about every other expert looking at this rationally is saying—everyone outside a fairly narrow band of light rail enthusiasts and Greens supporters.

The other aspect to this is: where are we going more broadly with the light rail program? The city to Gungahlin line was picked as a favourite without a proper analysis of all the lines. A lot of people have said, “Well, what about Belconnen to the city?” There is some argument. There was a future feasibility study done by Kellogg Brown and Root which said:

Based on revenue performance the first stage should be the Belconnen to City line.

But I think we understand, Madam Deputy Speaker, that this government is pursuing the City to Gungahlin line because that is the one which goes through Mr Rattenbury's electorate. It does not go through the electorate that goes up to where poor old Meredith Hunter was. She has been left out in the cold as Mr Rattenbury makes sure that this is to his political advantage. Some \$640 million as an absolute minimum to make sure that Mr Rattenbury can go back to preselection and make sure that he gets the ticket in front of Carolyn Le Couteur. It is about as base as that, because none of the other evidence stacks up. None of it stacks up.

Infrastructure Australia has criticised the government for not considering other routes, and this is what Infrastructure Australia said:

It is not clear how shortlisted options were selected from the list of potential options. There is limited information on the rationale for excluding options, and inadequate consideration of reform options.

And then God knows where we would end up, Madam Deputy Speaker, with phase 2, phase 3 and phase 4, if we ever got to that point, because the only sum that we have been able to look at based on the Gold Coast cost and extrapolating that on the government's routes that they have put forward is \$10.9 billion. Where is the money going to come from? And there will be people who pay. The government have said that increased parking charges will be assumed as part of this. So they are going to squeeze you out of parking to get you onto their light rail system. That is part of the plan.

And that is all very well for the people of Gungahlin, perhaps, who have got the option of getting on light rail. But as they ramp up parking in the city, what about the people in Belconnen who do not have those options, or Weston Creek or Woden, or the inner south? What about them? So, as the government are squeezing parking to try and get you onto their light rail because their numbers do not stack up without doing that, there is a lot of people who will be paying.

What about the mothers who have got to drop off kids, who just simply cannot get onto light rail because it does not work for them? And we have a lot of others, a lot of women in our workforce, who simply cannot use light rail as an option and who will be punished by this government as they put up the prices.

There are so many questions that remain unanswered: the operational costs, the full infrastructure cost, how this will be delivered. What I say again very clearly, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that this government have not made the case. They have not made the case to build a light rail network. They have not made the case to build this particular aspect, the first phase of it, and, until we have the population density, the government need to put this on ice. They need to acknowledge that the case does not stack up. (*Time expired.*)

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (11.48): This project is an important project for the future of our city. It is about reshaping the

growth and development of our city to a more sustainable pattern of development, and it is about giving Canberrans the beginning of an efficient, rapid public transport network that can service all parts of the city.

Capital metro, of course, was an ACT Labor election commitment. We went to the last election with a detailed written policy committing to the development of the Gungahlin to city corridor. So it should be no surprise to those opposite or to those who are critical of this project that the government is implementing a written policy that it went to the last election with.

This project is critical for the future growth and development of our city. It is the right choice for Canberra. First of all, it is a project that delivers a positive cost-benefit outcome. We know that investment in the project returns more to the economy than it costs to develop. The cost-benefit ratio remains strong and positive and the government is committed to providing an up-to-date benefit-cost ratio following its consideration of the final business case in the coming months.

We know that the project delivers land development benefits. We know it delivers transport benefits and we know it delivers sustainability benefits. And all of these are sought to be captured through the economic analysis that underpins the final business case.

But it is, of course, important to note that the development of a benefit-cost ratio and the economic analysis that underpins it is only one part of the broader consideration that government must bring to these types of projects. We know from the academic research from the experts in this area that there are elements of benefit-cost ratio analysis that cannot capture some of the more intangible benefits in economic terms but which are real benefits for the broader community from an investment in this type of project.

We know, for example, that people have indicated—and there is academic analysis to back this up—that people are prepared to make a shift from motor vehicle use to public transport use if the alternative that is given to them is light rail, compared to investment in bus services. We hear from those opposite that bus rapid transit is the preferable outcome for this corridor but what we do not hear from those opposite is how they propose to put bus rapid transit into the Northbourne Avenue corridor.

Essentially they have two choices. The first choice is to reduce the number of traffic lanes for general traffic on Northbourne Avenue from three to two, to provide for the existing left-hand lane in the northerly and the southerly directions to be for buses only. So is that the position of those who advocate for bus rapid transit—to actually make congestion worse for general transport users along the corridor by providing for public transport priority for buses in the left-hand lane in each direction, north and south? Is that their position?

We hear them advocate bus rapid transit but they need to explain what bus rapid transit actually means on this corridor, because if it means reducing the number of traffic lanes on Northbourne Avenue from three to two, I do not think that is a

position that would be supported by the broader population because improving public transport on Northbourne Avenue should be about improving transport outcomes for all transport users on this corridor, not just public transit users.

Their second choice, if they do not support reducing the number of general traffic lanes on Northbourne Avenue from three to two, is, of course, to build dedicated bus rapid transit lanes somewhere else. Presumably that means building those dedicated bus rapid transit lanes along the median strip along Northbourne Avenue. So what does that mean, Madam Deputy Speaker? What that means, of course, is that you turn the median strip on Northbourne Avenue into a road. That is what it means—a road which is separated from pedestrians because of the speed at which the bus rapid transit would operate.

Is that the outcome they want for Northbourne Avenue? Is that an outcome that the planning approval authority—the National Capital Authority—would support in any event? Do you think the National Capital Authority would support changing the median strip along Northbourne Avenue into a road? Do you think they would support that, Madam Deputy Speaker? We do not believe they would. It is completely inconsistent with their objectives for the corridor, which is to maintain the landscape character of the corridor.

What we have been able to demonstrate, through the landscape and design options that have been put forward in the very detailed public consultation process, over the last six weeks in particular, is that light rail is the best choice when it comes to integrating rapid public transit along this key landscape corridor—this corridor of national significance, this corridor that has planning obligations on it set out in the national capital plan. These are matters that must be addressed by those who advocate for bus rapid transit.

Of course, now, as before, they are silent on these issues. And they are silent on these issues because they have no plan for public transport in Canberra. They have no plan to improve transport outcomes along this corridor. They have no vision whatsoever. Their only position is to oppose any improvement that delivers better public transport for our city.

They opposed bus rapid transit when it was proposed in the earlier terms of this government. They opposed the development of dedicated busways when they were proposed and then implemented by this government in various locations across the city. They have even opposed giving priority to public transit along existing dedicated transitways, such as the T2 lane along Commonwealth Avenue. They have opposed, at every step, any measure to give priority to public transport in this city. And we do not expect anything less from them as a result.

The benefits of this project, of course, extend beyond the economic benefits that are outlined in the economic business case that will be underpinning this project. We saw four of Australia's leading experts on transport, planning, sustainability and public health come out in recent weeks and support this project for Canberra.

Professor Barbara Norman, who is the Foundation Chair of Urban and Regional Planning and a Fellow of the Royal Town Planning Institute in the UK, co-authored an article, along with Professor Tony McMichael, who is a Professor Emeritus of Population Health at the ANU, along with Professor Peter Newman, a distinguished Professor of Sustainability from Curtin University and a world-leading academic on transport planning in cities, and along with Professor Will Steffen, who of course is from the ANU and is one of the lead contributors to the IPCC report into climate change.

These four distinguished academics came out in the last two weeks, co-authoring an independent piece in the *Canberra Times* explaining why this project was critical and important for our city. They started off by making the observation that Canberra has the highest per capita use of the private motor vehicle of any city in the country. They went on to highlight that the development of the capital metro project stage 1, from Gungahlin to the city, was the key foundation stone in setting the framework for a broader city-wide network for light rail. They highlighted that light rail attracts people out of their private motor vehicles in a way that bus networks do not, and they highlighted the significant public health benefits as well as the significant sustainability benefits of the project for the broader population.

We hear, of course, the parochial and narrow-minded view of those opposite that this only benefits a small proportion of the population and that it has no broader benefits. The obvious observation to make about that, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that it is not just public transport users that win when you give public transport priority. It is everyone else, first and foremost, that uses transport along this corridor, from Gungahlin to the city. It means everyone who commutes along that corridor, it means everyone who cycles along that corridor, it means everyone who uses that corridor for their daily journeys, benefits if congestion is reduced along that corridor.

So to suggest that the only beneficiaries are the light rail users is false and misleading. It is misleading because, of course, everyone benefits when congestion is reduced, and congestion is reduced and travel times are improved for all if you invest in good public transport.

Of course, Canberrans understand these arguments. They understand that there is a partisan political campaign underway from a party that have no vision for public transport in our city. Indeed their only policy at the last election when it came to transport was to build more car parks. That was their only policy at the last election—thousands more car parks, if I recall the phrasing correctly.

Canberrans reject this approach. The recent surveys undertaken by Capital Metro concluded that 55 per cent of Canberrans support the government's plans to develop the capital metro project. And that support is not just in the inner north. It is in Gungahlin, it is in Belconnen, it is in Tuggeranong, it is in Woden, and it is in Weston Creek.

Of course, the Liberals, whenever they do not like a poll result, suggest that it is push polling. But if they want to say that, I suggest they take that up with the reputable

Canberra-based firm that has undertaken this work. I have seen no analysis whatsoever from them to back up that defamatory claim, and I would be delighted to see them make such a claim outside this place. We know there is strong support for this project.

We had Mr Coe say, “There’s been a lack of consultation about this project.” Where has he been for the last six weeks? For the last six weeks there has been a detailed community consultation program that has reached along the corridor from the city to Dickson and Gungahlin. We have had a shopfront presence nine to five throughout the week here in the city centre. We have had weekend information stalls at Dickson and Gungahlin on repeated occasions, and the government has also asked the Capital Metro Agency to go down and engage with other parts of the city—south of the lake, for example, into Erindale, into Tuggeranong—as a way of answering people’s questions and engaging with them about this important project.

It is a city-building project and it is a project of significance not just to the inner north, not just to Gungahlin, but to our city as a whole. What we are seeking to do is to lay the foundations for a genuine rapid transit, highly efficient, effective and well-patronised public transport system for our city.

We know the experience of other cities speaks to the success of these projects. The article that I referred to earlier from Professor Norman, Professor McMichael, Professor Newman and Professor Steffen highlighted that it is not simply a function of size that dictates the success or viability of these projects. They made the observation that there are many cities around the world, including small cities, that are investing in light rail right now. 118 cities around the world with populations under 150,000 are investing in light rail, and Canberrans understand these arguments.

We have heard the criticism of risk. The government has undertaken significant work to address these issues of risk. The PPP framework, should the government agree to proceed with that framework, will give us absolute certainty around cost, because there will be a competitive tender process where those commercial consortiums will have to deliver a number around what is the cost for the delivery of this project. The government will have a choice as to whether or not to accept that absolute number. So to suggest that the costs are uncertain, to suggest that they are going to change once a contract is entered into, is simply false and simply misleading.

In conclusion, I received the other day some correspondence from a constituent who kindly forwarded to me some correspondence he had sent to the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Hanson. He had been prompted to write to Mr Hanson following a letterbox drop from Mr Hanson, and particularly the section in his letterbox drop about light rail. I will quote from the correspondence that my constituent sent to Mr Hanson:

It is about time that the Liberals took action on public transport seriously, and in what is common words for your side of politics—

this, of course, being addressed to Mr Hanson—

“being adult”. It is important, and you should treat it as such. Light rail is the future, and you only have to look anywhere around the world to see that cities are moving back to this type of transport. If you are going to use this as an election wedge then it is appalling. Canberra demands better. Parking costs alone are going to drive down driving to work by car. That is not pandering to myths and falsehoods in respect to light rail. Buses are not the answer—

the constituent says—

so stop claiming that a better bus network is the answer. In reality, commuters do not like buses, but they will switch to trams.

He goes on to say:

Cities don't have to have huge populations to have a light rail network. I could point to Basel in Switzerland with a city population of 150,000 and 250,000 in the surrounding region, very like Canberra. They have a very effective light rail network with buses providing the feeder services. My wife has family in the Besancon area in France, and the city, not unlike the size of Canberra, is about to inaugurate a new light rail system. They all had the same complaints and letters to the editor that feature almost daily in the Canberra Times, but it is now built and it is fantastic.

The constituent concludes:

It is about time that you—

that is, Mr Hanson—

got in step here and you should take a leaf out of your state Liberal colleagues in New South Wales.

He goes on to quote the state Liberal colleagues. Ms Berejiklian, the New South Wales transport minister, said:

... for too long Newcastle has been hamstrung by indecision, and local residents and businesses have been let down by political lip-service ...

“Light rail is a popular mode of transport around the world because it is modern, reliable and boosts urban renewal and economic development,” she said.

“Light rail is being expanded in Sydney and around the world—why should the Hunter expect any less?

“This Government is getting on with the job of delivering real improvements and results for the people of the Hunter.”

The constituent concludes, in his correspondence to Mr Hanson, by saying:

And to this I add: why should Canberra expect any less?

Indeed; and this government is committed to delivering that for Canberrans.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (12.07): You can see the emotional attachment brimming over here, the emotional attachment of a minister who has an obligation to get it right for everyone in this community, not just for himself and his own ego. The emotional attachment is there. It comes up in the way he uses the data that he presents. He says that 100 cities around the world with about 100,000 people have got light rail. What percentage of cities around the world under 100,000 is that? It would be minuscule.

If we are going to have a reasonable debate, let us compare apples with apples, because the minister then goes on to say, "Let's go to Basel. Let's go to Switzerland. The Swiss are good. The Swiss run like a Swiss watch." He says, "It's about the same population as Canberra." But it is not the same population density. The population density of Basel is well over 7,000 people per square kilometre. Ours is what—500 or 600? Basel has 10 times the density. The minister forgot to tell that part of the story because of his emotional attachment to showing that he will get this job done. That is the problem. This is about personality. This is about the egos in the government instead of about the people of the ACT.

Let us get some of these population densities of the places that they claim support their case. You only have to go to what the Leader of the Opposition said when he was speaking about Edinburgh. They delivered half the rail for twice the price because it does not work. The people of Wellington, New Zealand have actually said, "No, we are not going to do it." Why? It is because it does not work for them. You have to work out whether it works in our circumstance of a city that, in reality, is six cities connected by a set of freeways. Will it change people's behaviour?

Let us compare apples with apples. If you want to start claiming that there are cities around the world just like Canberra, except their population densities are up to 10 times Canberra's population density, then you have got a problem. Of course, the minister is getting cranky with people who dare question his knowledge of this matter. He talked about the parochial nature of some communities. We had an outburst, an absolute outburst, from Minister Burch at the Tuggeranong Community Council the other day where she slammed the council, attacked the council for the tone of their letter to the Chief Minister. "How dare you have a tone in your letter when you write to the Chief Minister! How dare you actually disagree with this government!" If you do, you are wrong.

The minister should apologise to the members of the Tuggeranong Community Council who turned up that night, most of whom were quite shocked by the approach that she took. Instead of saying, "Look, we're hearing what you're saying. We'll take that into consideration," we were basically told, "No, you are wrong. Your tone is inappropriate and the Tuggeranong Community Council should get on board."

The Tuggeranong Community Council is there to support the people of Tuggeranong and their needs, their concerns and their issues. The people of Tuggeranong are concerned that this money will be spent on a route for which the case has not been made. The minister reacted to Mr Coe's comments about the lack of consultation. The first question is: Who did you consult with, apart from Mr Rattenbury, over the route? What is this about?

Your own reports say that other routes would be far more effective. Perhaps if we went from Kippax to the airport and through several large employment centres, past two, three, perhaps four universities, past the CBD, past the defence headquarters and connected several places of interest for tourists, you might actually have a chance of making a case. But your inner consultation amongst yourselves to the exclusion of the community is what will undo you.

If the project is right, the data is right, your case has been made and your conclusion is the correct one, then you would not be out polling the people of the ACT to find out if they agree with you. You would already have the people of the ACT on side. That, for instance, is the process that you, Madam Speaker, outlined: work up the case, go to the people and get their validation. Do not make up a number, make an internal decision, not include the people before you get there, and then end up with 53 per cent.

I am surprised that it is 53 per cent. It will depend on the questions. “Are you in favour of light rail?” Yes, who is not in favour of light rail. “Are you in favour of light rail down Northbourne Avenue at a cost of \$600 million to \$700 million with an unknown ongoing cost and impact on the people of the ACT?” Maybe not so. This is the problem with what has been put out by this government, by this emotionally involved minister, who really has not thought this through from the start.

It is important that we get this right because there are social consequences of what will happen. It is interesting that the people of the ACT have the highest participation in organised sport, in cultural events, in volunteering, in fitness and in a number of other criteria that you might judge social wellbeing by. How do they do that? They actually do it in their cars. You cannot deliver meals on wheels on capital metro. Those people that go to work and do some volunteering on the way home or who might go to work, drop their kids at school, duck out at lunch time to one of their kids’ activities, leave work early to take their kids to sport, to music, to the library or to swim training cannot do that on capital metro.

The bulk of them cannot do it because they do not live on the capital metro route, and that is the problem. We have not maximised the potential from this because it is a political decision made to keep Mr Rattenbury sweet. That is all this is about. This is not about serving the needs of the people of the ACT, because we would have actually done the master plan first and then picked the route from the master plan that actually worked. What we have done is pick the route and now we are developing a master plan as to where it will go after that.

Would it not have been more effective to do something that perhaps covered the parliamentary triangle so that you could include the tourism value during the day, that you might link a growth centre like Kingston Foreshore with its increasing population and areas around Manuka and Griffith where the infill is occurring? But, no, we have picked the route that only saves a minute in time—if it works on time—for almost exactly the same number of people on that route that currently use the buses.

I am not sure where the expectation is about where the people are coming from, but if they are getting off the bus to get on the train, we have not solved anything. What we

have got then is two government-run organisations soaking up subsidy after subsidy, year after year, to the detriment of the rest of the people of Canberra. You only have to go through the CIE report to see that bus rapid transit has a much better economic case behind it. We have some of the other arguments about jobs. The jobs will come from other parts of Canberra. We are told that there is this property uplift. Yes, and as CIE says, the increase in land value may come at the cost of people in the outer suburbs who do not have this service.

People are parochial because this will affect them. People like those on the committee of the Tuggeranong Community Council are standing up for their community and saying, "We are not getting the service. We are paying for the service. It may take jobs out of our region and it may affect our land values." In this case I would be parochial too.

People have a right to be parochial if the case has not been made. This is an announcement that was made and now we are working on the case to justify the decision that has kept this government in office, rather than the decision that should have been made that we are after a decision that better serves all of the people of Canberra.

It would be easy perhaps to make the case to say that Civic to Woden to Tuggeranong might have been a better route. I could say as the member for Brindabella that we want the train to come to us first. I am sure all the members can make that case. But my understanding is that the route that would go from Belconnen via Civic to the airport has the most density, has the greatest number of employment sites, cultural facilities, transport hubs and makes a lot more sense.

But there is no sense in this decision, Madam Speaker. This is about emotion; it is about staying in government; it is about keeping the Greens sweet rather than looking after the people of the ACT and spending their money wisely and not committing them to a long-term burden that this white elephant might become if it is not done properly.

I commend the CIE report to people. It is interesting that in the government's response to the estimates committee it states that they will release some information but not some other information, or release it after we have cut the deal and signed contracts. Of course, they immediately fell back to the "And by the way, commercial in confidence says that you probably will not get a great deal of it." So much for the Chief Minister's new era of openness and accountability. We are told, "We have made decisions behind closed doors. We are going to keep that information behind closed doors. You have to just accept that we are here for your benefit and not for us." It does reek of emotional attachment. (*Time expired.*)

Question put.

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

Noes 8

Mr Barr
Ms Berry
Dr Bourke
Ms Burch
Mr Corbell

Ms Gallagher
Mr Gentleman
Ms Porter
Mr Rattenbury

Mr Coe
Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne
Mr Hanson
Mrs Jones

Ms Lawder
Mr Smyth
Mr Wall

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate—Schedule 1A, Part 1.7—\$194,559,000 (net cost of outputs), \$256,524,510 (capital injection), \$63,182,201 (payments on behalf of Territory), totalling \$514,265,711.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (12.22): I will speak first, but I imagine that there will be many members speaking to this proposed expenditure given that there is so much in this area now. Let me start by saying that what we have here is a government and a budget that are laden with higher fees, higher rates, high debt and high deficit.

Mr Barr: That was your morning speech. You are reading the wrong one now.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Barr!

MR HANSON: Mr Barr has started interjecting already, which is always an indication that he is a little bit twitchy about what might be there in his budget. As we have heard already in the debate, there is a range of issues and of projects. We had a discussion of a range of projects which we are seeing this government introducing despite the overwhelming objections and concerns not only of the experts but also of the population.

This is a budget that is going to saddle the people of Canberra with an additional \$1 billion of debt, taking debt in this budget beyond \$4.5 billion. In this budget alone, there is an additional \$1 billion of debt. That is the highest that has been recorded in territory history. I think we need to understand this in the context of what you would get for \$4.5 billion—how many hospitals, how many schools, what other infrastructure in terms of roads that that would buy.

But also in terms of servicing that debt, we need to understand what we could provide to the people of Canberra. As much as this government will say, “It doesn’t matter. We can run up this debt and we can sustain it,” the reality is that when a government does go into debt, when a government does go into deficit, there is a significant opportunity cost. That opportunity cost is now being experienced across the people of Canberra in terms of the services that are being delivered but also in terms of the cost of living as this government scrambles after every single dollar to get out of their pockets in rates and in higher costs and charges across the board.

We have seen, Madam Speaker, that when it comes to those costs and charges, they are going up well beyond CPI. There is only a point at which we can sustain that. If you have costs and charges, if you have got rates, if you have got household bills that are going well beyond people's wage increases, well beyond cost of living index increases, then you have a situation where that is unsustainable for families.

However, what we have is a budget that is driven by the great economic reformer Andrew Barr who does not really care about the effect on people. In his view, things like houses are just entities to be taxed. People are units of the economy, that you can go after and get as much money out of as you can. What we have from Mr Barr is a lack of care, a lack of compassion, a lack of understanding of the impact of this budget when it comes down to the effect on people.

Certainly I would encourage all of us to look at the cost of living statement that is in the budget. Again, I commend Mr Smyth for that initiative that now puts it in the budget, because every time this government spends, every time this government taxes, there is a rolldown effect to the people of Canberra. Eventually, that is borne by the average ratepayer—the average taxpayer, someone going to work, someone paying payroll tax, someone that has invested, a family trying to make ends meet and that has a unit and is paying land tax. They are just about to be stung by it.

I come back to rates. Let us be very clear about what happened in this rates debate. The government said repeatedly—repeatedly, Madam Speaker—during the last election campaign that rates would not triple. We said the opposite. We did not define a time period because the government would not offer one. The only evidence that was provided was the Quinlan tax review that had rates tripling in 10 years. We have now looked for other evidence and we have asked the government for a time frame. The government has then provided various scenarios that they tabled in the Assembly that indicate, depending on models of growth, what that level of increase will be.

It is clear, even on the lowest threshold, that rates will go up and that revenue from rates will go up fourfold and on their highest growth measure, seven fold. So when we said that rates are tripling, it turns out that it was a pretty conservative estimate. What we see in this budget is rates going up by about another 10 per cent. The average impact on people will be about \$150. That is being applied, in the words of this government, progressively; so there will be a lot of people who will be paying a lot more in rates than simply the additional \$150.

The problem is that many of those people are asset rich but income poor. These are, in many cases, older Canberrans who are living on bigger blocks. When they bought them, these were not fashionable suburbs. In many ways they were outer suburbs. It is people like those living in Weston, Farrer or Fadden. This is not the inner city elites at all. These people now, many of them retirees, many of them on fixed incomes, are seeing their rates bills going up by hundreds of dollars a year and they simply cannot afford it.

This government does not care. This government does not care about the impact. It is simply not fair. It is simply not fair for so many thousands—tens of thousands—of

Canberrans who have worked hard, who have contributed to this community over decades and who now find themselves in the homes that they have lived in for all their lives—most of them want to stay there—being put in a position where staying in those homes is simply unaffordable. They cannot stay there because of the rates impost of this government.

We will continue to make the case against the rates increases as they are. The dry economic arguments that Mr Barr puts forward simply do not resonate when they come down to the people of Canberra. The point is that when you have a spending problem, when you are trying to build stadiums, when you are trying to build light rail, when you want a new government office building, when you want a big, new, shiny death star—we are back to that debate, Madam Speaker, sadly—then you are in a circumstance where you do need to tax people until they bleed but not until they die.

This is a government that is finding every single possible option, every opportunity, to increase taxes, rates and charges. In this budget we see rates going up by 10 per cent, and we see the bulk of other charges—parking, property charges, utilities and so on—going up in some cases at double CPI and triple CPI. How is that affordable? I look forward to Mr Barr explaining how year after year increases in costs and charges that are about 10 per cent are affordable for Canberra families when their pensions or their wages are going up, if they are lucky, two or three per cent. How does that work? How is that possibly affordable?

Mr Barr's response that we heard in the estimates hearing was, "Get your union to negotiate you a better deal." That is his response. What arrogance! What absolute arrogance that the response to people's cost of living increases—the people doing it hard, people raising families and pensioners—is, "Go get yourself a better union so you get a better wage."

Madam Speaker, if that is what it has come to with this government, then it is evident from this budget and from this minister's statement that this is a government that has wholly lost touch with the people that they claim to represent. I do not dispute the fact that Mr Barr is very effective at getting money into the coffers. This budget makes it very clear that when it comes to that, he is an expert. He has got imaginative, innovative ways to get more money out of the Canberra population and into his pocket.

What this minister and this government have failed to do in this budget is actually deliver for the people of Canberra. What they are doing is taking more and more money out of their pockets, out of Canberrans' pockets, and putting it into the pockets of ministers to fund their pet projects whilst the people of Canberra pay more and they get less every day from this government.

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

Sitting suspended from 12.32 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice
Asbestos—loose-fill insulation

MR HANSON: My question is to the Chief Minister. In June 2014 the government established the asbestos task force to manage the ongoing impact of the risks of Fluffy houses. Have all owners of houses known by the government to be Mr Fluffy houses now been notified that their house is a Mr Fluffy house?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. As the Leader of the Opposition is aware, we sent out another letter by registered mail, following his suggestion, to the home owners. I understand there are a small number who we have not been able to deliver those registered letters to—I think it is around 100, from memory; it might be a bit less than that—who we have not been able to make contact with. Steps are being taken. I have not seen the advice come back about what further steps are being taken to make contact with those people, but I do understand that there are a small number—I just do not have the exact number in front of me—of people we have not been able to get in contact with.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, could you advise what, if any, action is being taken to contact the previous owners or residents of Mr Fluffy homes?

MS GALLAGHER: I will come back to the Assembly if this is wrong. My understanding is that we have not got to that piece of work yet. It has been noted that going back may be something that the task force recommends—and I will take their advice on that—but the priority at the moment is to deal with the people who are in houses, particularly in houses where assessments are coming back showing levels of contamination which require immediate assistance.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, what action is in place to ensure that tradespeople can be certain that a house is or is not a Mr Fluffy house, and what is being done to identify tradespeople who have been in contact with Mr Fluffy houses?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Mr Smyth for the question. This, again, has been one of the issues that is before the task force. Of the registrations to the task force, one of the larger groups, apart from home owners, that have been registering is for people in trades. We are keeping in close contact with the building stakeholders like the CFMEU, the MBA and the HIA. All of those three stakeholders are represented on the community and expert reference group.

There is a final brief, which I think is on its way to me, around recommending the tagging of houses in the short term, which would be to perhaps put a tag in the meter box so that people could very easily go and identify whether it was a Mr Fluffy house or not. In the meantime there is, from approaches to the task force if people are concerned, a process to go through to let them know if that house is a Mr Fluffy house.

I would also say that there is a responsibility on the home owners as well, a mandatory requirement to inform tradespeople that they are to work on a Mr Fluffy house—if work is to be undertaken, that it is a Mr Fluffy house. So there are a couple of things in place already and then there is this issue of the tagging of the houses, which will need to happen regardless of what decision we ultimately take on the future of the homes, because that will take a period of time to roll through.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, what is the current position of the government concerning publishing the list of known Mr Fluffy houses?

MS GALLAGHER: The position of the government is not to publish the list of addresses of the homes. This certainly is not a decision that we have come to lightly. We do understand the public interest in being made aware of where these homes are but we also have to weigh that up with the representations from those living in the homes and acknowledge that some of them are going through a very traumatic time at the moment and they have made requests about their own privacy.

I think we can deal with the issue of people who need to know if a house is a Mr Fluffy house through the tagging of the house. Once a decision is taken about the long-term solution, if that decision is demolition then for those people who are happy to have their address identified, I think that with their agreement we can release that address but there will still be a core group of people who will want their privacy maintained.

Again, this is a balancing act. I am happy to take submissions from anyone. I am working with the Leader of the Opposition on this. If there are better ways of doing things and sharing information, I am very happy to take that on board.

Visitors

MADAM SPEAKER: Before I call the next questioner, I would like to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the Majura Ladies Probus Club. Welcome to your Assembly.

Questions without notice

Transport—light rail

MR COE: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Capital Metro. Minister, the Centre for International Economics, in its review of the 2014-15 ACT budget, believes that the cost of Capital Metro is “subject to a high degree of uncertainty and is a source of risk for the fiscal position of the ACT”. The centre also said:

There is little available evidence to “support the economic merit of the Capital Metro”.

Minister, why is the government proceeding with capital metro when its cost is subject to a high degree of uncertainty and is a source of risk for the fiscal position of the territory?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Coe for the question. The government was very disappointed when the Centre for International Economics made no inquiries of the government before making its conclusions in its report. There was no contact with the Capital Metro Agency. There was no request for information. Instead, the centre relied on an old record, a report that is now over two years old—indeed, probably older—and is completely out of date.

The bottom line is that there will be a high degree of certainty with the costs of this project because the government will proceed through a competitive market process. Contingent on the government's agreement to the foreign business case, the government will proceed to a competitive market process that would deliver a contract figure, and that contract figure will be the cost of the project. The private sector consortium, should the government choose to engage in a public-private partnership, will deliver the contract for that price. If it costs them more than that price, then that is their concern, not the government's risk. So there will be a very high degree of certainty around the cost of this project at the conclusion of that market process.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, did the Centre for International Economics do a review of publicly available information and draw their conclusions accordingly?

MR CORBELL: You would have to ask the Centre for International Economics that question.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, considering the government has admitted that less than one per cent of Canberrans will use capital metro to get to work or school—

MADAM SPEAKER: Preamble, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: will you now admit that capital metro is not viable?

MR CORBELL: The government has never said that. That is a figure used by the opposition, not by the government. The point to be made about this project is: do those opposite seriously believe that the only beneficiaries of better public transport are the people who use public transport? Even the simplest analysis would demonstrate that if you reduce the number of people who are using their cars and increase the number of people who are using public transport, the winners are not just those who use public transport; the winners are those who are using the road network.

This is a project that has system-wide benefits. It has benefits in terms of reduced road congestion and improved travel time, not just for public transit users but for motorists, because if you reduce or contain congestion, you maintain or improve travel time on the corridor. And that benefits everyone, not just the public transport user.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, if the one per cent figure is incorrect, how many additional Canberrans will use public transport or light rail along that transport corridor?

MR CORBELL: Those figures have already been released by the government.

Planning—Yarralumla brickworks

MR DOSZPOT: Question without notice.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! I would like to hear Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Planning. Minister, the SMEC Canberra brickworks and environs options and evaluation report update from December 2013 states: “the construction of the Cotter Road-Adelaide Avenue interchange should be considered to be necessary to support the viability of the Canberra Brickworks and Environs development”. However, the *Canberra Times* reported on 12 June this year that the interchange had been removed from the plans for redevelopment. Minister, what involvement have you or your directorate had in the decision to remove the interchange from the plans?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Doszpot for his inquiry. In regard to the Canberra brickworks, I have not had a lot to do with the plans as such; it has not come to me as a development application—or to the directorate.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, why has the government decided not to build the Cotter Road-Adelaide Avenue interchange given that it would dramatically improve traffic infrastructure in Woden and the inner south and was considered vital to the success of the brickworks development?

MR BARR: Madam Speaker, responsibility for the project sits with me as Minister for Economic Development.

Mr Coe: The question was about what involvement.

Mr Smyth: It was about his involvement.

MADAM SPEAKER: No, the first question may have been about Mr Gentleman's involvement but the next one is about why has the interchange been removed. So I think that probably leaves it with Mr Barr.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In relation to the proposal that was put forward by the LDA, significant elements of the proposal were scaled back from the initial 2010 proposal. As a result of that scaling back, it was deemed that that intersection upgrade would not be necessary at this time. It may well be in the future but the project has been scaled back from 2010 to 2014 and, of course, it will be the subject, as I have indicated before, of about five more rounds of consultation.

It is a project that will take a decade to deliver. So there is not a requirement to make decisions on that road upgrade in 2014. There may well be in the 2020s but at this point in time, given the process that is before us, which includes a number of years of further consultation, and given that the development has been scaled back, that road upgrade is not deemed necessary at this time.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: To the Minister for Planning: what assessment will your directorate do to evaluate what alternative infrastructure improvements will be required to cope with increased traffic through the interchange?

MR BARR: That is mine again, Madam Speaker. Let me clarify for the opposition: the Land Development Agency and I, as Minister for Economic Development, have put forward a proposal at this stage. The planning authority will assess that proposal once it is formally lodged—a clear distinction between a proponent and an independent assessor of the project.

Mr Coe: A point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: There is a point of order. Mr Barr, could you sit down please.

Mr Coe: I do not think the Treasurer's clarity is required here. The question was to the Minister for Planning: what assessment will his directorate undertake? I do not need to know about what work the LDA is doing. The question was about what work his directorate will do. If it is going to be nothing, he can say that. But it is fairly and squarely a question for the Minister for Planning.

MADAM SPEAKER: On the basis that the question was about what work the directorate for which the Minister for Planning is responsible will undertake, I think the Minister for Planning needs to answer the question.

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Coe for his supplementary question. My directorate will make all the necessary inquiries into what is necessary for the planning of the Yarralumla brickworks in regard to roads. Roads ACT will be involved in that process as well.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: My question is to the Minister for Economic Development. Minister, what are the key features of the LDA proposal for the Canberra brickworks?

MADAM SPEAKER: This is becoming a little complex because the question was directed to the Minister for Planning. We have had answer ping pong here. I will allow the question but I think that we need to be a bit rigorous about these sorts of things and try to keep it in one area if possible. We will be indulgent on this occasion but also I think members need to be a bit rigorous about where the questions go. The Minister for Economic Development.

MR BARR: Thank you. I understand that there will be confusion between the independent planning authority's assessment role and that of a proponent. In this instance, where the government is acting through the Land Development Agency as the proponent of a development, there is an important distinction and an important series of processes that are necessary to allow for an independent assessment by the planning authority. The planning authority should not be both a proponent and an assessor of a project, and that is an important distinction and one that the government is particularly conscious of in the context of development proposals such as this one.

The point to be made in response to Dr Bourke's supplementary question is that the government is seeking a reuse and activation of the Canberra brickworks and the opportunity for some community access, commercial opportunities and significant parks, playgrounds and public amenity associated with that particular part of the project. There is also a commercial and mixed use development aspect as well as residential components that vary in scale from two storeys closest to the existing Yarralumla suburb and, the further away from the existing Yarralumla suburb you go and the closer you get to the major transport corridors, the higher the density of the proposed development.

However, there is, as we indicated in last week's debate in this place, a long way to go in this project before a development application for an estate development plan is lodged, let alone a territory plan variation, national capital plan changes and an environment and biodiversity conservation act consideration—years of work ahead. This process will evolve over time. (*Time expired.*)

Schools—Gungahlin

MRS JONES: My question is to the minister for education. Minister, the chair of the Franklin Early Childhood School recently wrote to the Canberra Liberals, the Chief Minister and senior members of the Education and Training Directorate, amongst others, expressing concern that there is no defined pathway for year 3 for those currently attending Franklin Early Childhood School. He advises that Franklin is a shared zone for years 3 to 6 between Harrison and Palmerston primary, but that Harrison was unable to accept enrolments this year and Palmerston is not considered an appropriate place for many families. Minister, regarding capacity, what primary school plans do you have for families with young children living in Franklin and the surrounding suburbs?

MS BURCH: I thank Mrs Jones for her question, and I too got the letter. I think it was posted fairly widely. I too asked the question, particularly with reference to enrolments into Harrison. The advice I got this morning was that for those students attending Franklin Early Childhood School, at the end of year 2 there is definitely a defined pathway to either Palmerston or Harrison. The advice also was that those students in year 2 now are attending year 3 in Harrison next year. So there is a defined pathway. We have an absolute commitment to in-area schools accepting children. But Gungahlin is a growth area and we will continue to respond and to develop. As the north of Canberra grows, we will grow our education facilities to match.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, regarding this matter, what consultations have taken place on the question of primary school capacity for the area, and who has been involved in those discussions?

MS BURCH: The Education and Training Directorate looks on a yearly basis at enrolments and makes decisions accordingly. It is not unknown, for schools that are reaching capacity and are stretched, that we put demountables in there. We have seen that at Duffy; we have seen that at other schools. We certainly recognise that Harrison primary is getting full, but our commitment is that public schools will accept students from in area.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, has land been allocated for a new primary campus in the area? If so, where?

MS BURCH: That is all part of future planning. We have certainly got a commitment to develop in Coombs because that is a growing area. But there is also a recognition as the north area continues to grow that we will match that need and plan for it accordingly.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, when will building in the area commence?

MS BURCH: When we have finished the planning and we earmark that timetable we will let you know, Mr Doszpot.

Community services—men's sheds

MS PORTER: My question is to the Minister for Community Services. Minister, the 2013-14 budget provided \$200,000 to undertake a feasibility study on additional men's sheds in the ACT. Has the study been completed, and if so, what were the major recommendations?

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Porter, could I ask you to repeat the question. I just missed the vital piece of information—\$200,000 on?

MS PORTER: Undertaking a feasibility study on additional men's sheds.

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Porter for her question and also her interest in men's sheds across the territory. She has been a great advocate for those people.

The ACT government recognises that men's sheds provide social opportunities, health benefits, social support and camaraderie for men of all ages, backgrounds, abilities and cultures. As this Assembly would be aware, there is a well-known reluctance for men to face issues regarding depression, health and seclusion, particularly after major life events such as retirement, illness, family breakdown, financial difficulties, stress and drug or alcohol use. Men's sheds provide a much-needed opportunity for older men in our community to connect with other men of a similar age—55 years and over—and support them in dealing with some of the issues that men of this age so often struggle with alone.

The initiative to provide more men's sheds in the ACT was an ACT Labor commitment in the lead-up to the 2012 election. As a result of this commitment, the ACT government set aside \$200,000 to undertake a feasibility and design study to assess the need to establish additional men's sheds across Canberra. The findings of the feasibility study have shown that men's sheds respond to the support needs of men in this age group. The report also provides recommendations about the most appropriate and beneficial ways in which the ACT government can support the existing community of men's sheds as well as expand the services.

According to the feasibility report, there is strong community interest in establishing a new men's shed in the Woden region. The establishment of this new shed would support growth in the proportion of ageing residents and the geographical gap in the provision of sheds in this region.

The report also identifies further interest and benefits that could be achieved by extending the social and recreational men's shed already operating in Gungahlin and at the Ngunnawal Neighbourhood Centre. The addition of a workshop would greatly assist in providing a wider range of activities and would attract new members with interests in hobby activities such as woodwork and metalwork. There is often a bit of discussion at men's sheds as to whether you are a woodworker or a metalworker.

The ACT government recognises that further assistance can be provided to support men's sheds and, through this support, provide strong benefits to the broader community. As was recommended in the report, the government will provide the following assistance to support the ongoing operations of men's sheds in Canberra.

The Community Services Directorate will introduce a one-off round of grants from the community support and infrastructure grants program of up to \$100,000. The grants program will be offered later in 2014 and provide small financial grants to men's sheds to assist with purchasing new equipment, minor upgrades and training. We will also explore options to provide financial assistance for the establishment of new men's sheds in the Woden region, as recommended by the report, and the establishment of a workshop in Gungahlin.

In recognising the challenges the community faces in trying to establish new men's sheds, the government will develop an information resource to assist community groups interested in establishing new men's sheds to understand and navigate the processes and issues involved.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, what were the outcomes following the men's shed forum which was hosted in the Assembly on 29 April this year?

MR GENTLEMAN: The inaugural men's shed forum was held in the Legislative Assembly in April this year, and it was a great success. The forum provided an opportunity for representatives of men's sheds to meet and to share information and informally discuss issues of mutual concern and interest, challenges they had faced in establishing their sheds and what had contributed to their success.

Topics of discussion included exploring opportunities for support from private sector organisations such as Bunnings, opportunities to promote men's health, the level of support required from the government regarding the availability of grants, promotional opportunities and services such as CIT training. The forum suggested a one-stop shop approach to reduce confusion when dealing with different levels of government. It was also noted that greater networking between men's sheds would be beneficial to assist in sharing of skills, equipment and experience to solve problems.

The forum was attended by the consultant who was engaged by the Community Services Directorate to undertake the feasibility study on the provision of more men's sheds in the ACT. The outcomes of the forum were considered in the overall findings and recommendations of the feasibility report.

The forum was a positive event and appreciation was expressed for the level of support shown by the ACT government for men's sheds. Based on the success of the inaugural men's shed forum, consideration will be given to the potential of supporting the Canberra men's shed community to hold an annual forum. The use of annual forums can be instrumental in progressing important items such as how participation in groups such as men's sheds can further assist in improving the physical health and mental health outcomes for older men.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, what opportunities do men's sheds provide to assist older men overcome social isolation?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Berry for her question. Like the rest of Australia, Canberra is experiencing a rapid increase in the age of its population. It is anticipated that between 2011 and 2019, the total male population in Canberra will increase by 11 per cent. By comparison, the male population aged over 65 years is anticipated to increase by 47 per cent.

The men's sheds may be seen as a modern version of the backyard shed. In the men's shed you might find men restoring furniture, restoring bicycles for a local school or making a children's cubby house for Camp Quality to raffle. You may also see men talking over tea or coffee, learning to cook or learning new technologies.

Men's sheds provide social, community and health benefits and offer older men in the Canberra community a place where they can have fun, find or re-discover past hobbies, find camaraderie, and also social support and an opportunity for participation.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, what other benefits do men's sheds provide their members?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Dr Bourke for his question and his keen interest in men's sheds. Men's sheds offer many opportunities to assist older men overcome social isolation, including friendship and company, and also the opportunity to participate in social activities with men of similar age and similar interests. They learn to share skills and experiences and to give back to their community.

The connection between keeping physically and mentally active by engaging in interesting activities is beneficial to men who have experienced social disadvantage of course. Sometimes we see identity issues, mental illness, people who have been through incarceration perhaps and/or trauma and are at a loss to promote better mental health and help to reduce mental decline as people age.

Initiatives such as men's sheds were targeted at providing help to older men to provide an environment for community building and to support improvements in a person's emotional wellbeing by promoting socialisation through a meaningful activity. And I look forward to the prospect of seeing more men's sheds develop in the ACT over the coming years.

Uriarra Village—proposed solar farm

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Planning. Minister, as you are aware, the consultation period has closed for development application 201425695, which is the proposal for the large-scale solar project opposite Uriarra Village. Minister, did the Chief Minister advise you against using call-in powers in relation to the development at Uriarra?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Wall for his question. Of course, the Uriarra Village has been a topical planning exercise for a couple of years. The development application includes the construction of a solar farm on block 76 at Coree, with solar panels and related buildings, a lease variation and the construction of power lines from the site, adjacent to the Cotter pumping station. The overhead power grid connection includes 25 poles, from eight to 37 metres high.

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Do you have a point of order?

Mr Hanson: I do have a point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: It helps if you say “point of order”.

Mr Hanson: Yes it does; I apologise, Madam Speaker. The point of order goes to relevance. The question was quite specific with regard to whether the Chief Minister provided the minister with advice about using or not using call-in powers in relation to this development. I note that Mr Gentleman is reading from his notes. I am sure he has a well-prepared brief, but the question was whether he was provided with that advice about the use of call-in powers, not about a detailed description of the particular development.

MADAM SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order. The standing orders require that answers be directly relevant to the question. I would ask Mr Gentleman to be directly relevant to the question about whether he was advised against using call-in powers.

MR GENTLEMAN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was just trying to give some background to the development application.

MADAM SPEAKER: I understand that, but the standing orders require you to be directly relevant.

MR GENTLEMAN: Indeed, thank you. On the use of call-in powers, the number of ministerial call-in decisions made over the last four financial years, from 2010 to 2014, is 10. That is an average of 2.5—

Mr Hanson: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order.

Mr Hanson: I got it right that time. The minister is clearly not being relevant. He has continued to read from his notes about what call-in powers are and what call-in powers have been used. The question was very specific: with regard to this development application, did the Chief Minister advise the minister not to use call-in powers? It is pretty simple to answer and the minister is not being relevant.

MADAM SPEAKER: I will uphold the point of order again. Mr Gentleman, the question is quite specific: did the Chief Minister advise you against using call-in powers? That is what my notes say. Could I ask you to be directly relevant.

MR GENTLEMAN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. No.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, why did you then tell residents of Uriarra that the Chief Minister had in fact ordered you not to use your ministerial call-in powers on the development application No 201425695?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Wall for his question. I did not make that comment to the residents of Uriarra. I have met with the residents of Uriarra on a number of occasions to talk about this particular development and also the history of Uriarra settlement but made no such comment.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, has the member for Canberra, Gai Brodtmann, raised her concerns directly with you about the project at Uriarra and, if so, what was your response?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Lawder for her question. I have seen the article in today's *Canberra Times*. The member for Canberra, Gai Brodtmann, has not corresponded with me directly or talked to me directly about the Uriarra settlement. So there was no response to her.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, what actions will you take to ensure that the residents of Uriarra Village are not unduly affected by this proposal?

MR GENTLEMAN: I think it is very important on this occasion, and in many of our planning processes, that the independent process of ACTPLA goes ahead in relation to this development application. So at this stage we have had quite a series of inputs to the development application.

I have encouraged members of the Uriarra settlement and other stakeholders across the territory to engage with ACTPLA and to put forward their presentation to the development authority. Those notifications ran from 7 July to 1 August. So that is now closed and ACTPLA is going through that independent process to look at that development.

Emergency services—investment

MS BERRY: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, how is the government's investment of an extra \$48.8 million in emergency services in this year's budget improving services and community safety for people in the ACT?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Berry for the question. The government is making a very significant investment in emergency services capability in this year's budget, whether that is the investment for the development of the new Aranda fire and ambulance facility, a very important facility for the Belconnen district, one that will provide a contemporary, state-of-the-art emergency services station, with the co-location of ambulance and fire capabilities from the existing stations in the Belconnen town centre to a location consistent with the broader strategy for the delivery of emergency services across the city to maintain and, where necessary, improve response times as our city continues to grow and develop.

The government also is making a significant investment in terms of communications capability with upgrades to a range of communications technologies in relation to the TRN, the trunked radio network. This is a very important investment to maintain capability in the core of the emergency services communications with units in the field and with other entities and agencies. TRN is a critical capability, one the government is determined to ensure stays up to date, reliable and in place to deliver the operability we need. These investments will assist us with that.

The government, of course, also is having to make provision for a reduction in funding associated with payments from the commonwealth for fire services to commonwealth buildings and institutions. It is regrettable we have to do that but we are left with no choice, given the arbitrary decision of this government and the previous commonwealth government, both of whom have confirmed their position that they will be reducing that fire services payment.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, how does the commitment in this year's budget to a new combined ambulance and fire station at Aranda improve community safety?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Berry for the supplementary. The new combined fire and rescue station at Aranda is very much about maintaining response times for the community. At the moment fire and rescue services for the eastern end of Belconnen are located in the Belconnen town centre. What we know from our assessment of the future demands and needs, and maintenance of response times for fire and ambulance services, is that we need to get those services out of the town centre, which is increasingly congested and not suitable for rapid response and dispatch of fire and emergency services through the heart of the town centre, which is currently where those stations are located.

The new station at Aranda will position our fire and rescue and ambulance capabilities in a highly convenient and central location, close to major trunk roads, to facilitate quick dispatch by our emergency services. That will undoubtedly maintain and help improve overall community safety, particularly as there continues to be intensification of development in the Belconnen town centre.

Combined with this Labor government's commitments delivered for the new west Belconnen fire and ambulance facility, it means we are positioning ourselves well, through this first stage of the station relocation and upgrade program, to make sure that our fire, rescue and other emergency services are based where they need to be based, to maintain and where necessary improve response times in requests for emergency assistance across the city.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, how is the government improving the territory's emergency radio and dispatch systems?

MR CORBELL: I thank Dr Bourke for the supplementary. The government is investing considerable sums in this year's budget to improve and maintain the capability and operability of our communications systems. I have mentioned previously, in my earlier answer, the TRN radio network, a critical communications network for the ESA, and voice and data communications through that network. The upgrades to the microwave ring arrangements as part of the TRN will contribute towards ensuring that it stays up to date, reliable, modern and meeting the needs of our emergency services into the future. The government is also, of course, continuing with investments in terms of upgrade of Centracom technology as part of the 000 ComCen arrangements. Again, that is about making sure we have the investments in place to maintain the contemporary nature of facilities and capability in these critical voice and emergency communications aspects of the Emergency Services Agency.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, do you stand by advice given by ESA that the entire Riverview development will be serviced from the Charnwood station?

MR CORBELL: My understanding is that that is the assessment at this time. Obviously, the Riverview proposal is subject to a series of assessments as it goes through preliminary and early development assessment processes. Obviously, there is still significant work to be done in relation to Riverview. Therefore, those assessments will be ongoing by our emergency services as the details of that proposal become both clearer and more defined over time as the proponents work through the details of their proposal.

Bushfires—preparedness

MS LAWDER: My question is for the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services. Minister, in the aftermath of the 2003 fires the fire management unit was established within TAMS. Given that it is predicted that we are moving into an El Nino weather pattern, with its attendant increased potential for bushfire danger, what is the status of the fire management unit and what is its FTE staff?

MR RATTENBURY: I thank Ms Lawder for the question. Of course, as Ms Lawder and other members of the Assembly undoubtedly know, TAMS operate each season a bushfire operational plan, which is nested under the strategic bushfire management plan. TAMS have a BOP each season and they are currently in the process of moving to finalise the implementation of this year's plan.

There are a range of measures that have been put in place. I am happy to provide Ms Lawder with the full details. But I am advised that there is sufficient capability. I have sought advice on this recently and there are no issues for TAMS in rolling out the necessary steps that need to be taken this season. As members may be aware, not all of the elements of the bushfire operational plan were achieved last season. There is always an issue there of some matters not being done. Those that were not achieved last season will be brought forward as priorities into this season. So there is a rolling program there to make sure that the ACT is ready for the bushfire season.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, is it the case that only one of the four positions belonging to the fire management unit is currently filled?

MR RATTENBURY: No, that is not my advice, Ms Lawder. My advice is that four positions in the forestry and fire management unit are occupied with suitably qualified and experienced people, including all senior management positions. The TAMS brigade, of course, is one of several within the Rural Fire Service. The Rural Fire Service has a range of staff that are available to fill positions if another team member is not available.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, in regard to the bushfire coronial inquiry recommendations, does the fire management unit have the experience and ability required to develop and implement planned fire programs in its senior management positions?

MR RATTENBURY: Given the importance of bushfire preparedness in the territory, I have sought assurances on this issue in light of significant interest in this area of TAMS, and I am assured, as I said in response to Ms Lawder's question, that all the positions within the unit are occupied by suitably qualified and experienced people.

As I started to touch on before—and I will go into it in a bit more detail in response to Mr Smyth's question—the Rural Fire Service has a pool of level 3 incident controllers who are called upon during periods of high fire danger to lead and direct incident management teams should they be required. TAMS is able to draw from that pool of experienced people if a team member is on leave or unavailable for other reasons.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, how many accredited level 3 incident controllers does TAMS have in its employ?

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

ACT public service—contractors

MR SMYTH: My question is for the Treasurer. Treasurer, can you confirm that ACT Shared Services has advised its contractors that they must take a 7½ per cent pay cut on contract renewals or their jobs will be advertised externally?

MR BARR: No, I cannot confirm that.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Treasurer, will you find out if ACT Shared Services advised its contractors that they must take a 7½ per cent pay cut or their jobs will be advertised, and report back to the Assembly by close of business today?

MR BARR: I will seek some advice from the directorate and I will report back to the Assembly once I have got that advice.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Mr Barr, do you have any knowledge of a 7½ per cent pay cut that is planned by the department?

MR BARR: No.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Treasurer, coupled with the government's payroll tax changes, does this mean that Shared Services contractors stand to lose approximately 14 per cent of their pay?

MR BARR: No.

Housing—investment

DR BOURKE: My question is to the Minister for Housing. Minister, can you outline how the 2014-15 budget invests in housing?

MR BARR: The budget has a very strong framework for investment in a range of housing initiatives supported by suitable policy work over the last few years. So the government has a focus in the 2014-15 fiscal year of renewing ageing public housing stock. Capital expenditure on public housing initiatives will exceed \$82 million in this fiscal year, which is the largest capital expenditure on housing since the nation building economic stimulus package that followed the global financial crisis.

This investment, coupled with the ACT government's land release program, will boost the supply of housing in the territory, which is the best way to ease housing pressure on Canberrans. Housing ACT will invest over \$55 million on a range of projects to rejuvenate the public housing portfolio, to better align the properties to the needs of current and future tenants, and to continue the approach of salt and peppering public housing throughout our city.

A key component of the renewal program is the transformation of the Northbourne corridor. This will include a significant renewal of public housing and is one of the largest investments in public housing that the city has witnessed. The government is committed to replacing ageing and rundown housing. The government has committed to the maintenance of public housing through a roof-for-roof replacement of public housing properties along the corridor. The new public housing that will be built will be purpose built and energy efficient.

Importantly, the renewal program also seeks to better meet the needs of tenants. There is no doubt that demand for housing in Canberra's regions, particularly Belconnen, Gungahlin and Tuggeranong, is increasing and that the demand for different types of

housing is changing as the tenant profile changes. The government is seeking to respond to the needs of tenants who tell us that they wish to relocate to other areas of the city to be closer to family and friends.

Specific projects in the renewal program include the construction of 20 units to enable older public housing tenants to downsize into accommodation purpose built for older tenants. The properties will be constructed to at least the gold standard liveable housing design, which will allow tenants to age in place.

Accommodation that is culturally appropriate and better suited to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders will be built. The need for suitable and appropriate accommodation for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders was identified as a priority by the previous elected body.

There is a \$27 million investment in a range of specific housing initiatives to improve outcomes for existing tenants and to provide new purpose-built housing to better meet our tenants needs, including funding to improve security for older public housing tenants, funding for project independence, a model that affords people with disability and low incomes a chance of home ownership, as well as funding to build a number of dual occupancy properties that will enable people with a disability to share the cost of support. These are but a few of the examples that will roll out across the city in this fiscal year.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, are there other initiatives in the budget that invest in providing housing services?

MR BARR: Yes, the \$322,000 commitment to establish the one human services gateway, which will be the central point to improve access to information and self-support options to link individuals and families into more intensive and tailored support where they need it. The gateway is one of the first initiatives funded under the human services blueprint that transforms our human services system and improves outcomes for Canberrans accessing the system.

The budget also provides \$1.52 million for a specialist homelessness service delivery, and this funding matches the commonwealth government's commitment for one year only, unfortunately, under the national partnership agreement on homelessness. The ACT hopes that this funding will be continued by the commonwealth into the future.

In 2014-15 we will also complete the common ground development in Gungahlin, and we have in the budget committed funding to start tenancy and support services at common ground, funding that will increase over the forward estimates period.

Of course our new over-60s home bonus in the 2014-15 budget will also be a significant boost for older Canberrans looking to move to new accommodation. Those who are able to access the scheme will see their stamp duty slashed to only \$20, a saving of up to \$20,000—this government's further commitment to cutting stamp duty for every single property in this city.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, what else does the 2014-15 budget do in investing in the support of the housing market?

MR BARR: The government will continue to invest in the development of a range of new policies and initiatives to improve housing across the city. We have the highest proportion of social housing of any city in Australia, with just over eight per cent of all housing in the territory held by the territory government. I am very keen to continue to increase the supply of housing across the public, social and community sectors, as well as a significant increase in the supply of housing in the private market.

The government has, through its land release program and through its various taxation measures, sought to provide tax incentives and other incentives to encourage the construction of new housing. That includes the retargeting of the first home owners grant and significant stamp duty concessions that encourage the construction of new housing in the city. We are seeing well above long-run average production of new housing in Canberra in a variety of locations, both urban infill and in new suburbs across Canberra.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, how will your department manage the relocation of tenants who wish to move nearby, given that your department currently do not hold a register of disability-modified properties, as advised to me in a question on notice?

MR BARR: Carefully and respectfully.

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

Supplementary answers to questions without notice

Asbestos—loose-fill insulation

Canberra Hospital—medical wards

MS GALLAGHER: Earlier in question time Mr Hanson asked me a question about whether we had been in touch with all Mr Fluffy householders, and I said I thought there were about 100 we had not been able to contact. A receipt has not been returned from 132 households that were sent the registered mail. Those 132 have been written to again through regular post last Friday, and there will be a possible follow-up by phone if we do not get responses from those 132. It is just over 10 per cent.

Last week—I think on Wednesday, 6 August—Mr Hanson asked me a question about whether there had been an independent or external review recently conducted into practices and procedures in the medical wards at Canberra Hospital by an external consultant, possibly a Dr Brown. I can provide the following information: no external review has been conducted recently into the practices and procedures in the medical wards at Canberra Hospital by an external consultant, Dr Brown. Dr Peggy Brown—a different Dr Brown—Director-General of ACT Health contacted Ian Thompson,

Deputy Director-General of Canberra Hospital and Health Services—unfortunately for him, he was on leave at the time—to specifically ask if he was aware of any such review and he replied that he was not.

Dr Brown also contacted Mary Durkin, the Health Services Commissioner who undertakes commission-initiated considerations into matters from time to time. Ms Durkin was not aware of it but also raised this with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency—AHPRA. Both Ms Durkin and AHPRA were not aware of an external review being conducted by a Dr Brown at Canberra Hospital. A search of vendors with the surname “Brown” was undertaken in the finance database, which showed in excess of 200 entries. From this search three vendors were identified to be doctors, and none of those doctors conducted work described by Mr Hanson in the Assembly.

Another doctor at the Canberra Hospital, Dr Deborah Brown, the executive director of the health care improvement unit, is conducting sessions ward by ward across the hospital called patient safety conversations. This is not an external review into suspicious deaths, and that is the point I would like to lay to rest: there is no review as outlined by the opposition, but there is a Dr Deborah Brown, a staff specialist at the hospital, who is conducting a ward-by-ward process called patient safety conversations.

Mr Hanson: And what does that do?

MS GALLAGHER: I am happy to discuss that with you at another time.

Planning—park-and-ride and bike-and-ride facilities

MR GENTLEMAN: I have a response to a question taken on notice from Mr Wall last Thursday in relation to signage at the Calwell park and ride. I am advised by the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate that the Calwell park and ride signage was installed when the car park was opened, but this signage has been upgraded to larger signs with additional directional signage installed. These works are part of the program of improvements being delivered by the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate. All of the works are due to be completed by mid-September.

Executive contracts

Papers and statement by minister

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Health, Minister for Higher Education and Minister for Regional Development): For the information of members, I present the following papers:

Public Sector Management Act, pursuant to sections 31A and 79—Copies of executive contracts or instruments—

Long-term contract—George Tomlins, dated 23 July 2014.

Short-term contracts:

Ann Lyons Wright, dated 31 July and 1 August 2014.

Bronwen Overton-Clarke, dated 29 July and 1 August 2014.

Martin Hine, dated 24 and 25 July 2014.

Peter Brayshaw, dated 30 July 2014.

Contract variations:

Andrew Baker, dated 29 and 30 July 2014.

Elizabeth Trickett, dated 1 and 4 August 2014.

George Tomlins, dated 9 and 23 July 2014.

Michael Trushell, dated 27 and 28 July 2014.

Namasivayam Kugathas, dated 30 July 2014.

Peter Murray, dated 28 July 2014.

I ask leave to make a statement in relation to the papers.

Leave granted.

MS GALLAGHER: I present another set of executive contracts. These documents are tabled in accordance with sections 31A and 79 of the Public Sector Management Act which require tabling of all director-general and executive contracts and contract variations. Today I present one long-term contract, four short-term contracts and six contract variations. The details of contracts will be circulated to members.

2013-2014 annual report directions

Paper and statement by minister

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Health, Minister for Higher Education and Minister for Regional Development): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act, pursuant to subsection 9(6)—
Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Notice 2014—Copy of a notifiable instrument, including the Chief Minister's 2013-2014 Annual Report Directions, dated 3 July 2014.

I ask leave to make a statement in relation to the paper.

Leave granted.

MS GALLAGHER: The 2014 directions reflect the completion of the first stage of a major review of the annual report directions that focuses on improving the communication of agency performance by: improving the relevance of annual report information specific to agency performance, strategy and budget outputs; and removing information not relevant to budget outputs and strategic direction where it is already published elsewhere and does not require legislative amendments to effect.

Information that is published elsewhere that has been removed from last year's directions includes: reporting against whole-of-government strategies and plans specifically relating to diversity and to property crime reduction, as these are

published separately by the owning directorates; and an annual reporting requirement for agencies to list the legislation for which they are responsible, as it would repeat the administrative arrangements already available on the ACT legislation register.

Additionally, the 2014 directions have been amended with a revised reporting structure that is logical in terms of flow and sequence. The directions now include the requirement to report against the following sections: performance reporting, providing an overview of agency operating environment along with performance reporting in terms of economic, social and environmental aspects of its operations; governance and accountability, providing information on the governance arrangements of the agency and internal and external accountability mechanisms for transparent and independent assessment of agency operations, processes and systems; legislation-based reporting, requiring agencies to report information against the requirements arising out of several legislative instruments including, but not limited to, the public interest disclosure, freedom of information, human rights and territory records; human resource management reporting, relating to development initiatives and programs to attract, retain and develop staff for organisational effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery; and financial management reporting, providing detailed financial analysis of agency performance.

The directions also include amendments to the declarations about public authorities made under sections 12 and 16 of the Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act. Under section 16, I may declare that an entity established under an act is a public authority, which is required to prepare an annual report. Compared to last year's declaration, the following changes are made: the Chief Coroner is no longer declared a public authority for the purposes of annual reporting—the Coroners Act 1997 was amended to provide that the Chief Coroner will report directly to the Attorney-General and is not required to produce an annual report; and the Mental Health ACT Official Visitors established under the Mental Health (Treatment and Care) Act 1994 and the Radiation Council, established under the Radiation Protection Act 2006 are declared public authorities and are annexed reports of the Health Directorate annual report.

The annual report directions were provided to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts for consultation in accordance with section 8 of the Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004. The committee responded on 18 June 2014 with no comment on the 2014 annual report directions. Annual reports must be tabled within three months of the end of the financial year and will be tabled on 25 September 2014.

The next stage of the review will complete the implementation of the review measures through the 2015 directions process and will focus on development and implementation of legislative amendments that will allow for: changes to the Annual Report (Government Agencies) 2004 Act for the provision of whole-of-government annual reporting to be introduced; further development of revised performance measures and accountability indicators; the introduction of different reporting arrangements for directorates and other reporting entities, particularly where requirements are not relevant to small reporting entities; and consideration being given to altering the timeframes associated with the presentation and tabling of annual reports, with an extension of one month to the end of October.

Suicide reduction target Paper and statement by minister

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Health, Minister for Higher Education and Minister for Regional Development): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Suicide Reduction Target—ACT Deaths due to suicide and information about available front line suicide prevention and postvention services and support—Report, dated August 2014, pursuant to the resolution of the Assembly of 28 March 2012.

I ask leave to make a statement in relation to the paper.

Leave granted.

MS GALLAGHER: I make the following statement on deaths due to suicide in the ACT and present information about suicide prevention services and support available in the ACT. The Seventh Legislative Assembly passed a motion calling on the Minister for Health to:

... consult the Ministerial Advisory Council on Mental Health and other relevant stakeholders about what ACT suicide reduction target is appropriate for 2020 and outline that target to the Assembly by the end of 2012;

and make a statement to the Assembly biannually until the end of 2020 on ACT figures on suicide progress against the target, and information about available services and support.

I have consulted with the Ministerial Advisory Council on Mental Health on two occasions and sought information from local and national clinicians and researchers working in the field of suicide prevention. Suicide and suicide prevention is a very complex issue. Many of the factors that affect suicide rates are beyond the influence of the health portfolio. A sense of connection and belonging within the community and access to secure employment, housing and appropriate education enhances mental health and wellbeing, while bullying, drug and alcohol use and stress about changes in the cost of living increase individual stress and can affect an individual's risk of suicide. When it comes to setting a suicide reduction target, all of these factors have to be taken into consideration.

I would like to be able to set a zero suicide reduction target, but sadly, this is neither realistic nor attainable. The Ministerial Advisory Council on Mental Health supports setting an across-the-board aspirational target for a reduction in the rate of suicides, as a percentage over a reasonable time period—that is, to at least 2020. The council believes setting a reduction target would focus policy and service delivery attention more effectively and that a target would be part of a broader community awareness-raising exercise given the hidden nature of suicide and the importance of help-seeking behaviour.

Dr Peter Norrie, the ACT's Chief Psychiatrist, advises that the ACT should not set a numerical target because many of the factors that influence suicide lie beyond the influence of ACT Health or the ACT government. This advice is supported by Chief Psychiatrists in the other states and territories, including Western Australia, Tasmania, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, and respected researchers and clinicians in the field.

The small size of the ACT population makes meaningful target-setting difficult, particularly if raw numbers rather than rates are used. This also means there may be statistically misleading variations between years which, taken in isolation, may not accurately represent progress. Likewise, it would be difficult to provide trend results for specific population groups, for example, people discharged from psychiatric care, given the low numbers in the territory. The availability of timely and accurate data also impacts on our ability to regularly report on the territory's suicide rates.

Considering all of these factors, I believe the most reliable indicator on which to base annual reporting on progress on suicide prevention should be data on deaths by intentional self-harm from the publication *Causes of Death Australia*, which is published annually by the ABS. This data can be regarded as reliable as it is based on finalised coronial determinations, though, for the same reason, it is two years behind the date of publication.

It is appropriate for the ACT to aspire to make a sustained reduction in the rate of suicide in the ACT by 2020. Progress will be measured using the five-year age standardised death rates for suicide deaths in the ACT, as reported annually in the ABS *Causes of Death Australia*.

In line with that aspiration, I advise the Assembly that *Causes of Death Australia* 2013 reports that the ACT age standardised rate of deaths by suicide for the period 2007-2011 was 9.9 per hundred thousand. This is lower than the Australian rate of 10.4. The ACT's age standardised death rate for males in this period was 15.1 and females 4.7. These were lower than the Australian rates of 16.3 for males and 4.8 for females.

The same ABS report for 2014 shows the ACT's age standardised rate of deaths by suicide for the period 2008-2012 was 9.1 per hundred thousand. This is, again, lower than the Australian rate of 10.8. The age standardised death rate for males in this period was 14.3 and females 4.2. These were lower than the Australian rates of 16.8 for males and 5.1 for females.

For the benefit of members, I am also tabling today a description of the range of crisis and non-crisis supports available to people at risk of suicide. A range of crisis and non-crisis services are available to Canberrans, including through Menslink, Carers ACT, Gungan Gulwan, Headspace and Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service, providing very high quality services to people in need. There is also a range of evidence-based training programs available to both professionals and members of the ACT community who want to learn how they can best support people at risk of suicide.

Finally, I would like to bring to the Assembly's attention that ACT Health, in partnership with the ANU Medical School, is undertaking a two year research project focusing on the factors contributing to people completing suicide and the health services with which they have been in contact over the last five years. The research is also investigating which factors are the strongest predictors of suicide. This is important research that will inform the ACT government's strategic planning for evidence-based suicide prevention and postvention services and supports.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (3:38): I want to thank the Minister for Health for her ongoing support in the identification and reporting on the matter of suicide in our community. As my former colleague Amanda Bresnan noted when she first brought this matter to the Assembly in 2012, it is rare that we have everybody in this place agreeing on matters, but the issue of suicide is one where there is a recognition across the political spectrum of how serious and difficult an issue it is.

Suicide is often a silent killer in our community, and many people are understandably concerned and upset when it is discussed. The intention of the motion passed by the Assembly was to shed light and hope on a dark area and to measure our society's progress towards reducing the prevalence of not only the tragic loss of life but also the supports needed to address underlying conditions that can lead to suicidal thinking.

The Assembly's resolution to take action on this issue highlights the serious nature of the topic and the need for us all to be vigilant and aware of the prevalence of mental health issues in our own lives and those of our friends and family. Having this information brought to the Assembly today provides us with both a moment to reflect on the issue but also a baseline of information from which we can proceed forward.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Health, Ageing, Community and Social Services—Standing Committee

Report 2—government response

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Health, Minister for Higher Education and Minister for Regional Development) (3:40): For the information of members I present the following paper:

Health, Ageing, Community and Social Services—Standing Committee—Report 2—*Inquiry into ACT Public Service Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment*—Government response.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

MS GALLAGHER: Today I table the government's response to the Standing Committee on Health, Ageing, Community and Social Services report on the inquiry into ACT public service Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment. I thank the committee for the report and for the opportunity which it provides to consider the avenues of ongoing engagement with members of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and our own processes within the ACT government to support their employment.

The ACT government remains firmly committed to our vision for the ACT public service and the wider public sector to be seen as an attractive workplace for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people seeking employment. In the government's response to this committee report, it is clear we are making important progress under this commitment and continue to focus on further gains. The majority of the recommendations made by the committee are consistent with initiatives and strategies established in the ACT PS and those already identified for development as part of our commitment to continuous improvement.

As the one service model settles across the ACT public service and wider public sector, more innovative initiatives and continuous improvement in the area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment will occur, particularly in the areas of recruitment, retention, cross-cultural training and reporting. With this in mind, the ACT government will continue to build closer links with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and relevant stakeholders in the community in order to communicate more effectively with potential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. Strengthening these links will allow further effective communication with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to make sure pathways to employment in the ACT PS are clear and well supported.

Significantly, it is through listening to our community partners that we can understand what further opportunities we as a government can create to both attract and retain talented Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in the ACT public sector and the broader public sector. In this vein, the ACT PS will continue to build closer internal links with current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to continue to improve how we retain those employees and offer clear opportunities for progression and development whilst working as an ACT public servant.

I look forward to the ongoing work in this critical area of employment. I thank the committee for their report and commend the government's response to the Assembly today.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Papers

Mr Corbell presented the following papers:

ACT Criminal Justice—Statistical Profile 2014—June quarter.

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Crimes (Sentence Administration) Act—Crimes (Sentence Administration) (Sentence Administration Board) Appointment 2014 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-228 (LR, 30 July 2014).

Domestic Violence Agencies Act—Domestic Violence Agencies (Council) Amendment Appointment 2014—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-224 (LR, 24 July 2014).

Environment Protection Act—Environment Protection (Consultation on Application for Environmental Authorisation) Declaration 2014 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-225 (LR, 25 July 2014).

Exhibition Park Corporation Act and Financial Management Act—Exhibition Park Corporation (Governing Board) Appointment 2014 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-227 (LR, 31 July 2014).

Gambling and Racing Control Act and Gaming Machine Act—Gambling and Racing Control (Code of Practice) Amendment Regulation 2014 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2014-17 (LR, 28 July 2014).

Heavy Vehicle National Law (ACT) Act—Heavy Vehicle National Law (ACT) (Transitional Provisions) Regulation 2014—Subordinate Law SL2014-16 (LR, 28 July 2014).

Pest Plants and Animals Act—Pest Plants and Animals (Pest Plants) Declaration 2014 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-226 (LR, 29 July 2014).

Road Transport (General) Act—Road Transport (Offences) Amendment Regulation 2014 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2014-18 (LR, 31 July 2014).

Alexander Maconochie Centre—human rights audit Paper and statement by minister

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Corrective Services, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for Sport and Recreation): I present the following paper:

Human Rights Act and Human Rights Commission Act, pursuant to subsection 41(2) and subsection 87(2) respectively—Human Rights Audit on the Conditions of Detention of Women at the Alexander Maconochie Centre—A Report by the ACT Human Rights and Discrimination Commissioner—Government response.

I seek leave to make a statement in relation to the paper.

Leave granted.

MR RATTENBURY: On 15 May 2014 the Attorney-General tabled the Human Rights and Discrimination Commissioner's *Human rights audit on the conditions of detention of women at the Alexander Maconochie Centre*. The audit report was the product of extensive work during 2013 by the commissioner and her team. This work was facilitated through the significant cooperation of ACT Corrective Services staff, as well as staff from ACT Health and the Community Services Directorate. There was also notable engagement in the audit from community agencies who work with female offenders.

The work undertaken by the commissioner and the cooperation provided by government agencies are testament that this jurisdiction and this government have a commitment to service delivery consistent with human rights principles. It confirms that we believe very strongly in delivering effective and appropriate services in our corrections system and that we welcome that service delivery being scrutinised with a view to continuous improvement. I am happy today to table the government's response to the commissioner's report.

The report is a substantial document. It has in excess of 200 pages and contains 61 recommendations. A considered read of the report reveals that the picture for women detainees at the AMC is positive. The commissioner found that overall women detainees are treated well in custody. She found that corrections staff and management are respectful of the particular needs and vulnerabilities of women in custody. The commissioner is satisfied that the AMC is compliant with human rights standards in a range of areas, including induction, nutrition, clothing, bedding, personal hygiene and discipline.

The commissioner found that there has been significant improvement in the treatment of women detainees in the ACT since the last Human Rights Commission report into corrections back in 2007. In particular, the commissioner noted that the former reliance by ACT Corrective Services on strip searching of women detainees has improved, and she has put the view that the ACT is now leading best practice in this area compared to other jurisdictions.

This is not to say there are not challenges. The commissioner found that it is difficult to provide a comprehensive suite of services and programs to a small number of women detainees, all with diverse individual needs. She also identified problems in regard to responding to ongoing mental health concerns and the need for more activities for women detainees, including possibly some form of prison industry. These are areas where I also support enhanced efforts by Corrective Services and ACT Health.

Of the report's 61 recommendations, the government supports 35 and supports in principle nine recommendations. Ten have been noted and there are seven which are not supported.

Among the supported recommendations are quite a few that relate to reviewing or updating AMC policies as they impact upon women. The government and ACT Corrective Services agree that there are AMC policies and procedures which need update or review. A number of the key ones identified by the Human Rights Commission,

including the women and children program policy, were already well advanced at the point when the report was provided to government. The government has also provided additional funding for the through-care extension program in the 2014-15 budget, consistent with recommendation 60. Support for a needle and syringe exchange program is ongoing government policy and a parliamentary agreement item. Implementation of these recommendations will further enhance what is already very strong service delivery to women in the AMC. It should also be noted that many recommendations are consistent with existing practice.

As I said earlier, 10 recommendations have been noted and there are seven recommendations which the government does not accept. The reason these recommendations have not been accepted is that the government is concerned that some are unnecessary or impractical, or may undermine the operations, including security operations, of the AMC. It is also the government view that some non-essential recommendations are not cost-effective or financially feasible at this time. A number of these recommendations, while not supported at this time, will be considered as part of the current expenditure review being conducted into ACT Corrective Services. The government also has concerns that aspects of the report were shaped by negative perceptions which are not borne out by the facts at the AMC.

In response to concerns raised by some submissions from community groups to the commissioner, as well as those raised directly with my office, I convened a service provider roundtable in August 2013. It became apparent to roundtable participants that some perceptions they had about service provision at the AMC were incorrect. The government is concerned that input used by the commissioner might have been shaped by these early views which do not take account of the roundtable outcomes, which clarified or answered some of the more serious concerns.

Notwithstanding this, the audit makes a valuable contribution to ongoing work undertaken by ACT Corrective Services, and I thank the commissioner and her team for their work. In closing, as the Minister for Corrective Services and on behalf of the government, I want to acknowledge the work of staff of ACT Corrective Services, ACT Health and the Community Services Directorate for their input to this process and management of women in the AMC.

Appropriation Bill 2014-2015

[Cognate bill:

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2014-2015

Cognate paper:

Estimates 2014-2015—Select Committee report—government response]

Detail stage

Schedule 1—Appropriations

Consideration resumed on amendment No 13 [*see schedule 1 at page 2408*] moved by Mr Barr.

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate—

Schedule 1A, Part 1.7—\$194,559,000 (net cost of outputs), \$256,524,510 (capital injection), \$63,182,201 (payments on behalf of territory), totalling \$514,265,711.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (3.50): (*Second speaking period taken.*) It is an encore performance. I will not go over all the ground that has been covered but I might refresh people and give them the highlights.

Mr Coe: “The best of”.

MR HANSON: “The best of”; “the greatest hits”. We will move on to some new ground. Do you think for a minute, Mr Treasurer, that we are going to forget the debt in this budget, that we are going to forget the deficit—although there is a surplus projected at some stage, isn’t there? Does anyone believe it? It is a bit like some of Mr Corbell’s projections for the cost of light rail: which is the least dubious—that or Mr Barr’s surplus? I do not know. I do not think either is particularly credible.

Rates—that would be a bit of a highlight, wouldn’t it? With respect to the fees and charges and, of course, the cumulative effect of all that, as I mentioned before lunch, we are seeing fees and charges and rates all going up by about 10 per cent, whereas people’s wages are going up by two or three, if you are lucky—and pensions, in some cases, by even less. Maybe, if you are working in Shared Services or you are a contractor, your wage is going the wrong way, but you are still expected to pay your fees and charges.

I did not quite give Mr Barr the credit of being the world’s greatest Treasurer, because I know he would like to claim that mantle, but I think he is the world’s greatest Treasurer at getting revenue into the budget. In terms of a bloke that can actually squeeze the community for everything that they have got and find those innovative new ways to get money, I think we do have to give him credit. Credit where credit is due; I think he has taken over from his mentor, Mr Quinlan, as someone that really can find new ways to bring in money to the coffers of this government.

Of course, as we talked about before lunch, this is, in many ways, to pay for a number of misdirected priorities. We spoke about capital metro, and there was reference to the stadium. I would refer people to Jack Waterford’s article for further discussion of that.

In some ways what is interesting is what was not in the budget—that is, the reappearance of the death star.

Mr Barr interjecting—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Ms Lawder): Thank you, Mr Barr.

MR HANSON: Mr Barr is giving commentary on his stadium. I wonder what Mr Waterford would have to say about the reappearance of the big government office building. It was not in the budget. They did not want to have any mention of it in the budget, of course. This is part of this funding arrangement where everything is free. This is the Simon Corbell methodology for capital metro: “Someone else will build it for us. There’s no cost to the community.” I think that is what we are talking about with the government office building: “Someone else will come along and build it for us. There’s no cost to us.” But, of course, there is.

Whichever way you go about business, if what occurs is that a building is put in the car park just outside the Assembly or elsewhere, we will pay in the long term. Whether we are borrowing the money and building it, as was the previous plan, or whether we get someone to build it for us and then pay them off with a long-term lease, including the running of the building, ultimately, the people of the ACT are going to have to pay one way or another.

They simply say, “Oh, it’s a PPP.” It is now the magic fairy dust. It seems that everything is going to be a PPP and no-one has to ever pay for any of this, which is abject nonsense.

We do remember the demise of the death star last time. I cannot quite remember which sequel it was in—*Return of the Jedi* or something like that. It seems that the death star is back; it has been rebuilt by Andrew Barr, the Assembly’s version of Darth Vader.

Mr Coe: New and improved.

MR HANSON: Yes, new and improved. It got blown up last time. We destroyed it last time but—

Mr Barr: Worst character ever.

MR HANSON: Worst character ever?

Mr Barr: You—Jar Jar Binks!

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Barr. Order, Mr Hanson. There is no need to speak across the chamber.

MR HANSON: I cast myself, Madam Assistant Speaker, as Han Solo in this. I see myself as Han Solo. Mr Barr clearly is Darth Vader with his death star, and I will not go further beyond that. I do not want to apportion Jabba the Hutt to anyone.

Mr Barr interjecting—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order, members! Mr Barr!

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Coe, that is enough.

Mr Rattenbury interjecting—

MR HANSON: Mr Rattenbury—we will find a character for him. Anyway, the death star is back. I do not know whether this time it is going to come back with the walkway. Remember the walkway that was going—

Mr Coe: The sky bridge.

MR HANSON: Sorry, the sky bridge from the ministerial suites so that ministers could walk across the sky bridge and look down on the mere people below. Perhaps a view of the arboretum was a requirement. I do not know if the new scope has that in the ROI. Perhaps the minister can tell us whether the sky bridge is still a requirement in that. No, it is not; it has gone. What a shame!

Mr Coe: It's a tunnel now.

MR HANSON: A tunnel? Maybe there will be a platform for light rail. Maybe there will be a new platform for light rail; a tunnel that runs down. Madam Assistant Speaker, I do foreshadow that there will be some further debate about this issue. There is a motion in the Assembly and we will have an opportunity to debate this tomorrow.

Mr Barr: You've managed to outrage the Property Council.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Barr, if you have a point of order to raise, please stand up and say it. Otherwise please listen to Mr Hanson in silence.

MR HANSON: Mr Barr says I might have managed to outrage the Property Council. Of course, my job here is to represent the good people of the ACT and to make sure that every single dollar that is spent by Mr Barr is done prudently, and I will continue to do that.

Some of the logic does not stack up. The government on one hand says, "Everyone's got to be consolidated. Everyone's got to be in a single building or in a campus, except where we want to build something in Gungahlin." So why is it that a centralised function like Shared Services is sent to Gungahlin but we have to make sure that everybody else is within a 10-minute walk of the Assembly? What is the logic in the 10-minute walk from the Assembly? It does not stack up.

We have significant office vacancy in the ACT, across the ACT. This project will exacerbate that problem. It will increase the vacancy rates. Anyway, we will come back to that debate tomorrow. Maybe we will have further developed the *Star Wars* narrative and worked out further characters.

Mr Coe: Simon Corbell is definitely a storm-trooper.

MR HANSON: Simon is a storm-trooper. We will have further character developments in the ongoing saga of the death star.

On a more serious note there is the issue of Mr Fluffy. I want to return to that in this portfolio area. I note that the government announced at lunchtime a reference group to support the rollout of support for Mr Fluffy, provide advice to the government and provide representation to affected families. I think that is a good initiative. What I would say, though, is that we need to make sure, as I have said before, that the task

force is adequately resourced during the search period. Families are continuing to contact me to say that they are not getting a timely response from the task force, that they are not getting the information that they need.

We found out today that 130 people still remain unaccounted for, and there is no plan that the Chief Minister is aware of to send another letter. We need to make sure that during this critical period we are contacting everybody involved and we are keeping them abreast and informed of what action is being taken, what their requirements are and what the further plans are. I reiterate that the government has our bipartisan support in pursuing this issue, but obviously it is not a blank cheque.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (3.59): I will start where the Leader of the Opposition left off, with regard to the need for the opposition to closely scrutinise the government's expenditure. We do have to be very cautious when we hear the government talk about PPPs being a holy grail that will solve all of our problems here in the ACT. Whilst there is certainly a place for PPPs—and I think there have been jurisdictions that have used them well—you have to be very careful that the taxpayer does not get a raw deal out of these arrangements.

In particular, when you are using debt to fund a PPP, what you can end up doing is offering the private partner perhaps seven, nine or 11 per cent, because, while they would not do it for anything less than that, it could have been funded through an intergovernment loan at four per cent. So we have to be very careful that we sign up to PPPs not just because they are the latest fad but because they are in fact the best option for the territory.

As a rule of thumb, I gather PPPs work particularly effectively when there is going to be a good revenue stream. If there is not going to be a good revenue stream and it is going to involve the government making annualised payments to the private partner then it may well be that you are better off borrowing the money at the government bond rate.

Something else that I am keen to discuss today is the Land Development Agency and to ensure that the LDA do not overstep their role in our community. This year the LDA again failed to meet their target for land release. In 2012-13 the shortfall was 300 blocks but this year it was 1,500. This is almost a third of the target for residential blocks. It appears that these blocks will not be rolled over, so there will continue to be an undersupply of blocks in the ACT.

The consequence of this undersupply of residential blocks is that housing affordability continues to be a serious issue for Canberra families. The government is restricting supply and ensuring that the majority of land release is by the government. This means that the cost of purchasing a house is beyond the reach of so many Canberrans. It is unacceptable that this government is determined to make home ownership so unattainable for Canberrans. It seems that all the government strategies are determined to undermine home ownership and drive up the price for existing home owners.

The estimates committee recognised this issue and called on the government to review land release so that greater housing affordability can be achieved. Making more blocks available should help with this. However, a review of the types of blocks released may also be necessary. We have to be careful that we do not have a one-size-fits-all strategy, which is so often the case with the government. It is no good releasing a large number of small blocks and land for apartments when the demand is for reasonable-size blocks suitable for family homes. All this does is lead to a glut of apartments on the market.

The LDA should be focusing on its core purpose of land release or, better still, it should be allowing the private sector to be releasing the land. Ultimately, it is not in the interest of Canberra families to have the government as the major and monopoly developer. It is unfortunate when the government decides it is necessary for it to take over the development of all the new areas of Canberra.

We saw one example of this in the last financial year, at Denman Prospect. The fact that the government has done so reflects the unreasonable requirements that it has placed on construction in the territory. The government has decided to develop the land in Denman Prospect itself because the land failed to sell for the amount that it had hoped to get at market. Of course, that was primarily due to variation 306.

We heard in this place the talk of getting \$100 million; it then dropped to \$90 million, then to \$80 million and then to \$70 million. We heard that they were trying to give it away at \$50 million and still no-one would take it because of the unreasonable demands put in place by variation 306.

I believe recommendation 23 of the estimates committee report is a stinging rebuke of this government. The recommendation states:

The Committee recommends that in regard to land release in the ACT that the ACT Government return to one third ... (LDA)/one third joint venture/one third private development.

It is interesting that we should have a committee which is half Liberal, half Labor, yet it can still deliver a recommendation such as that one-third, one-third, one-third should be returned. Therefore at least one member of that estimates committee, whether it be Ms Porter or Ms Berry, does not agree with the government's current land release strategy, and that is so for a very good reason.

The committee has called for the return of one-third, one-third, one-third because it delivers a better mix for the people of Canberra, and especially for the first homebuyers of Canberra. Given that property is one of the most competitive industries we have, we should be able to back these businesses to actually deliver the product that Canberrans want. There are plenty of private developers who could do a better job and a cheaper job than what the government is doing at present. However, they have to be given a chance.

I endorse recommendation 24 of the estimates committee report, which states:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government review land release in the ACT to ensure that greater housing affordability is achieved and a reasonable return to the Government from the sale of this asset, and report to the Assembly by the last sitting day of March 2015.

I believe this is a prudent recommendation and, if accepted, will provide a time at which the government will be forced to look objectively at their monopoly land supply arrangements.

I also commend to the Assembly recommendation 25, which states:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government review the application of the Lease Variation Charge with a view to achieving the development target of 50% greenfields and 50% urban renewal development.

This is a recommendation I will come back to in a later line item of this budget.

Recommendation 26 of the estimates committee report reads as follows:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government address extension of time issues by waiving fees for all pre-2010 commercial land purchases.

This, too, is something that I intend to come back to in a later line item in this budget debate. However, it certainly does have some relevance here in discussing the LDA as well, given, of course, that so many affected businesses bought land off the LDA with every intention of developing that land as quickly as possible. However, due to circumstances beyond their control they have been unable to develop that land and they are paying very high rates and very high land tax with no yield whatsoever on that land, due to the fact that they have not been in a position to start construction. What does this government do? Rather than provide incentives to actually get construction going, it puts another barrier, another hurdle, in the way to stop construction starting.

In conclusion, we need the property and construction sectors to be performing well if Canberra is to prosper. However, this is unlikely if the ACT government continue to totally control the supply of land. We call on the government to rethink their approach to land release and to trust the property and construction sectors to build our future.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (4.07): This is a budget that should concern all Canberrans because of its lack of direction, its huge hike in debt and the belief of the Treasurer that everything will eventually return to normal. This is a treasurer who has got his fingers crossed and lives in hope. The Treasurer's own document, page 42 of budget paper 3, says:

The temporary deficits over the next three years reflect the Government's investments in jobs and services.

I am not aware that deficits are temporary. There is a deficit or there is not a deficit, but it is a deficit. We have seen this Treasurer slowly push out the return to surplus year after year because he cannot achieve it because there is not a budget plan to make

it happen. There is no move from this government to self-sufficiency. There is no move from this government to genuinely diversify the ACT economy. The only move from this government is to put their hand deeper and deeper into the pockets of ACT residents, because that is all they know.

We only have to look at the taxation table on page 226 of budget paper 3 where we see payroll tax this year going up eight per cent, general rates going up 13 per cent, land tax going up 18 per cent. And so it goes on. Particularly, the fire and emergency services levy is going up 28 per cent. The only way out for this government, all they understand, is: if we take more, we can spend more. But they do not do a great deal to contribute to the wellbeing of the residents.

They obviously do not read their own charts on the cost of living and the impact of their budgets on Canberra families, because in all of these scenarios everybody gets hurt by this government. I suggest they do not even read their own charts. Look at, for instance, the sale of goods and services, page 238 of budget paper 3. Fees for regulatory services are up 20 per cent. The water abstraction charge is up six per cent. Parking fees are up 30 per cent. Patient fees are up 10 per cent. Sales are up seven per cent. And so it goes on.

This is a government addicted to revenue, and they will take it any way they can. You see that then in the other revenue table on page 245 where traffic infringement fines are going up 10 per cent; parking fines, a mammoth 32 per cent; and other fines are going up one per cent. So what you see is a government that are very good at collecting revenue, but they are perhaps less wise in what they do with it.

We now have the debacle of the payroll tax on genuine contractors. We find that the 1 July start went to 1 October, and I see in the government's response that it is now 1 January next year. This has been a debacle of implementation of tax reform, because this Treasurer cannot get it right. What they should do is put it off to 1 July next year and say, "All right, we will go out and we will have a proper consultation with the community," because clearly they had no idea of the effect. And we had the comment from the Treasurer during estimates that no, it was not the intention to affect take-home pays. That is what is happening. If there is an unintended consequence that you have not thought about, then you should go back and revisit.

I would ask Mr Rattenbury to go and read all the emails I know that his office has got—and I know a lot of them have come to me as a cc or directly to me with him cc-ed—where people are genuinely hurting because of this government's poor ability to deliver tax reform.

We will see it in the land tax hikes too, where the explanation for the reason for the changes in land tax was that the burden is being carried by single-dwelling block owners and therefore somehow the unit owners are getting away with not paying their fair share. But of course the unit owners do not have the amenity of owning a single block and having that space. They choose to live that way because it is cheaper, which of course brings us to all the internal contradictions in this budget. You have got a government that say they want to get greater density so that they can support their capital metro project; yet you have got a series of taxes now and impediments to the densification of the city.

This is a government without agenda. This is a government without a clear path forward for the ACT as a whole, and the problem for the ACT as a whole is that the ordinary folk suffer because of this government's mismanagement. As Mr Coe pointed out with capital metro, somebody will ultimately pay. You only have to look at the debacle of PPPs in New South Wales under the former Labor government where those costs came back to the residents. They never achieved in some of their tunnel projects the estimates that were put forward. They were made up to ensure that projects went ahead, and it is the public that pays.

We see the same process on the Gold Coast where the numbers were fudged to get the project over the line, and ultimately the taxpayers of Queensland will carry that burden. Let us not have that happen here, because it all ends up affecting the cost of living of the ordinary Canberra resident.

Look at the way that this government approaches so many things. Even since the tabling of the budget there have been announcements of things that are not in the budget. You would have thought the budget might survive at least a month or two before the government started announcing new initiatives, but it did not even do that.

The fear that I have is that they have in their capital provision account \$1.3 billion but they cannot or will not tell us how it will be spent. How can a group like the estimates committee actually do its job when the government will not allow it to do so? When you have \$1.3 billion and this government will not tell us on what projects it will be spent—and indeed, in the response to the estimates report, will not deliver things like cost-benefit analyses or total, final costs of projects—what confidence can we have in the processes that this government goes about?

Of course we need to get the best deal for the territory. But the government must come up with a mechanism to involve the Assembly and allow groups like the estimates committee or the public accounts committee, but ideally this place, to have a say in the approval of these expenditures, instead of coming back and saying, “We have signed some contracts; you have all signed up to it whether you like it or not.” That is not how it should work. There should be much greater clarity, and there should be a much clearer vision about where the government is taking us with these projects, rather than the emotional attachment of Mr Corbell to his train set and Mr Barr, apparently, to his stadium. These projects keep cropping up. But we are not any clearer on the detail.

As Mr Hanson raised on the brand new government office building, at a time when vacancies in the commercial sector are pushing 15 per cent in this city—and the minister is trained with some qualification in economics—when you move the market or you disturb the market in such a way as to ruin an already unstable market, and, let us face it, pushing 15 per cent is a very high vacancy rate, surely the purpose of the government's policies should be moving towards equilibrium so that the market operates and turns over in a reasonable way instead of distorting it by suddenly saying, “We are going to take the public servants out of every location that we can and find this magical location 10 minutes walk from the Assembly where we can put all the ACT public servants.”

There might be a master plan beyond that. Perhaps it is because the minister is now also the Minister for Housing, and Northbourne Avenue is in his scope. Add to the public housing on Northbourne Avenue that may or may not become vacant, Macarthur House and some of the other buildings that the government have an interest in on Northbourne Avenue, and perhaps they hope to reap some extra value there. But it is very hard to see from this document in particular that the government actually has an agenda or a plan.

You only need to look at the level of debt that just seems to grow. It is \$4.7 billion by the end of the budget outyears. You have to dig through some of the documents to actually find that figure. Indeed, when I asked officials what was the level of government debt at the end of the period, they actually had to take it on notice. No-one knew. And that concerns me. It means the controls are not there. One of the first questions cabinet should have asked was: at the end of the period, what is the debt? But clearly nobody did, because the Treasurer could not tell us and the officials could not tell us when we asked that question. They took it on notice.

We have this problem of debt going through the roof, as Mr Coe so eloquently pointed out this morning when we dealt with ACTEW. There is no plan to pay it back. So we have got temporary deficits, we have got a Treasurer with his fingers crossed and his eyes shut because it is going to return to normal—the glory days are returning, according to the Treasurer—and the debt will somehow magically be repaid or we will simply carry it because we have got the ability to pay the interest. (*Second speaking period taken.*) And that is the problem for the people of the ACT.

In government responses to things like the estimates report, we are constantly told, “It is in the budget documents.” If you cannot actually point it out in detail in an answer to a committee report, then you cannot do your job. You are not doing your job. The problem is that, as always, the people get to pay. I think that is the sadness of this.

Again, we go back to things like the lease variation charge and extension of time. Indeed, the lease variation charge is a failure as a tax. And yet again it does not achieve the intended result. The lease variation charge was to achieve \$17.6 million in the year just finished. It got to \$15.2 million. The budget for 2014-15 has it drop to \$14½ million. I think if members go back to when the charge was first put in place, for the current financial year something like \$26 million or \$28 million worth of revenue was expected from this magic tax.

Andrew Barr’s tax was going to have no impact on the market. It was the perfect tax. It was not going to affect development, was not going to affect rent, was not going to affect sale prices, and the government was going to reap a motza. The government has not reaped the motza. It has not come. It has affected sale prices. It is affecting densification and is affecting the way that this city operates. And it is another piece of failed tax reform from this government. It is the same with the extension of time fees. They got it wrong but they cannot say, “We have got it wrong and we will go back and review it.”

Again, the estimates recommendation was to review the application of some of these things. “No, we have already done that. We are not reopening that little Pandora’s box.” And then of course the changes to the land tax that the government proposes will make things even worse.

Look at this government in relation to where they see the economy. Again, as Mr Coe just said, this is a city where its property sector is incredibly important as we still grow and become a city with a lot of potential. But there are now something like 10 development fronts this government believe are necessary to fuel its insatiable hunger for revenue from the land and property sector because they have not properly diversified the ACT economy.

We have got Gungahlin, Molonglo, city to the lake, the city plan, the city to Gungahlin corridor. Riverview is coming online. There is talk of the next stages of Kingston foreshore. There is, of course, the Yarralumla brickworks. Throw into it possibly going across the Murrumbidgee at Tuggeranong. We have got Lawson and Moncrieff about to come on line. And then, of course, throw in diversification. It is well and good to have all these plans, but then you have got to run a light rail down Northbourne Avenue that will steal all the jobs from these other areas because they will shift there.

What happens? You get a dysfunctional city. And if we have got a dysfunctional city, we have got problems. Forget about the city-state notion of the ACT; we are simply a city. The city is our home; it is our future; it is our economy. And if we do not make it work, it will be a very poor home. It will fail as an economy and we will not have a future. We need to be city builders if we are to look after the people of the ACT properly.

There is no city building plan in this document. I simply again refer to Mr Corbell’s failed plan from eight years ago—16 key initiatives, not one of which went even close to starting, let alone completion. And yet all we get from the government is, “The detail is in the document.” The detail is not in the document. The temporary deficits are in the document, which is the denial by the Treasurer of the true state of what is happening here. We have a denial from those opposite of the true potential of the private sector in the ACT. We have got their document where they finally use the diversification word but it is a rehash, a rebrand, a rename, a reorganisation or a refund of things that were primarily there or had been there and had been canned by this government. So that is the dilemma of this budget.

When we look at property vacancy rates and the effect that the great, big government office building will have, this is a government that has an obligation to all of its citizens, including those who invest in the property market in the ACT, to get it right, not to cut a deal with the unions and perhaps the union super fund so that they can have a building of their own in the city with a long-term revenue stream courtesy of the ACT taxpayer. I think we have got to get the balance there. Of course we want new development and we want the growth in the city to occur but you just cannot shift the point from one side of the city to another and back again. It was on the east side. Then it was the west side. Then it was city to the lake. Now it is City Hill. Now it is

along the corridor to Gungahlin. Where are the people coming from? Where are the jobs that they will be employed in so that they can pay for the high cost of living that this government imposes on this city?

This city is our future. We must be city builders. You cannot keep stretching the city from one side to the other. We have currently got the doughnut ring that is Civic, with the hollow still being empty. And the problem with doughnuts is that if you stretch them, they break. It is well and good to have plans like city to the lake with extraordinary costs to drop Parkes Way, but where is the money coming from? And when will it begin? That is the problem. There are many areas now in this line in the revised budget statement. It has gone from, I think, \$80 million to about \$500 million.

The other area, of course, that is covered by this line and that is in my portfolio responsibility is the arts. It is interesting that all members of the committee were quite hopeful that the government might come back and amend this budget, including, for instance, the Belconnen Arts Centre. The Belconnen Arts Centre is ready to go, but the government are holding off that money for city to the lake, which is not ready to go. They are doing some more planning. There is capital metro, which is not ready to go, and the new subacute hospital, which is not ready to go. But for a couple of million dollars, the people of Belconnen could have what we have in Tuggeranong—their own arts centre. And for a couple of million dollars beyond that, through the TAMS portfolio, the work could be done to do the foreshore of the lake there at Belconnen.

It is a good example of how this government gets it so wrong. Here is something that I think every member in the place agrees should occur. Here is something the community is desperate for. Belconnen does not have the town hall facility that this would provide. The plans are ready to go. Everybody seems to want it, and yet it does not get funding. And instead of talking about real things that could occur today—I understand the DA could be tabled at any time or placed with ACTPLA at any time—we have got the Treasurer continuing to return to the stadium and we have got Mr Corbell continuing to return to capital metro. But the people of Belconnen just want an arts centre. It is not a lot in the scheme of things in the capital provision account for that to be funded. It would be great to see the Treasurer come back and move an amendment to include that in this budget, because everyone wants it. It is ready to go, and it builds the community. It builds the community of Belconnen. And it would be a great thing to do.

There are a number of other recommendations in the document about the arts and the value of the arts. On one hand we heard from many groups about mental health issues in children as young as primary school-aged students. And one of the ways to ameliorate the impact of mental health is through the arts. Alain de Botton has written a book called *Art as Therapy*. Art is a great healer. We asked for an arts officer to be embedded in the education department to assist with the promotion of the arts in education, and the answer was, “No, we have adequate skills already.” And yet you hear from Belconnen community arts, you hear from people like the Childers Group, that this would be of invaluable benefit to the community and bidding our city.

There are other recommendations the government have not answered. It must be a pretty good report because they only disagreed with 12. Forty-two were agreed, 13 were agreed in principle, 11 were part agreed and 60 were noted. So they have noted these things and said, "That is for a future budget." In fact, they have disagreed with it. And they should have had the courage to say they disagreed with it, but they did not. Again, that is the problem with the lack of leadership in this budget.

There is no vision. There is no plan. There is contradiction after contradiction. There is turmoil in the market as a consequence of what this government has done and will do. As a consequence, we have mounting debt, and it is all paid for through the taxpayer who sees year after year their cost of living going up because this government has been here too long, is out of touch and does not understand how the real people of the ACT live, as evidenced by this budget.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (4.28): I am continuing with the economic development portfolio aspect and I am talking about the digital Canberra action plan. It will be of no surprise to anyone that, as usual, it is light on detail. With a total cost of this initiative currently budgeted at \$3.688 million, this aspirational plan reflects a capital provision of \$660,000 for the purchase of infrastructure relating to the Garema Place digital space. This includes the purchase of a digital screen, but what about other issues related to it? What about ongoing maintenance? Again, where is the detail? What about vandalism? This government has enough problems keeping tabs on the little men sculpture in Civic. What security features will be in place to ensure that this screen is not damaged in any way?

The "Don't worry, we've got it covered" motto the government seems to run with does not cut it anymore. You will find no argument from anyone in this place that investing in our digital economy is fundamentally important in ensuring the growth of business, education, employment, health and research. But through lack of detail, the question to be asked is: does the digital Canberra action plan contribute to any of this growth?

Moving on to iConnect, when asked through the estimates process when this platform is likely to be delivered, the response I received from the Chief Minister was as follows:

There will be an iterative rollout of the iConnect platform over the next four years focusing on a series of technology-based investments, to ensure interoperability across various existing and planned ICT systems, improving internal process and enhancing the service experience for the community.

With an answer as full of waffle as that to a simple, straightforward question, you can understand Canberrans are sceptical at best about the delivery of services, their quality and the timeliness with which they will receive them. The Chief Minister went on to say that savings are to be achieved through reduction in the time involved in processing digital transactions in comparison to paper-based transactions, reduced postage, packaging and materials, rework in correcting data errors as data can be validated, and productivity increases. Again, deciphering the information I received, one can only assume that this is code for, "Well, we'll meet our target of productivity increases and, yes, there will be a reduction in staff as a result. Just trust us."

This government time and time again talks about transparency and the assurance that they present an open and frank government, yet they have failed to deliver on the most basic of questions. According to this government we should trust them to deliver on budget and we should trust them to deliver on time. However, the reality is that we cannot trust them based on their record to date. We have seen time and time again their failure to deliver—budgets blown out and Canberrans left wondering where it all went wrong because the glossy brochure looked so good and promised them the world.

With the ACT government investing so much of taxpayer dollars into ICT initiatives, it is our responsibility to demand the detail. It is our responsibility to keep the government accountable for getting value for the money invested and to deliver quality service to all Canberrans. It is the government's responsibility to stop their obfuscation. It is high time for this government to start delivering more than just glossy brochures to this community.

Moving on to Shared Services ICT, the main thing for this organisation this year is a drive to focus on cost reduction whilst increasing productivity across the government. Mr Barr made comment that a lot of work will be coming out of these initiatives and this will, therefore, generate jobs. But upon closer inspection, the drive for increased productivity will inevitably bring with it a reduction in jobs to an IT sector with a significant number of contractors already affected by this Labor government's ill-informed new payroll tax changes.

The government's investment of \$16.5 million in workplace systems to improve efficiency and boost productivity provides a significant number of projects to increase the automation of services within government. However, yet again, the detail is light on. Shared Services ICT is yet another area where it is inherently difficult to drill down into the key, crucial information. We have a government that spruiks the ideology of transparency, yet this is another aspect of where they fail to deliver.

ITUS produced a report in June on the state of IT, ranking the best and the worst of IT in Australia's states and territories. The only jurisdiction that was not listed was the ACT. Why was the ACT not listed? Because, according to ITUS, there was not enough information on this government's options to enable comparisons with other states and territories. It should be noted that even Tasmania was listed. If ITUS is unable to source enough information, what hope does the general public have? Again, where is the transparent, open government that Ms Gallagher and her ministers promise?

Let us move on to the government ICT sustainability project of desktop, computer and printer management. Let me make this very clear: this project is budgeted at a cost of \$249,000 with predicted savings of only \$378,000 over the three years from 2015 to 2016. Here we have a project created solely to appease the Greens amongst us, or should I say the self-proclaimed third-party insurance for the government as opposed to the way the Greens party was selling itself originally as the third-party insurance for the community. I think we can all safely assume that, like most stories this budget tells, the cost will come in above \$249,000 and the savings will come in below \$378,000 for an initiative that does not target the physical refresh of efficient assets

but addresses only automated energy settings and user behaviour. We can only assume from the limited information we have received that whilst this government talks about investing in a more efficient government the lack of detail provided proves otherwise.

Moving on to the portfolio of sport and recreation, it has always been a difficult area to examine in the estimates process. It always appears to be a second-tier issue and little time is allocated to discussion of sports-related issues. Yet sport is something that is clearly identified in the everyday lives of Canberrans. In recent years, the now former Minister for Sport and Recreation has been pleased to herald his successes at the national and international sports levels. We have spent millions of dollars upgrading Manuka Oval to get into international one-day cricket matches, and we have recently heard of the prospect of international tennis matches coming to an upgraded Lyneham tennis facility. Less popular, I suspect, is the money being directed to six new, purpose-built beach volleyball courts, apparently in response to the huge and growing demand for the sport in Canberra. I will be very interested to see that demand and how big the growth is, Mr Barr.

Given the overworked ovals and rundown courts in all codes of football, hockey, baseball, softball, little athletics and netball, not to mention the state of some of our swimming pools and local tennis courts, I know many sports followers are somewhat bemused and angry about the need for Canberra to have international standard beach volleyball courts as opposed to services that so drastically need upgrade within our community. Perhaps it is all part of a secret plan the Treasurer is hatching to pitch for the Olympics in a decade's time. Anything is possible with you, Mr Barr.

I welcome the appointment of Mr Rattenbury to the sports portfolio. I am hopeful with his interest in local sports that we may start to have more of a local focus on sports than we have previously seen in this place. As I have laboured the point in this place and now direct it to our Greens sports minister, I remain concerned about the use of diesel line markings on our sports grounds. I get approached about it on a regular basis and I would be surprised if those same people had not at some stage made a formal complaint to this government.

I note the recommendation in the estimates committee report for the government to detail any cost of using diesel line markings on ACT ovals, including the restoration of damage caused by its use. It is not just physical damage to users of local grounds as a result of the indents and rutting but also the environmental damage caused by the diesel. (*Second speaking period taken.*) I have heard the arguments about cost effectiveness vis-a-vis paint, but when local grounds and local councils all around New South Wales no longer use diesel, one has to ask why they can afford it and see it as important when the ACT government does not.

There are always ongoing arguments about local sports grounds and the substandard facilities local sports clubs are required to use and pay for. I know last year the directorate's quick grab for increased hire rates was met with widespread criticism, and it was pleasing to see the minister back down. I trust that future ground hire fee increases are preceded by appropriate consultation from the new minister for sport. It is difficult to explain to a local sports club that has to run sausage sizzles and sell

chips and soft drinks at their local matches to keep the fees at an affordable level why they have to pay more for their grounds that have not had upgrades in years when money appears to be so freely available for seating and improvements at Manuka Oval or further developments such as the \$750,000 for beach volleyball.

We need to be mindful that Canberra has unique opportunities for sport that need to be protected and developed, and not just in what might be called mainstream sports like football or tennis but in a range of other popular local activities. For example, in equestrian sports we have the makings of an international-class facility here. We have enthusiastic show jumping, dressage and eventing clubs whose members compete regularly at national and, in some cases, international level. With the right investments, we could attract major international equestrian events that would also drive tourism. So, too, with motocross and mountain biking. And if we could only get our lakes into a more reliable condition, we could also run regular major rowing and dragon boating regattas. Again, all that might feed into the Treasurer's Olympic plan.

Canberra prides itself on high participation in recreation and sporting activities. We need to ensure we protect our recreational space and keep a sensible balance. We must keep our Olympic dreams, by all means, Mr Barr, but ensure that we have not forgotten local sports and local clubs that are the breeding grounds for tomorrow's sports stars.

MRS JONES (Molonglo) (4.40): I am pleased to add my voice to the debate on the budget, particularly in the area of Treasury taxation. Whilst exploring this budget during estimates, I put to the Treasurer a real situation of a real family who lives in Spence. After tax, the father of that family brings home \$65,000 a year. He is a teacher. They spend \$14,380 per year on transport costs with one car and bus use. They spend \$34,840 on housing—over half their income to keep a roof over their heads. They have worked to save and buy their own home—and it is a small home—to raise their children and have an asset for their future housing security. They are a responsible couple, the kind of Canberrans the government should be getting behind, nurturing, and looking forward to being stronger citizens in the future.

They have taken responsibility for their own future. They do not expect anyone else, including the government, to look after them. They are standing on their own two feet. But Mr Barr is tugging at the rug under their feet. They spend \$15,000 a year on food, \$1,800 on communications for a phone and internet, \$5,250 on medical expenses—health insurance, doctors' visits, prescriptions et cetera—and \$2,000 for unexpected expenses or entertainment. They do not go on holidays. They do not have Foxtel. Their kids do not play sports and they attend a public school.

They are not complaining; they are getting by. But what are they getting for their increase of 10 or 13 per cent in their rates this year? If an insurance company increased the premiums by 10 per cent in one year, this family, along with everyone else, would naturally find another supplier. However, the Treasurer knows here in the ACT he has a captive market. The government holds a monopoly on supply of municipal services, health, education and policing. What is this family and other hardworking families to do? They currently live on minus \$57 a year. Add 10 per cent to their rates—which takes it from \$1,400 to \$1,540—and that puts them \$197 per

year in the red. Some other part of the family budget is going to have to suffer. This family has already paid stamp duty when they purchased their home, a figure of around \$15,000. They are now being asked to pay over and over again the same figure.

When confronted with the reality this family lives with, the Treasurer's disastrous response was, "Get a union and get a pay rise." Mr Barr said they will have to get three per cent wage increases each year to survive his rates hikes. He intends to take that and some more. Mr Barr believes unions argue for a wage increase in line with WPI in order that he can take that additional money to spend on what he considers important. Does he think that when employees sit down and see the outcome of their wage negotiations, they think, "Fantastic, I'll be able to pay more tax"? Or does he think maybe they think there is some hope on the horizon for an improved life for their families? Maybe, finally, they will be able to buy their child a bike or send their child to soccer or replace a leaking fridge or buy a swing set for the backyard? The government is basically saying to these people, "Have no hope, because we'll take whatever increases you get. What's more, you should be grateful for what you get from this government."

Let us talk about this year's wage negotiations. Public servants all over Canberra have been offered by this government a 1.5 per cent pay increase, I believe. If, as Minister Barr says, household income will grow at three per cent per annum, those households are already 1.5 per cent behind and will still have to pay the 10 per cent increase in rates. How will they be able to afford it?

In his answer to me at estimates, Mr Barr said he could only guarantee that the family will be able to continue to afford to live in the ACT on one income:

... provided that the family's income continues to rise in line with the average wage price index, which I think is a reasonable thing to expect.

It seems that this is not a reasonable thing to expect in wage negotiations with Minister Barr making the wage offers. The federal public service, a leaked report tells us, is looking at a possible 0.88 per cent pay increase, so I am not sure how those families are supposed to cope.

Mr Barr: Well, you might want to have a word with Eric Abetz about that.

MRS JONES: I stand up for public servants in Canberra, thanks very much, Minister Barr. Minister Barr also said:

I am hoping that in that particular household the worker is a union member, and has a strong union representing them to increase their share of the wage share.

I told Minister Barr that I will let this hardworking family know that that was his advice. He went on to say:

It would be very sensible advice to be a union member and be able to argue for wage increases each year to meet the cost of living.

Maybe the workers of the ACT will need to invite the waterfront workers union to represent them in order to survive Minister Barr's tax grabs.

What do households get for their additional 10 per cent in rates? Do they get a new bin? Do they get a hard-waste collection? Nothing. That is right—there is going to be a tram. Whatever wage increases people get Minister Barr has guaranteed he will claw back in increased taxes. Never mind that the cost of living will keep going up and that this family will end up further in the red and will not be able to continue paying for the basics of life. I remind the government that they are not the worst-off family in Canberra; they are a professional couple but they are on one income at the moment. There are families who are much worse off than them.

Will there be a flow-on effect? Will more families go into rentals? Will the rental market be squeezed with an 18 per cent increase in land tax? Will mum and dad investors sell up, leaving us with fewer rental properties? Will we see then an increase for demand in government housing? What is the plan for this from the government?

I know Minister Barr is big on government provision, but wage increases are not just about feeding government provision and Minister Barr's addiction to increasing taxes. I appeal to the minister to open his eyes and spend some more time pondering the lot of good people—young couples, retirees and pensioners—stop the squeeze, be reasonable and stop the tax hikes that are hurting people who are working so hard for our future through their children.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (4.47): I rise to speak briefly about the impact that this budget is going to have not just on ACT families but also on the ACT business sector. We have heard from Mrs Jones and my other colleagues about the impact increases to rates and land tax, changes to payroll tax charges and increases in utilities such as electricity, gas and water are having on the family household budget and the bottom line. When the disposable income of a family is diminished as a result of increased government taxes, charges and levies, the free income left for them to support the local business community is severely diminished. That impact flows on wide and far within our community and within our economy. When families stop supporting the local newsagent, the local butcher, the local florist or the local takeaway restaurant, those businesses are forced to make cuts themselves. Those cuts often result in the losses of more jobs in our community. Those job losses affect families with lesser income, and so the cycle continues. Businesses continue to struggle and suffer in this community.

The adage that if you are struggling to meet the increased cost of living in the ACT, you should join a union and get a wage increase is really cold comfort for someone that has put on the line their home and all their family assets—someone who has taken the risk to invest in this community and to employ people, and who often goes weeks on end without drawing an income themselves from a business, simply because they are more concerned about making sure that their staff and their suppliers are paid on time. Businesses that take these risks often run at very low profit margins. These business owners obviously take the risk and bear the brunt of a declining economy and a tightening economy, as we currently are experiencing here in the territory.

The job of the ACT government is to not only foster the businesses that we have existing here in the ACT but also develop and attract new investment. When it comes

to the supporting of existing businesses and trying to also encourage investment, I am going to refer to an issue that I have raised here in the Assembly before, relating to a jeweller who operates out of Braddon who purchased their own business premise but also on top of that had the foresight to purchase an additional car parking space. They as a business owner made the additional investment to buy a car parking space in Braddon because they understand the challenges of car parking in the Braddon area and realise that, as a service, to provide convenience to their customers, there would be a benefit to having an additional car parking space available through the day during business hours.

The cost of a car parking space on its own in the city area is about \$20,000. When you look at the fees on top of that that this business owner is facing just in government charges and also sewerage charges, you see that investment in this city simply is not stacking up. With this example, you have got \$1,900 a year in rates; about \$608 in water charges which are now being levied because it is separately titled and united; and, in addition, if you borrow the money to buy the car parking space, \$1,000. To put that on a per week basis, you are looking at \$67.50 per week, just in fees, charges and interest, to own a car parking space in the ACT. It is almost comparable to the cost of paid parking. Where, Treasurer, is the incentive to invest in the ACT when these are the kinds of charges and levies that a business faces on a regular basis?

Another story that I will draw on as an example for this debate is the power kart complex that has just opened up in Fyshwick. This is a conglomeration of several business owners in the ACT putting their money where their mouth is, investing in the Canberra economy, trying to attract a new business market through tourism and offering an entertainment service that is currently not available in the ACT. These individuals went through it, did their due diligence, located a site and did all their business planning as a responsible operator would. They figured that six to eight months to set up, do the fit-out and be operational was a reasonable expectation.

As it turns out, failure in government policy, particularly in the planning area, where a certificate of occupancy failed to be issued some years ago on an addition to the premises that they have leased, led to delays of almost 18 months before they were able to open their doors and become operational—still with much of the fit-out internally to be completed simply because of the exorbitant rectification work that needed to be done because of an oversight in issuing a certificate of occupancy, causing the need for the building to be updated and brought up to current standards.

When I spoke to the people that are responsible for making this investment and opening this business, they simply said that if they were not residents of the ACT and did not believe in the economy because they lived here, they would have taken their money elsewhere and invested interstate. If that is the attitude of locals trying to improve investment, trying to grow and develop our economy, what hope do we have of attracting national or international investment into this city?

This budget has failed to address the ongoing concern in the business community. It has failed to foster the right business environment. There are increasing costs to operate here and there is increasing red tape. For every piece that is repealed, several pieces replace it. It is simply prohibitive for new businesses to establish, to open their doors and to employ Canberrans.

It is a travesty that we have failed to diversify the economy here locally. I know I am going to sound like my colleague Mr Smyth in saying that, but he has been harping on about it for years and he is correct. We are still too reliant on federal public service employment. More incentive and more opportunity need to be extended to broaden the small business base in this territory. Until such time as that occurs, we are going to be held ransom to the movements in federal politics.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Health, Minister for Higher Education and Minister for Regional Development) (4.54): I welcome the opportunity to speak on this important part of the budget debate. Budgets are always challenging documents to put together. You have to weigh up the investments you have to make, the additional expenditure that is urgent and required in a government that focuses very much on service delivery, along with things that you would like to do, commitments you have made to the people of Canberra, whether it be through election commitments or other decisions that have been taken, and balance them up with the resources available to deliver those at a time when the city is growing and unique challenges are being faced by the ACT economy.

This budget was a challenging one to put together. We have heard the Treasurer make comments on that. But the fundamentals of the decisions which underpin this budget are the right direction for Canberra. The budget does set out a vision that we have heard pooh-poohed by those opposite in the debate so far today. The vision is clearly there. We do have a desire to see Canberra grow and change and become an even better city to live in. We know that we are one of the world's most liveable cities.

We have got a lot to be proud of already, but we want to see Canberra continue to be ranked as one of the most liveable cities in the world. That means we need to make continued investments to ensure that that is the case. These go to some of the signature projects which are outlined in this budget, whether they be capital metro, some of the changes we would like to see along the Northbourne corridor, some of the works that need to be done in the growing greenfield suburbs on the northern fringe of Canberra and the central parts of Canberra or some of the decisions we have taken to ensure that we see infill in an appropriate way across the city. It goes to projects like city to the lake and support that we are providing through the budget for projects like the Australia forum, when we have seen the commonwealth government completely leave the field.

People look to the ACT government for leadership. They wanted to see stability but progress in the 2014-15 ACT budget, and that is exactly what they got. Let us remember that this budget was finalised in the weeks following a pretty savage commonwealth budget in terms of the impact that it had on Canberra. Not only did we lose significant amounts of money that go to Canberra's number one priority, which is health—and we had to rally around and look at how we were going to deal with that—but we saw Canberra's economy take a hit in terms of confidence, with some of the decisions that the commonwealth made about job losses. Yet because our budget is in the strong position that it is in, we were able to ensure that we continued with our growth funding of health, which does remain Canberra's number one priority. We were able to ensure that our commitments around education continue—that we invest in our city's next generation of citizens that are coming up and ensure that they have a quality education regardless of what school they attend.

We also saw major projects like the University of Canberra public hospital go to the next stage of commitments. We saw, importantly, the next stage of tax reform. I know those opposite find it very easy to start their campaign on anti-tax reform—anti anything the government does actually. Anti-tax reform, importantly, is seeing cuts to stamp duty to make sure that people who want to own a home are not sluggish with one of the most inefficient taxes that exist around the country. Here we are leading the way on that important reform. There are payroll tax cuts to make sure that we remain an attractive place for people to come and do business. We are seeing new savings put in place for people who want to downsize, who want to move out of their house, who have reached the age where downsizing becomes a real option for them. This budget helps them with that decision.

We have also made commitments around new schools. There is the work on the Woden bus interchange and a new CIT campus in Tuggeranong, which will be a fantastic addition to services for people living in the south of Canberra. Everywhere you look, right across the city, there is well thought through, targeted spending, making sure we are looking after our assets, improving our assets, and all the time keeping an eye on where we want to go as a city of the future.

Despite what people would have heard said opposite, let me say that if anyone reads the *Hansard* of this budget in years to come—I would be surprised, but if they did—I can assure them that this budget does exactly what Canberra needs at this point in time: provide a vision, a hope, a plan, to use words that Mr Smyth always barks back at us, about what we would like to see.

Mr Coe: A tram.

MS GALLAGHER: Yes, it does include light rail. Mr Coe does another laugh on that, but yes, it includes a modern public transport system that is worthy of the nation's capital. It will change the entrance to Canberra and ensure we are dealing with some of the congestion issues on the most heavily congested road in Canberra. We are starting where we need to start, in Gungahlin. We are doing the master plan to make sure that future light rail stages are dealt with properly when those decisions need to be taken. We do not apologise for that one little bit. Yes, it is an important city-building project, one that will generate jobs, change the look of the city and deliver a modern public transport system that is worthy of a city of our size. Many people support us with that vision, Mr Coe, despite your best efforts to undermine it.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: Again, I hear you use the words “push-polling”, as you did this morning. I am sure you would be a little less easy with that phrase outside this chamber.

Opposition members interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: If you are able to yell it across the chamber numerous times, you are obviously able to yell it in the Assembly grounds, the gardens. I do not think you would be so willing then.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Dr Bourke): Chief Minister, please address your comments to the chair.

MS GALLAGHER: It is a reputable local company that has undertaken that research for the government, and we have released that research, just as we will release a whole range of information about capital metro in the months ahead. That project stands on its own, and I think it is incumbent upon us to continue to talk with the community about the benefits that that project will bring.

In terms of the work that Chief Minister's does as part of this line item within the budget, as the central agency, under the administration changes which came in on 6 July, it does pull into this directorate functions within the former economic development directorate, Treasury and commerce and works directorate. It is a very large directorate with those changes in mind. It has an important job in terms of Chief Minister's, with study Canberra, regional development, and some of the work we are doing inside the public service to improve performance, accountability, transparency and openness. They are all managed within this directorate.

Canberrans are extremely well served by the ACT public service. This budget looks to manage the growth in public sector numbers, so it is cautious there. We will see growth in some agencies and reductions in others. But the commitment which we made to the people of Canberra in the election remains—that, overall, we would see the size of the public service remain the same. That is an important commitment when we have another large employer in town shedding jobs.

I commend this budget. I commend the work of the Treasurer and the Treasury in putting it together in very difficult circumstances. It balances the things we have to do with the things we have committed to and the things that we had not seen coming that we need to respond to, and it maps out a vision for the future.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Housing and Minister for Tourism and Events) (5.04): I thank the Chief Minister for her comments in support of the budget, the detailed work that underpins the budget strategy and the government's focus on ensuring that the ACT economy continues to grow during these difficult times. As I said, I will take the opportunity of speaking multiple times during this debate, but I thought now would be a good opportunity to address some of the sillier comments that have come in the last couple of hours.

Let me start with Mr Doszpot. Can I categorically rule out, for Mr Doszpot's benefit, that the ACT government will be supporting an Olympic bid for the city of Canberra. I can confidently rule that one out at this point.

Mrs Jones, I advise you, for the benefit of your future contributions, that the ACT government's pay offer to staff was three per cent paid in two 1.5 per cent instalments, and there was a \$2,090 first-year payment—depending on where in the public service pay scale you were, more than that for lower income ACT public service staff.

Mr Wall raised a question in relation to strata title car parks in Braddon. I can advise Mr Wall that the fixed commercial rates in relation to strata titled car parks do not apply, so in the example he used he needs to deduct nearly \$2,000 from the costs associated with the car park arrangements. I think he will find that significantly changes the nature of the analysis that he put forward.

To Mr Smyth, I say two things. I think you eat doughnuts; you do not stretch them. And in relation to vacancy rates in the commercial property sector, now is the best time to be approaching the market, because there are going to be a large number of property owners interested in new tenants. We are going to get a very good rate and a very good response from the market. As the Property Council have indicated, they are very supportive of this process, because it will enable competition and it will ensure that the government is able to access accommodation at a very reasonable rate. And it is an opportunity for us: if this process is effective and the market is as desperate for new tenants as we are hearing, we may well save money by moving out of more expensive accommodation into cheaper accommodation now because of the conditions of the market. So now is the perfect time to be approaching it. We have gone to the market with a variety of options—with adaptive re-use, a new build or being a major tenant for one of the developments that are already in the pipeline. All of those opportunities are there, and we look forward to a very robust response from the market, similar to what we achieved in Gungahlin.

Mr Coe is concerned that development is stifled in the city. Mr Smyth, a few moments later, said: “No; there’s too much development. There are too many development fronts. Too much is going on.” Then both of them seemed to suggest that, with too much going on—it seemed to be entirely incongruous—there was Senator Seselja’s suggestion that what we need is another development front, west of the Tuggeranong town centre.

The final observation to make at this point in the debate is this: could the Liberal Party please get on one side of the debate or the other in relation to Tuggeranong. Do we need more development fronts Senator Seselja style or are we opposing them Brendan Smyth style? Which member for Tuggeranong do we believe? Have we got too many development fronts, Mr Smyth, or not enough, Senator Seselja? Sort yourselves out. Come back to us with a position.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR BARR: You know you have upset them when they start responding, Mr Assistant Speaker. You know you get under their skin when they start responding. That is what we have seen. We have seen *Star Wars*, we have seen Olympics, we have seen doughnuts, we have seen incorrect government pay offers and we have seen a misunderstanding of how tax applies. Then we have got absolute confusion within the Liberal Party over how many development fronts we should have in the city. On one hand, too much is going on; on another, there is not enough and everything is being stifled. It is just a ball of confusion on that side of the chamber. That is what you get when you get five or six different people pushing in disparate directions, all with their own pet projects, pursuing the classic individualist Liberal position that it is about only themselves and no-one else.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Corrective Services, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for Sport and Recreation) (5.09): I rise to speak briefly in my capacity as Minister for Sport and Recreation. I thank Mr Doszpot for his comments and his welcoming remarks. I am certainly very pleased to have taken on this portfolio. Whilst I obviously was not involved in the development of the budget this year, I will speak briefly to some of the comments that were made in the debate.

Certainly for my own part, I think that placing a strong emphasis on community sport will be a hallmark of the role I intend to play in my capacity as the minister for sport. I think that having a strong community sports sector serves many purposes. It obviously builds community. It provides individual benefits for people through having a sense of belonging, through wellbeing, through both physical health and mental health, and I think it simply is such an integral part of our community that the government have a clear role in ensuring that we facilitate community sport as effectively as we possibly can.

There are a number of issues in the budget which are a matter of record now, but I think we have seen some good initiatives. I am particularly pleased that the Gungahlin Leisure Centre has finally opened. The reports I have heard from people who have already been out there and used the facility are that it is extremely good. It is so far quite uncrowded. I think it is a bit of a hidden gem at this stage compared to, say, the popularity of Civic pool, but it is a facility that will be very popular, I hear. The quality of it is very good.

It is clear that swimming is a great sporting activity for people to get involved in. The development of new facilities such as the new water play park for the Tuggeranong Lakeside Leisure Centre, which has funding in the budget, will be another one that will enhance the recognition of our pools, hopefully draw more people to them, and perhaps see them get involved in other activities beyond the play park, whether it is their children joining a swimming squad, getting involved in water polo or simply doing a bit of recreational swimming.

Members interjecting—

MR RATTENBURY: There are all sorts of comments being thrown across the chamber. If members want to come and ask me about matters, I am more than happy, but I cannot actually hear when you all shout at me at once. It is quite difficult to make it out across the chamber.

We have of course just seen the move forward on the Lyneham facilities, where Tennis ACT, in partnership with Tennis Australia and the Next Generation Health and Racquet Clubs group, have come up with a development that is going to see a significant upgrading of those facilities. For tennis fans that will be a great facility, in terms of not only the possibility of drawing some higher profile events to the ACT—we have seen two of those announced already, in partnership with Tennis Australia, so we will see that higher level—but the fact that every single day of the year there will be better tennis facilities available for Canberrans to use.

That whole Lyneham precinct, Southwell Park, is an incredible sports hub now. I was out there watching a game with Hockey ACT the weekend before last. I know Mr Doszpot was there on the same day. It was an important fundraising occasion for breast cancer awareness and research. But if you think about that precinct, it is an incredible hub and it is continuing to be improved.

Just turning to a few of the specific issues raised during the debate, I am aware of the diesel line markings issue, and I know that Mr Doszpot has raised this over a period. In light of that, it is a question that I have asked the directorate about already in the time that I have had the portfolio, and I have said, “Well, give me some more background on this issue.”

I have certainly been out and chatted to some of the staff who actually work on the sportsgrounds. They are convinced that diesel line markings are the best approach, for a range of reasons which I will touch on briefly, the essence being that they provide a more permanent solution. The various painted markings have the potential to be removed very quickly, particularly if there is heavy rainfall. If we had a significant rainfall event right across Canberra and all the markings were washed away, it would not necessarily be possible to get them all done again in time for a round of weekend sports fixtures.

That is one of the very practical issues that sit there. Certainly there is work that goes on to ensure that the lines do not become too deep. There was some reference to that in the estimates response from the government today. Each spring there is renovation of pitches right across the city, and part of that is ensuring that there are not deep holes being formed where the lines are being marked.

That said, given Mr Doszpot’s considerable interest in it—I have been meaning to speak to Mr Doszpot about this, but I will mention it now that the issue has come up in the chamber—I am more than happy to arrange a site visit at one of the TAMS depots where Mr Doszpot can have a chat with some of the staff who work on this on a day-to-day basis. Perhaps we can both go along and thrash the issue out in a little bit more detail.

When it comes to higher fees, I note that Mr Doszpot was commenting on last year’s decision, but it certainly has struck me that one of the issues that we face is that, like many of these government facilities, the fees paid for the hire of sportsgrounds is significantly below the cost to government of maintaining the facilities, and I think that this is an issue—

Mr Coe: Are you going to apply the principle to ACTION buses as well?

MR RATTENBURY: Well, it is an issue right across the city in a range of services, including public transport, where the government do provide a subsidy. Now that does not mean that the government should not seek to get a reasonable return. Just as we have seen some increases in ACTION bus fares in order to reach some benchmarks around fare box revenue, it is not unreasonable for the government to seek to recoup a reasonable level of return from the community to assist with the upkeep of the ovals and ensure there is good revenue to maintain a high standard.

When we look at some of these fees, it is currently \$5 an hour for junior sports to hire an oval, and for an entire team for an hour the individual contribution, I think, is quite low. We do need to try and carefully find that balance between making sure that we get the revenue to keep those facilities up to a higher standard and ensuring that access to support remains affordable for families across the city.

I am intrigued, coming new to the portfolio, by the discussion about beach volleyball. It is unclear to me—again, this might be a conversation I need to have with Mr Doszpot offline—why Mr Doszpot picked that up as an objectionable sports facility. I actually agree with Mr Doszpot's comments about how we need to make sure that some of the less mainstream sports also get access to resources and get a moment in the sunshine, so to speak, in terms of support from government. I think that is quite true.

There is a dominance of particular football codes in the way money is disbursed. We need to look right across all sports because we need people to be involved in sport and recreation. For some people that is not going to be some of the more traditional sports, so it is important to make sure that there are good facilities and a good recognition of some new and emerging sports or just less mainstream sports.

So I am interested in the argument around beach volleyball, and I have looked at this information since taking on the portfolio. There is a good, healthy number of people enrolled in beach volleyball clubs in the ACT. The sport came to the government, seeking to upgrade their facilities. There was an opportunity to move forward there, and the government has co-invested with the volleyball association here in the territory. That is one of those less mainstream sports the government has actually got behind. I am more than happy to have a further discussion about why that one is perhaps seemingly less meritorious than some of the other less mainstream sports.

I certainly agree that we need to do a lot of work on our lakes to ensure that they remain available as a sports facility and, for that matter, a recreation facility. The lakes provide a huge number of opportunities for a huge number of people. The state of the lakes has been a source of considerable frustration for me, as members will know, for quite a few years. I am very pleased with the Assembly's support of my original motion back in 2011 to have the commissioner for the environment look at the state of the lakes and to provide a good, clear pathway forward.

We have now got the money from the commonwealth to help us support the ACT in making considerable investments in improving the quality of our waterways. I think we need to be honest with ourselves, though. I am not sure that there is a quick fix for the lakes. The pollution problem in the lakes has built up over quite a few decades. The nutrient loadings in the lake are significant. Some scientists, some experts in this area, will say that we have a bit of a tipping point where the level of nutrients is such now that we are at a place where the blue-green algae can actually trigger very easily, or very readily, because of the level of nutrients in the lake, so it is going to take some time to turn that around.

That said, there are also people coming forward with some interesting ideas about how we might make a quicker impact. I will certainly continue to pursue the validity and check the scientific rigour of some of those proposed quick fixes, because if we can find one all the better. Certainly, many sports are dependent on our lake. Just that basic recreational activity, which is less recognised in the discussion about sport and recreation, relies heavily on the lakes.

So with those few remarks, I simply conclude by saying that I look forward to continuing to work with Canberrans across the community on ensuring that we have the best possible sporting facilities in our city, that we are encouraging as many people as possible to participate in a club, in an activity or in some sort of recreational activity. I am certainly making a considerable effort at the moment to get out and meet as many of the clubs and groups as possible, and I look forward to continuing that and working with them over the coming months to continue to make this city a sporting capital of this country.

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Racing and Gaming, Minister for Women and Minister for the Arts) (5.20): I rise to talk on a number of elements within this budget line. Firstly, I would like to talk on gaming and racing. This budget continues the government's strong support for the appropriate gaming and racing activities in Canberra—as an important community support, as a job generator and for businesses in their own right.

In terms of gaming, the clubs contribute much to the life of the territory, as most members of the Assembly acknowledge. The most recent data shows a community contribution by clubs of \$13 million, which is \$5 million more than they are required to do under legislation. This year we will make substantial progress in delivering on the government's MOU with the club sector. I expect to announce in the near future a substantial package of reforms that will make life much easier for community clubs while maintaining a strict regime of harm minimisation for gambling activities.

In terms of racing, this budget continues the government's strong support for the racing industry—thoroughbreds, harness and greyhounds. More than \$8 million is provided to the codes in grant funding per year for each of the forward estimate years. To give the codes as much certainty as possible, we are committed to working with them on a multi-year contractual arrangement. I see the racing sector as a valued industry for the government and for the ACT. An economic valuation of the racing industry by Allen Consulting back in 2011 noted that the modelling results show that the closure of the ACT racing industry could cause an economic deficit in our economy, and they valued it at around \$50 million. Similarly, in the same report, Access Economics estimated the contribution of the industry by calculating participants—trainers, the breeders, the owners, the jockeys—customer spending, wagering and racing club spending at around \$50 million also.

In November of this year the Canberra community will have a chance to see and enjoy Unbridled, a festival of horses, music and food at Thoroughbred Park, an initiative supported by government funding. A very exciting program is being developed, and I do encourage all members to attend. The government will respond to options put forward in the study of the potential relocation for the racing codes later this year.

In terms of the arts, Mr Assistant Speaker, Canberrans continue to appreciate the benefits of the arts and culture to our community. Investing in creative and cultural assets generates economic growth and social development. It creates jobs and exports while promoting social inclusion, cultural diversity and human development. According to the ABS, cultural and creative activity contributed \$86 billion to the Australian gross domestic product on a national accounts basis back in 2008-09. And we know that we need to do more to break down precisely the economic value of the arts to the economy, and this was identified by the estimates committee in its report. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that work is already underway on this economic analysis, which was discussed with me when I met with the Childers Group.

The government provides more than \$8 million in arts funding through a number of programs to support and develop our artists and enable the community to engage with the arts. This budget provides an opportunity to consolidate work already undertaken and complete the initiatives funded in previous years.

We have committed to continuing work on the key priority areas identified in the arts policy framework and will deliver on our election commitments. We did promise funding to redevelop the Kingston Arts Precinct and the Ainslie Arts Centre. In 2013-14 we allocated \$300,000 to continue the development of Kingston, and a feasibility study is currently underway into developing a visual arts precinct there. Last year we allocated \$1.5 million to Ainslie for capital works, and these projects will be completed in this year.

We also promised to invest \$1 million for Gorman House, and in last year's budget we committed that for capital upgrades. The upgrades are being done in consultation with the Gorman House community. We also promised to bring back the Fringe, and we certainly did that in this year's Multicultural Festival. In keeping with that promise, I am pleased to let this Assembly know that a peer-assessed expression of interest process for the 2015 Fringe producer is currently being assessed by artsACT and its independent panel. The government remains committed to the peer assessment of application for arts funding, a process which the ACT community strongly supports.

We also promised \$750,000 for a feasibility, site selection and design study into building a new theatre, and we have commenced this work. In this year's budget funds have been provided for the feasibility study into a new Canberra Theatre as part of the city to the lake project, and EDD will work closely with the Cultural Facilities Corporation to plan future theatre provision for the city. I note that the estimates committee recommended that we consider establishing this theatre as a national performing arts centre, and I am happy to say that the government has agreed to that recommendation and will certainly consider that suggestion. The budget also delivers major capital funding for the Canberra Theatre Centre, and this will go to the upgrade of lighting and fittings through the theatre and the Playhouse.

The arts community is vibrant across the suburbs, across the ages and across the disciplines. As mentioned, our community participate in arts activity and we certainly enjoy the difference that our arts community bring to our city.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Housing and Minister for Tourism and Events) (5.27): I will close the debate on this particular section. This directorate was established on 7 July by combining the former Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate with the functions of the former Economic Development Directorate and Commerce and Works Directorate. CMTEDD has the leadership role within the ACT public service and is now providing strategic advice and support to the Chief Minister as the Minister for Higher Education and Minister for Regional Development; to myself as Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Housing; to Minister Burch in the racing and gaming and arts portfolios; to Minister Rattenbury in sport and recreation; and to Minister Gentleman in workplace safety and industrial relations.

This directorate is now also combining forces to provide advice and support to cabinet on policy development, territory budgeting and reporting, financial and economic policy, federal financial relations, service delivery, whole-of-government programs and issues, high value and complex investment development proposals, sport and recreation policies and programs, tourism, government business enterprises, taxation and revenue management, and developing and guiding the land release program to ensure a sustainable return to the territory and stable economic growth. Clearly, it is a key agency in the delivery of the government's agenda and, indeed, the economic health of the Australian Capital Territory.

My colleagues have outlined in their respective portfolio areas a range of initiatives in the budget. I would like to highlight a number that will have significant benefit in terms of small business development, use of new technology within the territory government, and capacity to bring new international events to our city and to continue our rollout of ACT government office accommodation in Gungahlin and the development of Molonglo and the Lyneham sports precinct. This includes the \$53.3 million invested in various ICT initiatives, including iConnect, the hybrid cloud services, invoice automation, e-tendering, an upgrade to the human resources management system and the new revenue office systems.

In the context of events, there is a particular commitment in this year's budget around the ICC Cricket World Cup that now rounds out, I think, the biggest summer of cricket this city has ever experienced, with the one day international in November, the Prime Minister's XI and the Big Bash League final in January and then Cricket World Cup events in February.

That is a significant summer of cricket for the ACT made possible by the investments both in the Manuka Oval infrastructure and also the long-term commitments and partnerships with the AFL. Without that, there would have been no economic rationale to invest in Manuka Oval and no prospect of this city securing major events for cricket in the way that we have.

We have also made provision with the Treasury finance areas in this budget to undertake further operational reviews of ACT government activities to continue to drive efficiencies and to ensure that public funds are expended in the best manner possible to achieve the highest level of service delivery at the most affordable cost.

In the context of ACT government office accommodation, there is a significant allocation for the fit-out of the ACT government office building in Gungahlin that is part of the ACT government accommodation strategy. We will be debating that in more detail in private members' business tomorrow, I understand.

There is an \$18 million allocation for new infrastructure in Molonglo, one of the allegedly too many development fronts that we have in the city according to the shadow treasurer. As my colleague Mr Rattenbury indicated there is a particular commitment in partnership with the Next Generation club, Tennis Australia and Tennis ACT for a further stage of development of the Lyneham sports precinct. For the benefit of the shadow minister for sport, the great thing about this project is that it has a significant community sport element but also provides the facilities that will allow the ACT to host more major tennis events, both development events and major events like the Davis Cup and the Fed Cup.

It is fantastic that our investment has been able to leverage support from Tennis Australia and a significant investment from the Next Generation club group that goes to over \$20 million. In the context of attracting new investment to the territory, there are great opportunities for us to partner with local and national level sporting bodies as well as national and international level investors to bring new community sport and recreation facilities to the city, but also allow us to host major events in the future.

Before I wrap up my comments in the Treasury area, I think it is worth while to share a little of volume 3, the special budget adviser's report and supplementary analysis. This was the bit that the shadow treasurer did not feel he could read into the public record, so I will. In relation to taxation reform and its impact on economic activity, it is interesting that the CIE observed:

While being revenue neutral, the replacement of revenue from conveyance duty with revenue from general rates will have both macroeconomic and distribution impacts for the ACT economy. Overall, this tax reform is expected to have a positive though modest impact on the tax base and the ACT economy. Perhaps more importantly, the tax reform will help to improve the equity and stability of the taxation system.

And they go on to say:

There is strong rationale for replacing revenue from stamp duty with revenue from general rates ... There is strong rationale for replacing revenue from stamp duty with revenue from general rates. This rationale was recently outlined in Australia's Future Tax System (Henry) Review and then the ACT Taxation (Quinlan) Review 2012. The former review emphasised that stamp duty is an inefficient and inequitable tax.

But that does not seem to stop the Canberra Liberals from wanting to support it and wanting to increase it, as the Leader of the Opposition has outlined more than once in debates with me on ABC Radio. He does not believe that stamp duty should be reduced, and then, when challenged, indicated to Philip Clark, when he asked, "If you are not reducing it, then would you reverse it?" that "Well, yes, I guess we will have to because we are seeking balance."

We heard it there from Jeremy Hanson: his intent would be to reverse our stamp duty cuts if he ever formed government. Why? You have to ask why, given that quote from this report:

Stamp duties are poor taxes. As a tax on transferring land, they discourage land from changing hands to its most valuable use. Stamp duties are also an inequitable way of taxing land and improvements, as the tax falls on those who need to move.

Let us just dwell on that point for a moment. The Liberal Party's preference is that if a relationship breaks down, if a couple divorces and has to sell the family home, that is when you want to tax them. That is when the Liberal Party wants to get you. When your circumstances change and you have got to sell the family home and you need to move somewhere else because maybe your relationship has ended or maybe you have had a catastrophic incident in your life that requires you to move, that is when the Liberal Party wants to get their hands in your pockets. And it is not to the tune of a few hundred dollars a year; they want to get you for \$20,000 or \$30,000. That is the tax system that they prefer.

This is the case if you divorce, if there is a death in the family or maybe if there is positive news. Perhaps you have had another child and you need to move to a bigger house. That is when the Liberal Party want to tax you. That is when they want to get their hands in your pockets, and very, very deeply, because if we do not change stamp duty, if we do not get rid of it, over the next couple of decades the average house in the ACT will attract stamp duty approaching \$50,000. Over the next couple of decades that is where we will get to if we do not reform stamp duty.

The Liberal Party appear very comfortable with that. That is what they would like. They want to hit you for \$50,000 if you have another baby and you need a bigger house. That is their tax policy. Let me repeat again that stamp duties are an inequitable way of taxing land and improvements as the tax falls on those who need to move. That is one of the compelling reasons why we need to make this shift away from these inefficient transaction taxes and towards a fairer and more sustainable revenue base.

The other question that the estimates committee were obviously exercised about in their recommendations was the question of the economics of budget deficits and surpluses. The CIE has gone to great length to discuss these issues. But there is a pertinent paragraph or two in their commentary that deserves to be shared with the Assembly. I quote it:

Given the expected slowdown in the ACT economy and the relatively strong state of the ACT Government's balance sheet, the Government's budget strategy to provide a stimulus to the economy and return the budget to balance over the medium term is considered to be prudent.

Let me repeat that CIE stated that given the ACT's strong balance sheet, the government's budget strategy to provide stimulus to the economy and return the budget to balance over the medium term is considered to be prudent.

It is also the view of a range of other economic commentators on the government's budget strategy and the view of the credit rating agencies. That, I think, is a very sound endorsement of the government's budget strategy. I am very pleased to recommend this line item to the Assembly.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Commerce and Works Directorate—

Schedule 1, Part 1.6—\$33,845,490 (capital injection), \$271,799 (payments on behalf of Territory), totalling \$34,117,289.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (5.39): There are a number of directorates that are, of course, terminating. The Commerce and Works Directorate and the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate have been rolled into other areas, but we have to validate the funding that was spent between 1 July and 6 July, which is the purpose of this and the other line.

I will take this opportunity to ask the Treasurer a question, because he has not come back to the Assembly on it yet. I asked him a question during question time today about contractors in Shared Services and whether or not they were being asked to take pay cuts. I understand that since that question there has been a flurry of activity in emails around Shared Services. Perhaps the Treasurer might take the opportunity to tell us whether or not the cut in wages has been proposed and whether or not the payroll tax changes will be passed on to contractors who continue to work in Shared Services.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Housing and Minister for Tourism and Events) (5.40): Yes, I can advise the Assembly on that matter. Shared Services ICT contractors are engaged for a fixed term at a fixed rate. The terms and conditions of new contracts are subject to market forces at the time. Each time a contract is renewed, the financial delegate has a responsibility to ensure that the rates and conditions are consistent with market forces at that time. It is worth noting that contractors are paid much higher rates than ACT public service staff who they work alongside, to compensate for the shorter employment terms and the higher skill levels associated with some of the short and medium-term projects that contractors are required to undertake.

The market for ICT contractors will vary from time to time. I am advised that there is no blanket approach to this matter from Shared Services, that there are some contracts and some skill sets that are able to be secured for a lower rate, as you would expect the agency to do. They should not be paying over the odds for ICT services. There are other rates that have remained entirely unchanged as a result of there being no change in the marketplace.

I think I can confidently rule out the allegation that was raised during question time that there is some blanket approach to the cutting of contractor rates or that this is in some way related to payroll tax changes. I think that neither assertion has been proven to be correct. The advice I have is that there are a number of contracts that are renewed from time to time and that the outcomes of those contract renewals have

varied from no change at all to some reduction in rates. I am advised that in most instances any reduction in rates has been less than the figure quoted by the shadow treasurer.

Ultimately, the question would have to be asked: why would Shared Services pay over the odds for contract services, given that contractors are already paid more than their permanent public service counterparts who they often work in partnership with on a number of these projects? That is the market. That is the nature of this sort of work. But I think the important point to stress and to repeat again is that the assertions that were made during question time are not accurate.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Community Services Directorate—

Schedule 1, Part 1.7—\$37,505,689 (net cost of outputs), \$10,083 (capital injection), totalling \$37,515,772.

Schedule 1A, Part 1.8—\$194,585,311 (net cost of outputs), \$4,784,917 (capital injection), totalling \$199,370,228.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (5.44): I will speak to the budget line item relating to the areas of disability, youth and Indigenous affairs, which fall under the responsibility of the Community Services Directorate. I will start with disability and therapy services. On 1 July this year the national disability insurance scheme commenced its operation here in the ACT. By the end of 2016 the ACT will have ceased providing any services and the financial commitment from the ACT will be heading rapidly towards the 2019-20 total commitment of \$342 million as previously outlined by the minister.

I have stated in this place on many occasions that we on this side of the chamber along with all sides of politics welcome the reform to the sector the national disability insurance scheme brings and welcome the challenge of being a trial site for the transition as we move our entire disability community through to the new system over the next couple of years. The NDIS will truly bring choice and control to people with disabilities in the ACT.

What we do not necessarily see eye to eye on is the preparedness of the ACT for such huge transition. The ACT had plenty of time to prepare. However, as I have outlined on many occasions in this place, I am not so sure we are that well prepared. During the estimates process I was fascinated to hear the minister state:

Our community is certainly as prepared as we can be for the NDIS following the preparation that we have put in place and the conversations we have had with families.

I have complete faith in the NDIA and the work they are doing and have done since the starter's gun fired on 1 July. However, I remain sceptical about the situation as it has been handed over to them by the ACT government. Many questions are still being asked and there is a lot of uncertainty in the sector. I am pleased, however, to see that conversations are being had on individual bases with some organisations and also individuals and that the one-size-fits-all model is not holding true in this case and there are some flexibilities in the transition to accommodate individual needs.

For example, I am pleased to note that organisations such as L'Arche, which provide accommodation for 13 people with a disability in our community, have been given some guarantee by the ACT government that their service agreement will remain in place until it is time for their clients to phase in to the NDIS. L'Arche was on the brink of ceasing to operate because of a lack of certainty around its funding arrangements. We simply cannot allow one person to slip through the cracks as it will undermine the viability of the entire service operated.

It is also appropriate to note during this debate that it is with some alarm, by the Community Services Directorate's own admission, that 400 jobs in the sector will cease to exist as the transition progresses. It is appropriate to reminisce about the cries of the current minister and the relevant union during the last election campaign when my colleague Vicki Dunne made reference to the fact that the philosophy of having the right person in the right job in the Community Services Directorate equated to job cuts, yet here we are with the loss of 400 positions and there seems to be silence from those members opposite on the issue.

This is another area where we see a real lack of forward planning and where real gaps continue to appear. Anecdotally, I am receiving comments and hearing about situations where disability carers are simply not turning up to clients' homes from one day to the next. I am also hearing about physios, speech pathologists and occupational therapists who are actively seeking more stable employment because they simply cannot wait for things to settle down internally. How prepared are we for this inevitable change? Time will tell as the transition progresses.

I applaud the estimates committee's recommendation 79:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider ensuring that the funding levels of current disability service providers which do not necessarily fit the NDIS model are maintained until December 2016.

That recommendation is most laudable and will provide much-needed confidence to disability services here in the territory.

With regard to Indigenous affairs, as I have said before in this place, a disproportionate amount of money from both the ACT and the commonwealth is spent on services directed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders within the ACT, with little in the way of outcomes being seen given the substantial investment. There is some conjecture about the exact figure, but, on paper, we can see it is around the vicinity of \$231 million. That is the figure we are talking about. On a per capita basis, that equates to around \$38,500 per person. Given that so much of the disadvantage is borne out of poverty as opposed to race, the question remains to be asked why we continue to see such disparity in outcomes.

I again applaud the estimates committee for recommendation 82:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government include strategic objectives and accountability indicators in the 2015-2016 budget papers that reports specifically on Closing the Gap initiatives for the ACT's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents.

This is a necessary step to ensure that future funds are directed where they are needed most and so we can break down the reasons for such a continuation in poor outcomes for health, housing, education and justice for our Indigenous community.

A subject of note is the requirements for some organisations in the Indigenous space, such as Gudan Gulwan Aboriginal Youth Corporation. Gudan Gulwan provide a place for the Indigenous community to gather. They provide services for youth and families along with a number of outreach programs aimed at enhancing the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the ACT. The organisation have outgrown their current premises in Wanniasa and continue to be in desperate need of additional space. I am pleased to note that the ACT government is of the same view and that options are being explored in consultation with the organisation.

Providing services that focus on assisting the territory's Indigenous residents in a culturally appropriate manner is critical to ensuring the continual trend of Indigenous disadvantage does in fact end. Programs and services targeting Indigenous youth provide an opportunity to break the cycle of disadvantage, and Gudan Gulwan, as the major provider of Indigenous youth services, should be given a high priority when it comes to assistance.

I mention the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and the elections that have recently taken place. While there has been an improvement on voter turnout from the previous election as a result of some of the legislative changes made to increase participation, I believe there is still some way to go in increasing the votes. This year's election participation totalled around 377 voters, which continues to be representative of only a very small portion of the ACT's Indigenous community.

I congratulate the newly elected members of the body: Rod Little, Fred Monaghan, Dianne Collins, Jo Chivers, Jo Donovan, Maurice Walker and Ross Fowler. But I also remind them that it is dependent upon them in their new roles to ensure that the current elected body continues to build the support of the broader Indigenous community through engagement activities with the idea of, hopefully one day, having full participation in their elections by the Indigenous community.

The youth portfolio is where I will finish. During the estimates hearings, the committee heard from the Youth Coalition as they raised a number of concerns relating to youth, in particular, the outreach model of youth services. I remain of the view that youth services need to be a mix of outreach and centre-based activities to be truly effective in the ACT. Without somewhere to provide the services of outreach from, it is difficult for youth to know where to turn to when they may need help.

I fully endorse the estimates committee's report in recommendation number 28:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government initiate an independent review of the closure of youth centres and its replacement outreach program to determine the effectiveness of the changes and report to the Legislative Assembly by the last sitting day of February 2015.

Having not yet had the opportunity to look at the government's response, I hope that, in fact, that was accepted.

With regard to youth justice and the Bimberi detention centre, the minister is always quick to ignore the issues that sometimes may exist. We only need to hark back to her ear-covering—the la-la-la moment—that occurred some years ago, and I fear that this budget and the estimates process have been no exception to that attitude. Nonetheless, I believe it is safe to say that the problems relating to security of staff, detainees, contraband and the overall administration of the AMC are reflected at the Bimberi detention centre. We know drugs and drug-related crime are the main reasons people are incarcerated in the ACT, yet I am yet to be convinced that enough resources are being directed to rehabilitation at all levels. *(Second speaking period taken.)*

As is usual with this budget line item, there is a lot of chest beating, pats on the back, and the government talking about what they want to talk about and highlighting what they want to highlight. I assure the Assembly that I will continue to highlight things that are not necessarily working well, the failures of the minister and the failings of the government as a whole. It is important to achieve good outcomes to give the youth of the ACT the best opportunities and the best start in life we possibly can, and I will continue to hold this government to account in their failings.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (5.55): I will briefly mention two initiatives for Canberra's Indigenous community receiving a boost this year, including \$1.4 million over four years to build and maintain five units specifically to meet the housing needs of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants. This includes \$93,000 in recurrent funding to be met from within existing resources. The work will be developed in consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and organisations. Secondly, the Canberra office of the Aboriginal Legal Service New South Wales/ACT will be funded to undertake a duty lawyer role in the ACT courts with an additional \$416, 000 over four years.

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. The federal government not only cut half a billion dollars from the Indigenous programs, but it ceased funding completely for the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, the only independent national representative body for the community. The Prime Minister, it seems, only wants to listen to his hand-picked advisers and ignore the voices of the people. I commend this fair and responsible budget to the Assembly and congratulate all who worked on it.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (5.56): As the shadow minister for family and community services, I will make a few comments, firstly, about service delivery in the Community Services Directorate and also about Care and Protection Services. Throughout estimates, when talking about community services there was a lot of talk about the human services blueprint. No matter what aspect of CSD we talked about, there was the human services blueprint—that it will be developed, is developed and will fix all of the problems. Over the forward estimates \$1.78 million is being spent on the human services blueprint, as well as the better human services strengthening families program. We will not really know until this work is complete how much of a benefit it will provide.

I certainly hope in this instance the government is correct and the blueprint will provide efficiencies within this area. But I will wait for the proof of the pudding. I hope this blueprint will not only provide efficiencies for the government but that it will also make interaction for community services providers easier and more streamlined. I hope the blueprint ensures community service providers in our city are able to do what they do best and be supported by the government. I hope this blueprint removes some of the red tape and bureaucracy that has always been an issue, but we will wait and see.

We also have Care and Protection Services within this directorate. It is one of those very complex areas of government that a blueprint is not going to fix. I do not stand here claiming there is a magic wand you can wave to have a perfect care and protection system, but I want to take a moment to reiterate how important this area is and express my disappointment that no action seems to be taken while we are letting down some of our most vulnerable citizens. In this budget expenditure for care and protection is increased by not even enough to cover CPI, which we all know means in real terms the funding for this area is going backwards.

Report after report has detailed how the care and protection system in the ACT is failing our most vulnerable children. We have heard many times about the systemic culture of cover-up and bandaid fixes that have allowed the service, which is supposed to protect our children, to fail time after time, yet the government has not made this an area of priority in this budget.

The Public Advocate's interim report into the emergency response strategy for children in crisis in the ACT was released in October 2011. This report made recommendations to address the organisational and systemic changes in response to what was considered the deficiencies which exist in Care and Protection Services. Given the narrow scope of this initial review, it was assumed by most that the report did not paint the true picture of care and protection services but was simply an aberration.

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.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.30 pm.

MS LAWDER: Before we were saved by the dinner bell I mentioned that the Public Advocate's interim report into the emergency response strategy for children in crisis in 2011 had painted a dark picture of care and protection services. The Public Advocate was quoted as saying:

My investigations revealed that there may be many more cases of systemic deficiencies and practice failures than I dare to think.

In 2012 we then saw the Public Advocate state in the final report:

These problems are exacerbated by broader systemic deficiencies within the Care and Protection Service.

It has been no secret that, in this area of government, we have not been successfully looking after our most vulnerable Canberrans for a long time. The hard-working and dedicated front-line staff within Care and Protection Services continue to battle against a system that failed to support them, despite their best efforts. And despite the minister's constant reassurances that things will improve, that was not the case.

In a report released last year on care and protection by the ACT Auditor-General it became known that the government could not tell you on any given day where the children that were in care were. Who would have thought that would be too much to ask for?

Late last year we had the release of the ACT Children and Young People Death Review Committee report, and the statistics there showed that 20 per cent of children that died in the ACT over the five-year period examined were either known to Care and Protection Services or one of their siblings was—that is, one in five children who died were known to Care and Protection. We had some deaths that could conceivably have been avoided.

This year we had the report on government services released in January. This report showed the ACT government is continuing to allow the territory's child protection services to flounder. In comparison to other jurisdictions, the ACT spends well below the national average on the sector. On a per capita basis the ACT spends only \$551 per child compared with the national average of \$739. We spend the lowest on our care and protection services, and it shows.

This budget shows that even after all those reports, after all the proof that the operations of this department need to be improved, after all the reports that show our children are being let down, this is still not seen as a priority by this government. We are happy to throw \$600 million at a light rail system, we are happy to put \$1.3 billion into the budget without really explaining how it is going to be spent but we are not even going to find enough of a funding increase for Care and Protection Services to cover CPI. This government wants to continue to have a system which works against the best efforts of the hard-working, front-line staff and does not provide true support for the children who need it.

There is no consistency here. There are situations where one child may be given back to a mother but not another, situations where children are put into foster care and the father has no knowledge of it, times when children who are in danger are forced to go back to parents when evidence indicates it is not safe. There is case after case of the care and protection system being inconsistent and failing, and we really need to make this a priority of our government.

We spend less in this area not because we are more efficient but because we are delivering poorer outcomes. We are throwing away money on things like light rail but when it comes to Care and Protection Services, with our most vulnerable people, we seem to have short arms and long pockets.

MRS JONES (Molonglo) (7.34): I go to the women's portfolio. In the women's portfolio over the last couple of years we have seen a decrease in spend and a decrease in outcomes. Fewer courses have been offered and there is at present a planning process underway, from my understanding, for the delivery of services to women.

Since the hurried announcement and shambles of the process of closing the Women's Information Referral Centre we have no further indication of whom women's services are aimed at, what those in such a target group need exactly and what study of Canberra's population the services are based on. Someone somewhere in the department is tasked with coming up with a sellable model of women's services which looks like they are aimed at women in some kind of need, and we will no doubt see a plan emerge sooner or later for the delivery of some courses.

The question remains: who are the services for, what are they trying to achieve, are they achieving these aims and can they be better delivered? The closure of the Women's Information Referral Centre served to highlight that no-one really knows the answer to these questions and no-one really knows what the purpose of this entire area of government is, except to say that perhaps everybody wants to help some women. The closure of the Women's Information Referral Centre was putting the cart before the horse, and I hope we will hear soon what the new plan is and what it intends to achieve, given that there are no additional spending measures outlined for women in this budget.

With respect to multicultural affairs, under this government it seems to be that English language courses, the Theo Notaras centre, supporting various ethnic communities, citizenship ceremonies and the Multicultural Festival each year are the main line items. The estimates committee report recognises the very great value of different ethnic communities that we have represented in Canberra. However, it also asks the government to focus on the provision of childcare places for women who participate in the study of English.

During the estimates process I outlined the economic position of a standard young family in Belconnen. In the case of that family, the father is a teacher, uni educated and in a stable, full-time job. After tax he brings into the house \$65,000 in income. However, my experience of the new, ethnic communities in Canberra is that the fathers of families are earning significantly less than that. Some of them are educated to be accountants and in other professions but they are often working at Coles and Pizza Hut. As a result they are more likely to be bringing home \$40,000 a year.

Wives and mothers in these households often stay home with the children. That is sometimes expected of them; sometimes they really want to. And if their English is not very fluent, some have little choice. The decision for wives to learn English is put second after the household being financially able to cope, which is perfectly understandable. However, think about the household on a \$40,000 per year income. They often have just one car, an old one. The family sees that the wife's English learning is an optional extra, and we should do everything possible to ensure that there are fewer barriers to that English learning; otherwise women can live here for decades

and be unable to be involved in the schools where their children go, not make friends other than within their own ethnic communities and never work. And if their marriage has failed they can be left in extremely vulnerable situations, not knowing how to navigate society.

I asked the minister to take seriously the request for improved access to English classes offered by the territory and in particular to allow for at least babysitting of children while the classes are on. It does not have to be a rolled-gold solution. A babysitter in a safe classroom next door with some toys, drawing equipment and some entertainment is all that is required so that children are happy and safe while mum learns English. The images still haunt me of the women I have doorknocked over the years—and I have door-knocked thousands of homes in my time—women imploring me to get them English language education. So I will keep on about this for a long time, until I believe it has been dealt with in some satisfactory manner.

The Multicultural Festival is a good thing for our community. However, I still note that last year's budget had an allocation of an additional \$100,000 for this year's and next year's festivals, covering costs such as additional food safety inspectors and other seemingly necessary elements of the event. I note that this year's allocation does not include any such additional funds for the events beyond next year, and I will continue to ask the question about how the event will be funded or how the delivery model of it will be changed to accommodate a radically reduced budget.

In conclusion, I encourage the government to consider which women they are trying to assist via the women's portfolio and exactly what they are hoping to achieve through the services provided. I ask the minister to take seriously the needs of women of various ethnic backgrounds to have babysitting available on site for English classes so that more women can undertake the classes and have the necessary access to the society in which they live, for the sake of them, their families and their children. And I ask the minister to make sure she has the funding organised ahead of the future multicultural festivals to ensure that they are properly funded or delivered in a different way so that such funds may not be required. There are many women of various ethnicities in our city who would really benefit from such a focus and who might, as a result, be more engaged in the benefits that come from living in Australia rather than living isolated lives in the outer suburbs without transport or communication skills.

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Racing and Gaming, Minister for Women and Minister for the Arts) (7.40): I would like to talk on a particular line at this moment, disability. I think we would all recognise that it is an important year this year for people with a disability as the national disability insurance scheme begins in the ACT, with people starting their transition to the NDIA as we speak. This budget will continue to support the preparation for the NDIS of people with a disability, their families, their carers and service providers.

The NDIS trial in the ACT was officially launched on 1 July this year, and people are already meeting with agency staff, talking about their goals and aspirations and making plans that involve the kind of support and services that they aspire to and that

they need. There is no doubt that change, particularly change of this magnitude, will never be easy and there will be challenges. But when I go out and talk with people with disability, their families and carers, overwhelmingly I get a sense of hope and excitement of what the NDIA and the NDIS have the potential to bring to our community. And that is what we need to stay focused on, because people with a disability, their families and carers have been waiting far too long for this reform.

The ACT government is committed to the NDIS and will keep working to transform disability services. In total the government will provide just over \$96 million in 2014-15 to provide services that strengthen the capacity for people with disability, their families and carers and help them maximise control over their lives. The government is investing approximately \$5 million in initiatives to help prepare people for the NDIS. This includes funding over two years to provide emergency responses in disability services for those who may need a greater level of care and a continuation of funding for three years so that the therapy assistants program for children with a disability in schools can be supported.

This funding is in addition to the total contribution from the ACT and commonwealth of \$21 million that we are investing to help prepare for the NDIS. This includes the enhanced service offer grants, funding for individual planners and funding to support individuals who are identified as having urgent and unmet needs.

There is serious funding for sector development. \$500,000 of sector development funding has been invested to build the capacity of ACT residents through mental health projects, community conversations, family leadership, capacity building and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community capacity building and workshops for people with a disability. We have also invested in support for the sector through initiatives such as the NDIS readiness tool kit delivered by the National Disability Insurance Agency and the governance of financial management and business investment packages. Mr Wall takes the role of opposition very seriously and seems to oppose, and has a negative word to say about, everything.

In terms of those financial management and business investment packages, some of the organisations that have been offered \$50,000 grants are the Canberra Men's Centre, DUO, Northside Community Services, Carers ACT, Richmond Fellowship ACT, Community Connections, ADACAS, Cerebral Palsy Alliance, Koomarri, Autism Asperger ACT, Communities@Work, Pegasus, CatholicCare, Sharing Places, Focus ACT, Southside Community Services, L'Arche Genesaret, Belconnen Community Services, Hartley Lifecare, and Marymead Child and Family Centre. It has always been the commitment of this government to support the providers in this transition and it is just absolute nonsense for Andrew Wall to put a level of hysteria and doubt in the community sector providers that we are not there standing with them and supporting them all the way. Additional investment is also being made to respite services to provide short-term breaks for carers of people with a disability so that the support relationship is maintained and also provides a positive experience for people with a disability.

We have invested money in this financial year to enable the construction of a new, purpose-built respite home that will provide modern respite services for children with a disability. This is an exciting project as we partner with the community and with the

Ricky Stuart Foundation to deliver this new facility. The new respite facility is part of a more comprehensive restructure of respite services in the ACT that has been undertaken to ensure the disability sector is ready for the NDIS.

Earlier this year new providers were announced for respite services previously operated by the government, and the aim here is to provide greater choice for people with a disability who visit respite centres. The government is committed to making the NDIS a success in the ACT and is the first jurisdiction that will see all eligible residents enter the scheme within two years. This really is a chance for us as a government to change the lives of people.

I would hope that at one point the shadow minister, Mr Wall, actually understands that he would serve this community far better if he did not come in here and raise concerns around funding, such as the providers have only just realised there will be continuance of funding, when this has always been the case. Providers have been in regular conversation with Disability ACT. Contracts have been renewed and transition arrangements are in place for direct contract providers but also for those organisations that sit in a term that is referred to as a T2. I understand there are about 18 organisations, including Autism Asperger ACT, whose case management funding will continue into next year.

One of the interesting things about Andrew Wall—and I looked forward actually to the estimates hearing on Education and Training because on the morning of that estimates hearing Andrew Wall got very antsy and put out—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Ms Burch! Could I ask you to conform with the formal practice of this place and refer to people by their titles; therefore, Mr Wall or the member for Brindabella.

MS BURCH: Not the shadow minister for disability?

MADAM SPEAKER: Or the shadow minister but not by his Christian name.

MS BURCH: I do apologise.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

MS BURCH: The shadow minister for disability put out a tweet that he was looking forward to estimates that day because he was coming down to ask me the hard questions and to finally get some answers. When Mr Wall did turn up to education estimates he turned up late and did not ask a single question on early intervention. Given that that was his focus of that week, I find it disingenuous that he would advocate being a champion as he actually falls flat at every opportunity. He also is demonstrating to be a true believer of the saying that if you say something often enough it must be true, but nothing about what he said was correct.

We have worked consistently and productively with service providers. We are working with our community on the preparation for the NDIS, and Mr Wall would give a better service to those he is representing by actually supporting the NDIS and seeking proper advice at the proper times so that he can have an informed view.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (7.48): I am reminded of the phrase from Shakespeare “She doth protest too much.” The minister was grilled on the NDIS and the minister basically had no answers. We were constantly referred to: “There are a couple of fact sheets on the website. You can go and read them.” I asked whether there was an overarching document, a guide to the introduction of NDIS in the ACT. The answer was no. There is no overarching document, the minister cannot answer questions and people are concerned about the progress.

We have all heard the constant stories from around the country. Either this morning or yesterday there was a piece on the radio where a gentleman was saying there was not enough clarity, there was not enough certainty and there certainly was not enough funding. The minister can come here and bleat all she wishes, but the reality is that she was asked, and in most cases the answers were unsatisfactory. Particularly in relation to the guiding document, she and her officials were not able to point to a single document for the overarching strategy for the delivery of these services. It is a very important sector of our community. I think that speaks volumes about the minister’s leadership.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Planning, Minister for Community Services, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations, Minister for Children and Young People and Minister for Ageing) (7.49): I rise this time to talk about children and young people through the Appropriation Bill. This year is very important for the ACT government’s support for children and young people as we begin to see the results of research, consultation and development come together.

Since May 2012 the ACT government has been working to develop a new out of home care strategy for children and young people in the ACT. I note Ms Lawder’s comments on budget priorities in this output class, and I would just like to advise that the ACT government has shown its commitment to assisting Canberra’s vulnerable children and young people in out of home care with additional funding of \$4.1 million in 2014-15. The funding will be used to meet the additional growth in children and young people in care, enabling continuation of current out of home care programs for the 2014-15 period, and to lay important groundwork for a new out of home care system that will begin from July 2015. This funding meets a commitment in response to the Public Advocate’s reviews.

Consultation has concluded on the out of home care strategy, which will, firstly, support children to remain at home wherever possible through new placement, prevention and reunification services; secondly, improve outcomes for children and young people who cannot live with their families; and, thirdly, wherever possible, find alternative permanent families for children and young people in a timely fashion.

The funding of \$4.1 million in this budget will provide for the piloting of therapeutic assessments and planning for children and young people in care. It will also provide for accreditation and monitoring programs for out of home care services. This was a commitment by this government in response to the concerns raised by the Auditor-General in 2013. It will provide training and transition support for trauma informed care systems, including the training of the care and protection service staff, out of

home care and other relevant agencies and foster and kinship carers. And it will provide improved information management to support children and young people in care.

In 2014-15 the outputs for care and protection and youth justice have been combined, signalling intent to move towards integrated case management processes for these two statutory services. The outcomes being sought through this project include improved streamlining of processes and systems; the introduction of a single case management approach for children and young people; a reduction in the number of workers that a child or young person has to deal with; and improved collaboration and information sharing through our organisational structure. These reforms will enable the Community Services Directorate to implement the human services blueprint and the out of home care strategy and, mostly, importantly, deliver better outcomes for children, youth and their families.

I mentioned that this year is one for seeing results of our work. One example already this year has been the opening of the \$3.05 million Melaleuca Place in July, the ACT's new trauma recovery centre for children aged up to 12 years. Melaleuca Place fills an identified need for more holistic support for vulnerable young children and will also act as a means of providing the latest advice to all those working in the sector.

Finally, I would like to add a word of thanks to all those individuals and directorate staff who work with and provide services to the ACT's most vulnerable children and young people. I thank you for the tough work you do in the most difficult of circumstances and commend the measures that I have outlined to this Assembly.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Corrective Services, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for Sport and Recreation) (7.53): I rise to make a few remarks in relation to my responsibility as the Minister of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.

The ACT government is committed to continuing to work with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to deliver improved life outcomes for those across the community. It is no secret, and all members know, that many in our Indigenous community continue to have life outcomes far lesser than those of other members of the community. That is a continuing challenge and one that we must seek to address.

The role of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body is integral to the government making progress in this area. As has been mentioned today, we have just had an election. We have new members of the body in place, some returning and some new. I congratulate all the members on their election.

One of the key projects that we have going forward is the establishment of the whole-of-government agreement with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. One of my priorities in working with the elected body is to get that agreement finalised as quickly as possible. What we are looking at in that agreement is a clear delineation of priorities for government driven directly by the community.

In my discussions with the elected body, I have said to them that what we want in that is a clear articulation of what the community wants the government to do. I have encouraged them to frame it in a way that means the government can be held to account readily on whether we meet those objectives or not. They will come forward with what they see fit, but that is the view that I have put to them. It is saying that we do not want to end up with a massive long list of all the things we should try and achieve but should perhaps focus on those things that can be achieved in a two, three or four-year time frame—focus on making sure we deliver those things.

The elected body have a whole range of other tasks and opportunities through their direct contact with the directorates on a regular basis, through the annual estimates-style hearings that they hold with the directorates, and through the meetings that I regularly have with them and their general advocacy in the community.

Both the United Ngunnawal Elders Council and the elected body continue to play an important advisory and advocacy role for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the community. I thank them for their ongoing efforts. It is all done on a voluntary basis, but their contribution to their community is invaluable.

I noted Mr Wall's comments on the voter turnout for the election. This is a question to reflect on. I was pleased that the voter turnout was higher than the last election—substantially higher. We saw some very excellent contributions, particularly from Indigenous detainees at the AMC, who contributed around 10 per cent of the overall voter contribution. More than two-thirds of those eligible to vote at the AMC did vote. When I was out at the AMC for NAIDOC Week celebrations, I remarked to the Indigenous detainees that I really congratulated them on their engagement with the election process. The vote was up. I would particularly like to thank the staff from the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs for their considerable effort, in partnership with Elections ACT, in getting out there and encouraging people to vote.

That said, I would like to see more people voting as well. I think it sits at the feet of the elected body to some extent to ensure that the community sees value. I think the community is starting to see that value. I see the elected body being on an upwards swing in the sense that there was real competition for the places on the elected body this time. We had a strong field of candidates and the seats were hotly contested. The better the job the elected body does, the more the community will engage. Certainly they have my undertaking that the government takes their role and their contributions very seriously, and I trust the broader community will start to see that.

There are a range of other things going on, programs and projects that the government is delivering in support of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community here in the ACT. They sit across a range of directorates. My role as the minister responsible for the community is to try and see coherent patterns across government, to play that advocate role and to make sure the interests are being taken into account.

I take this opportunity to touch on the future of Gugan Gulwan, an issue Mr Wall also raised in this remarks. Formerly, in my role as Minister for Housing, I was actively working with the organisation to find new premises. As I have updated the Assembly

on on previous occasions, we have taken them to a number of sites. I acknowledge Mr Wall's remarks about the fact that there is an active effort going on, and I agree with him that we need to find them new premises. They are a very effective and successful organisation. Similarly, I know that Winnunga are bursting at the seams because of their level of success. People in government are actively searching out new premises that might be suitable for them, and looking at other options, as we are with Gudan. It may be a case of improvements to the existing premises as much as new premises. These things are important. I can assure the Assembly that, through Property Group, which now sits with Mr Barr but which I had responsibility for until a few weeks ago, we are actively seeking to support these organisations.

With those few remarks I simply observe that we have much work to do to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The government remains committed to doing that, and we look forward to working with a range of community organisations to deliver some of those improvements.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (7.59): I had meant to mention recommendations 7 and 8 when I spoke earlier; I will take the opportunity now. The recommendations are in relation to the emergency financial and material aid program for Kippax UnitingCare. I particularly would like to commend Minister Gordon Ramsay—I think they call him executive minister out there—for the work that he does but also for his perfect summary of what being in the community services sector is like. He told the estimates committee that it was like building a plane while it is flying. I think we can all appreciate the level of difficulty that that would create, with the diversity of the people that Gordon and his crew come to the assistance of.

Recommendation 7 reads:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government tell the Assembly before the Budget debate begins why it has not acted upon its review of the Emergency Financial and Material Aid Program and that it immediately increases the Budget from \$315,000 to \$410,000 for Kippax Uniting Care.

Gordon put the case that they were stretched, that they had used up their funds and that they could spend, in his estimation, up to the \$410,000 mark looking after people in difficulty in the ACT, particularly with the onset of winter, which adds a whole new set of different problems for people who are in difficulties, whatever they might be.

The government's response is that this be agreed in part. It says:

Current Emergency Material and Financial Aid (EMFA) contracts are in place until 30 June 2015. CSD has agreed to undertake a review of these programs as part of a wider consideration of the provision of emergency relief, food assistance and financial counselling in the ACT.

The response goes on to say:

Funding levels will be considered as part of future Budget processes. The ACT Government has not been able to act on the review as the *Issues Paper on the*

Provision of Financial Counselling, Food Assistance and Emergency Relief in the ACT is in the process of being finalised. It is anticipated that the issues paper will be released in late August 2014.

We all appreciate the issues paper, but there was a review of the emergency financial and material aid program, as I understand it. It would be not inappropriate for the government to respond immediately on the basis of the evidence we heard and lift the funding.

Recommendation 8 is:

The Committee recommends a review of the Emergency Financial and Material Aid program to ascertain current funding needs and areas of stress within the program.

The government response was:

Agreed.

The Community Services Directorate is finalising an *Issues Paper on the Provision of Financial Counselling, Food Assistance and Emergency Relief in the ACT*.

It goes on to talk about the consultation.

I guess that is all well and good. I just bring to the attention of the government the *Hansard* from the community day when the Reverend Ramsay appeared. I ask them to read it and act with some compassion.

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) (8.03): I rise to talk on the other two areas within this line that are my responsibility, the first one being multicultural affairs. The government is committed to ensuring that the cultural diversity of our city is well managed and supported and that all Canberrans can reach their full potential and live the life they seek to live here in our wonderful city. The government will continue in earnest to shape whole-of-government priorities that promote the participation and wellbeing of the Canberra community. The focus and responsibility of the government are broad and include a range of support and policy development activities, including multicultural affairs.

Our commitment to multiculturalism is evident in our continued funding and support for initiatives such as annual multicultural grants of \$260,000 to assist community groups with projects that enhance, promote and facilitate the participation of culturally diverse residents throughout our community; the work experience and support program which provides valuable work experience in a government administrative environment for recent migrants and refugees to the ACT; and the ever-popular National Multicultural Festival, with funding for this very well attended and much-loved event.

The government will continue to deliver other key community engagement events, such as the monthly Australian citizenship ceremonies and the annual Ramadan and Diwali receptions. We will continue our community consultation process in the lead-up to the multicultural summit to be held later this year to set the ACT multicultural framework for the next four years. The government will continue to provide secretariat support to the strategic policy committees such as the refugee, asylum seeker and humanitarian entrant coordination committee, and manage support programs such as the free overseas qualifications assessments service and the ACT services access card.

Our city has a rich cultural diversity and as a government we are committed to supporting and continuing to grow this diverse and accepting community.

I would also like to speak briefly on women, which is an area that I am responsible for. Canberra continues to be a place that supports women and girls in all areas of life—at school, at work and as part of our community—to maintain the services and supports that they require. The ACT women's plan sets out the government's vision for working with the whole community to improve the status and lives of women and girls in our community.

A Picture of women in the ACT was released in November last year, which showed how the ACT is faring compared to the rest of Australia. The report showed that the ACT continues to have a relatively low gender pay gap, with men on average earning 14.7 per cent more than women compared to the national average of 17.5 per cent. So clearly there is still some way to go.

Under the women's plan sit a range of direct actions. For example, the annual women's grants provide financial assistance to groups and organisations to develop activities that improve the status of women and girls in the ACT. A total of \$135,000 in funding is available, which includes the Audrey Fagan violence prevention projects, the young women's enrichment grants, the women's leadership program and the Audrey Fagan scholarship program.

Additionally, the ACT government continues to provide financial assistance of \$1,000 to women re-entering the workforce through the return to work grants program. Within the next few months we expect the 1,000th grant to be offered, and that will mean a \$1 million investment in local women to help them return to work over the past six years.

The government remains committed to the prevention of violence against women and children strategy 2011-17. The strategy has strong links to the national plan to reduce violence against women and their children, with the shared goal of reducing and ending violence against women and children.

The purpose of the strategy is to involve the whole community in upholding and respecting the rights of women to live a life free from the fear and experience of violence. It provides four primary objectives: women and children are safe because an anti-violence culture exists in the ACT; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children are supported and safe in their communities; women and children's

needs are met through linked services and systems; and men who use violence are held accountable and supported to change their behaviour.

In this budget \$153,000 in additional funds is being provided to the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre to support the ongoing provision of sexual assault counselling and crisis support in court for victims of domestic violence. Additional funds have been provided to the Domestic Violence Crisis Service to pilot the delivery of a domestic violence support group program.

This government remains committed to doing all we can to enhance the lives and status of women and girls in our community.

I will go to a few points that have been raised in the discussion. Mrs Jones made mention of the women's information centre. She seems to continue to paint the picture that it is not delivering programs for women. There has not been a single stall or glitch in the programs being delivered. We are not delivering them out of the old premises in Civic but programs are still being delivered from premises in Civic, just across from us in the Theo Notaras centre, and also in regional centres, at the child and family centres and at other venues by a service provider who is providing a course or other facilities. I hear women say they want services delivered where they live, and that is exactly what we are doing.

With respect to some other comments that I heard—even though they are no longer my responsibility; Mr Gentleman will continue the carriage of these very essential services here in the ACT—there was mention made of the blueprint. As I understand it, Mr Gentleman has already commented on that. Ms Lawder's comment was that she hoped this blueprint showed interaction with providers. That clearly showed she did not understand that from the get-go this blueprint was actually co-designed with community providers. That is why it has been so welcomed by the community providers, because they were there with us as a government, as a whole system, recognising the need to work together.

There were also comments around Care and Protection, indicating that the system continues to fail the community. It is a fraught, difficult area of service delivery. Yes, we have two very significant reviews into Care and Protection. Those opposite should take the time not only to read the reports but to read the work that has since been done. I refer, for example, to the milestone review panel that was established to report against the recommendations in the Public Advocate's report. It can be seen that they had confidence in the change of culture and the change of practice within the system.

Mr Gentleman has already spoken about the out-of-home care strategy, which sets a clear future picture for service delivery. It means significant reforms and a new way of doing business because that is what we need to do—to have a focus on early intervention and family support.

It was disappointing to have someone of Ms Lawder's calibre, who comes to this place from the community services sector, either unwittingly or deliberately—and I remain unsure which—continuing to misrepresent the efforts of not only the government in their service provision in human services but also many of our community providers.

Finally, what really disappointed me was the tone of the narrative from Ms Lawder on Care and Protection. She then made reference to the child death review committee. She almost took delight in saying that the most recent child death review showed that 20 per cent of deaths were related to Care and Protection. The inference was disturbing and disappointing. If you had read the report carefully and if you had ever had a chance to have a conversation with Penny Gregory, you would know that she has cautioned significantly within this report not to join the dots that you have salaciously joined, Ms Lawder.

The report that is in front of me states that from July 2008 to 2015 there were 22 deaths. Any death of a child is tragic and intolerable. We as a society should be doing absolutely everything we can to ensure that our children are protected. So 22 children and young people who died were known to Care and Protection or had a sibling that was known to them. This represents 0.3 per cent of children. Of these 22 children and young people, 12 were known together with a sibling and less than five were known only because a sibling was known to them.

The report also refers to those that were the subject of intervention by Care and Protection at the time. The type of intervention was in the form of voluntary casework, a residential order, a voluntary care arrangement, and an appraisal. It also makes reference to child concern reports. There are 14,000-plus child concern reports in each and every year. The fabulous staff in Care and Protection do their best to make sure that the 14,000-plus contacts by people raising concerns about children in our community are considered and assessed and appropriate action is put in place.

As I say, for someone of the calibre of Ms Lawder, from the community sector, to say this, I have to ponder and consider whether it was unwitting, ill informed or a deliberate narrative that completely misrepresented the processes and the efforts of Care and Protection.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella) (8.14): Just to close off on my overarching portfolio responsibilities for Community Services, the ACT government's 2014-15 budget sets out a new direction in our support for vulnerable Canberrans and investing in our community. The budget supports new initiatives that provide high quality services to support vulnerable Canberrans and build a stronger community sector.

The better services \$2.1 million trio of initiatives will simplify the way people access and obtain support by services across the ACT such as housing, family support and disability as part of the whole-of-government human services blueprint. The government-community sector task force steering implementation of these reforms met for the first time on 4 August.

The first initiative is a two-year \$1.335 million towards the local services network launch in west Belconnen, which will roll out new ways of working that will better integrate local services including local governance, enhanced service coordination and data sharing.

There is a saying that “the whole is greater than the sum of the parts”. The way in which Gordon Ramsay from Kippax UnitingCare works with other organisations to achieve better outcomes for the people they serve in west Belconnen is a perfect example of how the unified whole can achieve more than individual organisations working alone. This is the spirit of the human services blueprint. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of Gordon Ramsay, his volunteers and staff at Kippax UnitingCare, to both the local west Belconnen community and to the development of the human services blueprint.

The second initiative is the \$445,000 expansion of strengthening families, which will work with up to 50 vulnerable families to develop and implement an agreed family plan, with a tailored support package to meet their particular requirements. In addition, strengthening families will also build front-line worker capacity across both government and community sectors.

The third initiative is funding of \$322,000 to establish a human services gateway for people to improve access to information and self-support options, and link individuals and families into more intensive and tailored support when it is required.

These three initiatives have one common objective—to ensure that individuals who need support are supported with the right service at the right time and for the right length of time.

There is a high level of commitment across the government and community sectors to the blueprint reforms. Each partner has shown a strong interest in implementing the vision and purpose of the blueprint and work together as part of a joined-up human services system. The government is committed to continued collaboration and co-design throughout each phase of implementation, and recognises this as integral to the success of the blueprint reforms.

Just as the blueprint reform work is about making it easier for people to interact with and use human services, so it is that our wide-ranging reforms for the community sector are designed to make it easier for these organisations to interact with us as a government. We have been reducing unnecessary red tape and increasing support.

From 1 January 2014 the Community Services Directorate has been increasing the term of service funding agreements from three years up to five years. Also introduced on 1 July this year was the concept of recurrent grants, a move intended to replace more administratively complex service funding agreements where this is appropriate. These two changes, between them, will enable up to \$1.5 million annually in saved time and administrative effort for community sector organisations.

These changes come on top of the regulatory and reporting changes earlier in 2013-14 that together have reduced the regulatory and reporting burden by an amount equivalent to a further \$800,000 per year. With further red tape reduction initiatives to come, I expect the benefits to the sector will continue to increase over time.

From 1 July 2014 the Community Services Directorate has introduced a new relationship management approach based on the principle of a single relationship manager for each community sector organisation, regardless of how many individual contracts the directorate has with an organisation. This will significantly simplify the relationship between government and the community sector, and is a measure many non-government organisations called for and have now welcomed.

Of course, reducing red tape is not the only area that the government has been working on. Since commencing the sector development program we have in 2013 and 2014 delivered 23 governance and financial management initiative consulting packages of \$20,000 each. In conjunction with the NDIS task force we extended the initiative to make it available to up to 40 more organisations preparing for implementation of the national disability insurance scheme in the ACT.

Future elements of the sector development program will assist the community sector to deal with a complex and rapidly changing environment, and I commend these measures to the Assembly.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (8.20): I briefly wanted to say that I am not sure whether I should be amused, complimented or perhaps titillated by Ms Burch's characterisation of me as a salacious user of some information. The dictionary actually defines salacious as "having or conveying undue or indecent interest in sexual matters". I am not quite sure what part of what I said about child protection services may indicate some kind of sexual interest. I am prepared to accept that perhaps rather than Ms Burch wilfully, deliberately or perhaps simply ignorantly using the word it is due to a long day at the office. She might like to withdraw her use of the term "salacious".

Ms Burch: Madam Speaker, if I used the wrong word, I withdraw. But the intent around your narrative of linking 20 per cent—

Ms Lawder: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: No. If you withdraw, Minister Burch, you withdraw. If you want to speak to the item you address the chair.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Cultural Facilities Corporation—

Schedule 1, Part 1.8—\$300,000 (net cost of outputs), totalling \$300,000.

Schedule 1A, Part 1.9—\$7,945,000 (net cost of outputs), \$2,181,000 (capital injection), totalling \$10,126,000.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (8.21): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to the Cultural Facilities Corporation line this evening because of the good work that they do in the community. I would like to refer to the transcript when we had the CEO, Ms Elvin, before us on one of the few days when there was a member of the public sitting in the audience in estimates, Mr John Hindmarsh. I said:

Before I ask a supplementary—and Mrs Dunne has one—I would like to acknowledge the presence of the chair of the Cultural Facilities Corporation in the gallery, Mr John Hindmarsh, the Canberra equivalent of Lorenzo the magnificent for his patronage of the arts over many decades. You are more than welcome, Mr Hindmarsh.

The minister then said:

Can I echo that? He has been a very sound and good chair of the corporation.

As chair of the corporation, I think it is important to acknowledge the voluntary work that John and his wife Rosanna do. It is not just years of support; it is decades of support of the arts in the ACT. We are a much more enjoyable society for their presence here and their contribution.

We then went on to a discussion—it is not often one gets to gazump the Speaker, but I took the question rather than giving Mrs Dunne the supplementary—about what was happening with the new Canberra theatre scoping project. Mrs Dunne has spoken about this in the past, as have I. What is happening with what has potentially been called the Kennedy Centre equivalent in the ACT?

There is one thing that the ACT lacks amongst the cultural icons that we have. The cultural icons are all related to the visual arts, but there is not a performing arts icon that we have. Washington, as the capital of America, has the Kennedy Centre. As I said to the committee on the day, Father John Eddy, who set up the School of Australian Studies at Georgetown University, had said to me that in his view, having lived in Washington on and off for 30-odd years, the thing that changed Washington in the eyes of Americans and made Washington the great capital that it is today, remembering that in the 1960s Washington was the murder capital of America—there were about 400 gun-related deaths in Washington a year in the 60s—was the establishment of the Kennedy Centre as the national performing arts centre of America.

This is where contemporary American culture is put on display. There are a number of free concerts every day. There are three major theatres plus a number of smaller performance spaces where the best of American culture is put on display. I asked the question:

Is there a bigger vision behind a new theatre than just a new theatre for the ACT and if there is not, should we be having that discussion?

Ms Elvin, to her credit, said:

I certainly think that this is a theatre for the national capital and that always has the status of a national theatre. And when you look at this suite of cultural facilities that we have in the ACT, they are dominated by collecting institutions like visual arts. We do not have an equivalent in terms of the performing arts. So I think our vision should be grander and should contemplate that the national capital deserves a performing arts space of a national status indeed.

Mrs Dunne then quipped:

I think you took most of my supplementary.

I said:

That is why I went first.

But then Mrs Dunne said:

On that, is the vision that if we have a new theatre it is a replacement theatre or an additional theatre so that we would have a 600, a 1,200 and a 2,000-space?

Ms Elvin responded by saying:

I would certainly like to think that it is an additional facility. We feel that that would give us a suite of facilities that would be suitable for different usages, whether it is community use, whether it is town hall-type usage which I think would be very much what the existing Canberra Theatre could become. At the moment we struggle, to be honest, to accommodate a lot of those town hall-type uses like citizenship ceremonies, end of year dance performances, school graduation ceremonies et cetera. Typically those are very short hires and to try to accommodate them in a theatre which is also trying to provide a venue for longer hires means we are constantly juggling with dates. So I feel that there is a real opportunity for the new theatre to focus on the longer seasons, say a large musical, and for the existing theatre to become Canberra's town hall, which we do not really have at the moment, and pick up a lot of that town hall usage.

Mrs Dunne then went on to say:

Could you give us an example of the sorts of things that we have not seen because of the technical limitations of the Canberra Theatre?

Mrs Jones said:

Disney on Ice.

Ms Elvin said:

Actually, we have done ice shows.

She went on to say:

It is a considerable challenge to set up the stage as an ice rink ... Clearly with stars ... and the costs of that touring production, you simply cannot amortise them over a venue that only accommodates 1,250. That is probably the argument for the larger auditorium.

There was then discussion about the Paris Opera Ballet that some had had the opportunity to go to and others had not. But what we had was quite a nice discussion

about one of the things that really in the end defines the artistic community in your city. That is the ability to put on the big shows but at the same time accommodate the local. So I would like to commend Ms Elvin for her responses. I would certainly like to commend John Hindmarsh for his support of the corporation.

I thank the committee for recommendation 87. Remember, of course, members that this is a unanimous report without dissent. Recommendation 87 states:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that the scoping study for a new theatre facility include the possibility of establishing a national performing arts centre in the ACT.

The government response is:

Agreed. CMTEDD, in conjunction with the Cultural Facilities Corporation, will explore consideration of a performing arts facility of national status within the existing funding envelope identified for the theatre study.

Perhaps that is a sign of the maturing of our arts community that we are now looking at the long term—not just at the local but also at what is of national significance—of what happens here in Canberra. It is with the support of things like the Cultural Facilities Corporation that Canberra really does lead the nation in contemporary dance. We have produced a large number of the great dancers, choreographers and members of the dance troupes that have graced Australian stages, and particularly also in contemporary glasswork.

It is always kind of hard to know where the Canberra Glassworks fits in. It is not particularly in CFC, but I had the pleasure during the lunch break of going to the glassworks for the announcement of the 2014 Ranamok glass prize. The winner was a Catherine Wrightman from New Zealand. She has done an amazing piece in glass called *Carpet*. Oddly enough, it looks like a bit of Persian or Turkish carpet, and it is the most extraordinary piece of work. She was very fulsome in her praise of people in the contemporary glass scene, the Canberra Glassworks and the work that it does.

I think that there is a signature that we need as a city leading into the future. When they laid the foundation stone, the Prime Minister said that Canberra should become a city of governance, of education and of the arts. I think we are certainly known as a city for governance. In a large way, thanks to the ANU, the UC and the other facilities here we do have a reputation as an academic centre.

But it is that measure of arts and culture, the measure of a society, the lasting reminders of what has gone in the past that is important. It is contemporary art today; a thousand years from now it will be ancient history. It is that record that one keeps that is very important. If, true to the vision of the National Capital Authority, we are to be the home of the Australian story and engender that story into the hearts of all Australians, certainly it will be through facilities like a new theatre that may one day be known as the national performing arts centre of Australia.

The Yanks have got the Kennedy Centre; perhaps we should have the Menzies centre. Prime Minister Menzies was a great patron of the arts. I think that would be a fitting

recognition of a man that does not have a suburb named after him or a large facility as most prime ministers do. It would be the opportunity then to put on display in a world-class facility the best that Australia has to offer in the nation's capital. That would be a great objective.

It is pleasing to see that the government has agreed to the recommendation. I thank the members of the estimates committee for agreeing to that recommendation being there because this is one of the ways that you build a future for this city.

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Racing and Gaming, Minister for Women and Minister for the Arts) (8.31): Can I start by clarifying something? I do offer an apology to Ms Lawder. If I misspoke and used the word “salacious” I was actually thinking of the word “fallacious”. That actually means a mistake and a wrong set of assumptions. No offence was meant, other than I do fundamentally believe that you were wrong in your assumptions around that report. I make that clarification for your benefit. Thank you.

In respect of the Cultural Facilities Corporation, this budget provides significant new funding for the Cultural Facilities Corporation and the facilities that it manages. We are delivering major capital funding for the Capital Theatre Centre. \$1.85 million is being provided over two years for the package of works in the centre to address workplace health and safety and to improve functionality.

The work will fund major upgrades of lights and lighting features and fixtures. The new funding builds on a three-year package that is already in train to upgrade the centre. Both projects will support the viability of the centre as a venue on the national touring circuit as well as being used by the local community.

This budget will see a second stage of \$400,000 to upgrade roads within the Lanyon precinct. That is a fabulous heritage precinct in my electorate of Brindabella. The government is also providing CFC with funding for smaller building works which will allow a number of priority projects to be undertaken across venues, including Canberra Museum and Gallery and historic places. All of this funding is allowing the CFC to continue its work and program.

In respect of recommendation 87, Mr Smyth has rightly identified that the government has supported it. In conjunction with the CFC we will explore the consideration of the performing arts facility as a national service. We are in our national capital. It seems right and proper that we explore that opportunity. The other piece of work that CFC is undertaking is linked also to the audit of arts so that we can better define the benefits of Canberra theatre, CFC and the broader arts community. I think that is a very good thing as well.

Mr Smyth made mention possibly in regard to the theatre that it could be called the Menzies. I would like to remind the Assembly that if the Canberra Liberals held the former Prime Minister Menzies in such high regard then one of the Canberra Liberals would have gone down to the shores of Lake Burley Griffin when we unveiled the statue of former Prime Minister Menzies. Not one Canberra Liberal saw fit to go

down there and to join the Menzies family as we unveiled that a number of years ago. I think that actions are stronger than words and I think that demonstrates their commitment to Mr Menzies.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Economic Development Directorate—

Schedule 1, Part 1.9—\$4,129,000 (net cost of outputs), \$233,000 (capital injection), \$3,850,000 (payments on behalf of territory), totalling \$8,212,000.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (8.34): Again, Madam Deputy Speaker, the former Economic Development Directorate has been subsumed into another area. We have had most of that debate and we will be supporting the line.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Education and Training Directorate—

Schedule 1, Part 1.10—\$18,039,000 (net cost of outputs), \$13,116,000 (payments on behalf of territory), totalling \$31,155,000.

Schedule 1A, Part 1.10—\$590,203,000 (net cost of outputs), \$100,089,000 (capital injection), \$239,240,000 (payments on behalf of territory), totalling \$929,532,000.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (8.35): Before I speak about education and training, I will make a brief observation. It is good to see one lone member of the ACT community actually coming in to the ACT Assembly this late at night to listen to the budget deliberations. I would like to welcome Mr Rob Lovett from the Brindabella electorate; thank you, Mr Lovett, for your interest in the Assembly.

The Education and Training Directorate is the largest single commitment of funds in the ACT budget. With a net cost of outputs at over \$680 million, it represents a significant investment and rivals that of health and the local hospital network allocations. These funds cover a wide network of schools and training. With nearly 71,000 students enrolled within the ACT education sector, 42,000 of whom attend public schools, it is a sizable commitment. In the public school sector we have 76 preschools, 71 primary schools, 19 high schools, nine colleges and 12 specialist schools and centres, all of which have to be managed to consistent and high levels of service delivery. There is much to be proud of in both our government and non-government schools, but there is always room for improvement, as the estimates hearings demonstrated. I bring to the attention of the Assembly today just a few.

As the estimates committee report has highlighted, there was considerable discussion during the hearings about the cause and extent of asbestos found at Birrigai Outdoor School. The committee was told there is quite extensive soil contamination by asbestos materials in the area, but details were a little vague. As the directorate said to the committee:

I personally, and my team, do not know why it is what it is. We can only assume that it is historical.

While I appreciate the honesty of that answer, I must say it will do little to reassure nervous parents, many of whom are already facing unknown futures in regard to their own houses affected by asbestos, who have similar vague responses about a school that many Canberra students have visited.

Later in the hearings after consultations with TAMS officers, we learnt there are actually six areas on the site that have been identified as containing asbestos-contaminated materials. The areas were defined on a very conservative basis. We learnt that all those sites had been topsoiled and seeded. They have also been fenced off to allow the grass to grow. That is in accordance with asbestos management plans for the site. Until then there had been a check and a pick-up of loose contained materials every three months. Once the area is grassed over, checks will revert to an annual inspection. What reputational damage this has done to Birrigai is probably unknown, but, clearly, it will have some impact on its popularity. One can only wonder whether this might have been less of an issue had the government been more up-front and advised schools earlier.

We know, given the age of our schools and one of the assessment reports done routinely on the presence of asbestos and other contaminated materials, that many of our schools have asbestos in them. For the most part, it is contained and in stable forms. It is only when freak acts of nature occur, such as the storm that affected Taylor Primary School in 2012, that the asbestos becomes an active problem. Indeed, in the case of Taylor primary, the solution was expensive, costing somewhere around \$13 million. The result is an excellent rebuilt modern environment, but we need to be mindful that any other school of similar vintage or construction could be hit at any time.

I note recommendation 88 in the report suggests a full report to the Assembly on the matter. I only hope that in future the directorate is a little more on the front foot in this public reporting. I note also the allocation of \$1 million a year over the next three years for the hazardous material removal program. I trust this is managed effectively and communicated well to minimise alarm among our school communities.

Another issue raised at estimates was that of planning and school upgrades. With over 70,000 students attending schools and the population of Canberra growing significantly, it is important we get the blueprint for present and future planning right. It is one thing to identify a need for a school to be upgraded to meet the current and future demand, as is the case with Belconnen high, but writing lyrical election promises is not the same as getting on with the job. The master plan for Belconnen high has been the subject of discussion for some time.

In the latest hearings the director of infrastructure and capital works told the committee the plan for Belconnen would be completed by September 2014. However, there was also vague commentary about the costings and when the work would actually be completed. Given the election promise made by the Chief Minister in October 2012, which talked of a \$28 million upgrade to Belconnen high with design completed in the 2013-14 financial year, it would seem we are already well behind in that promise.

We have an ageing school profile; many of our schools are over 40 and 50 years old. In some cases, a knock-down and rebuild would be a far more cost-effective solution. I know of schools that have waited for their toilets to be upgraded, others for reroofing, not to mention refurbishments and painting. Additional concern was expressed in estimates about planning for additional school capacity to meet demand generated by the Riverview development.

More recently, concern has been expressed by the Franklin Early Childhood School board about where pupils from that school would go to year 3 and beyond. Franklin is a shared zone for years 3 to 6 between Harrison School and Palmerston District Primary School. However, it seems that Harrison is unable to accept enrolments for year 3 in 2014 from Franklin residents because it is already beyond capacity numbers. Bonner is not a pathway for families and neither is it an option for families to travel out of the community. Palmerston is apparently a possibility but geographically challenging as young children and families would be required to cross Gungahlin Drive which, as the letter from the board suggests, is no place for pedestrians.

The board of Franklin Early Childhood School is very concerned at the lack of education facilities in the Franklin-Gungahlin area. Clearly, they are worried it will only get worse. I can understand the difficulties for government planners in prescribing school capacities and getting the zones right in all cases, but I recall a similar issue a couple of years ago with another preschool when families were in the dark as to what primary school their child might be enrolled in. If we want our schools to develop strong community spirit, we need to ensure the community is engaged with the school and families communicated with by the directorate.

That comes to other matters involving the school community. A number of questions were put to every directorate on the question of bullying, and the estimates committee report reflects a number of recommendations around this issue. We know of bullying in several government departments, and not all of them have been handled appropriately or in a timely manner. Equally, on the issue of bullying in schools, I am not sure we have yet got it right. I get a number of complaints, but I know the number I receive would pale into insignificance with those the directorate has to deal with or, indeed, those that get as far as the minister's office.

While there are clear policy guidelines for how bullying, harassment and trouble avoidance, for want of a better phrase, are managed in schools many parents express frustration that the issues and incidents so often just get veneered over. The victim is often encouraged to move to another school, and too often it is just too hard for the school to engage effectively with the parents of the bully. School counsellors play an important part in this, and we need to ensure our teachers and support staff are trained in the latest techniques and equipped with the latest material.

Bullying is endemic in modern society, and of even more concern is cyber bullying, which is on the rise not only in schools but throughout the community. It is important to try and get a wider understanding of how it starts and how it can be deflected. I note that APFACTS is running a cyber savvy week from 15 to 19 September to help parents and students develop strategies to counter bullying in all forms. There are workshops for secondary students and parents and a community forum, and I

understand all the activities are available to anyone who has an interest in the subject. I am not aware of any single program that the ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations is running, so hopefully parents from government schools might be encouraged to become involved in the cyber savvy week activities. (*Second speaking period taken.*)

I wish to note the cooperation between the government and non-government sector on this subject of parental engagement. It is a subject APFACTS first brought to my attention a couple of years ago when they were trying to get the attention of government. Now it is a subject that has prominence in a number of forums. Indeed, parental engagement appears as the new magic formula for successful schools, and yet its principles are really quite basic. For many parents and many schools, it is nothing new. It has always been present in successful schools.

A definition I read recently suggests that “parental engagement” is when schools, families and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to be better in school, stay in school longer and like school more. When parents talk to their children about school, expect them to do well, help them plan for post-secondary study and make sure that out-of-school activities are constructive, their children do better in school. When schools engage families in ways that are linked to improving learning, students make greater gains. When schools build partnerships with families that respond to their concerns and honour their contributions, they are successful in sustaining connections aimed at improving student achievement.

All of that is basic common sense, but, nevertheless, it is important that it is being promoted. I applaud APFACTS—the Association of Parents and Friends of ACT Schools—and their public school equivalent—the ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations—for the collaborative approach they have taken to advancing this. Parental engagement links well with autonomous schools and effective school boards. However, I suspect that unless there is equal engagement between staff and parents, the results are not always what they should be.

I know during the estimates process questions were raised about NAPLAN. I continue to be concerned that too many schools and too many parents place too much emphasis on this one day of testing. Anecdotal evidence tells us of classes being coached, of parents withdrawing their children from school on NAPLAN testing days because their children are too stressed to sit for the test, of parents of children with a disability being encouraged to keep their children at home, all of which puts too great an importance on NAPLAN. I am sceptical about the reworked school comparisons grading based on socioeconomic elements, and I continue to be concerned about the number of students across a wider range of classes and schools that are below the national average.

I support increases in the number of specialist numeracy and literacy teachers in ACT schools and trust they are having an effect. I think emphasis on improving the quality of teaching is of far more relevance than socioeconomic measures. To that end, more funds directed to appropriate professional development for teachers would always be supported. Casual teachers have expressed concern at the limited choices available to them in this regard. Given the important role they play in our schools, we need to ensure their skills are kept updated.

I know there continues to be great concern in the area of disability education, which my colleague Andrew Wall will further address. The government needs to get the funding, the message and the direction right in education policy. Too much depends on it. At the end of the day, it matters not what school system a child in the ACT is educated in—public, Catholic, independent. What matters is that they have access to quality learning, professional and dedicated teachers, a safe school environment and an engaged parent community. All these are possible for every school in Canberra.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (8.49): I rise to speak to this line item today with respect to early childhood education, and specifically child care. I spoke in this place just last week in response to Ms Berry's matter of public importance on this topic. We spoke about affordable, available and quality child care. These aspects of child care affect everyone, and everything our families do—whether or not a mother can return to work, where they can work, what hours they can commit to, and worrying about whether their child is in a quality centre under good care. Importantly, it affects the cost of living for our families and affects our economy as a whole.

According to the 2011 census, 45 per cent of women now in the workforce who have young children returned to work before their youngest child turned one. In Canberra, for those families whose mothers or fathers return to work, it is not unusual to find childcare costs in excess of \$100 per day per child. While we know that the federal policy in this area has a huge impact on our territory, it is still a big responsibility of our government to help our families in these situations.

We know we have some of the highest childcare costs in the country. Some people who put their children on the waiting list when they first become pregnant find, when their child is 12 or 18 months old and the mother needs to return to work, they still do not have a childcare place for their child to go to. So there is an issue with cost and there is an issue with supply in the ACT, and that is something the government needs to address.

Additionally, it is interesting that the Productivity Commission's draft report last month stated:

Despite benefits for working families and children, New South Wales, Tasmania, Western Australia, and the Australian Capital Territory do not fund ... universal access preschool programs in long day care settings.

It then goes on to say that the ACT only provides this universal access preschool service as part of the school system. I quote the draft report's comments:

This reduces options for working families, results in some children missing out on the high-quality UA-preschool service that is delivered elsewhere, and their parents are facing higher out-of-pocket expenses.

In the estimates report recommendation 81 states:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government undertake an analysis of unmet need for child and family services in the ACT ...

Hopefully, they may think about child care as part of that. Whilst you can see there are some differences, it is an important aspect of child and family services.

The government have told us today that they will not table a report on that; instead we will hear about the human services blueprint fixing it all. As I said earlier when I spoke on community services, despite what Ms Burch might think, I really do hope that the human services blueprint is successful in making all aspects of community services delivery better. However, we cannot rely solely on this. We do not want to find ourselves in the same situation all over again a few years from now, and having a blueprint is not the only way to fix things. There were certainly some large community sector organisations that were not, or chose not to be, involved in the development of the blueprint.

This budget does not appear to be doing anything to improve affordability and access to child care in the ACT. I am disappointed that for perhaps another year, families may be left hanging out to dry by this government.

I encourage the minister to read some of the submissions that people have made to the Productivity Commission and that are included in the draft report, especially those from people in the ACT.

We cannot keep doing the same things and expect to get a different result. We need to consciously make those changes. We need the government to start aiming to decrease the cost of living for our families, rather than continually being happy to put our families under cost-of-living pressures. Child care is an area that has a direct impact on women's participation in the workforce and it is an area that needs to be addressed as a matter of priority. This has not happened in this budget.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (8.54): I want to speak on a couple of things in this line item—education, to start with. One of the estimates committee recommendations was that the ACT government set out a time line for the completion of the Belconnen High School master plan. I am looking forward to hearing about that time line. It is scheduled for completion before the end of 2014. I know this is an area that you have worked on for many years as well, Ms Porter, so we will both be celebrating when we get to see the results of the time line for the completion of that plan.

Also, during those committee hearings, I asked a number of questions as a member of the estimates committee around schools infrastructure, particularly around west Belconnen, for the new development of Riverview. The government's response to that recommendation was:

Agreed in principle.

The Education and Training Directorate undertakes analysis of projected need for public schooling as part of its ongoing planning processes. This planning will continue to analyse the need for schooling in West Belconnen.

The timing of advice to Government, however, is dependent on input from estate developers, including private developers (in the case of Riverview) and the Land Development Agency.

As a result, decisions on the number, type and timing of public schools cannot be finalised by March 2015. Delivery of Government infrastructure will be part of future ... considerations.

I am happy to be part of a government that makes sure that public schools in a new development in west Belconnen are taken into account and that we can be sure of the type and timing of public schools in future budget announcements.

I want to talk a little bit about early childhood education. I have noted that at Kippax a new centre is being built. I understand that centre will be operated by the YMCA. I will be very happy to watch the progress on that centre, which should be able to provide other opportunities for families to be able to access early childhood education in our community. Also, as part of the Higgins school redevelopment proposal, there will be a new early childhood centre in future years—another opportunity for families in west Belconnen to access early childhood education.

I want to talk about some of the things that the ACT government does in the early childhood education sector, in supporting that sector to provide the highest quality education and care—that is, the hundreds of scholarships for certificate III and diploma qualifications for people who work in that sector. I have already talked about some of the new centres coming online, and those that will come online in future years.

I want to talk a bit about the federal policy. I do not know what planet Ms Lawder has been sitting on, but there is no way that the ACT government or any state and territory government could fund education in the early childhood education sector. It would be a wonderful thing, and in a perfect world that would be the case. But funding for that sector is in the hands of the federal government. And this is a government that wants to wind back quality in the early childhood education sector, so that parents are having to make a decision to put their children into an education sector without being guaranteed that the people who are caring for and educating their children have the highest qualifications available.

During the conversation in this place last week, she said something along the lines of: “Oh, yes, well, quality is a luxury that only people who are wealthy can afford.” “Quality in early childhood education and care is something that only people who are wealthy should be able to afford.” That is an unacceptable message for us to be sending our families, by saying: “You know what? You don’t deserve a quality education.”

Mr Hanson: Come back with the quote.

MS BERRY: “You don’t deserve quality education and care in the early childhood sector.”

Mr Hanson: Come back with a quote, if you are going to make allegations.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Hanson!

Mr Smyth: Where did you get them from?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Hanson! Mr Smyth!

MS BERRY: Through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, I did not actually make the quote. I did say “something along the lines of,” and I do not think that I was incorrect in what I was saying.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members! Ms Berry, continue.

MS BERRY: I think it is really disappointing that a person can come into this place and make assumptions about the ACT government being able to have any control over the affordability of early childhood education in the ACT when that absolutely and primarily sits in the federal government’s pocket. If we are serious about having affordable education in the ACT then the federal government needs to fund it completely. That would make a perfect world for the early childhood sector. But what is happening right now is that they are putting the cart before the horse, asking for the workers in the early childhood sector to be underqualified and underpaid, and then expect parents to pay for poor quality care. It is unacceptable.

The ACT government are doing everything that they can to make sure that people who work in this sector have the highest qualifications and are able to access the education to have that highest qualification level.

With respect to the availability of services in the ACT, the ACT government needs to take into account what is happening in employment in the public sector in this town. That is being cut by the federal government right now. So flooding the market with additional education and care places is only going to lead to bigger problems in the future. I was working with the union that represented early childhood educators in 1996 when centres closed down because the federal Liberal government cut the public service so badly. Centres were shut down because there were no children in those centres. Families had to pull their children out of those centres because they had no job to go to.

Mr Hanson: Rudd took a meat axe to it, didn’t he? Weren’t those his words?

MS BERRY: It was your mate John Howard, actually. I want to talk about the human services blueprint as well. If you talk to the people who have been part of the development of that human services blueprint, they have real hope that it is going to have a real impact on the people who need it. It is people focused. The community sector appeared before the estimates committee and talked about their hopes for the success of that project, particularly in west Belconnen, where the need is felt by everybody in that community.

They recognise that the human services blueprint starts from the bottom up. It does not start from the top down. The community services sector are the ones that will be

developing the supports that are necessary and will be part of the services that implement those supports. I have great faith that the human services blueprint, with the input from all of those community services sector organisations, will be able to deliver for the people in west Belconnen.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (9.02): I rise this evening to speak to the budget line item relating to disability education. This line item warrants particular attention as we debate the appropriation bill this evening.

As I have said earlier during the debate, the national disability insurance scheme is supported by all sides of politics and is welcome reform for those with a disability in our community. Both sides can also agree on the position that the government is not best placed to act as a service provider under the NDIS. However, what we have seen in terms of education provision for young children with a disability from this government here is a rapid withdrawal of service delivery in the early intervention space. Closures of early intervention units and other supports, and leaving kids with an unsure future, are an absolute travesty.

This government have made a decision—goodness knows when they made it, but nonetheless, the decision has been taken—which has allowed them to make an early exit from the cost of maintaining an early intervention service to children in an educational setting in the ACT. The excuse that has been used has been the arrival of the NDIS trial in the ACT, but the government have failed to consider the more than 300 families that are currently accessing and relying on these services on a daily basis. These families rely heavily on the success and the stability that these services have provided in the past.

Just last week, I tabled a petition that had almost 2,500 signatures on it. It sought to ensure that early intervention units attached to schools across the ACT would be maintained. Again, because of a lack of preparation from this government, parents, carers, teachers, therapists and advocates are left anxious and desperately seeking information about what services will be operational by the end of the 2014 school year to replace the early intervention services that they currently access.

The minister continues to give assurances that services will well and truly be ready by the end of the school year—in fact, that by the beginning of the last school term this year, service providers will be available to talk about what services are on hand. However, I note that the language is getting much more measured when affirming this commitment. Last week in a ministerial statement, Minister Burch said, and we have the actual excerpt here, which seems to be a practice the opposite side is failing to follow tonight:

I have said I would make available, for a limited time—

a limited time—

facilities in schools to assist organisations in establishing their services. I made that decision as it will assist children to remain in familiar school surroundings for the time being.

This means that there will be, again, disruption for these children. Not only will they start in a new program, but potentially—definitely by the sound of that language—they will have the cloud of uncertainty hanging over them as they face yet another potential move to another premise at some point in the future. Again, it is taking children away from familiar surroundings and forcing parents to build new networks and new communities.

The success of early intervention is no secret, particularly when dealing with children with disabilities or developmental delays such as autism or global developmental delay. There is a finite time for these services and these opportunities to be given to give these kids the best start in life. At the end of the day, it ultimately changes their capacity as an adult to function in our community. A child that has a successful opportunity to go through an early intervention program is more likely to be independent as an adult and is more likely to be able to enter into gainful employment and contribute to our economy. The uncertainty that these changes pose to families is potentially robbing children of achieving to the maximum of their capacity.

We here are all familiar with the motions and the election commitments by the Canberra Liberals in 2012 to establish a centre based on the AEIOU philosophy. My colleague Mr Doszpot has been a very proud advocate of this. He and I have visited that organisation on a number of occasions. We are in regular communication and dialogue with them. After having a chat to the director up in Queensland just a couple of weeks ago, it is surprising to now see that they are considering establishing in the ACT. It is surprising, because that is quite to the contrary of what was explained to me on the telephone when I spoke to them just a couple of weeks ago. Nonetheless, hopefully, for the Canberra families, these kinds of services will come.

Members interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot! Ms Burch! We are not having a conversation across the chamber. Mr Wall, continue.

MR WALL: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. As I said, it is surprising that the opposition has been told one thing by a service provider and the government is promoting a different cause. AEIOU is just one such example.

Another issue that it is important to note in the debate tonight is the report that was commissioned by KPMG. KPMG were engaged to undertake what the government describes as market soundings. If you commission a report for an organisation such as KPMG to do some market soundings to find out what stage the service providers are at and whether or not they are ready and capable to establish services in the ACT, it is very good and it is a very sound principle, but you have taken this advice and sought the community consultation after the decision was already made, again, putting the cart before the horse. It is only going to continue to create more anxiety, more uncertainty and more unrest for families that are continuing to rely on these services, not yet knowing whether they are going to be able to access early intervention services for their child next year.

My colleagues here in the opposition and I are proud to stand by our position. On numerous occasions we have called on the government to maintain the early intervention services that are currently on offer, at least until 2016, and not withdraw service until such time as another service provider is able to step in and take up the slack. It is a smooth transition. It is a common-sense approach to say, “We will maintain services in this space until such time as the sector is ready to take it over, bit by bit”—not a whole-hog approach saying, “We are out; someone else will take care of this mess,” which seems to be the approach by this minister all too often.

We will continue to fight for the wishes of families out there that access these services. We will continue to raise their concerns here in this Assembly. And we will continue to hold this minister and this government to account until such time as their concerns are heard, taken notice of and addressed appropriately.

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Racing and Gaming, Minister for Women and Minister for the Arts) (9.09): I rise to talk about, and probably close debate on, education and training. I think it is recognised by many here that this is an important line in the budget and it is an important bit of business for government to ensure that our children are given the best quality education that we can offer.

This budget continues our proud tradition of investment in education, and, with record funding of \$960 million, which is up 5.2 per cent on last year’s budget, we have increased recurrent funding for the public education sector by \$17 million to \$566 million, and we are continuing to support non-government schools through an allocation of \$59 million. This continued funding commitment, as well as our deep commitment to quality and innovation, will ensure that we maintain our leadership in education and improve outcomes for all Canberrans. This budget delivers on that commitment and targets investment to provide the best possible education for every child.

In the area of early learning, our commitments are targeted on the infrastructure, educators and quality. Continuing with our childcare infrastructure program, we have allocated a further \$1.4 million over two years to enable refurbishment and upgrade of childcare facilities. We are investing \$500,000 over two years to extend the existing early childhood scholarship program, providing certificate III in children’s services to assist educators to meet the requirements for the national quality framework. I was pleased to announce last month scholarships for people aspiring to obtain a degree in early childhood education, and these 25 scholarships will deliver on one of our key commitments.

On early childhood education, much has been said by Ms Lawder on the need for early childhood education and care, and indeed I agree 100 per cent—it is an important aspect—and she says it is the responsibility of the government to do all it can. Ms Lawder has been in this place only a short time so she may have missed the investment in the 120-place centre that we built and have contracted out to provide service through the YWCA at Holder; the Franklin Early Childhood School, again a

designated school for supporting early childhood education, and upgrades across a number of our centres. Ms Berry mentioned Kippax. I know of a new site at Macarthur. We have invested significant money to make sure that Canberra families do have access to long-day care places and to preschool places.

In fact it was only just last week, I think, on a matter of public importance, that I reminded the Assembly of the investment of this government that has seen a 94 per cent increase in places for early childhood care in the ACT. From 2011 to 2014, there was a growth of 2,068 places. I call that no slight growth. I call that a reasonable growth and investment by this government, with 700 of those places coming in last year alone.

There was mention of the importance of the preschool years, and reference to the Productivity Commission. I also draw the attention of those in this Assembly to the comments by the Productivity Commission that recommends that the Australian government, the Australian federal government, continue to fund universal access to early childhood education care because the current arrangements will come to an end in December this year. So, in a matter of months, Canberra families could have reduced offerings of early education and care courtesy of the Australian government.

The Productivity Commission also recommends that further federal funding be provided to states and territories to allow universal access to early childhood care in long-day care centres. So the call goes to Ms Lawder not to stand here and say, "This government needs to do more," but actually to get on the phone, maybe approach federal colleagues and ask why they do not commit to universal access funding and not leave Canberra families in this state of uncertainty.

Ms Berry made reference to Ms Lawder's statement. I think she used words along the lines of a reference to an expensive car and she was accused of verballing. I quote from *Hansard* of 5 August, where Ms Lawder said:

We need to acknowledge that the ACT has the highest cost of child care in the country. It is disingenuous to put quality completely above affordability and availability. If you cannot afford a Rolls-Royce or a Ferrari, there is no point talking about the quality that you get from it because it is completely out of your price bracket and it does not matter how good the performance is of that car.

Very clearly the point is that Ms Lawder was the one that brought in the Rolls-Royce and the Ferrari. It was Ms Lawder. Ms Lawder was not verballed. *Hansard* shows that if you cannot afford a Rolls-Royce or a Ferrari there is no point talking about quality.

So there it is. The federal Liberals wanted to pull out of the national partnership and stop funding universal access to child care in preschools. The Canberra Liberals here have not put one motion of assent, no policy, not a zip towards having early childhood care, education and care as a priority. In fact there is nothing. In fact Ms Lawder says, "If you cannot afford a Rolls-Royce, do not ask about quality." So I am not quite sure where you go with your early childhood care policies. It is quite frightening to Canberra families that you do not recognise the investment of this government that sees a 94 per cent increase in availability for early child care, and that is your response.

Let us get back to school initiatives, Madam Deputy Speaker. We know that the quality of the learning environment has a big impact on how well students learn. Accordingly we have provided focus funding for infrastructure and information and communication technology improvements. Capital funding of \$81 million has been provided to improve physical infrastructure as well as information and communications technology.

The significant investment will enable the new state-of-the-art primary school to open in 2016 to serve the Molonglo valley community. Coombs Primary School was the first community facility in the valley. It will accommodate around 720 students, predominantly from Coombs and Wright. Master planning work for Belconnen High School initiated in the 2013 budget will be progressed through a further funding allocation of \$250,000. Stage 1 works include building demolition, facilities upgrades and completion of master planning in consultation with the Belconnen schools and their communities.

I was at a private event last night and I spoke with a Belconnen high student who is very thrilled with the work and the opportunities. Work is already starting, I think, on the science and arts area and the administration there, and the student speaks very positively of those changes taking place within the school.

Also on the built form, Mr Doszpot made mention of a number of things. He made mention of asbestos at Birrigai and was quite dismissive of Education and Training's response to questions on asbestos at Birrigai. The Birrigai site is managed by TAMS and the school is now clearly informed of the condition of the site. As I understand it, only two schools have chosen not to participate, not to go to Birrigai, but it is a well-regarded and a well-loved venue for schools, and ACT schools, both government and non-government, continue to use the site.

There is asbestos in our schools. There is no doubt and I think that is well understood. There are 69 ACT public schools and 22 childcare centres with a confirmed presence of asbestos, but each and every one of those schools has an asbestos management plan. I think they have been brought into the Assembly before. If not, they are available on the website and I encourage Mr Doszpot to have a look at them.

There was also a comment, again by Mr Doszpot, about Franklin. There was a question from Mrs Jones about the pathways from Franklin school into Harrison. The advice I have is that Harrison is indeed accepting, as it ought, schools—

Members interjecting—

MS BURCH: I am aware of the letter from the board but I am also aware that year 2 students currently at Franklin are going to Harrison and that those children are being accepted. I would say through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, if somebody is wrong it is probably Mr Doszpot.

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Ms Burch, resume your seat, please. Mr Doszpot, I will warn you next time you interject. Ms Burch and the rest of the members here heard you in silence when you were speaking, I believe, so will you please pay the same respect.

MS BURCH: There was also a mention of bullying. Bullying, unfortunately, does exist. It happens in our community; it would happen in our schools. We have 40,000-plus students in our government schools and around 30,000 students in non-government schools. ETD has a very strong and clear policy around managing poor behaviours, including bullying at schools. Again, all those policies are on the website and I encourage Mr Doszpot to have a look at them.

There was mention of NAPLAN. I agree with you on this one, Mr Doszpot: it is not the only test or indicator that families, schools and students should be looking to. It is one test. It is a consistent test. I am a supporter of NAPLAN but I also understand that the best thing that a parent can do—that families can do—is actually to go to the school and talk to the school executive when they are considering what school their children can go to.

Mr Doszpot also made mention of professional learning opportunities for teachers across the ACT and made an inference that there were not many opportunities for professional development. I would like to table a list from TQI on the opportunities for professional development. I table the following paper:

2014 Register of Accredited Professional Learning Programs, dated 11 August 2014.

Mr Doszpot may want to visit, again, another informative website that clearly, for those who can see, has quite an extensive list of opportunities for professional development.

I have made mention of the financial commitment to public education. I have also made mention of our financial commitment to non-government schools. We on this side of the chamber understood the elements of the national education reform agenda and the need to have student-based funding. We committed to six years funding to government schools and non-government schools and it is the federal Liberal government that has torn up that contract. That will fund only four years.

It has also been raised in this place about what the independents and Catholic schools think of that. I can tell you quite explicitly that the Catholic schools write to me and talk to me and say they are devastated and ask me to continue to fight for years 5 and 6 funding that the federal government has torn up and thrown out. So if Mr Doszpot wants to do something useful, I would say: please go to your federal counterparts and argue on behalf of the ACT Catholic education system and have the federal government honour the years 5 and 6 commitment in the NERA agreement.

On training initiatives, this budget also continues a focus on the government's strategic initiatives to improve the vocational education and training system's

responsiveness, access and equity. This includes the ACT skills needs list, an evidence-based approach to identifying the skills needs within the ACT and ensuring the best possible match of available skills on demand. Our better linkages initiative improves linkages between registered trading organisations, employment service providers and employers and community agencies across the ACT. To support the better linkages initiative, over \$1.1 million of training and reformed funding in this budget will be directed to projects demonstrating innovative approaches, tools or resources for assisting ACT job seekers to access training and employment.

When we look at ensuring that excellence is continued in our education and training area, the budget initiatives are complemented by ongoing strategies to support nation-leading performance of our schools through quality teachers, effective learning environments and positive parental engagement. Ensuring that we have quality teachers in our schools is fundamental to building a high-performing system and obtaining the best results. Above all, the community expects our teachers to have high levels of literacy and numeracy, and from next year the recruitment process for new public school teachers will include a literacy and numeracy test. My aim is for our teachers to have literacy and numeracy levels in the top 30 per cent of the country. We are working with the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership on an online assessment to implement this test.

In terms of parental engagement, while teachers are indeed crucially important in ensuring high levels of students' achievement, the role the parents play in their children's education cannot be forgotten or brushed aside. Research shows that positive parental engagement in learning promotes improved academic achievements, wellbeing and productivity. We include families in this genuine partnership to make sure that children get the best opportunities and the best outcome from their school environment. This is why I have provided, through the directorate, funding to engage the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth to conduct a significant piece of work on parental engagement involving public, Catholic and independent schools. This will help to inform our work to make sure that we get the best outcomes for our children.

There were also comments by Mr Wall on early intervention. He has left again. I am still trying to understand why he tweeted, on the morning of the estimates education and training session, about the hard questions he was going to ask and then did not bother asking any. But we do know—

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Ms Burch and Mr Smyth—

MS BURCH: Make no mistake, those on this side of the chamber know and understand the benefit of early education, and this is why we are talking with providers. I know of at least five providers, including the AEIOU, organisations that are in serious negotiations about stepping into the early intervention space at the beginning of term in 2015. There will be a provider expo on 13 September this year where parents can have a chance to meet firsthand the providers that will step into this early intervention space.

Our priorities will ensure that every child, young person and adult will benefit from a high-quality and accessible education and training system. Underpinning this is a funding system which is equitable and appropriately targeted. Accordingly, this government will continue its commitment to needs-based funding in our schools as per its commitments under the national education reform agreement. This will include evaluating our current funding of public schools. We will direct funds to where they are needed most and to where you can deliver the best outcome to ensure that every child has the knowledge and skills for success through our community and through this budget. Our ongoing focus on measures will make a real difference for students and we will continue to provide the best education system in this country.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (9.28): I was not intending to speak to this line but I want to make a couple of points with regard to education funding. Ms Burch talks about the fifth and sixth years of what was referred to as the Gonski funding and says, “Where is this money? Why did the federal government not sign up to it?”, and so on. Let me be very clear here. That money never existed. That money was never in any budget anywhere.

What happened with the funding both in health and in education was that the federal Labor Party under Gillard and Rudd knew that they were heading for tragedy. They knew that. What they did was they thought, “We are going down here. What we will do is promise whatever we want,” but not in the budget years because that would hold them accountable. What they said was, “For the next four years in the budget we will basically have a level of funding which is consistent.” The federal government, when it got into office, made a commitment to sign up to that and has continued to do so. So there are no changes to that.

What you see, if you look at the charts and you look at the graphs, is that in year 5 and year 6, in the never-never, when there was never any money allocated, when it was never budgeted, what the federal Labor government did, in a deceitful act under Prime Minister Gillard and Prime Minister Rudd, was promise astronomical levels of funding which were not sustainable and which, if they had been permitted to, as we were aware, would have taken the levels of public debt up to \$600 billion.

When the question is asked of the Labor Party—and none of them have ever been able to respond to this, other than putting health and education spending on the national credit card—where was that money coming from, none of them will engage in that debate. None of them will respond to that because they know it is true that what Gillard and Rudd were doing was promising away the future. This is the most disingenuous thing that they did. They went to the states offering billions of dollars of money that did not exist, that they could not possibly fund. The only way that that money could be secured, the only way that that money could be provided, was by putting it on the national credit card.

I know that lot opposite do not want to hear this and they do not want to engage in this debate, but I look forward to Ms Berry, Mr Gentleman, Ms Burch, Mr Corbell or the world’s greatest Treasurer over there, Mr Barr, getting up and telling us. Mr Barr certainly knows how to squeeze a dollar out of someone. Mr Barr might be able to tell us where all that money was coming from.

I am sure that when Ms Gallagher and Ms Burch signed up for that money they said to the federal government, “Where is this money coming from?” I am sure that they knew that this was appropriated or was going to be appropriated and where it came from. But no, they did not ask that, because this was dodgy, this was deceitful, and, as was predicted and as Gillard and Rudd knew, they went to an election and lost. What happened afterwards is that every Labor politician in the country is out there saying, “Where is the money? Where is the money that was promised?”, knowing full well that it was Monopoly money at best. It did not exist. It was on the credit card. It was an illusionary promise, a deceitful promise, that this lot signed up to.

But worse than the grand deceit by the federal government and the complicit Labor government here was that in the budget before last—and we are feeling the ill effects of it now—the Gonski plan was put up across the board. You will remember that this was the moment when previous Prime Minister Gillard was under enormous threat; the sharks were circling; Kevin Rudd was doing his numbers; Bill Shorten was wondering whom he should go with this week; and she needed to stitch up a deal really quickly to try to make herself look secure. She came running to the ACT, and just as Kevin Rudd had been able to get Jon Stanhope signed up to health agreements, the first one to do so—you remember that back in, I think it was, 2010 where Jon Stanhope signed up and said, “Let us go to the bar”—Julia Gillard came down and said, “I need you to sign up to this deal.” Katy Gallagher and Joy Burch did.

Let me tell you, when you compare what was in the budget under the national partnership and special purpose payments with what the Chief Minister signed up to under Gonski, over those four years—and we are right in the middle of that now—there is \$30 million less into the ACT school system. This minister and her Chief Minister, in order to try to provide some cover for their Labor mate, their sister up on the hill who was about to get knifed by Kevin Rudd and the factional overlords, were prepared to sign away \$30 million of money from our school children. And that is what they did.

So when this mob come in here and dare lecture—

Ms Burch: Madam Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, is “mob” acceptable as parliamentary language?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: No. Mr Hanson, refer to the members on the other side by their correct names.

Mr Doszpot: We did not say “rabble”; we said “mob”.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Excuse me, Mr Doszpot, that was the point of order. Mr Doszpot, have you got a point of order as well?

Mr Doszpot: No.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Mr Hanson, refer to members on the other side by their correct names.

MR HANSON: Let us refer to them by their correct names: the Labor Party, the friends of Gillard, the friends of Rudd, the friends of Shorten, the friends of the mob up on the hill who, through their own incompetence, their own infighting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, do you mean the federal government or the previous federal government?

MR HANSON: The previous federal government. At the time, the federal government came down to the ACT and said, “I have got a deal for you”—this will get you—“Come on, let us have a deal, and we will all sign it together and skip along. This will keep Prime Minister Gillard in power for at least another week. And all it will cost your kids, all it will cost your school children, is \$30 million.”

The Chief Minister has arrived, hopefully to stand up and explain to us why she signed up to a deal that cut \$30 million out of our education budget that we were getting from the feds. I hope the Chief Minister will stand up and explain that to us. No? It does not sound like she will.

Anyway, I thought it would be worth standing up, after we heard Ms Burch’s sad tale of the money that was not coming for the fifth and sixth years and that was on the credit card, and pointing out that when it comes to funding from the federal government, the people with blood on their hands, or ink in this case probably, the people that signed away \$30 million of funding for our kids, were Katy Gallagher and Joy Burch. And they have the hide to come in here and complain about federal funding.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Housing and Minister for Tourism and Events) (9.37): I cannot let the Leader of the Opposition’s ramblings, even at this late hour, go by and not respond to them. It is particularly interesting, perhaps galling, that those opposite would attempt to come into this place and argue as they did, given what their party has done to education and health expenditure in this country and the priorities that they have chosen.

They want to give tax cuts to miners, to people who have more than \$1 million in superannuation. That is their priority. It is tax cuts to their mining billionaire mates, and it is big tax benefits to those who have massive amounts of superannuation, whilst at the same time ripping away what small bonuses were given to low income households for their superannuation, ripping money out of health and education in order to fund the Prime Minister’s series—not even universally supported within his own party—of election commitments that he is ultimately having a great deal of difficulty convincing the Senate to support.

Then it is putting a tax on the visit to the GP. What have we got there? We have a very clear statement of values from the Liberal Party that we will tax you if you are sick. We have got this series of contrasts where the Liberal Party is in favour of driving down public expenditure on health, on education and on assistance for low income families but providing massive tax concessions for the miners, for insisting on

giving massive tax discounts and write-downs to those who have millions and billions stashed aside in superannuation; yet taking it away from low income households. They are the choices.

We could sit here and debate all night our quite clear policy contrasts in relation to those issues that matter most to ACT residents and indeed Australians. And we have seen time and again, when it comes to which party the people of Canberra and the people of Australia trust to manage health and education, it is overwhelmingly the Labor Party. It is because of our track record in the delivery of essential services to people in Canberra and across Australia and being able to do so in a fiscally responsible way.

How we do that is by having a fair, sustainable taxation system that is progressive, that asks a little more of those who have high incomes to make a contribution to the greater good of our society by providing world-class health and education services. And more than half of the territory budget is spent, and rightly so, in public health and public education because that is the absolute guarantee of a decent and civil society: high-quality public health and public education services. And that will always be the difference between this side of politics and those opposite.

Mr Hanson can come in here and try to lecture the Chief Minister about securing more funding for education and securing a once-in-a-generation change to fund schools on the basis of need, to get money where it is most needed in education, to transform our public education system at a national level to ensure that resources go to needy children in this country. He can come in here and make snide remarks, as he is wont to do, but he has never contributed anything positive to public debate in this area because, at his core, the Leader of the Opposition stands for nothing but greed and wealth accumulation against the values that most Canberrans hold dear. And that is why the Leader of the Opposition is the Leader of the Opposition and not the Chief Minister and will stay in that position. His speech tonight absolutely confirms that it is his role in public life, and we look forward to him staying as Leader of the Opposition for quite some time to come.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (9.41): Madam Assistant Speaker, I will take my second 10 minutes. Look, it is clear that Mr Barr is not really the ACT's greatest Treasurer. It is the ACT's greediest Treasurer that I should respond to. For anybody to come into this place and complain about people taking tax out of people's pockets, I think is ironic. It is extraordinary that Andrew Barr, the great taxpayer, the great claimer of rates and other fees and charges in this town of his great lease variation charge and other fantastic taxes—

Mr Coe: Unless they are the Labor Club seeking deconcessionalisation.

MR HANSON: Right, and then it is deregulation, isn't it? Then it is, "Do you want some deconcessionalisation? We will sort you out with that." But what I would ask Andrew Barr to do, the ACT's greediest Treasurer, is answer me two questions. This is a test for the Treasurer. I hope he is listening because this is a test and he can demonstrate how he is not the world's greediest but the world's greatest Treasurer.

Firstly, explain to me why this government signed up to a Gonski deal where there was \$30 million less than was previously in the budget forecast under national partnership and special purpose payments. Explain to me where that \$30 million went and why you signed up for that deal. That is the first challenge I have for you.

Secondly, can you please explain in the fifth and sixth year of Gonski funding where that money was coming from other than the credit card? Can you explain to me where that money was coming from? When I sit down, I want to hear from you, Mr Treasurer, where the \$30 million went and where that money was coming from in the fifth and sixth years other than the credit card.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education) (9.43): I rise to address Mr Hanson yet again, because we have been through this, I think, in at least three estimates and annual report processes. I have got to the point where I think it might be—because I know Mr Hanson—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Coe, order!

MS GALLAGHER: is not stupid. I know you are not stupid and so I fear that there just may be a little part of you which is consciously not listening to the information and advice you were given about the indexation arrangements for calculating payments of education grants to the states and territories. Because if you were able to comprehend that information—it is quite basic—you would know that the reason there was a reduction in the indexation arrangements about education funding to the states and territories was because larger states all cut their budgets. They all cut their education—

Members interjecting—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order, members!

MS GALLAGHER: spend and as the indexation figure is drawn from the funding from state governments as it flows—

Members interjecting—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order!

MS GALLAGHER: and is reflected through the commonwealth indexation. Those cuts arise from—surprise, surprise!—your Liberal mates. When they get into power they cut education funding. When they cut education funding it flows through the commonwealth indexation arrangements. That explains entirely the change in indexation as part of the ACT-commonwealth agreement. You have had it explained to you now probably five or six times. It is very—

Mr Hanson: Well, why did the other states get tens of millions more? You have not explained that.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Hanson!

MS GALLAGHER: It is very straightforward. It is because, Mr Hanson, they do not resource their schools at the point that we do. That also was made very clear to you. In fact, we are proud of our funding for education. This is something that we have seen as being of clear importance since 2001. Let us remember—what was it?—\$27 million behind the school gate, our commitment in 2001. Our victory in 2001 had a very strong education focus. That funding has flowed to the point that we—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, order!

MS GALLAGHER: have the best resourced education system in the country. That is something that we are incredibly proud of. We do not see it in states where the Liberal Party is in power.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Smyth**) adjourned to the next sitting.

Adjournment

Motion by **Mr Corbell** proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Ms Megan Smithies

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Health, Minister for Higher Education and Minister for Regional Development) (9.47): I rise tonight to pay tribute to an outstanding public servant who has finished a long career with the ACT public service in July this year. Megan Smithies was Director-General of the former Commerce and Works Directorate and the ACT's Under Treasurer between 2007 and 2012. This included my time as Treasurer between 2008 and 2011, during which Megan provided outstanding support, service and advice to me and following on in 2011 to 2014 provided that same level of support and advice to the Deputy Chief Minister, Andrew Barr.

Megan joined the ACT public service in 1989 and rose to the position of Under Treasurer, making her the most senior female bureaucrat in the ACT at the time and one of the first women in the country to head a Treasury department. At ACT Treasury, Megan was responsible for strategic financial and economic policy advice to the ACT government and was involved in several cycles of public sector reform, changes to budget systems and approaches, and structural reforms of the territory's budget.

Megan was a key architect of the government's tax reform agenda as a panel member for the ACT Taxation Review and she also co-chaired the ACT government's Expenditure Review and Evaluation Committee. During her time as the Director-General of the former Commerce and Works Directorate, Megan was instrumental in overseeing the sale of ACTTAB, a process which has resulted in a sale price of over \$100 million, which was announced a couple of weeks ago. Megan was also responsible for the implementation of Shared Services across the ACT government and more recently championed the development of the new iConnect initiative.

I would like to put on the record on behalf of the Deputy Chief Minister, myself and my colleagues on the government benches the ACT government's thanks and my personal thanks to Megan Smithies for her hard work, her high-quality advice and her many achievements serving the community of the ACT. I wish her all the best for her next career.

Birthing Kit Foundation

MR COE (Ginninderra) (9.49): I rise this evening to talk about the Birthing Kit Foundation, commonly known as the Zonta birthing kit project. The Birthing Kit Foundation provides birthing kits to women in remote and rural areas of the world who, for whatever reason, cannot access a medical facility to give birth. These kits include essential hygiene items such as soap and gloves, and they are designed to prevent women dying during childbirth. Each year it is estimated that 385,000 women die during childbirth, many from preventable infections.

The idea for the project in Australia began in 1995 with Dr Joy O'Hazy, a member of the Adelaide Hills Zonta Club. In that year Dr O'Hazy attended the world health conference where she heard a speech from actor Sally Field about how a birthing kit, costing less than \$1, can save a life. Four years later in 1999 the first 100 birthing kits were sent to Papua New Guinea, receiving very positive feedback. In 2000 the birthing kits officially became known as the Zonta birthing kits.

Since then the project has gone from strength to strength in Australia, so much so that the decision to incorporate the Birthing Kit Foundation (Australia) was made in September 2006. Some of the great work done by the Birthing Kit Foundation to date has included: delivering over 1 million birthing kits to over 30 countries; training over 7,800 birthing attendants in Vietnam, Kenya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and India; and currently providing about 140,000 birthing kits annually, a number which will surely only grow.

I speak of the Birthing Kit Foundation today because I recently had the opportunity to help in the preparation of these kits. I would like to thank the Zonta Club of Canberra Breakfast for hosting the assembly day, where 3,000 birthing kits were assembled, a truly great effort. Despite the corporatisation of the foundation, the Zonta clubs have remained the greatest supporter of the project in Australia. I encourage all members to contact the Zonta Club of Canberra Breakfast at canberrabreakfast@zontadistrict24.org if they would like to get involved with the organisation. The club, in conjunction with members from the Zonta Club of Canberra, hosted a wonderful and well-organised packing day at the Lyneham chapel of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

At a national level, I congratulate everyone involved in the Birthing Kit Foundation, in particular, the foundation's current board, which includes: Fiona Smith, the company's chairperson and director; Dr Julie Monis-Ivett, the company's vice-chairperson and director; Maggi Gregory, the treasurer and director; and the directors, Dr Joy O'Hazy, Jenny Weaver, Julie Irwin and Pip Coleman.

Finally, I give a plug to the next birthing kit assembly day in the ACT. It will be held on 6 September 2014 and is hosted by the Australian College of Midwives (ACT Branch). One thousand kits will be prepared on that day, and I encourage members to email info@bkfa.org.au if they are interested in attending and supporting the cause. Further information on the Birthing Kit Foundation, including how to make a donation to the foundation, can be found at www.birthingkitfoundation.org.au.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 9.53.

Schedule of amendments

Schedule 1

Appropriation Bill 2014-2015

Amendment moved by the Treasurer

13

Schedule 1

Page 6—

omit schedule 1, substitute

Schedule 1 Appropriations

(see s 6 (1))

column 1 agency	column 2 appropriation unit	Column 3 net cost of outputs	column 4 capital injection	column 5 payments on behalf of Territory	column 6 total
		\$	\$	\$	\$
Part 1.1 ACT Executive	ACT Executive			117 000	117 000
Part 1.2 ACT Gambling and Racing Commission	ACT Gambling and Racing Commission	177 461			177 461
Part 1.3 ACT Local Hospital Network	ACT Local Hospital Network	22 286 000			22 286 000
Part 1.4 ACTEW Corporation	ACTEW Corporation	428 000			428 000
Part 1.5 Canberra Institute of Technology	Canberra Institute of Technology	2 586 132			2 586 132
Part 1.6 Commerce and Works Directorate	Commerce and Works Directorate		33 845 490	271 799	34 117 289
Part 1.7 Community Services Directorate	Community Services Directorate		37 505 689	10 083	37 515 772
Part 1.8 Cultural Facilities Corporation	Cultural Facilities Corporation	300 000			300 000
Part 1.9 Economic Development Directorate	Economic Development Directorate	4 129 000	233 000	3 850 000	8 212 000

column 1 agency	column 2 appropriation unit	Column 3 net cost of outputs	column 4 capital injection	column 5 payments on behalf of Territory	column 6 total
		\$	\$	\$	\$
Part 1.10 Education and Training Directorate	Education and Training Directorate	18 039 000		13 116 000	31 155 000
Part 1.11 Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate	Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate	735 000			735 000
Part 1.12 Exhibition Park Corporation	Exhibition Park Corporation	20 000			20 000
Part 1.13 Housing ACT	Housing ACT	1 671 500	200 000		1 871 500
Part 1.14 Legal Aid Commission (ACT)	Legal Aid Commission (ACT)	275 000			275 000
Part 1.15 Public Trustee for the ACT	Public Trustee for the ACT	47 615			47 615
Part 1.16 Territory and Municipal Services Directorate	Territory and Municipal Services Directorate	14 083 000			14 083 000
<i>Total appropriated to agencies</i>		102 283 397	34 288 573	17 354 799	153 926 769

Schedule 1A Appropriations

(see s 6 (1A))

column 1 agency	column 2 appropriation unit	column 3 net cost of outputs	column 4 capital injection	column 5 payments on behalf of Territory	column 6 total
		\$	\$	\$	\$
Part 1.1 ACT Executive	ACT Executive		264 000	8 006 000	8 270 000
Part 1.2 ACT Gambling and Racing Commission	ACT Gambling and Racing Commission	4 436 539	127 000		4 563 539
Part 1.3 ACT Local Hospital Network	ACT Local Hospital Network	579 439 000			579 439 000

column 1 agency	column 2 appropriation unit	column 3 net cost of outputs	column 4 capital injection	column 5 payments on behalf of Territory	column 6 total
		\$	\$	\$	\$
Part 1.4 ACTEW Corporation	ACTEW Corporation	10 695 000			10 695 000
Part 1.5 Canberra Institute of Technology	Canberra Institute of Technology	66 261 868	6 134 000		72 395 868
Part 1.6 Capital Metro Agency	Capital Metro Agency	23 535 000	96 000		23 631 000
Part 1.7 Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate	Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate	194 559 000	256 524 510	63 182 201	514 265 711
Part 1.8 Community Services Directorate	Community Services Directorate	194 585 311	4 784 917		199 370 228
Part 1.9 Cultural Facilities Corporation	Cultural Facilities Corporation	7 945 000	2 181 000		10 126 000
Part 1.10 Education and Training Directorate	Education and Training Directorate	590 203 000	100 089 000	239 240 000	929 532 000
Part 1.11 Environment and Planning Directorate	Environment and Planning Directorate	72 452 000	5 914 000	1 852 000	80 218 000
Part 1.12 Exhibition Park Corporation	Exhibition Park Corporation	425 000	552 000		977 000
Part 1.13 Health Directorate	Health Directorate	257 615 000	132 251 000	7 619 000	397 485 000
Part 1.14 Housing ACT	Housing ACT	41 787 500	26 648 000		68 435 500
Part 1.15 Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission	Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission	548 000			548 000
Part 1.16 Justice and Community Safety Directorate	Justice and Community Safety Directorate	280 070 000	86 432 000	158 301 000	524 803 000

column 1 agency	column 2 appropriation unit	column 3 net cost of outputs	column 4 capital injection	column 5 payments on behalf of Territory	column 6 total
		\$	\$	\$	\$
Part 1.17 Legal Aid Commission (ACT)	Legal Aid Commission (ACT)	9 670 000	234 000		9 904 000
Part 1.18 Public Trustee for the ACT	Public Trustee for the ACT	1 190 385			1 190 385
Part 1.19 Superannuation Provision Account	Superannuation Provision Account		198 209 000		198 209 000
Part 1.20 Territory and Municipal Services Directorate	Territory and Municipal Services Directorate	315 303 000	207 145 000		522 448 000
Part 1.21 Territory Banking Account	Territory Banking Account		214 000	82 159 000	82 373 000
<i>Total appropriated to agencies</i>		2 650 720 603	1 027 799 427	560 359 201	4 238 879 231
Part 1.22 Treasurer's Advance	Treasurer's Advance				29 500 000
<i>Total appropriations</i>		2 650 720 603	1 027 799 427	560 359 201	4 268 379 231