



# Debates

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**Wednesday, 13 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.

**Education—early childhood**

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra) (10.01): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) evidence that shows that attendance at preschool has a significant positive effect on literacy and numeracy outcomes for students;
- (b) the ACT Government provides up to 12 hours of free preschool education through schools;
- (c) that the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education has enabled the increase in preschool hours to 15 hours;
- (d) research highlighting the significant gains in cognitive development by children who attend 15 hours of preschool per week;
- (e) the increase in Australia's productivity that is estimated to occur as a result of improved quality and access to early childhood education;
- (f) that the Productivity Commission has recommended that the Australian Government continue to provide funding to preschool programs to 15 hours a week for 40 weeks in the year prior to schooling;
- (g) that the Productivity Commission has also recommended that the Australian Government also provide funding to 15 hour preschool programs in long day care centres;
- (h) the current National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education between the ACT and Australian Governments expires on 31 December 2014;
- (i) while the most recent Australian Government budget has made a contingency for the continuation of this partnership, the amount and duration is unspecified; and
- (j) delays in negotiation for the continuation of the national partnership are causing great uncertainty amongst parents and educators as to the future of preschool programs in 2015; and

(2) calls on the Minister for Education and Training to:

- (a) seek immediate assurances from the Australian Government ministers responsible for early childhood education on the continuation of the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education with the ACT Government, at existing funding levels; and
- (b) report to the Assembly later this year on discussions with the Australian Government on the future of the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education.

It is with great concern that I rise today to move this motion. I heard from the minister last week that there had been no ongoing commitment from the commonwealth for continued funding to ensure universal access to early childhood education. We know that the early years of children's lives are critical to later learning success. Ensuring that all young people have the best possible start in life is vital to the wellbeing of families and our community. Many studies have shown that there are significant benefits for children who attend high-quality preschools, including greater economic outcomes and higher levels of concentration and sociability and independence.

Research has shown, and parents know, that it is proven that attendance at preschool has significant positive effects on their literacy and numeracy outcomes for students. According to research undertaken by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 15-year-old students who attended preschool for one year or more scored more than 30 points higher in reading than those who did not attend the program for international student assessment. OECD evidence indicates that disadvantaged children have the greatest potential to benefit from preschool education.

All of that evidence is held up by the experience of Canberra parents. I often chat with other Canberra parents about preschool, and I have not spoken to a single parent who does not understand how important this is. When I asked this week about why parents thought preschool was important, I got some great responses. One of them was from Alison, who said:

As a parent I've really appreciated the way preschool helps me transition my daughter into our wonderful local school community (hooray for early childhood schools). It's been a gentle stepping stone for us to learn about all things school related—packing lunches, 9 am starts, classrooms, uniforms. While the 2.5 days can be challenging to balance with work, the co-located child care makes this seamless, we appreciate that the part-time nature reduces the pressure of this change on our family. There are so many things we love about preschool.

Some parents have reflected on what it meant to miss out on preschool. They said that it was important. Their daughter had missed out on preschool because they were travelling, and when she started kindy she never seemed to be able to catch up on what all the other kids had already learned. She is only just catching up now, and she is in year 3, and that is with tutoring for one day a week.

These parents know from their experiences exactly what the research says, that it is government's role to give kids the best start in life by investing in early childhood education and care. As far back as 2006, the ACT Labor government took action to

ensure the best start for the youngest members of the community by increasing preschool hours from 10 to 12 hours per week. This placed the ACT within the top jurisdictions nationally for providing the most hours of preschool education per week.

This move was further supported in 2009, when the ACT signed the national partnership agreement on universal access to early childhood education. This agreement provided the ACT with \$13.2 million over five years to further increase preschool hours from 12 to 15 hours. We joined with the then federal Labor government in partnership because of the clear evidence that 15 hours of preschool has a great benefit to these early learners.

The ACT government has also worked on building workforce capability by offering scholarships to teachers to upgrade to a four-year early childhood degree, and funding for preschool assistants to study certificate III traineeships. The ACT's staged implementation allowed for funding to be first targeted towards meeting the needs of our most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, as well as our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

In addition to the Australian government investment the ACT government has committed \$318,000 across four years to the implementation of the preschool matters program. The preschool matters program recognises the central role of parents in their child's education. This investment has a multiplier effect and it provides significantly greater return from the \$13.2 million of universal access funding than would otherwise be realised. Finally, and I think most importantly, all 79 ACT public preschools offer 15 hours free preschool education per week for 40 weeks per year.

Sadly, Madam Speaker, all of this great work is now in jeopardy. The current national partnership agreement on universal access to early childhood education between the ACT and the Australian government expires on 31 December 2014. The Australian government has not indicated whether funding to support 15 hours will be continued beyond 2014, leaving great uncertainty amongst parents and educators as to the future of preschool programs in 2015. Without continued Australian government support, 15 hours of free preschool education in the ACT cannot be maintained.

Whilst this is a sad moment in education in Australia, it is not wholly without precedent from the current Abbott government. We have already seen them walk back from the supposed unity ticket on school funding, leaving great uncertainty as to the future of funding to some of our most disadvantaged school students in both the ACT and across Australia. We have also seen them try to walk back from the national quality framework, and dismissing quality in early childhood education and care as simply red tape. And we have seen them dismiss the calls for pay equity amongst early childhood educators as simply a union scam, as if asking for a living wage that recognises your skill and dedication is an outrageous notion.

It is greatly disappointing to me and to the families in my electorate that important matters such as access to quality education and care can so simply be cast aside by some in this place and compared with a luxury item only for the wealthy to afford. If the Australian government do not continue to support universal access, they will risk losing much of the significant gains already made in early childhood education both nationally and in the ACT.

This is why, Madam Speaker, I am moving this motion today: to ask Minister Burch and the ACT government to seek immediate certainty from the Australian government about what it intends to do to support education in these formative years. It is a vitally important issue to my community and to Canberra as a whole. I hope the Assembly joins with me today in urging the Australian government to recognise the importance of early childhood education and to continue funding the national partnership agreement beyond December 2014, and thus secure a strong future for our children and our community. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

**MR DOSZPOT** (Molonglo) (10.10): I welcome the opportunity to speak on Ms Berry's motion, which could perhaps be best described as an assorted collection of well-meaning but nevertheless ill-timed notions associated with child care and early education. At the start, I have to say that I find it a bit rich for someone from the ACT Labor Party to imply the federal government has not communicated well with parents. Ms Berry claims the federal government has caused, to quote a part of her motion:

... great uncertainty amongst parents and educators as to the future of preschool programs in 2015.

That statement is flawed. Most glaring is the fact that it is made by someone from the same party that delivered only a few short years ago the savage proposal to close 23 schools—not just preschools but whole school systems from primary through to senior high school across Canberra—and to abolish a significant number of teaching positions along with them, all without consultation, all done without appropriate financial, social or demographic consideration. Of course, we are now seeing the results of that short-sighted planning with new schools now needed in those same areas.

If that was not enough, they then followed it up with a fortunately unsuccessful attempt to slash teachers of special education in such fields as hearing and sight-impaired education. Frankly it is more than a bit rich that Ms Berry comes in to this Assembly and tries to run a line that suggests failings from the federal government based on what is nothing more than a few loose pieces of information and phrases.

When we drill down into the elements of the motion in front us, we see a number of statements, not necessarily in any segue. There is no dispute that attendance at preschool has a significant and positive effect on literacy and numeracy outcomes of students. The commonwealth Department of Education in their submission to the Productivity Commission noted:

In Australia, research is starting to show the significant benefit of early education programs. Preschool attendance has been shown to be equivalent to 10 to 20 points in the national assessment program for literacy and numeracy, NAPLAN or 15 to 20 weeks of schooling at the Year 3 level, three years after attending preschool.

Ms Berry refers several times to the Productivity Commission. It might have been more useful had she referenced the latest work the Productivity Commission is doing in the early childhood education space. In November 2013 the federal government announced the establishment of the Productivity Commission inquiry into child care and early childhood learning. As the media release issued at the time said:

The Inquiry will identify how the current system can be improved to make it more responsive to the needs of parents.

We want to ensure that Australia has a system that provides a safe, nurturing environment for children, but which also meets the working needs of families.

Our child care system should be responsive to the needs of today's families and today's economy, not the five-day 9am-5pm working week of last century.

Over 480 submissions to this inquiry have been received, but I did not see one from either Ms Berry or the ACT government. Perhaps I have missed them; if I have, I stand corrected. There was an initial closing date of 4 February, and a draft report was published in July of this year. In respect of preschool education the draft states:

Participation in a preschool program in the year before starting formal schooling provides benefits in terms of child development and a successful transition to school.

I cannot see in that statement any suggestion that the federal government would not support or does not understand the benefits of preschool education. One of the draft recommendations proposes:

The Australian Government should continue to provide per child payments to the states and territories for universal access to a preschool program of 15 hours per week for 40 weeks per year.

The Productivity Commission will continue to take submissions, including on the draft report, up to 5 September. Perhaps it might be appropriate for Ms Berry or the ACT government to put their views into that process; 480 other organisations have, and it is time the ACT government did, Ms Burch. The commission is due to report its findings in October.

Two submissions to the inquiry from ACT-based organisations I wish to refer to come from Children's Educators ACT and YMCA Canberra. The YMCA have some messages for the ACT government. Their submission includes a number of recommendations to the ACT government, including:

The ACT government work across departments to develop some coordinated planning regulations and parameters around where Early Childhood Education Centres services may be established and the size and type of service which may best suit that community.

Their submission goes on:

The current pattern for pre-school attendance across the ACT does not encourage increased workforce participation. To accommodate 15 hours of preschool most preschools across the ACT have a fortnightly pattern where children attend 2 days one week and 3 days the next. While the YMCA supports the government's initiative to increase preschool hours for children it also believes that this fortnightly system actively discourages increased workforce participation.

Perhaps Ms Berry might like to raise those concerns with her colleagues and work within the terms of the latest Productivity Commission inquiry to provide alternate options to address this issue.

The Children's Educators ACT submission makes the statement that:

The ACT currently has the highest mean cost of children's education and care services in the country. For families facing disadvantage or vulnerabilities, this can put access to a quality early learning space out of reach.

Again, addressing the failings and shortcomings in our own system might be a good place to start.

Ms Berry's motion goes on to call on the ACT government to seek immediate assurances from the federal government ministers on the continuation of the national partnership agreement and to report to the Assembly later this year. Perhaps a bit of research about where the Productivity Commission is up to in its inquiry might save Ms Berry from embarrassing her education and training minister.

In this year's federal budget the government has set aside funding to negotiate a one-year extension on universal access with the states and territories for 15-hour programs in preschool in to 2015—I hope you noted that, Ms Berry—while the Productivity Commission holds its inquiry.

I will read that again because I do not think Ms Berry was listening at that point as she and the minister are deep in discussion. In this year's federal budget the government has set aside funding to negotiate a one-year extension on universal access with the states and territories for 15-hour programs in preschools into 2015 while the Productivity Commission holds its inquiry. It is anticipated that significant reforms will flow from that inquiry, and I think those reforms are likely to be taken up by the government in the federal budget next year.

The federal government's own education department emphasised the importance of early childhood education in its submission to the Productivity Commission. It said that while historically the Australian government's support for the sector was primarily to support the workforce participation needs of parents, it notes that more recently, based on evidence about cognitive and non-cognitive development in young children and the role played by quality early learning and development programs, there has been an increased focus on expenditure on the quality of care and early learning.

Their submission goes on to say:

The sector touches the lives of most Australian families ... Based on the most recent data available, an estimated 1.2 million children were attending some form of approved child care or early childhood education service in the June quarter 2013.



Child care and early childhood learning is also a significant industry in its own right, providing employment for around 140,000 employees and generating revenues estimated to be over \$10 billion annually.

The federal government, as does the ACT Liberal Party, understands the importance of child care and preschool education and the role it plays in a child's development. The ACT education minister some years ago in a speech introducing the Education and Care Services National Law (ACT) Bill of 2011 famously uttered the words:

... the first five years of a child's life do last a lifetime.

And, indeed, Ms Burch, they do. But, importantly—and perhaps what you meant by that statement—was that the first five years of a child's life are critical in their development. I am sure the federal government also know that, and their own education department has been at pains to record and track the importance of the early childhood sector. We know it is important. So does the federal government.

As I said at the beginning of my comments, this motion is an assorted collection of notions around the subject of child care and early childhood education, well intentioned no doubt, but inappropriate in its timing when there is a Productivity Commission inquiry on this very subject currently in train. I propose we wait until the commission has reported and the federal government has responded. Then we in the Assembly and families throughout Australia will be better informed as to what the ACT needs to do to ensure quality child care and preschool education is available to all Canberra families.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (10.21): I support Ms Berry's motion today and thank her for her ongoing passion and consideration on this and similar issues. While we can all speak to the universal acceptance that early childhood and preschool education provides incredible benefits in the life of children and their families and can cite numerous studies and research that show links to improved numeracy, literacy and socialisation outcomes later in life, the sad fact is that today we are in a situation of needing to call on the federal government to provide certainty to families and staff alike.

Early childhood education in the ACT is already an enormously valued resource. The Education and Training Directorate provides over 70 public preschools and early childhood schools, including the highly regarded and valued Koori preschool program, and there are many in the non-government sector as well.

Results in preschools that are implementing Australian development curriculum are higher levels of engagement and motivation, higher oral language skills, increased writing, increased pro-social skills, and decreased behavioural problems. And it is not just the children who are benefiting; parental engagement, both as a simple term and in the more academic sense, can be truly fostered in this environment and has been shown to support families from vulnerable backgrounds become much more willing to seek help when needed. This type of gentle early intervention for parents and families

can decrease the likelihood of falling through the gaps, as it were, later in the life of the child, and cannot be underestimated as an unspoken but clearly understood goal of these education programs.

As we know, the ACT government already provides 12 hours of preschool, and with commonwealth funding this can be increased to 15 hours. As Ms Berry's motion states, this is the minimum recommended by the Productivity Commission's draft report into child care and early childhood learning.

As the background of that document states:

The child care and early learning system can be improved because:

- families are struggling to find quality child care and early learning that is flexible and affordable enough to meet their needs and to participate in the workforce
- a small but significant number of children start school with learning and developmental delays
- there are shortfalls in reaching and properly supporting the needs of children with disabilities and vulnerable children, regional and rural families and parents who are moving from income support into study and employment
- services need to operate in a system that has clear and sustainable business arrangements, including regulation, planning and funding

It is really the last point I want to highlight in support of Ms Berry's motion. We need certainty; the federal government has not yet made a commitment to continue funding for 15 hours of preschool education beyond 2014. I noted Mr Doszpot's comments about the references to "into 2015", and I am aware there is a contingency in the federal budget, but there is still a level of uncertainty that I do not think is satisfactory. I think we would do well to get more clarity as soon as possible.

I recognise the value of taking on board the final finding of the Productivity Commission, but we are eight months into 2014, and the sector, the workers, the parents and the ACT government need to know what is going to happen to the funding that supports these services and programs.

Unfortunately, there is a bit of a pattern like this at the moment; we have seen it with housing and homelessness funding where transitional agreements with no firm dates or milestones are being inflicted on the sector. That makes it difficult for people to plan. We see funding reductions and uncertainty in education and areas of sport and recreation. We need the federal government to make some clear decisions in a number of key policy areas so that those affected by the various decisions can proceed on a sustainable basis.

Certainly early childhood education, preschools specifically, is one of those areas. They provide an essential and positive start in life to those children who need it most, and I do not think anybody disagrees with that. Some of the staff at these agencies are already struggling because of low wages to make a career in a profession they love, and they certainly do not need uncertainty or anxiety around not knowing what is going to happen in 2015.

We have four months left of 2014, and the community at large deserves some certainty and idea around the future funding arrangements and partnership agreements between the commonwealth and the states and territories sooner rather than later if we are to provide continuity and sustainability to the sector. It is reasonably clear that there is real value in getting that resolved as soon as possible. On that basis I am happy to support the motion Ms Berry has put forward today.

**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) (10.26): I am pleased to support Ms Berry's motion today. I know that Ms Berry and many others in this chamber understand and appreciate just how important preschool is for young Canberrans and their families. I recall Mrs Jones in estimates on this subject just last week supporting me in the call for the commonwealth to commit the extra dollars and full certainty. So I am still unclear whether the Canberra Liberals will be supporting this motion, but certainly on a personal level Mrs Jones has made her view very clear indeed.

Based somewhat on that level of support from all in this room—I appreciate Mr Rattenbury's support for this motion as well—I can give the Assembly absolute confidence and assurance that I will be taking this matter up with the commonwealth government and the relevant minister as a matter of urgency and importance. We are in August. There are four months left of this year. I would certainly like to be able to do that with the full support of this Assembly, because I think that is important.

Madam Speaker, the evidence is very clear on this topic: early education works and makes a difference. No doubt this is for many reasons. The evidence to the Productivity Commission in its recent inquiry into childcare provision in Australia strongly recommended that the national partnership continue. Indeed, the Productivity Commission stated:

The Australian Government should continue to provide per child payments to the states and territories for universal access to a preschool program—

As it does currently at 600 hours a year—

This support should be based on the number of children enrolled in state and territory government funded preschool services ...

The Commission went beyond this and suggested further expansion of the program, saying:

The Australian Government should provide per child preschool payments direct to long day care services for 15 hours per week and 40 weeks per year, where long day care services do not receive such funding from the states and territories.

Madam Speaker, this is from the Productivity Commission whose expertise and qualifications are well respected and acknowledged. They know quite well the benefit both socially and economically of ensuring that we have high-quality and highly accessible early childhood education. The increase to productivity and our economy

of having early quality childhood education was estimated by KPMG Econotech to be between 1.2 and 2.9 per cent. Yet despite the clear evidence, there has been no firm commitment regarding future funding from the Australian government.

Mr Doszpot seems to think that an undisclosed sum held in a contingency in the recent budget shows that commitment. There is no commitment. The national partnership ends in December of this year. Time is running out. Let us be very clear that time is running out. This NP expires on 31 December. At the recent school census there were 4,583 preschoolers in the ACT. That must be close to 4,500 families in Canberra that have no certainty of the universal access continuing from 12 to 15 hours beyond December of this year.

The delays in negotiations for that continuation are causing great uncertainty amongst parents and educators as to the future provisions for preschool programs next year. As it stands, without immediate action from the Australian government in this space we will see a reduction in services and quality in preschool and early education across Australia. Without continued Australian government funding, the ACT and other states have indicated that they cannot sustain 15 hours of service delivery. Without commitment from the federal coalition government, very soon there will be cuts to preschool education communities across the country.

I am also concerned about the immediate impact a cut in hours will have on families in the ACT. Such a dramatic cut to preschool hours will see families needing to find alternatives. Much has been said this morning by Mr Doszpot about supporting women's participation in the workforce. Yet at the same time he has not made a clear statement whether the Canberra Liberals will support my call on the federal government to maintain and to continue universal access to 15 hours a week in preschool.

Given the delays by the commonwealth and the late hour of these discussions, a failure to renew this agreement may see parents scrambling at the last minute to find childcare hours to replace those hours lost in preschool. At a time when the Abbott government is seeking to reduce the cost to parents of child care and increase workforce participation, particularly for women, it simply makes no sense that we would find ourselves in this situation. It is interesting to note that these concerns are not just mine or this chamber's. They are shared by education and early childhood ministers across the country. To my knowledge all education ministers are as one to ensure that this funding continues.

I quote my Western Australian counterpart Peter Collier. He said in the *West Australian* newspaper just last month:

If the Federal government is serious about improving the education quality of students throughout the nation, they need to ensure that they honour the national agreement with regards to universal access.

The New South Wales Minister for Education Adrian Piccoli told News.com.au in April:

There is a lot at stake and, obviously, the New South Wales Government's ability to support early childhood education would suffer without ongoing support from the Federal Government.

In the same article the Victorian Minister for Early Childhood Wendy Lovell also spoke about the need for the continuation of the program, saying that she was concerned there were:

no positive signs from the Federal Government on the importance of this national partnership and what it has achieved to date for early childhood education in Australia.

Minister Rankine from South Australia said:

If the Federal Government ceases to fund the program, this will mean that more than 20,000 families—

I am assuming in South Australia—

would be impacted.

Here we have ministers from the Labor Party, the Liberal Party and the Nationals in different states and in different contexts all agreeing that this funding is vital to education in this country. I am pleased to be among them in advancing the cause and I am pleased to support Ms Berry's motion today.

I wish to respond to some comments from Mr Doszpot this morning. He agreed that there was no dispute about the benefits of preschool years. I would hope that in that spirit the Canberra Liberals can support this motion. We have over 4,500 children in preschool and that number is growing. These families have less than four months to have the certainty that they need that their children's education care and universal access can be maintained to the level of 15 hours per week. Whilst Mr Doszpot may comment about the way those preschool hours are structured, I would like to see a commitment that at least he supports the continuation of 15 hours of universal access to meet the needs of families.

Madam Speaker, in closing, this is almost a non-brainer given that everyone in this chamber who has stood recognises the importance of early education in the lives of children and the aspirations for families to give them the best start to life. This motion clearly and simply calls on me to seek an immediate assurance from the Australian government ministers responsible for early childhood education on the continuation of the national partnership agreement on universal access to early childhood education in the ACT at the existing funding levels and to report to the Assembly later this year on discussions with the Australian government on the future of that national partnership.

I do not know how the Canberra Liberals can object to those two simple requests of me as a minister. Yes, there is a Productivity Commission inquiry. It is due to report in October. That is even less time than now to have assurance and certainty for Canberra families. I would hope that the Canberra Liberals think beyond just the

black and white of politics, see beyond the negativeness and go to their counterparts and support this motion to ensure that the 15 hours of universal access funding is continued for Canberra families.

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra) (10.36), in reply: I thank members for their contributions to the conversation around early childhood education and universal access for preschoolers in the ACT. I wanted to draw to Mr Doszpot's attention the Education and Training Directorate's submission to the Productivity Commission. It can be found on the Education and Training Directorate website. It has a link encouraging Canberrans to submit to the Productivity Commission's inquiry. The Productivity Commission's website also notes that this was one of the submissions that was publicised.

Because he has kind of flip-flopped around early childhood education and care and universal access, I thought I would address some of the issues and read from the Education and Training Directorate's submission around early childhood education. I will do this to aid his ongoing and future learning in this area of early childhood education.

The submission talks about the national quality framework. It has an increased focus on the quality of the educational program and practice in the ACT, particularly in long day care and in family day care services. It states that the provision of a highly skilled and professional education and care workforce continues to be a significant task, with a number of strategies being undertaken by the government in this sector.

The submission then goes on to talk about the ACT government acknowledging the progress that has been made in the education and care workforce. However, there is more work to be done to ensure that the workforce is sustainable and sufficiently skilled to implement quality standards. The ACT government, in partnership with the Children's Educators ACT Forum, developed the ACT education and care workforce strategy 2012-2014. It outlines a shared commitment to implement initiatives in order to attract new educators, retain existing educators, develop workforce skills and increase the professional profile of the sector in the community.

Minister Burch and I have talked at length in this place about the challenges to provide quality education and attracting educators to the sector on such low wages. A person from certificate III to diploma level is paid somewhere between \$17 and \$23 an hour. In a male dominated workforce, a diploma qualification would attract \$10 to \$15 an hour more. It is extraordinarily difficult to attract educators to a sector to provide the highest quality education.

This has all been encouraging work from the ACT government in support of the national quality framework and recognising the important work that educators do. It has been well supported by the sector in the ACT and across the country. The national quality framework has meant that not only are the qualifications of the people who work in this sector recognised. How care and education are provided is also recognised.

This is one of the challenges that comes out of the Productivity Commission's draft report. They want to claw back the fantastic work that the national quality framework has already done in recognising the important work that educators and carers do in this sector in providing the best start for our children's ongoing learning and education.

The national quality framework introduced a one-to-four educator-to-child ratio for children from birth to two years old. This was an increase of educators from one to five. The Productivity Commission has suggested that perhaps these ratios need to be revisited. I think that would be a shame for families in the ACT and across the country who are making a decision about putting their children into early childhood education and the effect on their education and care that an increased ratio of children to educators would have.

Finally, I note that the ACT Education and Training Directorate's submission to the Productivity Commission, which Mr Doszpot could not find, supports the objectives of a national body framework. It states:

Large change management can always be seen as burdensome, however this perception is anticipated to decrease as providers become more familiar with the Framework and practices begin to be embedded.

Finally, it goes on to state:

It is important that the best interests of children are at the forefront of decision making about early childhood education and care. The Education and Training Directorate welcomes measures that support affordability and access for ACT families without compromising outcomes for children.

The submission also goes further to talk about universal access in preschool education. It states:

With the introduction of 15 hours of preschool through the National Partnership on Early Childhood Education (Universal access), the demand for preschool education is strong.

Ms Burch has already just referred to the 4,500 preschool children, and growing, who attend preschool education in the ACT. The funding, however, for the national partnership agreement was not extended to independent schools and long day care services. The submission goes on to state:

The long day care sector in the ACT is keen to be supported to offer 15 hours of free preschool education, which would provide working families with more flexible options for education and care in the year prior to primary school.

The submission that the Education and Training Directorate made actually goes further and calls for even more than the 15 hours of universal access to preschool and suggests that it be extended to long day care and independent schools.

Mr Doszpot has been saying that the federal government clearly understands the importance of preschool learning for children. The draft Productivity Commission report is out. It is appropriate for this government to seek certainty about its funding future. But as usual the Liberals want us to sit on our hands and do nothing. That is the Liberals plan. The question is, Mr Doszpot: if the federal government knows that preschool is so effective at giving children a good start, at giving them a good education, then why not provide certainty for families? Why will they not commit to continue funding so that families can access 15 hours of free preschool education a week?

On the matter of a one-year extension of funding, it is already August, Mr Doszpot. Families are already enrolling children in preschool. Where is the money for that? Sussan Ley is holding families to ransom. She will not release the report. She will not release the funding. Why is she holding back?

If Mr Doszpot is so much in the know, perhaps he could enlighten us. But I do not think he can. He has got nothing to contribute to the debate around universal access for preschool education in the ACT. All he has to offer are slights, attacks and insults and, as usual, no plan for education in the ACT at any level. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to.

## **ACT public service—office accommodation**

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.45): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) in 2011, the ACT Labor Government announced plans to build a \$432 million government office block in the city;
- (b) the plan received significant criticism and the Government was unable to demonstrate the business case for the proposed development;
- (c) in 2012, the ACT Government scrapped its plan to build the office block;
- (d) in January 2014 the ACT Government released a Whole of Government Accommodation Strategy;
- (e) the 2014 strategy recommends the Government develop a new Civic office hub of between 38 000 and 43 000 square metres net lettable area;
- (f) in July 2014, the ACT Government released a registration of interest (ROI) process for the leasing of approximately 40 000 square metres of office accommodation in Civic;
- (g) the ROI offers three options:



- (i) a new building on the Government owned site (part of Section 19 Civic);
  - (ii) a new building on an existing privately owned site within Civic; and
  - (iii) a campus-style of office accommodation utilising one site or a number of adjoining sites;
- (h) the case has been made for a number of requirements in the ROI including that accommodation be within 10 minutes walk of the Legislative Assembly and that the bulk of the public service be accommodated in a single building or hub;
- (i) commercial office vacancy rates in Canberra have increased from 12.9 percent to 13.6 percent, the highest since 2010;
  - (j) vacancy in non-Civic areas has increased from 13.7 percent to 14.5 percent, the highest on record;
  - (k) 24 500 square metres of new space is due to be added to the Canberra market in the second half of 2014;
  - (l) a new government office building will add to the oversupply of office accommodation in Canberra; and
  - (m) the significant number of vacant properties across Canberra has not been adequately considered as part of any business case for a centralised office building; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) immediately halt any plans to build a new office building;
  - (b) conduct an analysis and report to the Assembly on all existing and planned commercial office space across Canberra suitable for ACT public service accommodation; and
  - (c) provide a business case to the Assembly outlining the costs and benefits to the ACT budget and ACT economy of leasing existing accommodation across Canberra as opposed to building and leasing new facilities in a centralised facility.

I must say that I did not think we would be back in this place talking about this issue. It is not that long ago, as you would recall, Madam Speaker, that my predecessor, the now Senator Seselja, dismantled the original office block proposal, death star I. And in that case, despite millions of dollars of public money being spent, despite thousands of pages of spin, armies of consultants—and I remember them appearing at the estimates committee—the simple fact is that the ACT does not need this office block and certainly cannot afford this office block. Why are we getting it? It is a bit of a mystery but we will try to unravel that as we go. And this question has been asked before. The reality is that it did not stack up previously when this was looked at and it does not stack up now.

If we go back to the history of death star I—"death star" being the name given to this by the Labor Party, I believe, but then it permeated throughout the community—it was Jon Stanhope who first, if you recall, Madam Speaker, insisted that this was essential and then he had to dump it. At the time of the original proposal, this was going to be the most expensive floor space ever proposed by capital expenditure, by fitout, by square metre in the entire ACT, ever.

If I compare it to other A-grade buildings, the cost of this new office building was, per square metre, \$6,478 whereas in the health building, it was \$4,130; the ATO, \$3,833; and DEEWR, \$4,358—a rolled-gold solution indeed. Back in the budget reply debate—remember the good old days when we used to have a debate, before Andrew Barr ran away from that—back when we used to have a debate, I remember when the artist's impression of this new building was shown, it did not quite capture the sky bridge that the ministers wanted but it certainly had the great edifice and, I think, a wonderful fountain in front, a Trevi fountain. It caused a lot of mirth but it was not actually that far from the truth when you look at the enormous cost that was associated with the building, including the \$11 million ministerial wing, private ministerial suites, a lounge, a crisis room—a crisis room where Andrew could go and hide—a reading room, all with a lovely \$2 million fitout and the \$2 million sky bridge, of course. I thought that that was just superb.

All along the government said, "This will save you money, our being in an \$11 million suite with our sky bridge. This is going to be good for you, good for the people of the ACT." Of course, that was debunked. That was absolutely rejected. That was debunked when we went through this process in detail in estimates. And I do recall when we asked for the savings, when we said, "Show us your savings," the consultants and the government came in with their savings and it was an A4 piece of paper in about font 16. Do you remember that, Mr Smyth, through you, Madam Speaker? Mr Smyth will remember that, because there was great mirth and great embarrassment on the side of the government about all of these savings. That included \$12.7 million in rental savings. They were claiming a saving on rent but not actually the expense that went with the building. So they were saying, "We are going to save this on rent," but they had not factored in the fact you have actually got a bit of a bill to pay, to pay back your \$432 million.

There were all these workforce efficiencies, \$4.6 million in workforce efficiencies. It was going to save \$2 million in churn. Once everyone was in the new death star, no-one would want to ever leave the ACT public service, apparently, and it was going to save \$2 million just in the great attraction of working in the death star.

There was going to be a 1.5 per cent increase in productivity. All of a sudden, everyone was going to become more productive. They could control their own ventilation and lighting, and that was going to make everybody so much more efficient that we were going to save \$5.8 million a year. Extraordinary! This went on and on and eventually it all fell over.

In many ways, I think that this was the demise of Jon Stanhope. I certainly remember at that budget breakfast when he had been made a laughing stock because of this

proposal, when a member of the audience then asked a question of Jon Stanhope about why his daughter had had to wait for eight hours with a broken arm in the emergency department while the government pursued this and other projects, Jon Stanhope bit his head off. I think that was the moment when I saw the embarrassment around the tables. I remember, I think it was, Elias Hallaj putting his head in his hands. We are back to the future. But of course the government does not have to do that anymore because they hide from the debates.

The reason I go back through that history and the reason why that is so important is that the current proposal is built extensively on the previous one. Essentially, you have got the same design for death star II. They are just looking for a new builder. On the website—you can go to the website the government put out—practically every document is from the previous proposal. They put a press release on for the new proposal, they put the ROI there, but all of the facts, all of the business case, all of the proposal, all the costings, are exactly back where we were, documents dated 2009, 2010. Nothing is new. This is the same proposal that they have just rebadged, recast and brought back to the community.

**Mr Smyth:** Just ask why.

**MR HANSON:** Why? We will get to the “why” soon. There are some odd things in the statement of requirement. Some of them come out of the government’s office strategy. It has got to be a certain size, got to be within a couple of minutes from the Assembly. And those criteria that have been listed in it—the A-grade and a whole bunch of other criteria—really limit the scope of what you can do. They really do it unnecessarily. This is part of this whole demand that the government has that it has all got to be in a central hub. It has either got to be in one building or on a campus where everybody is all co-located.

Health bureaucrats have got to be with education bureaucrats. Education bureaucrats have got to be with JACS bureaucrats because then, of course, what happens is that no-one will ever leave their job and everybody is more efficient. But if that is the case, if that is the reality, if they want all the bureaucrats in one spot, riddle me this: why is it that they are moving Shared Services to Gungahlin? I support putting an office block in Gungahlin. I support putting ACT public servants in Gungahlin.

If you want a hub, if you are going to have this hub and spoke-type philosophy and if you put all your central policy makers, administrators and bureaucrats in one spot—and the element of this government that is the most centralised is Shared Services; if you look at what Shared Services do, from their website, they are established to deliver more efficient and quality whole-of-government services across the ACT public service—and if it is all right to send them off to Gungahlin but you have got to have everybody else brought back into the centre, it does not stack up. Shared Services delivers ICT for whole of government: human resources, things like payroll, HR systems, recruitment, employee relations, Territory Records Office. That can be in Gungahlin but everybody else has got to be 10 minutes from the Assembly. I do not understand it. It is just not logical.

Procurement, which supports services across ACT government, can work out of Gungahlin but every education bureaucrat has got to be in the city.

**Mr Barr:** They are in Stirling, Jeremy.

**MR HANSON:** Are you bringing them back? There is a plan to bring everybody back in, if you read the strategy.

*Mr Barr interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, Mr Barr, you will have time to participate later.

**MR HANSON:** They want to bring in all the bureaucrats in finance, innovation and planning. What you have got is this ridiculous situation where the government say that they want to co-locate everybody but the element of this government that should be the one that is centralised—if you are going to centralise anything, it should be Shared Services—is spinning out to Gungahlin. So it is an incoherent strategy.

We can see that the government previously used to support spending money putting people in other locations. Andrew Barr said in the *Canberra Times* back in 2012:

It's particularly important to locate staff in the Gungahlin town centre, it will add significantly to the local economy.

So the strategy back then was to put people where we could build resilience in local economies but now it is all about death star II. Why are we saying that we are not going to be considering other locations? If we are going to put it in Gungahlin, why have we not looked at other locations across this town to maintain a number of these public servants?

I will quote from Mr Seselja, when he spoke in the Assembly, just to show you how we are coming back to the future:

The point made by Mr Gilbert is valid. The ACT already has the highest office vacancy rate in Australia. As of July 2011 this vacancy rate was 13.3 per cent, up from 8.7 per cent in January 2010. Furthermore, in Civic, where the government office block is located, the vacancy rate as of July 2011 is at 14.2 per cent. The implication of adding another 50,000 to 60,000 square metres is obvious. The writing on the wall cannot be any clearer.

In fact, Ms Le Couteur, in her capacity as chair of the public accounts committee—

remember when we had a Green that used to think independently, back in the good old days when Ms Le Couteur would not just sell out but would actually do what she could to look at the facts of a case and present evidence—

... was reported as saying that the government has not looked at the reality of the property market. On that, Ms Le Couteur, you are 100 per cent correct. In fact, she was even reported to have said there were so many empty offices on the market that the owners would upgrade them to the highest government standards. The point I would like to make here is this building will worsen the office space glut in the ACT. In short, it is bad for ACT businesses.

Those predictions have come true. According to the most recent reports from the Property Council, vacancy rates in Canberra increased from 12.9 to 13.6 per cent. Vacancy in non-Civic areas increased from 13.7 to 14.5 per cent, the highest on record. There is 24,000 square metres of new space to be added to the Canberra market in the second half of 2014, and now what the government wants to do is add tens of thousands of square metres of space at the cost of hundreds of millions of dollars at a time when there is more office space than ever sitting vacant across this city. It does not make sense.

Why is the government doing this? I have been asking, going around talking to people, and there are a couple of reasons that have been presented to me, a couple of explanations. The government may wish to provide further explanations. One of the reasons is that there is quite a bit of pressure from people to build it. People that want to build a big building see a big benefit in doing that. They want a shiny, new building that they can invest in.

One of those organisations is Cbus. Apparently Cbus—you would remember that is the superannuation arm of the CFMEU, the union—want to get a big asset in Canberra. They want to invest in big, shiny buildings and what they want to do is secure, as would any landlord, a long-term tenant paying a lot of money. Let us understand what this means. If the government is considering this, it means that the ACT government will sign a lease on a building we do not need and cannot afford, to help secure the future of the union's superfund. The ACT taxpayers, essentially, would be set up to fund the CFMEU and make sure that their super is safe.

My understanding is that the union is affiliated with the Labor Party. Maybe Mr Barr can illuminate us on that but if this is true, if this is the case, Mr Barr can illuminate us. Is this true? Is it the case that this is going to be providing—and there has been pressure on the Labor mates—a sweetheart deal for Labor mates right out into the future? Is that what is going on here?

Mr Barr can refute this. He can tell us, “No, no-one has had any communication with Cbus. We have not heard from Cbus. Cbus is not trying to build this at all.” And I would like Mr Barr, when he speaks, to rule out the fact that a potential proponent of Cbus is sniffing around, wanting to build this. It would be very interesting to hear him refute that, that anyone from Cbus or their associates have had any conversations with anyone in government. I would love to hear them say that; otherwise I think we might have a bit of an inclination as to why there is so much desire from this government to build something big and shiny to support their union mates.

Also, of course, there is light rail. What they want to do is move public servants out of that Northbourne Avenue corridor, which is going to be the light rail corridor, so that they can sell all that to developers to help fund the light rail cost. It helps to offset the costs of the light rail, which we know is a pretty dodgy business case in itself. If you want proof of that, when he was talking about the Gungahlin office block and the need to move bureaucrats out of Northbourne, what Mr Barr said to the *Canberra Times* in 2012 was:

Clearly, we will be divesting ourselves of some of our office assets and looking to move to new accommodation. That is part of the light rail project.

Quite clearly light rail is a driver.

My motion is pretty clear. Let us stop this nonsense. Let us stop the return of the death star for the people of the ACT and have a proper look across Canberra at the market and an appropriate accommodation strategy. (*Time expired.*)

**MR BARR** (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Housing and Minister for Tourism and Events) (11.00): The government will not be supporting Mr Hanson's motion this morning. He has just shown a complete misunderstanding of the issues that are before the territory.

Quite simply, the government is seeking to make better use of taxpayer dollars. The ACT public service is currently being accommodated and paying rent in a range of buildings, most of which are at the end of their useful life and are sub-optimal. The registration of interest project that we put forward is for new accommodation. It simply replaces the existing rent we are paying with new rent. The project aims to streamline government activities, and is the most economical of all of the options available to us to accommodate our workforce. The savings that can be made over the longer term can then be channelled into key government services.

For the benefit of Mr Hanson and those opposite, I will give some further detail of the government's office accommodation strategy and the benefits of our approach.

Firstly, as appears to have escaped Mr Hanson, the government is undertaking a whole-of-government accommodation strategy. This strategy has demonstrated that there is an underlying requirement for a CBD office block due to the ageing of our own stock, the high ongoing costs associated with leasing low-grade buildings, the need to provide healthy environments for our existing staff, and a desire to be able to attract and retain staff within the ACT public service. A review of the ACT government's property portfolio has revealed that almost all of the existing stock, both owned and leased, fails to achieve the government's accommodation requirements or standards.

The government has adopted a hub and satellite approach to office accommodation. For the benefit of those opposite, who might care to listen at this point, let me repeat: the government has adopted a hub and satellite approach. The hub is located in Civic, but, let me be very clear, it is not intended that it will accommodate the entire ACT government workforce. We have 20,000 staff or thereabouts. What is proposed for Civic is for around 3,400 of them to be located within new accommodation. The hub does allow for the co-location of a range of administrative and policy functions, and does provide for operational benefits over the long term to reduce costs associated with churn or changes in administrative arrangements.

The satellite buildings, which will accommodate a range of functions, are located in locations around the city, such as Gungahlin, Belconnen, Dickson and the Woden-

Weston Creek area. For the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, he might want to acquaint himself with where education is predominantly located—at the Hedley Beare Centre for Teaching and Learning in Stirling.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MR BARR:** Education have services provided out of Stirling, and they have some staff on Northbourne Avenue.

**Mr Hanson:** Oh, they do.

**MR BARR:** They do; that is correct. But the bulk of their staff are in Stirling.

The first satellite is located in Gungahlin, and an agreement for lease has been signed for an A-grade commercial building that is due for completion next year. The competitive tender process for the Gungahlin satellite office resulted in a high-quality and innovative design within commercial parameters. Importantly, it offers the government rental savings and asset disposal options from the C and D-grade stock that is currently occupied.

The next stage for us is market testing for hub office accommodation in Civic through the registration of interest document for the provision of about 42,000 square metres. So it is scaled down from the proposal of five years ago. The ROI seeks proposals on a government-owned site, which is part of section 19; on a new building on an existing privately owned site within Civic; or campus-style office accommodation utilising one site or a number of adjoining sites. The rationale for this is to provide the market with the widest possible array of options to bring back to government that provides us with the opportunity for the adaptive re-use of buildings, a new build associated with a project that is already in the pipeline or a new build on government land. It gives us the widest range of options.

This is the first stage of a multi-stage process that will be used to establish a short list of respondents who may be invited to submit a tender in response to a formal request for tender document. There may be more than one phase to the request for tender process, to arrive at a final shortlist and preferred tenderer.

Again, for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, it is expected that any building that we need to occupy would need to be ready by late 2018. That is 4½ years away. That is when a lot of our leases expire. We need to make a decision about what we are going to do with future ACT government accommodation to have that option to move in late 2018. At that point, it is envisaged that the territory would enter into a long-term leasing arrangement, with a possible extension, at least 20 years and possibly beyond, though the ROI will also allow proponents to present options for ownership to revert to the government after the end of an initial lease period.

Let us talk about the differences between our approach now and previously. The government will not be capital funding this project. We are simply seeking to lease accommodation, like we do now. The project will be a boost for the ACT economy. A project of the size of a new building in Civic will provide an economic stimulus for

the local construction industry at what is a challenging time beyond 2016—beyond 2016. The sale of older surplus government office buildings will also provide the potential for a number of adaptive re-use and other development opportunities, particularly in the CBD and along the Gungahlin to Civic corridor. The co-location of government functions within a major complex in Civic provides an important employment hub and an anchor that links a range of other strategic projects for the city, such as city to the lake, the city plan and capital metro.

Let us talk now about office vacancy rates. The latest headline vacancy rate is 13.6 per cent for all accommodation and 12.6 per cent for A-grade accommodation. This means that as of July 2014, there are about 323,000 square metres of vacant office space. Of this, only 40 per cent is A-grade, and this includes a substantial amount of space built at the airport without any long-term pre-commitments. These figures by no means represent near-full occupation; nor do they indicate that the market is critically oversupplied or that new developments are not appropriate.

We are seeing a new development in Tuggeranong supported by the federal government. I hear nothing from the opposition opposing that new development. In town centres, there is a relatively modest amount of A-grade office accommodation available to meet longer term requirements. In Civic, of the 77,000 square metres available, only 16,000 is A-grade. In Gungahlin, Belconnen, Woden and Tuggeranong combined, there is only 8,750 metres of A-grade space available, all of which is in Belconnen.

It has been suggested that the government put its process on hold because there is a new unleased A-grade development in Barton of 24,500 square metres due to be completed later this year. However, Barton and Parkes accommodate demand for Australian government related activities, and there is currently only 6,300 square metres of A-grade space available.

As this vacancy data shows, there are not substantial A-grade buildings sitting vacant in Civic or in our town centres that could effectively accommodate ACT public service requirements of around 40,000 square metres in a way that achieves the efficiencies of scale and scope that are being targeted through co-location. So this project, the ACT government project, will not have a long-term impact on office accommodation vacancy rates.

It is possible that for C and D-grade stock in this city, vacancy rates will continue to be high. The development of a new building, though, would have no significant long-term impact on overall vacancy rates. This is because there will be substantial opportunities to renew, refresh and redevelop older accommodation. The ACT government will be part of this process, with our own ageing offices, particularly Macarthur House and the Dickson motor vehicle registry, prime candidates for renewal and redevelopment.

In the current climate, with reductions in demand from the commonwealth, it is, right now, the time for owners to refurbish, upgrade and update their stock to meet today's demand for highly energy efficient, innovative and connected buildings. The government project, in combination with a range of other stimulus measures to



support the construction industry in the city, creates more opportunities for the rejuvenation and revitalisation of our city. It is an important project for the territory in the longer term. I need to repeat that we are talking about occupying a building in late 2018. We have a process ahead of us to get the best possible price from the market. As I indicated yesterday, now is the perfect time to be getting the best possible deal.

My aspirations for this project are that we can get to the point where we move our staff out of C and D-grade accommodation into higher quality accommodation and that we can get it at the most competitive price because there is interest across a wide number of stakeholders. I would anticipate expressions of interest through this process from section 63, from the buildings on the corner of Northbourne and Barry Drive that have been proposed by the Walker Corporation. I would expect a range of interest in relation to possible location on section 19. I am also anticipating interest, particularly if there are decisions taken by the commonwealth to move out of Civic with a number of their departments, in adaptive re-use or upgrading of a number of buildings that are currently occupied by the commonwealth.

This is a timely project for the ACT. It is one that will save us money in the long term but, importantly, get our staff into high quality buildings. That is a key priority for the government. We are going to take our time. We have got a number of processes to go through. Let us see what the market can deliver for us, exactly as we did in Gungahlin. Those opposite supported the Gungahlin process, and I still believe they support the Gungahlin process, because we have got a very good outcome for Gungahlin and for the ACT public service, and it has provided jobs in the construction phase.

We look forward to a similarly successful process, because there is keen interest in the marketplace from the widest possible range of industry players. The Property Council are supportive of this process and have indicated that publicly. We look forward to further market soundings as we move through each stage of this process. That is the correct way to approach the market and the way we intend to proceed with this project. We will not be supporting the opposition leader's petty, mindless motion today.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (11.14): I know it is pretty challenging for the opposition to have to come in here and find four things to complain about each Wednesday, but at least we might have had a motion that had a bit more substance to it. As the Treasurer has pointed out, Mr Hanson has not really done his homework on this motion. The narrative that Mr Hanson is trying to bring to the table does not stack up. He is trying—

**Mr Hanson:** Bring back Caroline.

**MR RATTENBURY:** We will come to exactly that. The narrative that Mr Hanson is trying to bring to the table is that the government proposed a government office building in 2011, and he says that they are still on their mission to build a so-called death star. What he completely fails to note anywhere in his motion is that the current proposal that is out for market testing is a very different proposal from that put forward in 2011.

In 2011 the Greens could have put forward a very similar motion to what we have before us today. We had similar concerns about the high cost of a government office building, about adding more commercial space to Civic when it already had such a high office vacancy rate, about the requirement for most of the ACT public service to work in the one building together, about the lack of discussion and consultation with the property sector and—this is one that perhaps others do not care so much about but the Greens certainly do—about the energy efficiency of the project, about whether we could reduce the greenhouse impacts relating to the project, including full life cycle analysis, taking into account operational energy use, the embodied energy of existing buildings and the greenhouse gas implications of a new build.

And they were all issues, as Mr Hanson interjected across the room, that were raised by Ms Le Couteur. She did a very thorough analysis of the proposal that was brought forward in 2011. And, Madam Speaker, with Ms Le Couteur taking a lead, in partnership we, the Greens, did our homework. We looked in significant detail at all the documentation available on the project, we had detailed briefings from the government, we met with key stakeholders and we met with the relevant minister to discuss better options.

As a result, the government also went away and did some more homework. They looked further into life cycle analyses of retrofitting options, what exactly they meant by “carbon neutral enabled”, what onsite and offsite energy production was proposed, further evaluating the various ownership options, undertaking more market testing before going full steam ahead and finalising a government accommodation strategy.

As a result of all this work, the current government accommodation proposal takes into account all of these key issues that were raised throughout the last Assembly. Key to Mr Hanson’s motion is that this registration of interest process includes options for tenderers to build something new, or to offer up existing office spaces—whether that be using one site or multiple adjoining sites, or a combination—perhaps retrofit some existing buildings and also build something new to link them. Mr Hanson’s motion includes that point, in (1)(g)(iii) already:

A campus-style of office accommodation utilising one site or a number of adjoining sites ...

So it seems that he has not simply joined up the dots here in what has actually changed since 2011, because this point is exactly to allow for options such as current building owners to offer up their spaces or sites. This could even be a consortium of owners and this would help to alleviate the high commercial property vacancy rate. This option thus opens up the registration process to local property owners as well as local industry.

In his motion Mr Hanson has called for an immediate halt to any plans to build a new office building and instead conduct an analysis and report on suitable office space across Canberra and then to provide a business case and a cost-benefit analysis that compares leasing existing accommodation to constructing a new building. I am completely surprised by this proposal and I wonder whether Mr Hanson spent 2011

under a rock, as the government produced a wide variety of such analyses between 2009 and 2011 and these reports were then all seriously analysed by the public accounts committee inquiry into government office accommodation, as well as by the estimates committee.

Now, of course, Mr Smyth was on the public accounts committee for that whole period, as was my former colleague, Ms Le Couteur. These reports, with the commercial-in-confidence sections omitted, are available online on the Economic Development Directorate website, along with the other information for potential tenderers. So I am not sure whether the Liberal Party have not looked at that website and whether they think there are still major holes in that analysis and documentation, but I think a lot of work has been done since the initial proposal.

As well as the requirement for copies of the business case and the economic and environmental analyses, the public accounts committee also asked for a whole-of-government office accommodation strategy before any further work occurred on a government office building. This strategy was delivered in January this year. Peckvonhartel was commissioned to look into all of the ACT government's current office accommodation, and it looked at what the best size, configuration, geographic placement, layouts and type of buildings would be.

The strategy takes this analysis into account, and concludes that the best option for the government is to have a main office hub of around 40,000 square metres in Civic, have the Gungahlin office of 9,500 square metres as a satellite office and look into what other satellite offices should be kept or established, including those at Dickson, Belconnen, Woden and Stirling. Additional office space will probably still be necessary in the city, and this is what is being looked at through the market testing process.

It also looked at the best arrangements, in terms of cost to government, of leasing versus ownership. The KPMG economic analysis was that approximately 40 per cent ACT government-owned and 60 per cent leased would give the best value, and, in terms of prioritising which buildings the government owns, maintaining ownership of core buildings that will be needed centrally over the long term is important; for example, those buildings close to the Assembly.

Now that the government has this very useful information about whether it is better for the government to own or lease buildings and at which point it becomes better to do what, this will be helpful when evaluating the registrations of interest and looking at the range of options available. In asking the government to completely scrap any plans for new office accommodation, Mr Hanson neglects to address the key issues at heart here, the reason why the government started its work on new accommodation.

The point is that if the government does not do anything to change the current office accommodation, it would ultimately cost the government more. I understand that all ACT government-owned buildings are C and D grade buildings, which are expensive to continue to maintain and operate, and the buildings that the ACT government leases are B grade. The financial analysis looked at comparisons between a new 4.5 star NABERS building, leasing space in a comparable quality building, business as usual, upgrading existing buildings to 4.5 star NABERS and minimal upgrades.

I think that the key point is really that the majority of ACT public servants are working in substandard accommodation, in B, C and D grade buildings, which is unfair to the workforce. Also, these office buildings, being substandard, are not very energy efficient and are therefore costly to run as well as a burden on the ACT government's aim of achieving carbon neutrality by 2020.

In terms of the high office vacancy rate in the city, I agree that this is obviously far from ideal. However, when this is broken down into building grades, I think you will find that there is very little A-grade office space available. The commonwealth government have a minimum requirement for 4.5 star NABERS buildings, as they want to ensure that their staff are in good quality office spaces and that they are running efficient buildings in terms of energy use. So, although the office vacancy rate is high, it is not the type of office space that good employers want.

The ACT government are no different. They do not want staff to be working in substandard conditions. Madam Deputy Speaker, it is time for many office buildings in Canberra to be brought out of the 60s and into the 21st century. This could be done either by adaptive re-use, something the Greens are keen on, or by knock-down rebuilds. This is something that needs serious evaluation on a case by case basis, but overall, just as it is with cars, washing machines and fridges, it is actually usually the daily use of energy that makes the biggest difference in terms of overall lifecycle analysis of energy use, over that of the embodied energy of the existing concrete. Certainly that is enhanced when the building materials are recycled if there is a demolition.

I believe that we could achieve something like a 79 per cent reduction in energy use by shifting our ACT public service into more energy efficient buildings—clearly, a priority if we are to achieve carbon neutrality and do our bit for achieving the ACT's overall emissions reduction targets. And there is a range of other issues that arise in terms of the efficiencies arising from co-location, and I think that that is possible given the way the registration of interest has been put forward. Some sort of campus model, I think, is particularly beneficial and certainly we will be discussing later today, under Ms Lawder's motion, the issue of having a single conservation agency. I am sure we will come to that in good time.

But having these sorts of campus style accommodation means that those agencies can be located together much more effectively. I think there is also, certainly, social issues around upgrading ACT government office buildings, with the opportunity to modernise with things like the inclusion of childcare centres, improved IT, security and intranet services—all of those sorts of things that go with modernising the government's office accommodation are important components of the discussion about the future of the government office accommodation strategy.

Much seemed to be made in today's paper about the particular requirement that buildings be within a 10-minute walk of the Assembly. I have tried to think about that. I think for most parts of Civic, if you walked more than 10 minutes from the Assembly you would be essentially out of the city, so that requirement is one that really encompasses most spaces, either existing available blocks or existing buildings in terms of taking up vacant office accommodation space or buildings that might be retrofitted for the purpose.

So in light of both the work that has been done and the fact that Mr Hanson's motion does not reflect an up-to-date analysis of the situation, I will not be supporting it today and will be voting against it.

I was very struck in yesterday's debate when Mr Hanson referenced the death star. He decided to self-describe himself as Han Solo. That struck me as an intriguing thing to do. I mean, who does that? Who walks into this place and says, "I am Han Solo"? That aside, it prompted me to go off and think more deeply about it and look up Han Solo's background. Of course there is a *Star Wars* Wikipedia—one imagines there probably is. One might not be surprised to know it is actually known as Wookieepedia, of course, which figures.

Presumably the reason Mr Hanson decided to self-describe himself in this way was that Han Solo helped Obi-Wan Kenobi, Luke Skywalker and Princess Leia escape the death star. Presumably that was the linkage that Mr Hanson had in mind. I wondered whether it was because of Han Solo being someone that walked with a swagger and was smart-talking. That certainly struck me as a likeness. But when one actually researches it, it turns out that Han Solo was a smuggler—perhaps the best smuggler in the galaxy. He was on the run from imperial forces, seemingly undertaking a bit of civil disobedience, heaven forbid.

*Members interjecting—*

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members.

**Mr Hanson:** You have joined the empire. Shame on you.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Yes. So I was amused that Mr Hanson likened himself to someone undertaking large-scale disobedience in fact for profit. That is the Liberal Party version of civil disobedience: for profit.

Two other interesting facts about Han Solo are that his son Jason turned to the dark side of the force, something Mr Coe might wish to reflect on, and that George Lucas had to actually alter the film. *Star Wars* was actually remade in the 90s, because there was a controversial scene in which Han Solo actually drew first and shot one of his alternating characters in what is considered to be a rather un-hero-like moment in the earlier version of the films. So there was a necessity to rewrite the film, to rewrite history, which of course is one of Mr Hanson's other great strengths.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr Rattenbury. I am sure we are all much more educated now, not that I thought it had much to do with the motion.

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (11.28), in reply: There is a proud history of the Greens confusing movies with reality. I think it was Sarah Hanson-Young who watched *Happy Feet* and thought that the ice melting was real. And then she watched *Sea Patrol* and thought that was real, too. Maybe Mr Rattenbury thinks that is the case as well. I must say that that was a humorous contribution from Mr Rattenbury and I welcome it. I can only assume he sees himself as an ewok—he is not quite aligned at this stage and just grubbing around in the forest.

**Mr Barr:** Boba Fett?

**MR HANSON:** Well, I don't know. The original death star had Jon Stanhope as Darth Vader. I suppose that makes you Luke, does it?

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson, I know that the budget week is getting to us, but could we get on with the motion, please.

**MR HANSON:** Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will come back to the issue.

**Mr Smyth:** Well, you didn't call the minister to order.

**MR HANSON:** That is true, Madam Deputy Speaker. But ewoks get away with a lot, don't they. It is interesting that the Property Council has been mentioned on this issue, because this matter was raised and discussed when the Property Council appeared before the estimates committee. Mr Tony Hedley, a well-known and well-regarded member of the Property Council board represented the Property Council at the estimates hearing, and he said:

... as I said, the big monster office block which was going to be here, which would have significantly exacerbated vacancy rates in the territory.

That is an extract of his statement. The government can come in here and say that the Property Council love it. But when Tony Hedley representing the Property Council appeared before the estimates committee, he described it as the big monster office block and then said it would significantly exacerbate vacancy rates in the territory. I am not sure who Mr Barr is talking to at the Property Council, but if he—

**Mr Barr:** Catherine Carter.

**MR HANSON:** Catherine Carter? Well, perhaps we need to make sure—

**Mr Barr:** She has issued a statement on behalf of the Property Council.

**MR HANSON:** Brilliant.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** This is not a conversation, Mr Barr.

**MR HANSON:** The Property Council member representing the Property Council described it as the big monster office block. So we might describe it as the death star, but Mr Hedley described it as the big monster office building that is going to exacerbate vacancy rates in this town.

There will be a variety of views on this matter. But I remind Mr Rattenbury that he and his party went skipping along with death star I. They thought that was a good proposal too. They all thought, "This'll be great. We'll support the government. This seems like a lovely proposal." And like so many things the Greens do, they go in cahoots and run along with the government, but then when the truth comes out and the government goes, "Well, we're folding it," they then reinvent themselves. They are very good at that.

Here we are again with the sanctimonious lectures, the same sort of stuff that we heard from Jon Stanhope in 2011—"Oh, you small-minded opposition. You don't understand." From Meredith Hunter we heard about triple bottom lines and all the rest of it. Of course, that all collapsed in a smoking ruin, but now we have the son of Darth Vader putting out the same lines again with the same sanctimonious lectures—"Oh, you don't understand." Well, Tony Hedley from the Property Council fully understands what this will mean. I note that Andrew Barr did not bother to mention what the Property Council said when appearing before the estimates committee, noting that we are cogently debating the estimates report today.

The Treasurer also failed to mention a few other things in his speech. He failed to explain why everybody has to be 10 minutes from the Assembly. I still do not understand that logic. It has not been explained to me why everybody has to be 10 minutes from the Assembly. I understand there will be senior bureaucrats that, from time to time, will come to the Assembly to meet with ministers and ministerial staff. Absolutely. But for the remaining 3,000 bureaucrats, why do they need to be 10 minutes from the Assembly? No-one has been able to riddle me that. Why is that limitation being imposed on this? What the government wants to do, of course, is skew it towards a particular solution that suits them.

The other interesting issue was that Mr Barr did not mention any approaches from Cbus, and I invited him when I was speaking to debunk that and say, "No, no, we haven't been contacted by the union. This isn't a matter of the union pushing for this because they want a big asset in Canberra that, although they would build it, the ACT taxpayer will pay for for 25 years." I said to him, "Look, you can say, no, that's not the case. That's just salacious"—"fallacious", that's right—"That's a fallacious rumour. This doesn't stack up, that's not true." But did he say anything? No. I invite him—if he wants to seek leave we will grant it—to debunk that. Please do so, Mr Barr. No, he has his head down ignoring me.

Then there is the issue of light rail. Again, Mr Barr ignored that. He was talking just about office accommodation. But previously when he was making the case for Gungahlin, he said, "No, this is about getting people out of Northbourne so that we can flog that off and put it up for re-use so we can make a bit of money out of LVC, perhaps"—or not—"Get rid of that land. Sell it off so that we can then make the light rail project stack up." No mention of that as part of his proposal.

There was no explanation, either, about the government's strategy. The strategy is to have a hub and spoke and put some people out in the regions and some people in the centre, but then there is the complete disconnect of sending Shared Services the government entity responsible for whole-of-government issues—HR, IT, finance, procurement and so on—out in Gungahlin. Why do you have a strategy when you ignore the logic of that strategy? No response.

If the argument was. "Well, we're going to put Shared Services in the centre to support the other directorates and the bureaucrats and policy makers of those directorates but we're going to put one of the front-line services out in Gungahlin," there would be more logic to that. That would fit with the strategy. So, do not come in here with the arguments about a hub and spokes when you are ignoring the strategy you have proposed.

It is also worth noting that Mr Barr asserted that all the education bureaucrats are in Stirling, but when pushed on the matter he had to accept and acknowledge that, no, that is actually not true and that a number of bureaucrats work on Northbourne and that they would be relocated. So it would include education bureaucrats, despite the—

**Mr Barr:** Not necessarily.

**MR HANSON:** Well, if we are getting rid of all the land on Northbourne, which is part of the strategy, one would assume they are coming into the centre.

**Mr Barr:** No, we're not getting rid of all the land on Northbourne.

**MR HANSON:** That seems to be the pressure to do it.

The other point I put is that this proposal is skewed towards the build option. There is vacant property out there, and I accept that that is in the proposal. It is looking at office accommodation that can be re-used. But by saying that it all has to be in a campus or it all has to be 10 minutes from the Assembly, we know that limits us to a pretty narrow band of options. Certainly there is the potential for an option essentially over the road from London Circuit with people vacating a number of properties. But beyond that, it really limits the scope of what can be done and what would then create the vacancy across the city.

This is not, as Mr Barr said in his speech, providing the largest possible range of options. It is deliberately narrow in its scope to eliminate a range of options and skew it towards the build option. A little bit like Mr Barr wants his nameplate on a stadium at some stage, I think he also wants to be the builder of this building. I say to the government: you have not made the case. You did not make it in 2011; you have not made it now. I know there is pressure on you from people to build it; you did not take the opportunity to refute that. There is pressure on people for you to build this, and some of them are your mates, I am sure. But it is not good for the people of Canberra.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

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

Noes 9

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

Question so resolved in the negative.



## **ACTTAB Ltd—sale**

**MR SMYTH** (Brindabella) (11.42): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that the:

- (a) ACT Government has now entered into arrangements to sell ACTTAB to Tabcorp;
- (b) future of the current staff of ACTTAB is unclear; and
- (c) racing industry has concerns over the future of the industry post the sale of ACTTAB;

(2) calls on the Government to:

- (a) detail to this Assembly consequential and transitional arrangements for employees and the racing industry as a result of this sale;
- (b) consider retraining options for ACTTAB Ltd employees who may lose their jobs as a consequence of this sale; and
- (c) ensure that the funding arrangements allow the racing industry to be self-reliant and sustainable in the long term; and

(3) refers the ACTTAB Ltd sale process to the ACT Auditor-General to consider a review of the sale.

It is important when the government sells assets that we get it right. I am reminded of the saying that if it appears too good to be true then it probably is. I think there are a lot of people in the community who are saying, “\$105 million sounds like a good deal.” It was certainly much more than was potentially touted and is probably much more than people expected the government to get from the sale. On face value, that is a good thing. But the question is: what have we given up to achieve that sale?

In the discussions I have had with the industry and in discussions with people who are concerned about the future of the staff, there have been a number of unanswered questions that I think could best be solved by allowing the Auditor-General to have a look at the issue.

The motion is very simple. Paragraph (1) notes that the government has now entered into arrangements to sell ACTTAB to Tabcorp. We believe the future of the current staff of ACTTAB is unclear. They have three months of certainty, but no-one can say what will happen after that. And I note that the racing industry has concerns over the future of the industry post the sale of ACTTAB, in that, whilst Tabcorp has put some incentives on the table, the industry will still be budget funded. As budget cycles come and go, the question will be: what can the industry rely on long term? It is one

of the things that business always asks for from any government—that they have some certainty so that they can plan their future. I do not believe, and I do not think the industry believes, that there is any certainty for the industry as an outcome of this sale.

Paragraph (2) of the motion calls on the government to detail to this Assembly consequential and transitional arrangements for employees and the racing industry as a result of the sale. It is very important that the government puts on this table in this place far more detail than they have through a press release or through the courts and the media. What it actually means is that, as a consequence of the lack of certainty for the employees, in 2(b) we call on them to consider retraining options for ACTTAB Ltd employees who may lose their jobs as a consequence of the sale. And in (3) we ask them to ensure that the funding arrangements allow the racing industry to be, as far as possible, self-reliant and sustainable in the long term. That is what they would like: they would like to know what their long-term future is.

With that in mind, we think the best person to look at the sale process and consider the outcomes of the process is the Auditor-General of the ACT. So we ask the Assembly to refer the sale of ACTTAB to the Auditor-General.

Initially, the process was queried by a number of groups who believed they were shut out of the sale of the agency. There a number of *Canberra Times* reports. On 24 March this year, for instance, there was one headlined “Bidders shut out from sale of agency”. And there are some local groups, I understand, that had an interest in keeping ACTTAB in the ACT—ACT-owned groups who believed they had something to offer but who were not even considered.

Then there are groups like corporate bookmakers, who are reported to be unhappy and who say that the government is only going with the big organisations and do not understand what they can offer. It would be interesting to know what those other options were, what they were offering, and how they looked at the development of the industry in the ACT.

Canberra has a very large equestrian community. One of the peaks of that industry is thoroughbred racing and harness racing. It is important that we understand their role in the local community and the joy and entertainment they bring, but at the same time—

**Dr Bourke:** What about the doggies?

**MR SMYTH:** Dr Bourke says, “What about the doggies?” I will get to the doggies in a minute. It is with this in mind that the government are currently doing their study about the co-location of the three codes, which includes the greyhounds, and whether or not that would have some benefits.

We need to know on what basis the government excluded those bids. The industry had a view that it should go to one of the TABs, one of the TAB operators. But have we not looked at the options because that simply made it easier? Given the incentive that the federal government has put on the table with its asset sales, and the Treasurer has

mentioned that there may be other asset sales beyond ACTTAB, can we make the process run more smoothly in the future? Are there lessons to be learned from this? And how do we improve what we are doing? The first thing is the whole issue of the process. Why were people shut out? Was that a reasonable thing to do?

There was some amount of secrecy about this. There is a story, also in the *Canberra Times*, that the government refused to detail even basic details about the sale process. The spokesperson would not say how many had been lodged, beyond saying “a number” and that the expression of interest documentation was confidential. That may have been true, but surely just the number was not confidential. The officer then said she would not divulge details about the bidding stage or timetable beyond completing plans to have the sale completed by 30 June. You have to question why that is secret. Why is the process that you are following actually so secret? It is important that we get an understanding of that and whether, because of the way the government conducted the process, we got the right outcome.

Then we need to work out whether the \$105 million is as good as it seems. I have to say, Treasurer, that it sounds like a good deal. But what have we given up for that? It would appear that the price includes the tote, the sports betting, the lottery-type activity on the racecourse—things like Keno, et cetera—and the track-side activity. We have surrendered that for 50 years.

The question I asked was: what numbers were done? What financial analysis was done? And I asked could I see the government’s financial analysis. I was told, “No.” The reason given was that it was commercial in confidence. It is the government’s own analysis. The government does not have to keep it commercial in confidence. Indeed, this is a government that said it would not hide behind commercial in confidence; this is a government which, when the Chief Minister took it over, heralded a new era of openness and accountability. If we had this new era of openness and accountability, what stops you from giving us the financial analysis so that the opposition and the community can make their own decision on whether we got a good deal here?

In one way, the money up-front might be a good deal if it was invested and you got a long-term dividend from it. But if the money is just going to help balance the government’s budget, which is doing so poorly, are we robbing the future to pay for the present? These are the questions that need to be answered.

When the announcement was made, there were some articles published. I will read just one from the *Australian*, but there were others:

TABCORP’S David Attenborough has helped ensure the company’s long-term future with cheap long-life licences through his ACTTAB acquisition.

The deal is the first for Attenborough since the split from his casino arm, now called Echo Entertainment, and at \$105.5m it is a handy boost to earnings.

At eight times earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation of \$14m, the multiple equates with Tabcorp’s present trading performance and fills a gap on his east coast network, which runs south from NSW.

The real prize is the 50-year licences at zero tax on tote earnings and less than 1 per cent on the sports bookmaking licence.

In NSW, the TAB pays 19 per cent and 10 per cent respectively, while the tax hit in Victoria is 7.5 and 4.5 per cent. In this sort of market the acquisition of low-cost, long-life optionality is every boss's dream deal and Attenborough looks to have achieved that.

If there is a question here that Tabcorp is getting such a good deal, does that mean that the taxpayer of the ACT did not get the best deal? The answer is that we do not know, because the government will not release its financial analysis. And if the government will not release its financial analysis, you have to ask the question: what are they hiding? You have to look at this. Go through these numbers, members. The article says:

The real prize is the 50-year licences at zero tax on tote earnings and less than 1 per cent on the sports bookmaking licence.

In New South Wales, the tax on sports bookmaking licences is 10 per cent; we have got a tenth of that. In Victoria it is 4.5 per cent. We have got one per cent. You have to ask why Tabcorp are willing to pay the \$105 million. The answer is: because they got the better deal. They have got a very good deal. They know that for 50 years they will pay no tax on tote and only one per cent on the sports betting.

I think it behoves the government to make that information public—to make their analysis public. I am not asking for the deal that Tabcorp put to them, although given that you are selling a government asset it would not be unreasonable to know that detail. But the government surely did its homework, and the government is in a position to release its work on what the revenue forgone in the outyears will mean. If there really is a case that can be made that yes, we have got what seems like a good deal today, it is a question of whether we have denied taxpayers over the next 50 years the benefit of the sale for a quick grab today. The government needs to consider that.

It is interesting that the estimates committee was charged with looking at the budget. This was on the table. We did not have any detail. The detail emerged after the committee had finished its process. I ask members to look at the recommendations the committee made. Recommendation 61—and this is with two Labor and two Liberal members—says:

The Committee recommends that the Legislative Assembly refer the sale process of ACTTAB Ltd to the ACT Auditor-General to consider a review of the sale.

There is bipartisan support for this, and I hope that that is what happens today. But I notice the minister has an amendment which will remove the referral. You have to ask: if this is such a good deal, we have had such a good process and we are getting such a good outcome, why would you not have the Auditor-General validate this process? The government's refusal to support this motion today, through the amendment that the Treasurer has circulated, clearly shows that they do not want this discussed.

The second recommendation on ACTTAB is:

The Committee recommends that on the first sitting day following the sale of ACTTAB Limited the Government detail to the Legislative Assembly consequential and transitional arrangements for employees and the racing industry post the sale.

The government's response: "Noted." The government's media release announcing the sale of ACTTAB dated 30 July 2014 included information on transitional arrangements for ACTTAB employees and the racing industry. There was not a great deal. If you are asking the employees to rely on the government's press release, that is very sad.

The report goes on to say a few other things. Recommendation 63 says:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider options for the retraining of any ACTTAB Limited employee who may lose their job as a consequence of the sale of ACTTAB Limited.

The government's response is:

Agreed.

From the outset of the commencement of the sale process ACTTAB engaged a professional Human Relations firm who have been working closely with staff to help prepare them for pursuing new career opportunities including transitioning workshops, career counselling and individual assistance to staff.

One can read from that that, yes, there will be job losses, and the government agrees that they will have to do something for those that lose out from this sale.

There are other issues. Part of the handling of the process was that most people heard about this on the radio before the government told them. I understand there was some confusion over the timings when the announcement was made to the stock exchange, but I understand that the industry for some days had no notice from the government, that they heard about it from people who had heard on the radio in Melbourne that it had been sold and who had purchased it. So there is, again, a question of process. Was it handled appropriately? Could it be done better? Can we learn from these lessons? As a consequence of that, apparently most of the staff, if not all of the staff, knew their fate before they were called into the meeting the government had arranged. I understand that a lot of people were upset by the way that occurred.

There are lessons to be learned here. If we are to have asset sales in the future, let us work out that we have got the process right, let us optimise the process and let us learn from this first sale of an asset. We do not have too many, and we do not do this too often. But if the government are certain they have got it right, I do not see why they would stand in the way of referring this to the Auditor-General. If the outcome is the best outcome, I do not see why they would stand in the way of referring this to the Auditor-General. If the options they have taken are correct, I do not see why they

would stand in the way of this going to the Auditor-General. And if the price that is being paid is a good price, I do not see why they would stand in the way of this going to the Auditor-General.

You only have to go back to the article in the *Australian*—which seems to indicate that Tabcorp got the better deal, not the people of the ACT—to have some concerns about what the government have done and whether they truly have got the best value for money for the people of the ACT. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

**MR BARR** (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Housing and Minister for Tourism and Events) (11.57): I move the amendment circulated in my name:

Omit all words after “notes that”, substitute:

- “(a) the ACT Government has now entered into arrangements to sell ACTTAB to Tabcorp for \$105.5 million;
- (b) under the sale conditions, all staff (with the exception of the Chief Executive Officer who is retiring) are guaranteed employment with Tabcorp for a minimum period of three months following completion;
- (c) the racing industry funding arrangements are unchanged—receiving around \$8 million per year from government—recognising their important contribution to the region;
- (d) in addition to the payments from government, the racing industry is guaranteed for at least 10 years an amount of at least \$300 000 (indexed by CPI) per year for race and other sponsorships from Tabcorp, which represents an increase of \$100 000 (indexed by CPI) per annum; and
- (e) local community and sporting organisations will continue to receive from Tabcorp at least \$400 000 per annum in sponsorships and support (indexed by CPI) for at least 10 years; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

- (a) detail to this Assembly consequential and transitional arrangements for employees and the racing industry as a result of this sale;
- (b) consider retraining options for ACTTAB Ltd employees who decide not to accept an offer by Tabcorp; and
- (c) work with the racing industry to investigate the development of multi-year contractual arrangements with reporting requirements in consultation with the industry.”.

On 30 July I announced the government had agreed to sell ACTTAB to Tabcorp and that the transaction was expected to be completed later this year. In responding to Mr Smyth’s motion this morning, it is important to outline the steps taken by the government leading to the sale.

The ACTTAB feasibility study undertaken by PricewaterhouseCoopers in 2013 provided a strong case supporting the sale as ACTTAB continued to struggle in the face of increased competition and changes in technology and consumer preferences for wagering, including mobile betting.

After extensive consultation with a range of stakeholders, including the relevant unions and the racing industry, the government decided to pursue the sale of ACTTAB with the following objectives: firstly, to achieve a fair and reasonable price; secondly, to ensure the racing industry was not negatively affected; thirdly, to achieve a timely sale; fourthly, to ensure the successful purchaser had the appropriate experience and capacity to operate a wagering business; and, finally, to ensure employee welfare was considered.

In order to achieve a fair and reasonable price, there was an open call for expressions of interest that was advertised nationally, which was then followed by a competitive bidding process. I suggest anyone would be hard pressed to argue that the sale price of over \$100 million—\$105.5 million—is not a fair and reasonable price. We can also confidently observe that no other TAB privatisation has achieved an exchange of contracts in such a short time frame.

As one of the most successful wagering operations in the country and one of the top 100 listed companies on the Australian Stock Exchange, there can be no doubt that Tabcorp has the appropriate experience and capacity.

In framing their proposals concerning the staff and the local racing industry, bidders were asked to take into consideration the preferences of the union relating to staffing and those of the industry in relation to future funding arrangements. The government remains committed to ensuring staff are treated fairly and that to the extent possible they can retain their jobs under existing terms and conditions.

By way of background, it is important to note that late last year ACTTAB engaged an HR adviser to provide career transitioning workshops and individual assistance to staff, including financial counselling. Assistance in finding suitable positions will also be provided to any staff seeking to join the ACT public service, although of course they will need to go through the same merit selection process as anyone else. I am aware that the union has provided some positive feedback from staff to ACTTAB about these arrangements.

In relation to the terms of sale, Tabcorp has undertaken to offer employment to all staff except for the chief executive officer, who is about to retire. Tabcorp is also required to employ all staff on substantially the same and no less favourable terms and conditions, with full recognition of prior service.

At a general ACTTAB staff meeting held on the morning of the sale, Tabcorp stressed that they would be making offers of ongoing employment, and not just for three months. Tabcorp has also indicated that it is expected to take at least a year to fully integrate ACTTAB's business operations. Although no guarantees have been given beyond three months, it is reasonable to assume that most staff will be retained over the longer term, given Tabcorp were keen to acquire all of ACTTAB's premises and retail outlets.

Furthermore, it has been a major objective of the government to ensure that the local racing industry is not negatively affected by the sale. As such, the government is intent on providing the current level of funding in support of the ACT racing industry that was identified in the 2014 budget.

It should also not be forgotten that Tabcorp has agreed to increase the annual sponsorship funding for the industry by \$100,000. Tabcorp is also intent on actively promoting the local racing events industry by providing improved marketing, including increased radio and television coverage.

It is also relevant to note that the racing industry in smaller jurisdictions in Australia tends to be budget funded, whereas the majority of industry funding in the larger states is derived from commercial agreements with local totalisator licence holders. These differences in the primary sources of funding simply reflect the reality of the situation between large and small jurisdictions.

The turnover generated by the local racing industry in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland is a major profit driver for the company that holds the totalisator licence in those states. Due to its small scale, the ACT racing industry, on the other hand, has limited impact on ACTTAB's profitability as it only generates about two per cent of the business's total racing turnover. So it is almost negligible, Madam Deputy Speaker.

This funding cap was highlighted in the PwC ACTTAB feasibility study, which identified an annual funding shortfall of about \$5 million per year in ACTTAB payments to government compared with the level of budget funding paid to the industry. Let me repeat that: a \$5 million per year gap. This means it would have been very difficult to present ACTTAB as an attractive investment opportunity if direct funding to the racing industry by the new owner had been a mandatory condition of sale.

While the industry, I understand, has expressed some disappointment at the outcome of the sale, let me be clear that the government remains committed to providing appropriate assistance to the local racing industry, with the current level of budget funding at its highest level ever.

Let us again remind people: that is more than \$8 million a year that goes from taxpayers to our racing industry, one of the most generous subsidies for any industry in this city. I consider the ACTTAB sale provides a positive outcome for the territory, and meets the sale objectives that I outlined at the beginning of the process. Let me repeat that: it provides a positive outcome for the territory, and meets the sale objectives that we outlined.

The sale has been conducted appropriately, and, importantly, in accordance with proper probity requirements. With respect to those probity requirements, we have sought advice on those and ensured that the process has met those requirements. At times that has meant that some people who wanted to know things before everyone else could not be told, for those probity reasons. Most importantly, in relation to the announcement on the day and the impact on share prices, if some people had known before that time, that would have been a serious breach of probity.



In the context of Mr Smyth's call today, I do not think it is necessary to specifically call on the Auditor-General to review the sale process. However, the government has no concerns should the Auditor-General decide to undertake a review. It is up to the Auditor-General to make that decision in the context of the competing priorities for her time. We have no concerns at all should she decide to undertake a review of ACTTAB, but we do not believe that it needs to be specifically referred by the Assembly today. For that reason the amendment that I have moved removes that element of Mr Smyth's proposal. But if the Auditor-General decides she wants to look at this, we have no concerns about that.

Having said all of that, I commend the amendment, which outlines the benefits of the sale in terms of the \$105.5 million achieved, outlines the level of funding that the taxpayer provides to the racing industry, is very clear about the commitments that have been signed up to by Tabcorp in relation to increased sponsorship of the racing industry—so that accounts for more than \$3 million over the next decade—and their more than \$4 million commitment to ongoing sponsorship of community and sporting organisations in the territory.

This is a major Australian company that is going to be doing more in this community and that is investing significantly in this business. I have said this more than once publicly: you do not acquire an asset like this and invest what they have with a view to running it down. They want to grow this business, and that is good news for the territory economy. We need to attract new capital into our economy, and we have done so through this process. I commend my amendment to the 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) (12.07): I have previously expressed my support for the sale of ACTTAB, primarily due to my belief that the ACT government should not be in the business of bookmaking operations. I flag my intention to support Minister Barr's amendment to Mr Smyth's motion, as I think it enhances the motion put forward by Mr Smyth. But I will come to that in a moment.

Mr Smyth's motion seeks to raise concerns about the future of the industry. I certainly believe some of Mr Barr's amendment will go some way to assuaging those industry concerns. Several parts of Mr Barr's amendment are a simple restating of elements of the sale, such as Tabcorp's commitment to continue support of local and community sporting clubs. That support is clearly very valuable to a range of organisations, and I welcome the fact that that support continues under the sale agreements.

The commercial sale of ACTTAB was necessarily a confidential affair, as Minister Barr has just outlined. Given the commercial sensitivities and the probity requirements around such a sale, the government issued probity guidelines to ministers and their staff, and appointed a probity adviser to ensure that the highest level of probity was maintained. Given the confidential nature of the transaction, I can understand that people might feel that they do not have enough information about the outcome or the next steps.

That is why I support Mr Smyth's call for the government to detail to the Assembly consequential and transitional arrangements for employees and the racing industry. Mr Smyth's call for information has been preserved in Mr Barr's amendment. I certainly consider that it is appropriate that the Assembly receive that information, and part of my willingness to support Mr Barr's amendment is that that element is maintained.

Mr Smyth's motion also talks about the future of current ACTTAB employees. He suggests that it is unclear. Whilst the reality is that the sale is not yet completed, I do understand that because the sale still requires the approval of the ACCC and also the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission, nonetheless Minister Barr's amendment outlines that current employees have the certainty of at least three months of employment after the sale is completed, and paragraph (2)(b) of the amendment certainly indicates that Tabcorp will be likely to retain a proportion of staff.

Mr Smyth's call for the government to consider retraining options for employees of ACTTAB is basically preserved in Minister Barr's amendment, albeit with a focus placed on those employees who choose not to remain with the organisation after the sale. But I think there is an awareness and a real sense of being mindful of staff and the consequences of the sale for them. It is certainly something that has been canvassed in a number of discussions that I have been involved in around this in cabinet. Ensuring that the staff are looked after and that appropriate transitional arrangements are in place was certainly high on the government's discussion list.

In terms of financial support for the industry, the Canberra Racing Club recently published a long article that detailed several of their concerns, including their disappointment that the ACTTAB sale did not address the long-term revenue stream of the ACT racing industry. Minister Barr's amendment outlines that the ACT racing industry will continue to receive \$8 million a year in government support. I can only hope that will take the edge off their disappointment.

The amendment also calls on the government to work with the racing industry to develop multiyear contractual arrangements. I certainly look forward to hearing more about that, and what the racing industry bring to the table in terms of their long-term financial viability.

When it comes to the sale price, I have heard opinions that the \$105.5 million price tag was either too low or too high, depending on who you talk to. The sale was market tested, so I take the price as an accurate representation of what the market was willing to pay for the asset. One needs to go through these processes to find these things out and, with a number of bidders in place, clearly the price was what the market was willing to bear in terms of the arrangements that were put in place.

Finally, Mr Smyth's motion calls on the Assembly to refer the ACTTAB sale process to the ACT Auditor-General to consider a review of the sale. I do not believe it is necessary to maintain this in the amended motion. As all members know, the Auditor-General will look at matters that the Auditor-General considers appropriate. Equally, the Auditor-General writes to all MLAs asking for their input into her office's

program of audits for the coming year. That request would provide all members with an opportunity to suggest things that should be considered, including for Mr Smyth to suggest that the ACTTAB sale process should be considered by the auditor. I have certainly provided the Auditor-General with my suggestions on a range of useful audit topics, and I assume other members did as well.

On that basis I do not think the Assembly needs to put this forward. I will express the view that there are a range of matters that I would like to see the Auditor-General look at. I have put those views to the Auditor-General and I hope she will take up the ones I have suggested. Whether she does or not, of course, is a matter for the Auditor-General.

With those brief remarks, I will conclude by simply observing that I will be supporting Mr Barr's amendment today.

**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) (12.13): I rise to support Minister Barr's amendment and to speak briefly in regard to the racing industry. With respect to the sale of ACTTAB I have certainly heard from the racing industry about their disappointment at some of the recent aspects of that sale. Since that decision I have met with all three codes to hear their views and to discuss a way forward that gives them the certainty they need to invest and grow, because this government understands the value of the three racing codes to our economy and to our community.

Looking at the Canberra Racing Club, for example, attendance at Thoroughbred Park is around 64,500 a year, with over 44,000 in race day attendances and close to 20,000 in attendance on other days. The biggest day, of course, is the Black Opal and Canberra Cup day, with around 10,000 attending. Significant non-race-day events this year include the Unbridled Horse Festival, which is in November, and the VW car convention, which is a fundraiser, I understand, for the Canberra Hospital Foundation.

In terms of their contribution to the community, many race days support local charities through race day sponsorship and race day fundraising functions. Attendance numbers, I believe, stand up against some of our other great spectator sports at Manuka Oval and Canberra Stadium. Some 25 race meetings are held at Thoroughbred Park each year, and Thoroughbred Park is used every day of the year by industry participants, who make up the many hundreds of people that are employed full time in our racing industry.

All 25 race meetings are televised nationally and internationally, bringing a focus on the city of Canberra through Canberra branding. I would like to think that we can better use this to promote our fabulous city.

The report of the ICRC in 2011, while questioning some of the flow-on impacts of the Allen study, found that every \$1 spent on the racing industry increases the value added to the economy by \$1.42.

The current budget allocates \$8.022 million as a grant to the industry this financial year, rising to \$8.898 million in 2017-18. This is a significant contribution in the

context of the ACT budget. Mr Barr noted that this commitment is solid and that it is a significant investment from the ACT budget to this industry. It is also worth noting that the move to the budget line was because of the decrease in income that was becoming apparent from ACTTAB. This government moved to make sure that the industry had certainty.

The funding arrangements that have been in place since their commencement in 2010 have resulted in an increase in financial support in real terms over the arrangements that previously existed. As this budget indicates, this is a long-term commitment. We have always remained active in responding to the concerns of the racing industry.

For example, we gave the local racing clubs the opportunity to increase the level of self-generated funding by charging a fee for the use of their race field information. These product payments are enacted through race field legislation and apply to wagering operators. These arrangements have provided the racing clubs—all three of them—with the flexibility to price their product in line with market demand.

Looking ahead, now that the government has made its announcement on the sale of ACTTAB, I have asked officials in the directorate to commence work with the racing clubs on establishing a multiyear contractual arrangement, as foreshadowed in our MOU with the industry. It also forms part of paragraph (2)(c) of Mr Barr's amendment, which notes that the government will work with the racing industry to investigate the development of multiyear contractual arrangements with reporting requirements in consultation with the industry.

In closing I would like to reiterate the government's ongoing commitment to our racing industry. I look forward to working with them on achieving the many objectives that we share for our community.

**MR SMYTH** (Brindabella) (12.17): It is important we get this sale right. We on this side do not doubt the case to sell. This is about the process, it is about the outcome and it is about the long term, and that is what we need to get right now. I have to say that, yes, there is disappointment in the industry. Despite the words from Minister Burch, I do not think there is any certainty for the industry in what they say, and there is certainly no certainty in this amendment.

If members recall the motion to sell that we had last year, I said, "Let us put some things on the table that need to be done before the sale happens." The response was, "We will sell this and we will take care of it." There is no more certainty today than there was last year for both the staff and the industry in the way that the government has gone about this sale. If you are committed to the industry, certainly you would have allayed their fears before the sale. You would have shown them the clear path for their funding and you would have been discussing this with them before the sale and ensuring things like long-term funding. The minister has just said they will commence work now with the industry to look at long-term arrangements.

Well, it will be a bit sad once the gate is closed. The fear in the industry is that, yes, they are budget funded and they are grateful for that money, but that is all they have.

If the government are cash strapped and have to cut something and they cut the funding, the industry will be in dire straits. There is no certainty in what is happening, and there is no certainty for the racing industry in the ACT in this amendment.

Let us look at the human side of this bill, the staff. The federal government have put up some assets for consideration for sale in their current budget. Imagine if they had attached to those assets a proviso that the staff would have certainty for three months. The outrage and the howls of horror from those opposite would be long and loud. It seems that it is okay that the ACTTAB employees get three months of certainty, and that is all this government has got for them: three months of certainty, but that is okay. People will hear and see what is happening to ACTTAB and know how this government acts.

For me, the question is fair and reasonable price. What have we actually surrendered, and what is the true value of what has been surrendered over 50 years? As Mr Rattenbury said, some said we might get more. He proposed that some had said we might get less; that is true. But I have no doubt that Tabcorp have done the numbers, and Tabcorp think this is a good deal. I wish Tabcorp well. It is nice to see private enterprise getting on, and their CEO will be very happy with this, I have no doubt.

But the question is: what have we given up for the short-term? So much about this government is short term. We see it in their land sales without a long-term view—just sell another block of land to balance the budget. Everything is short-term about this government. Signing up to a 50-year licence arrangement without being able to detail the financial case to this Assembly—the estimates committee probably should have been given this information but it was not; the announcement came basically after the committee had finished its process—does leave me with some concerns.

I hear the Treasurer say that, if the Auditor-General wants to do the review, they do not have any problems with that. Well, leave part 3 in. When we refer things from this place to the Auditor-General, it is still the Auditor-General's decision as to whether they do it. It is important that we get this right. This cannot be undone. Given the level of concern amongst the employees, and still with the level of concern from the industry, it is important that, before the sale is actually finalised, this happens.

I will finish with reading this article from the *Australian* again. What we have given away are cheap, long-term licences. That is the analysis of the industry and the market. The article states:

TABCORP'S David Attenborough has helped ensure the company's long-term future with cheap long-life licences through his ACTTAB acquisition. We have sold this cheaply.

That is the analysis of the market. It is interesting. I asked: how was it determined what was sold? I was told in the briefing that bidders were able to make offers. So the question is: did all the bidders ask for the same thing and offer the same price based on that? And did other bidders know that you could get 50-year licences on a lot of these things with either zero or very, very low tax rates? Would they have changed their bid? That is something we will never know.

So if it is fair, it is fair only if they all bid on the same thing. Again, I think it needs to be determined by somebody else as to whether the inherent fairness that we would all hope the government had sought to achieve for all bidders actually did occur, and we will not know that because the analysis is not being released. That is a shame coming from a government that said that we are now living in a new era of openness and accountability.

So what have we given up? The heading of the article is “Attenborough’s Prize”. So Attenborough got the prize in this, not us. The real prize is the 50-year licence at zero tax on tote earnings and less than one per cent on sports bookmaking licences. That is the real prize here.

**Mr Barr:** There is an annual licence fee.

**MR SMYTH:** Yes, there is an annual licence fee, but the analysis of the market is that they are the winners and we are not. I have no doubt that \$105 million in the budget today is probably a good thing for the Treasurer; I am sure he is feeling pretty happy with that. But as we look for long-term revenue streams for the sustainability and viability of the city and the services we want to offer, having forgone potential taxes for a 50-year period, let us have the analysis. The government is refusing to give the analysis, and that gives me great concern.

I will finish where I started. There is the old adage that if it seems too good to be true it probably is. Well, the only way to ascertain whether it is too good to be true is to have an independent inquiry. The best person to do that is the Auditor-General of the ACT. I ask members to reconsider deleting paragraph 3 from my motion. If there is nothing to fear or nothing to hide then let us say that all of the Assembly supports it, have the referral, leave it as it is, and let the Auditor-General do the analysis. She can see all this documentation and make a decision based on having the full story, not what we are getting as reported through press releases or in the media.

Question put:

That the amendment 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.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

## **Order of the day—postponement**

*Ordered that order of the day No 4, private members' business be postponed until the next day of sitting.*

**Sitting suspended from 12.29 to 2.30 pm.**

## **Questions without notice**

### **Canberra Hospital—internal review**

**MR HANSON:** My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, you revealed yesterday in the Assembly that an internal review has recently been conducted at the Canberra Hospital by a senior member of staff, Dr Debbie Browne. What was the reason for conducting the review?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. I did not confirm that there had been an internal review in the hospital. I said that Dr Deborah Browne, who is the director of patient safety and quality, in her appointment to that position with the restructure of Health, has undertaken, and is undertaking—in fact, it is not completed—a series of what are known as patient safety conversations, ward by ward through the hospital. So they are not triggered by any event. They are something that Dr Browne has done in hospitals she has worked in overseas, primarily in the United Kingdom.

What happens is that they sit down with the staff on the ward and ask a series of questions that relate to goings-on in a ward. For example, “Has anything occurred over the past week that has resulted in you feeling that you are not able to do your job to the safest degree possible?” There is a series of open-ended questions to staff. Staff answer those questions and it is used to inform any changes to patient safety that need to be undertaken throughout the hospital. They are doing it ward by ward. There is no incident that has led to it. In fact Dr Browne’s briefing to me has been that we are operating a very safe hospital at Canberra Hospital, but we have patient safety and quality units particularly to focus on improving patient safety all the time, and that is what this series is about. But there is no written document. It is just a meeting with individual team members on each ward in the hospital, and I believe there are only three or four of those wards to go, and that they have done the majority of the hospital.

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

**MR HANSON:** Have any seminars been conducted as part of this body of work in external locations to the hospital?

**MS GALLAGHER:** Not to my understanding in relation to the patient safety conversations; they are being held with the wards within the Canberra Hospital. It would not surprise me if Dr Brown, as part of her work, is conducting other sessions across the health system more broadly, but I am very happy to take that on notice and come back to you.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, have the results of the review been shared with staff and what was the nature of this process?

**MS GALLAGHER:** My understanding is yes. They are meetings with staff where staff are encouraged to talk with the patients, with Dr Brown and her team over issues that have affected patient care, either positively or negatively, over the preceding time. Staff are encouraged to actively get involved and share that feedback. My understanding is that feedback is returned to those specific ward areas.

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

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, what actions will be taken as a result of the review?

**MS GALLAGHER:** The advice that I have got from Dr Brown is that they are picking up themes from across the wards, and those themes, as that work is finished, will definitely feed into potential changes across the hospital if needed. There was not anything that she brought to my attention in her discussions with me. In fact, she said she felt very confident about the patient safety and quality of care process that was underway. But hospitals are incredibly dangerous places if you do not treat patient safety seriously, which is what this whole program is about. So it will definitely feed into changes once those decisions have been taken and the entire hospital has taken part in this series of discussions.

## Visitors

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Before we proceed to the next question, I wish to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the members of the Canberra Central Probus Club. Welcome to your Assembly.

## Questions without notice

### Transport—light rail

**MS LAWDER:** Madam Speaker, my question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, the Tuggeranong Community Council wrote to you recently expressing their views on light rail. The letter was written as a result of a motion passed at the community council meeting in early July. Chief Minister, are you aware of comments made by Minister Burch at the TCC meeting last week at which the Tuggeranong Community Council was criticised for their correspondence and their views on light rail?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I am certainly aware of the letter that was written by the Tuggeranong Community Council and the meeting that was had that Ms Burch attended. As a government that works very closely together, we discuss a range of issues across Canberra collegially. Where there are concerns, I think that all members represent their constituency to let me know what those concerns are. So I am certainly aware of the meeting that was held and the fact there are strongly held views down in Tuggeranong, particularly within the community council, about the light rail project.

I think it is incumbent on the government, and each member of us is focused on this, to continue to articulate, to support the discussion, to consult and where we can to address those concerns. I hope, as much as we can in the responsibilities that we have as members, to encourage a city where I guess that we are not just looking to our own



local area but are concerned as a whole about the development of the city as a whole as one great city where we all choose to live. I will do what I can in relation to this project to encourage this sort of sentiment across the city.

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

**MS LAWDER:** Chief Minister, was there any discussion in cabinet about this letter prior to Minister Burch attending the TCC last week? If so, what was the intention of that discussion?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I do not disclose, and neither does any other cabinet minister, discussions that were held in cabinet, so I will not, other than to confirm that Minister Burch and I have discussed light rail. We have discussed land development in Tuggeranong. We have discussed community services in Tuggeranong. We have discussed child care in Tuggeranong. We have discussed municipal services in Tuggeranong—street lighting road crossings, shops, garbage collection, waterways, the health of the lake. We have discussed arts, CIT, schools—

**Mr Smyth:** Light rail?

**MS GALLAGHER:** Public transport, thank you, Mr Smyth.

**Mr Smyth:** Capital metro?

**MS GALLAGHER:** Well, I started with light rail, Mr Smyth, if you had been interested at the beginning. Certainly members can be very confident that Minister Burch is advocating in the interests of her local constituency very strongly to me as Chief Minister.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Chief Minister, was it your government's intention to attempt to influence or intimidate the Tuggeranong Community Council through the words that Minister Burch used?

**MS GALLAGHER:** The community councils remain an important stakeholder in all debates across the city. With the people that are represented on those community councils—indeed, with the people that are representatives of Tuggeranong—my experience is that I doubt that there is any pushing or shoving, or seeking to influence any community council member. To get involved at that point, they are not shy wallflowers at all, Mr Smyth; they are confident advocates for their own constituency. We, as elected members, attend those meetings from time to time. If that means that we disagree at different points—and I have disagreed with positions of community councils in the past—so be it. That is one of the wonderful things about living in a place like the ACT, where you can attend meetings, disagree and respect each other's position.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Chief Minister, given that Mr Hargreaves was forced to apologise for his comments about the Tuggeranong Community Council, will you now insist that Minister Burch also apologise to the community council?

**MS GALLAGHER:** Minister Burch has nothing to apologise for. As I said in my previous answer, she is a strong advocate for Tuggeranong. She is an important member of the government team, and she takes her responsibilities very seriously.

### **Civil contracting industry—work**

**MR COE:** My question is for the Minister for Economic Development. Minister, the Opposition has been advised that the civil contracting industry in Canberra is struggling due to a lack of current and future work. We are advised that there is a perception in the industry that money that would once be going to civil contracting has been held up due to funds being redirected towards the light rail project. Would you please advise whether you have had concerns raised with you by civil contracting companies about the state of their industry? Further to this, what is the cause of their concerns?

**MR BARR:** I have had the opportunity to meet with representatives from this sector through their membership of the MBA and the HIA, and I know that there is very strong support for the government's decision to fast-track work in the suburb of Moncrieff. I have had no concerns raised in relation to the allegations that the member has raised and I can certainly confirm that no money has been taken from civil contracting and placed in light rail. That is simply a fanciful statement.

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

**MR COE:** Minister, have you heard that this month several major Canberra-based contractors are laying off staff due to a lack of work and lack of certainty about future work, which they attribute to the fact that light rail is sucking up all the money?

**MR BARR:** I suspect that the member might look elsewhere for his concerns in relation to the lack of work for some in that sector. The ACT government, of course, has a capacity to provide some work for this sector but we are by no means the only source of work—nor should we be the only source of work—for this sector.

Let me repeat, for the benefit of the member opposite, that there is no money that has been taken away from civil contracting areas and placed into light rail. In fact, ultimately you would imagine there would be a significant amount of civil works in the pipeline associated with the range of projects that come with the series of decisions the government will be taking in relation to infrastructure, of which capital metro is but one part, in the coming years.

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

**MR WALL:** Minister, what proportion of current civil contracting contracts is being undertaken by Canberra owned and operated companies?

**MR BARR:** A large proportion thereof, or under subcontracting arrangements. Obviously the largest project in the territory at the moment would be the Majura parkway project, and 90 per cent of the civil works there are undertaken by a local contractor.

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

**MR WALL:** Minister, what civil contracting capital works projects are in the pipeline besides the two you have already mentioned, which are Moncrieff and the Majura parkway?

**MR BARR:** I would refer the member to the forward land release program in the budget papers, and he can do his own research.

### **Health—budget**

**MS PORTER:** My question is to the Minister for Health: how does the 2014-15 ACT budget benefit the public health services delivered in Canberra?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I thank Ms Porter for her question and her ongoing interest in ACT health services. We know health remains the number one priority for the people of Canberra. It is always right there when they are looking at work the government is doing and when they are assessing important documents like the budget. That is why since this government has been in power we have continued to invest at record levels in our public health system.

The budget this year delivers \$164 million over four years. It is the largest increase of any agency. That, again, confirms our record of health being the number one priority for this government. This \$164 million goes into extra investment primarily into doctors, nurses, opening up of new hospital beds and the expansion of services in some of the new infrastructure across the territory. This includes the funding for the Belconnen and Tuggeranong community health centres, including the new walk-in centres, which, I can update members, have seen in the last week alone 682 presentations, showing extremely high levels of usage, already doubling essentially what we were able to do at the Canberra Hospital. Tuggeranong, in particular, is seeing in the order of 70 to 80 patients a day, and I think it is just fantastic that those services have been able to be offered and that the community is using them to the degree they are in such early stages.

We have also seen: the expansion at Calvary hospital of particular services, including ophthalmology; extra services in the new Canberra Region Cancer Centre, which was opened just last week; extra services at the women's and children's hospital; more money for elective surgery; expanded community nursing services; extra funding for our emergency department, particularly through extra doctors being available; increased services in endoscopy; additional funding for intensive and critical care services; expanded lymphedema services; increased services for women and young people; expanded outpatient and imaging services; and, importantly, money going assist services to reduce and prevent suicide, including further promotion of community awareness of this important area.

This budget prioritises health. There will be an additional 154 full-time equivalent positions for ACT Health, which includes a combination of medical staff, nurses, health professionals and administrative staff. We will also have \$122 million over four years allocated to continue the government's investment in health infrastructure, and this will go to projects such as the secure mental health unit, Calvary car park—which I know members will be very pleased to see start—Calvary hospital refurbishment for extra beds, and other essential infrastructure work being done at the Canberra Hospital.

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

**MS PORTER:** Minister, how is the government investing in community health services?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I thank Ms Porter for the supplementary. Again it will be no surprise to members that, when asked, people would like to be able to use health services as close to home as possible. They want to keep hospitals as places they have to go to when they need to, but to a large extent most of our services can be delivered closer to where people live. These were the issues that led to the decisions that we took about refurbishing and expanding our community-based health services, starting in Belconnen and Tuggeranong, and also opening the new one in Gungahlin just a couple of years ago.

The budget contains \$11.7 million for more services and staff at the community health centres and for the walk-in centres. It also includes extra funding for community nursing to ensure that we are able to do more community nursing visits at home, and extra money for mental health care as well. Again the majority of our mental health services are offered to people at home or in community-based settings. Despite a lot of the focus being on the inpatient unit, the majority of the treatment, care and support occurs in the community. Over time, we will continue to build these services because we want to make sure that the hospital remains a place where people go who need hospital treatment. For anyone visiting the hospital that can be cared for in the community, at home, under other alternatives, I think that is welcomed by patients and it is better for the system overall.

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

**MS BERRY:** Minister, how much is the government investing in beds in ACT hospitals?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I thank Ms Berry for the question. The year 2014-15 will see us provide an additional 31 inpatient hospital beds in the 2014-15 financial year. Sixteen of these beds will be opened at the Canberra Hospital. These beds will be in the area vacated by the children's wards that have moved from the tower block to the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children. These beds will come on line in September. This initiative will also see an increase of 39 staff to staff those extra beds.

Fifteen beds will also be opened at Calvary public hospital. These will be going essentially to meet demand due to increases in the elective surgery work that Calvary hospital is doing. There is also extra money to support Calvary public hospital to meet its growing demand for birthing services on the north side. A further six-bed equivalent will be provided through hospital in the home, which again is a very popular program for patients.

As at the end of the 2013-14 financial year, the government has funded capacity for over 1,000 beds within the ACT public hospitals, which is an extra 360 beds on the beds that were available in 2001-02, when we were first elected to government, meaning a 53 per cent increase over 12 years.

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

**MR HANSON:** Minister, why is bed occupancy dangerously high at TCH according to the AMA and other peak health organisations?

**MS GALLAGHER:** Because demand for acute hospital services continues to grow; as soon as we open beds, they tend to fill, Mr Hanson. That is why you will see year after year increased effort going into opening new beds. The hospital at the moment is extremely busy and we are looking forward to those extra beds being opened in September, which will take some of the pressure off the winter impact that we are seeing at the moment.

### **ACTTAB Ltd—sale**

**MR SMYTH:** My question is for the Treasurer. Treasurer, when will the sale of ACTTAB be finalised?

**MR BARR:** In the coming months.

**MR SMYTH:** Treasurer, what are the components of the sale that realised the value of \$105 million from the sale of ACTTAB?

**MR BARR:** Those matters are still commercial in confidence.

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

**MRS JONES:** Treasurer, did the government consider the implementation of a tax with a long-term revenue stream as other jurisdictions have rather than an up-front one-off payment?

**MR BARR:** Tabcorp will be making an ongoing licence fee payment and taxation arrangements for Tabcorp will be exactly the same as taxation arrangements for ACTTAB.

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

**MRS JONES:** Treasurer, will you now table the financial analysis undertaken by the government to justify the approach taken?

**MR BARR:** The sale is not yet complete; so it would be inappropriate for me, it would be breaching the probity arrangements that are in place for this sale. No, but once the sale is completed the government will, consistent with the amended resolution of the Assembly today, make further information available.

### **ACT public service—breastfeeding**

**MRS JONES:** My question is to the Chief Minister. This morning it was reported in the *Canberra Times* that women at the ATO—the Australian Taxation Office—felt that they were forced to breastfeed and express milk in their cars or in the toilets, with many saying they are afraid of managers' responses if they push the issue. Chief Minister, are you able to guarantee that public servants in the ACT are not feeling forced to breastfeed or express milk in their cars or in the toilets?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I thank Mrs Jones for the question. I think anyone who read that article and knows what it is like to look after a baby, care for a baby, would understand how distressing that could be and how inappropriate it is in a modern workplace.

I can say that certainly in the ACT government we have very good conditions in relation to lactation breaks. In most areas where it is possible—indeed I think the Assembly is accredited as a breastfeeding-friendly workplace; certainly ACT Health is, and I think there may be some other directorates as well—lactation rooms are made available for women. But I would be very disappointed, and I have certainly never had it drawn to my attention, that women are experiencing that sort of unacceptable situation in the workplace. If it was drawn to my attention it would be dealt with very promptly. Women should be supported when they return to work to be able to balance the collision that occurs between looking after young children and pursuing their career. We need to do everything we can to say that what is being spoken about in relation to the federal public service, if it is true, is completely unacceptable.

**MRS JONES:** Minister, what is the government's policy regarding breastfeeding and breast-pumping in the ACT public service. Is it a directorate by directorate approach or is there an ACT public service wide approach?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I will take that on notice. We certainly have conditions that are public service wide in the enterprise agreement. How that is operationalised would be different in individual workplaces just due to the nature of the different workplace environments. Not every ACT government employee works in a clerical position, for example, so I expect that there would be different operational implementation guidelines, but I can certainly come back to you on that, Mrs Jones.

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

**MS LAWDER:** Chief Minister, what consultation has been undertaken with women in the ACT public service regarding this issue?

**MS GALLAGHER:** Again, across government, I would have to come back to you, but certainly in Health, where we were, and are, accredited as a breastfeeding-friendly organisation, there was a lot of consultation with staff, consultation with unions and consultation with the Australian Breastfeeding Association.

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

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, what are the benefits of these policies within the ACT public service?

**Mrs Jones:** Babies get breastfed, Dr Bourke.

**MS GALLAGHER:** I think it is twofold. Yes, Mrs Jones is right. The babies get fed, which always leads to a much happier baby. But the other is that women and their partners feel that they are supported by their employer. So we have always felt that it is very important to lead the way. That is why we have 18 weeks paid maternity leave. We have generous paternity leave. We have generous carers and personal leave to ensure that people are able to manage their families, their caring responsibilities and have a job at the same time.

I think that when you do not get that balance right, you do not see the retention rates in your directorates that you want to see and people will go elsewhere. So it is very important and I think the benefits in terms of productivity and loyalty will far outstrip any of the time taken to support women to look after their babies when they return to work.

### **Budget—tourism**

**DR BOURKE:** My question is to the Minister for Economic Development. Minister, could you inform the Assembly of the initiatives in the 2014-15 budget to support the tourism and events sector of the ACT economy?

**Mr Coe:** The location of which services by the train?

**MR BARR:** I thank Dr Bourke for the question and Mr Coe for his obvious interest in this area. In 2015 Canberra will host two of the biggest sporting events in the world, the Asian Cup football tournament, which runs from 9 to 31 January, and the ICC Cricket World Cup, which runs from 14 February to 29 March. Canberra hosts seven matches as part of the Asian Cup, including a quarter final, and three matches as part of the Cricket World Cup.

The ACT government has contributed funding in this budget and in previous budgets towards host city rights for these events. Canberra's involvement in these global events provides a unique opportunity to raise the profile of the city, along with further opportunity to cement our status as a major events destination and, indeed, a place for new investment. The events will encourage and enhance community engagement, particularly strengthening links with a large number of multicultural and business groups within and outside the territory.

The Asian Cup is estimated to bring 45,000 international visitors to Australia and to deliver an expected attendance of half a million across the 32 matches. With seven matches, Canberra is well placed to leverage from this opportunity. The Cricket World Cup is the third largest international team sporting event in the world, behind the Olympics and the Soccer World Cup. The event will be broadcast to more than 200 countries, enabling Canberra to be showcased before an estimated global audience of around a billion people. A report by Deloitte Access Economics, commissioned in 2012 to examine the benefits of the Cricket World Cup, estimated that hosting three full matches and a range of warm-up matches would generate between \$19 million and \$35 million in additional, direct expenditure for a host city.

The ACT government has also invested in this budget additional funding in our cooperative airlines stimulus fund, and this is to encourage and support international and domestic marketing campaigns associated with new flights, both domestic and international, to our city. This investment in aviation growth is part of the government's 2020 tourism strategy.

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

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, how does the budget invest in visit Canberra to promote the ACT as a tourism destination?

**MR BARR:** Tourism currently contributes \$1.8 billion to the territory economy and is one of the largest private sector employers in the city, the industry supporting 17,000 jobs. In recognition of its importance to the economy, the budget provided more than \$8.5 million to grow the tourism sector and more funding to support the tourism 2020 strategy, which is being directed towards the domestic marketing strategy 2013-15 with a particular focus on promoting Canberra's key arts and culture, food and wine, outdoors, nature and family-friendly experiences.

Specific programs like the Australian Tourism Awards winning human brochure and cooperative industry and media partnerships are some of the activities that this additional funding will support. We will also be investing in gateway entry signage to the territory to welcome visitors to the city. Funding will also be allocated to activities to encourage a range of economic benefits associated with business tourism, a range of leisure-based activities that go beyond the conference and seek to maximise the conversion of business event travel into future leisure travel.

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

**MS PORTER:** Minister, how does the budget invest in further work to enhance the experience of visitors to our very successful National Arboretum?

**MR BARR:** The budget delivers nearly \$1.5 million in funding over the next two years to complete work on the central hub of the arboretum, the events terrace.

The government will complete the landscaping and visitor infrastructure at the events terrace, which links the visitor centre, the Margaret Whitlam Pavilion and the



amphitheatre. This is in keeping with the arboretum master plan. Works include planting trees and hedges; installing irrigation; the construction of gravel and hard surface pedestrian and vehicular pavements; providing mower strips, toilets, outdoor furniture and signage; tree protection; and car parking for the Margaret Whitlam Pavilion.

The design of the public facilities will provide amenities for people using the events terrace before 9 am or after 4 pm, when the main village centre is closed. The objective of this project is to develop the events terrace to a level where it meets the design intent as the main hub for all major events at the arboretum. The events terrace is a core element of the National Arboretum master plan adopted by the government in 2005.

The budget also provides funding to upgrade landscapes and facilities in and around the village centre, car park and playground as well as the propagation of plant stock. Fire trails and dirt tracks will also be upgraded.

**MR COE:** Treasurer, what representations did you make to have Canberra stadium, Manuka Oval, the convention centre or any national institution included in the first stage of light rail?

**MR BARR:** The government considered a range of options in relation to those projects. I am very keen, as members have observed, to progress the city to the lake plan that includes bringing a number of those major pieces of public infrastructure into a more central location in the city that will enable people to access those important pieces of public infrastructure on the light rail route. I welcome Mr Coe's support for such foresight in locating those major pieces of infrastructure within the CBD on the light rail route.

### **Civic Olympic Pool—site**

**MR DOSZPOT:** My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Minister, I refer to media reports that the government is planning to build a new stadium on the site of the current Civic Olympic Pool. What actions will you take as minister to protect the interests of the users of the Civic pool in this process?

**MR RATTENBURY:** Probably at the start of this answer I need to declare an interest. I am a member of the Civic pool. I have a full membership at that facility. That is something that I have also disclosed to my directorate as part of taking up the portfolio.

Having put that to one side, clearly, it is important that we continue to have aquatic facilities in the city. Minister Barr is leading on the development of the stadium and city to the lake, as he has indicated on a number of occasions. But sport and rec will be working closely with the economic development directorate to ensure that aquatic facilities are provided. The current proposal sees a staging, with a new aquatic facility intended to be constructed on west basin. It is seen as a sequencing whereby the new facility will be constructed first.

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

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, what action will you take to ensure that the pool is properly maintained?

**MR RATTENBURY:** As members may know, the running of the pool is contracted out. Under that current contract there are various maintenance and cleaning requirements built into that to ensure that the pool is operating at a standard that is acceptable to patrons. They are probably getting a little more scrutiny now with their new minister being a regular visitor.

But I think there is a bigger picture around Civic pool. Obviously, it is ageing. That presents a range of bigger picture maintenance issues. Members will be aware that the pool has been closed a couple of times in recent years for more major pieces of work. That maintenance work will continue as necessary.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, what additional scrutiny do you intend to place on the maintenance of, in particular, the filtration system at the pool?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I think it is fair to say that over the last 15 years the quality of filtration at the Civic pool has gone up and down. Certainly with the work that has been put into the pool in recent years and the new management, I think the water quality has improved in recent times.

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

**MS BERRY:** Minister, when did you first jump off the tower at the Olympic pool?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I am sorry; that is out of order. It does not relate to the minister's responsibilities.

### **Transport—light rail**

**MR WALL:** My question is to the Minister for Capital Metro. Minister, you continually criticise the Productivity Commissioner and the Centre for International Economics for basing their assumptions on capital metro on, and I quote “an outdated assessment”. Minister, what new assessments has the government done which contradict the Productivity Commission and the Centre for International Economics? Why is this information not publically available?

**MR CORBELL:** As Mr Wall and those opposite would know well and truly, all of these matters are being assessed in detail as part of the final business case, which will be released appropriately by the government once a decision has been taken in relation to it.

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

**MR WALL:** Minister, is the \$20 million provided to Territory and Municipal Services in this year's budget part of or separate from the \$614 million cost projection for capital metro?

**MR CORBELL:** I have already answered that question in the estimates committee—if the Liberals had been paying attention. To repeat my answer: no.

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

**MR COE:** Minister, is the government definitely going ahead with light rail?

**MR CORBELL:** The government has an election commitment in relation to the project, but that is subject to the finalisation of a robust and rigorous business case which will be considered by cabinet later this year.

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

**MR COE:** Minister, when did you last receive a cost assessment for capital metro and what was that figure?

**MR CORBELL:** Those matters are cabinet-in-confidence and will be released by the government once they have been considered, as part of the final business case.

### **Schools—Molonglo Valley**

**MS BERRY:** My question is to the Minister for Education and Training. Minister, could you update the Assembly on progress towards delivering school education and early childhood services to the residents of Weston Creek and the Molonglo Valley, and in particular construction of the school in Coombs?

**MS BURCH:** I thank Ms Berry for her interest. I am pleased to update the Assembly on the progress in the delivery of school education within the Molonglo Valley. Over the next 30 years, over 55,000 people will move into the area. Already we are seeing great numbers of people calling the suburbs of Wright and Coombs their home. This is why the government has made strong commitments to building the vital infrastructure that this new community will need.

Consistent with our commitment, the government has allocated \$47 million for the construction of the new Coombs Primary School. It will be the first school in the new Molonglo Valley development and it will cater for 720 preschool and primary school students when it opens in 2016. The school will be a preschool to year 6 school catering for the new families and students of the area. The new primary school will be the first community facility in the Molonglo Valley. As such, the school will have a range of community facilities, including a larger school hall, a gymnasium and associated storage areas suitable for use by various community groups.

In addition to these facilities Coombs Primary School will include learning spaces for preschool to year 6 students, a resource centre, school administration, a canteen, out

of hours school care facilities and outdoor learning and play areas. The school will also include facilities for music and environmental science. The school playing field is to be developed as part of the project and is also designed to be a community playing field.

The tender process used for the project has introduced tender design and construction innovations and has built-in longer term maintenance components. By utilising the tender design and construction innovations in the project the territory is achieving improved value for money for the project. I look forward to the first day of the 2016 school year when Coombs Primary School will welcome its first students into the most modern school in the ACT.

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

**MS BERRY:** Minister, could you update the Assembly on the work undertaken at Duffy Primary School to accommodate the enrolment growth from the Molonglo Valley?

**MS BURCH:** I am pleased to update the Assembly on the successful expansion at Duffy Primary School. This project has provided an additional seven classes to a school experiencing enrolment pressures due to the regeneration and expansion of the local area and the establishment of the new suburbs in the Molonglo district. The project was recently nominated in the 2014 ACT master builders and Cbus excellence in building awards for a commercial project exhibiting technical difficulty or innovation. It would only happen at Duffy school.

The additional capacity at the school will cater for children living in Weston Creek, the rural areas west of the district and the new Molonglo suburbs until the Coombs primary school opens in 2016. Following extensive consultation with the school and local communities, an innovative, off-site modular construction method was chosen to provide a high quality, cost-effective, timely and flexible solution for the school. The classrooms were constructed in Melbourne and assembled on site in time for the start of term 1 of this year. The classrooms provide a better relationship with the existing school than traditional transportable classrooms. If required in the future, the classrooms can be relocated to another school site.

I am told that school community is delighted with their new classrooms and associated fit-out. I was there; I remember standing within the grounds with the principal as these very modern, off-site modular construction units were being placed there. I will have to go back before the year is out and see for myself these new classrooms and the opportunities they are providing the students. This additional space has certainly provided much-needed flexibility in the delivery of the school's programs and is serving as a pilot for an innovative construction option for future school expansions and growth.

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

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, how will the new early childhood centre at Holder support families in this region, and what has the reaction to the new centre been?

**MS BURCH:** I thank Dr Bourke for his interest. The government does recognise how important quality accessible and affordable education and care services are for working families. The now operating Holder early learning centre meets this criterion for many families. The YMCA are the contract service provider in the centre there. I recently toured the centre and was very impressed with the facilities and the service that they are providing.

The centre includes 10 playrooms which provide 124 education and care places, extensive landscaped areas, educator support spaces and kitchen facilities. The large open spaces provide children with stimulating environments that offer adventure and challenges. The YMCA has done a fantastic job incorporating the environment into the indoor program through a variety of natural resources.

Feedback from families using the centre has been extremely positive, both about the building and the gardens and about the service provided by the YMCA. Families have commented that they are exceptionally happy with the homely feel of the centre, in particular the community dining area where the children enjoy a variety of nutritious meals. The centre's quality construction was recently recognised when it was shortlisted in the 2014 Master Builders and Cbus excellence in building awards.

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

**MS PORTER:** Minister, how does the government plan to meet educational needs in Canberra's growth areas?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The original question was about Molonglo Valley and Coombs. The supplementary question was about Duffy Primary School and how that provided for the Molonglo Valley. The third question was about the Holder childcare centre which was also about the Molonglo Valley. I think that if the original question had been phrased in terms of investment in early childhood education and education, with particular reference to Molonglo, it would be in order. Ms Porter, I rule your question out of order.

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

## **Personal explanation**

**MR WALL** (Brindabella): Madam Speaker, I seek leave to make a brief explanation under standing order 46.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Do you claim to have been misrepresented, Mr Wall?

**MR WALL:** I do, Madam Speaker. During the appropriation debate last night, Ms Burch made a reference to a tweet that I put on social media during the estimates process. Her words were something to the effect of, "So the shadow minister for disability put a tweet out that he was looking forward to estimates that day because he was coming down to ask me the hard questions."

Madam Speaker, the tweet that I put up on 23 June this year in fact made no mention of asking hard questions. In fact it was more related to getting some solid answers. The tweet itself was:

I am hoping that I get some solid answers out of Joy Burch MLA today about early intervention services. It is about time.

Madam Speaker, Ms Burch's skills on social media are well known and she has often struggled—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** No, you do not debate the issue. You just say that you have been misrepresented, Mr Wall. Are there any other questions arising from question—

*Ms Burch interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order! Order, Ms Burch!

*Ms Burch interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Ms Burch, I have called you to order. Mr Rattenbury had the floor. He has been forced to sit down because of your discourtesy.

### **Supplementary answer to question without notice Bushfires—preparedness**

**MR RATTENBURY:** Mr Smyth yesterday during question time asked me how many accredited level 3 incident controllers TAMS has in its employ. The answer is one.

### **Environment—proposed nature conservation agency**

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (3.18): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the current structure of the ACT Government, where conservation functions are divided between the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate and the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate;
- (b) the importance of our local environment to the well-being of the people of the ACT;
- (c) that this Assembly voted on 20 March 2013 for the Government to establish a single nature conservation agency;
- (d) that the Chief Minister indicated in this Assembly on 26 February 2014, that this change would be implemented with the appointment of the sixth minister;

- (e) the recent changes to the ACT Government's administrative orders and the appointment of the sixth minister; and
  - (f) no move has been made to create the single nature conservation agency; and
- (2) directs the ACT Government to establish a Nature Conservation Agency, located within Territory and Municipal Services Directorate, which will be responsible for all conservation services, before 31 December 2014.

I rise today to bring this issue to the attention of the Assembly once more. I am here to talk once again about the current structure of the ACT government when nature conservation functions remain divided between the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate and the now Environment and Planning Directorate. For something that we all seem to agree on, it seems bizarre that here we are again trying to work out why action has not yet been taken in this area.

A single nature conservation agency is about delivering an administrative structure that can deliver improved nature conservation outcomes through the integration of all parts of biodiversity policy and research. It is about providing the best structure to protect and manage our environment. We want the best resource and service delivery. We want coordination of policy and legal requirements. We want a single department that is on the same page when it comes to monitoring and reporting. Overall, what we all want, what we have already agreed on, is better environmental outcomes.

We have Territory and Municipal Services being the overarching directorate to the boards of management of Namadgi and Tidbinbilla and the Capital Woodlands and Wetlands Conversation Trust. TAMS also looks after rural lands and law enforcement, which relates to the nature conservation estate as well as the parks and conservation Pest Plants and Animals Act 2005, the Tree Protection Act 2005 and the Domestic Animals Act 2000.

Environment, on the other hand, looks after the planning and research in conservation, natural resource management programs, all nature conservation policy, including biodiversity planning, nature conservation and its strategy, and the threatened species action plan. The Environment and Planning Directorate looks after the Nature Conservation Act, the Conservator of Flora and Fauna and the secretariat to the Flora and Fauna Committee.

Frankly, it seems illogical to keep these responsibilities separate not just in different departments but under the leadership of different ministers. It is a bit like having nurses and doctors in a different directorate to the rest of Health or teachers in a separate area with a different minister for education. It is simply something that does not make sense, and we all seem to have agreed on this before.

The Canberra Liberals 2012 policy, which was released by Mrs Dunne, stated that we would, amongst other things, consolidate the nature conservation functions under one directorate. I refer to the media release at that time that stated:

We will also hire an extra five nature conservation rangers, review the *Nature Conservation Act 1980*, and bring all nature conservation functions into one Directorate

Further, the ACT Labor-Greens agreement states at article 3.12:

Merge the ACT's existing conservation services into a single Conservation Agency to achieve better integration of biodiversity policy, planning, research and management;

Minister Rattenbury stated on 20 March 2013:

I am particularly pleased to see tripartisan support in the Assembly for a single, integrated conservation agency.

On 20 March 2013 Mr Corbell stated:

The parliamentary agreement for the Eighth Legislative Assembly commits the government to merge the ACT's existing conservation services into a single conservation agency to achieve better integration of biodiversity planning, policy, research and management.

The government acknowledges this commitment and is currently working on its implementation.

Mr Smyth moved a motion in 2013. I moved a similar motion earlier this year. Madam Speaker, it is one of the few issues in this place where we all seem to furiously agree. So I ask what would seem to be a simple question: why then has this not been done? On 26 February 2014, the last time we brought this to the Assembly, the Chief Minister said:

I will tell the Assembly that I am looking to align that with the appointment of the sixth minister.

I ask again, Madam Speaker: why has this not been done? Fast forward to the past few weeks and now we have recommendation 76 of the estimates committee report which states:

The Committee recommends that the Government establish as a priority the single Nature Conservation Agency.

To which the government's response was:

All administrative arrangements are the responsibility of the Chief Minister.

But here we are in a situation where the one and only Greens member in this place wants this to be implemented. We have the Labor Party promising that this would be implemented. We have the Conservation Council and community groups in the sector wanting this to be implemented. We have the Canberra Liberals wanting this to be implemented. We have had motions on this pass in this place. It is in the Labor-



Greens parliamentary agreement. Recently we have had the administrative arrangements change quite significantly and now have our sixth minister. Yet there is still no action on the single nature conservation agency.

The Chief Minister in her own words said:

I do not think it is the best way of dealing with changes to the administrative orders to change them a bit here and then a few months later change them a bit there. The approach I have taken is that this work falls into the broader work we are looking at across government because there are, outside the environment and nature conservation, other areas in which I believe some administrative changes need to be made.

If we look at the Chief Minister's words there, we can almost assume that this proposal for a single nature conservation agency has been scrapped or at least will not come into effect any time in the near future, because administrative arrangements have recently been changed. Ministers were appointed and portfolios shuffled, directorates moved and renamed, and there is still no action on the single nature conservation agency.

Given the Chief Minister quite fairly does not believe these things should be done ad hoc, and that changes in administrative arrangements should occur at once and not here and there, the fact that it was not done makes us turn to the question of why. Is it that Minister Corbell is trying to out-green the Greens and does not want to hand over his beloved environment portfolio?

By the same token, Minister Rattenbury, the sole defender of the Greens in this building, does not want to forgo responsibility he has for environmental functions because he would otherwise, perhaps, be known as a minister for roads, which would not sit well on his shoulders, and without becoming the minister for the new single agency.

Perhaps we find ourselves in a deadlock. Unfortunately, as we well know the Labor government only holds power in the ACT with the support of Minister Rattenbury. If he does not want to give up the functions of environmental management in his portfolio, the government cannot really make him, can they? It is a bit of a pickle, Madam Speaker.

Logically we now have an Environment and Planning Directorate. Surely it could all fall under there with the minister, Mr Gentleman. The government would probably respond by saying that we, the Canberra Liberals, have advocated so far for it to be in TAMS. We have advocated for it to be in Environment and Sustainable Development. Now we are saying something different again. *Mea culpa, mea culpa.*

The point is that it should be a single conservation agency, no matter where it sits. I urge the government to come clean today. If the single nature conservation agency is not going ahead, say so. Vote against the motion; take it off the table. But stop leaving the community groups and the wider community who are concerned about the environment in limbo.

Nobody wants to hear again the words that the implementation of the proposal continues to be under consideration by the government. If it was seriously under consideration and going to be implemented, it would have happened back with the change of ministers in July. It has not occurred. So let us stop messing around with this, be up-front and tell the people of Canberra what the plan actually is.

If it is going to stay the same because of an internal battle of ministerial egos, say so. Perhaps it is part of the government's strategy in the lead-up to the next election, a way to explain changes which will result in a cosmetic split between Labor and the Greens. But, please, do not keep saying, "We are considering it." How much consideration does something that everyone agrees on need? I commend the motion to the Assembly.

**MS GALLAGHER** (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Health, Minister for Higher Education and Minister for Regional Development) (3.28): I welcome the opportunity to talk on this matter again today, and I must say I do find it a little rich being lectured by the Canberra Liberals on the importance of the environment. I do not know if anyone else has noticed some of the irony there from those who have campaigned against the carbon tax, those who have failed to support important renewable energy initiatives like the solar farm, those who will not agree to the targets that we set to achieve reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Yet we have got a lecture about how we line our administrative functions up. Yes, let us deal with the big issues then, Ms Lawder, as the shadow environment person, but you have the most right wing environment policies, if you have any policies at all on the environment. Do not then come in here and start lecturing me on how to arrange the administrative arrangements for the ACT public service.

I turn to some of the suggestions from Ms Lawder. I would draw her attention to the major issues of environmental importance affecting Canberra, Australia and the world and would suggest that perhaps that could be the focus of the Canberra Liberals, for just a smidgen of time—if you could just pay attention to the bigger issues. In terms of the single nature conservation agency—and I am aware of the commitments we made in the parliamentary agreement, and members will be updated soon on how we are seeing excellent progress on the commitments made in the parliamentary agreement rollout, and this remains one of them yet to be implemented—it is solely within my discretion to arrange the administrative arrangements for the ACT public service.

It is one of the very few individual decisions and prerogatives of the Chief Minister, and I will make the decision when it is right. It is not for the Assembly or for the Canberra Liberals who see it as some sort of joke and an opportunity to have a go at individual members of the government and their particular interests. When I am convinced that it will improve service to the community, that it will improve protection of the environment, and that the systems in place that support that transfer will deliver an outcome for the staff and for the executive—and we have been given the responsibility from the people of Canberra to manage these matters—that is when the decision will be taken.

It is not fair to say nothing has happened. If members took the time to read the administrative arrangements—they are online; search “administrative arrangements” and they will pop up—they will see for the first time in self-government that we are clustering agencies, directorates, where there are synergies and similarities between the functions. Indeed, they will see that there is the clustering of Environment and Planning, Territory and Municipal Services and Capital Metro. In addition to this, the Head of Service has spoken with directors-general about aligning work and work plans within those clusters to support improved synergies across the directorate.

So it is wrong to say that nothing has happened. There is a step towards further development of the one-government model. What I am more focused on in terms of the ACT public service, regardless of where a particular function sits within an agency, is: what does it actually deliver to the people of the ACT? That is what matters to them.

I do not know that there are too many Canberrans that go around reading the admin orders. Indeed, it is clear that perhaps those opposite have not paid a huge amount of attention to them. But Canberrans do care about what is delivered, what is the outcome, what is their interface with the government, was it easy, was it difficult, did they have to explain their story to three different directorates, or were they able to get their business done. That is what matters to the people of Canberra, and that is what I am focused on. These administrative arrangements made a step in the right direction.

I continue to liaise with directors-general and the Head of Service about further changes that can be made. I took individual advice from the directors-general of Territory and Municipal Services and ESDD prior to it being called Environment and Planning, and the response from both those directors-general was that they were putting in place ways to improve, I think, communication and delivery of the services that they are responsible for in what they would see as a virtual agency. However, I believe there is more that can be done.

I made commitments in the parliamentary agreement that I intend to deliver upon. But what cannot be done is that members of the non-executive cannot come in here and move motions directing me to do something which is not within their prerogative to do so.

The amendment that has been circulated in my name indicates that I am considering the establishment of a nature conservation agency in line with the commitment that I made in the parliamentary agreement. I will update the Assembly on the last day of sitting on how that is progressing. And I think that keeps the Assembly suitably informed. It makes it clear that there is work underway in this area. My commitment here today is that I will deliver on the things that I have signed up to, just as I have for every other item in the parliamentary agreement. I move:

Omit paragraph (2), substitute:

“(2) calls on the Chief Minister to consider the establishment of a nature conservation agency and report to the Assembly by the last day of sittings in 2014 on her deliberations.”.

But let us not pretend for a moment that the Canberra Liberals are interested in whether or not there is a single nature conservation agency, because if you rank that No 1 in the concerns you have in the portfolio of the environment, I would be very surprised that anyone else would share that view. However, if you asked them about our greenhouse gas reduction efforts, our efforts in renewable energy, our efforts in public transport, active living, trying to get people out of cars and leading to a healthier lifestyle, trying to protect the environment, trying to reduce waste to landfill perhaps, trying to promote Canberra as the solar capital of Australia perhaps—they are all issues that I would have to say would warrant at least a similar commitment from the Canberra Liberals, of which there is none.

Everyone here can see there is no environmental credential for those opposite. There is absolutely none. There is no interest in the environment. What there is interest in is trying to build up some conspiracy and some massive conflict within the government on the arrangements that are in place. And there is none. I hate to disappoint you. There is none.

**Mr Smyth:** Why is it so hard?

**MS GALLAGHER:** As I just said before, I am not convinced that we have the work done that will deliver the improvements to the people of the ACT that would require those changes at this point in time. But when I am convinced, you might be the fifth, sixth, seventh or maybe the 10th person to find out. How is that? There is my commitment. We will make sure that the media release gets straight to you, Mr Smyth.

But this is a responsibility of mine as Chief Minister. It is very clear. It will continue to remain a responsibility of mine. I will deliver on the commitments that I have signed up to. There is more work to be done. We have made an important step in the right direction with the current administrative arrangements, and I will update the Assembly by the end of this year.

**MR SMYTH** (Brindabella) (3.36): That would be the most unconvincing speech given in this place for a long time. Let us go to the last point the Chief Minister made. I interjected:

Why is it so hard?

The Chief Minister said, “Not convinced, have not got the work done yet.” They have not got the work done on capital metro, yet they committed to a \$614 million light rail track from Gungahlin to Civic. Something as simple as a single conservation agency cannot go ahead.

The Chief Minister belittled Ms Lawder by saying, “Let us deal with big issues.” I would have thought better environmental outcomes would have been a big issue for the Chief Minister, but apparently not. Let us go to the agreement that the Chief Minister signed up to. What she signed up to was that she would merge the ACT’s existing conservation services into a single conservation agency to achieve better integration of biodiversity policy, planning, research and management. Surely that leads to better outcomes for the environment and surely that is something we would all welcome.

It is funny that we have not heard a reason for not doing it. There is no reason given why this cannot go ahead and cannot go ahead immediately. We had a motion early last year saying, 'let us do it.' Everybody agreed that the government was going to consider it some more. We had the shuffle. We have got the new AAs. We have got the sixth minister. There is extra capacity for this to happen, and if you cannot choose between Mr Corbell and Mr Rattenbury you could have quite easily given it to Mr Gentleman. No, you did not take that opportunity.

What you now ask for is another four or five months to be able to consider this and report on your deliberations on the last sitting day in 2014. So you are not going to give us a decision. You are going to come back here and tell us what your deliberations have been. There you go. As Ms Lawder so accurately portrayed, there is a cosmetic split coming here sometime in the election year so that the Chief Minister and the Greens can fake a break-up so that they can each go to the next election with their own agenda.

But the problem is that the environment suffers in the interim, because you do not have an integrated approach to this. You do not have a single conservation agency and you are not achieving better integration of biodiversity policy, planning, research and management. And the community wants that. Many members of the community have said to me, "When is this going to happen?" I have outlined what we have done and said, "It is all up to the Chief Minister." There is a lot of angst out there that better integration is not occurring and that better outcomes are not being achieved for the community.

**Mr Hanson:** More angst in here than outside, though, maybe.

**MR SMYTH:** Maybe over there. But all we get from the Chief Minister is that the AAs are a step in the right direction and then, in a disparaging tone, that anyone would dare try to achieve something better for the environment of the ACT. But the question is: why is it so hard? Why is it so hard that you cannot make a decision—

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER** (Dr Bourke): Mr Smyth, would you please address your remarks to the chair.

**MR SMYTH:** Why is it so hard, Mr Assistant Speaker, that the Chief Minister cannot make this decision? You have to look at the internal politics of the benches over there. The answer is apparent. It is quite clear. This is a failure of leadership. You have just changed the AAs. It could have been accommodated—

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Mr Smyth, I remind you to address your remarks to the chair.

**MR SMYTH:** Yes, Mr Assistant Speaker. This is a failure of leadership of the Chief Minister, through you, Mr Assistant Speaker, and it is a failure that is obvious to all. To stand there and move an amendment asking for another four or five months to consider and then to simply suggest that she will report on her deliberations shows that there is something wrong in the abilities of the Chief Minister to make what is fundamentally a simple decision.

All three parties have agreed to this. All three parties apparently want this. We know that the community wants it, because I have certainly been lobbied by a large number of groups. We had the motion last year asking for this to happen. We have got a motion this year asking for it to happen. Do we need another motion next year for it to happen? Will there be another motion in 2016 for this to happen? That may well be the case.

There has not been an excuse given. There is no reason for this not to happen now. If you want to achieve what is in the agreement, I am not sure why the delay. We have not had an excuse. I think it is entirely appropriate, when the Assembly has asked for something to happen and called for something to happen, that the next step is then to direct that something happen. That is quite reasonable, and it has happened before in this place.

The problem is that there is an internal stoush going on there and they have got a number of ministers who are not willing to surrender. It is about personal ego. This, again, is about emotional attachment to the bits they have and that they are not going to surrender for the good of the environment. The Greens-Labor alliance say, "Look at us; we are the party that best looks after the environment." I will back our environment record against yours any day. I was the first minister—

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Mr Smyth, resume your seat, please. Mr Smyth, I have already spoken to you on a number of occasions about addressing your remarks to the chair. You are now warned.

**MR SMYTH:** To your warning, Mr Assistant Speaker—thank you for the warning—which bit of my looking you in the eye—

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Mr Smyth, are you taking a point of order?

**MR SMYTH:** Sorry?

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Are you taking a point of order?

**MR SMYTH:** I am taking a point of order. I said, "To your warning." Which bit of looking you in the eye and speaking through you and every three or four lines saying "Mr Assistant Speaker" is not directing my speech through you?

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** It is your use of the first person term, as well you know.

**MR SMYTH:** So are you making a ruling that no-one can use a first person term—

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** that is not addressed to—

**MR SMYTH:** Under standing order 73, I ask for a ruling from—

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Mr Smyth! Mr Smyth!

**MR SMYTH:** I am entitled under the standing orders, Mr Assistant Speaker. Under standing order 73, I ask for a ruling on the use of the first person in this place.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Mr Smyth, it is the custom in this place for members to address their speeches to the chair. I am drawing your attention to the fact that I have spoken to you about that twice already. This is the third occasion, and I have warned you. That is my ruling, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Sorry?

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** That is my ruling.

**MR SMYTH:** I asked for a ruling under standing order 73 on whether the use of the first person—

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** I have already given you the ruling, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** I apologise; could you repeat your ruling for me?

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** My ruling is, Mr Smyth, that you will address the chair during your speech.

**MR SMYTH:** Again, I point out to you, Mr Assistant Speaker, that I was looking at you. Following you first bringing it to my attention, I looked at you through the entire speech, so I ask you to either point out in which way—

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Mr Smyth, you are being argumentative. Would you resume your—

**MR SMYTH:** No, I am allowed to make a point of order. Standing orders allow for me to make a point of order and ask for an explanation. I am asking you which bit of my speech, as I looked at you and spoke, was not consistent with your ruling.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** The bit that is inconsistent with the standing orders is your use of the word “you” to the Chief Minister during your speech.

**MR SMYTH:** “You” is not allowed? Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker for your ruling that when one uses the word “you”, one is now violating the standing orders. That is fine.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** That was not my ruling, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Well, that is what you just said. You just said—

*Government members interjecting—*

**Mr Corbell:** A point of order, Mr Assistant Speaker.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Mr Corbell.

**Mr Corbell:** Mr Smyth is being deliberately argumentative. You have made your ruling and he is now defying your ruling. Mr Smyth should either accept your ruling or move dissent to your ruling. Those are the two choices open to him.

**Mr Hanson:** On a point of order, during that previous point of order, we had repeated interjections from the Chief Minister and from the manager of government business saying, “Suck it up, suck it up.” If you are going to be consistent in this place, I ask that you address those interjections, which are clearly unparliamentary.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr Hanson. Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** The issue here, Mr Assistant Speaker, is that the Chief Minister has not given us a reason for her inability to deliver on the policy she has signed up to, that the Greens have signed up to and that the Canberra Liberals have signed up to. It is not that hard. We have another motion here—here we are, last year, this year—and I still wait and wonder whether we will do it next year and the year after. It will be interesting to see when the Chief Minister will determine how she ends this internal stoush they are clearly having so we can actually all move on and benefit the environment of the ACT.

**MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (3.46):** I am pleased to hear there continues to be tripartisan support for a single integrated conservation agency in the Assembly. I certainly appreciate the continued interest of the Canberra Liberals in this matter. It is surprising to see a third motion in 18 months come forward on this matter, but I guess that clearly demonstrates an interest on the part of the Canberra Liberals in at least the politics of it, if not the substance.

I agree it is frustrating that this issue has not been resolved by now but, as we discussed last time we spoke about this matter—and I certainly made the point—there is a level of complexity to picking through the right allocation of resources between different agencies in terms of getting the best possible outcomes for the environment. My focus in this matter is ensuring that we get the best outcomes for the environment in this city.

The original position of having the single conservation agency was one the Greens supported at the last election. The Canberra Liberals underlined the fact today that they also had that as policy, and it was supported by a range of stakeholder groups. I do not think that position has changed for anybody. The very practical question is what that looks like on the ground in terms of which directorate resources sit in which place. These matters are being worked on.

The Chief Minister indicated in her remarks that she retains a commitment to this. I accept that. I work with the Chief Minister on a range of matters in our parliamentary agreement and we have a very clear understanding of moving forward on those things. Some of them take more time. A number of matters in the parliamentary agreement have proved to be more complex than we perhaps originally anticipated or have taken a little while while we are getting the resources in place for them. It sometimes takes a bit longer than we might have hoped, but that does not mean we are not continuing to progress these matters.



I am quite happy to accept the Chief Minister's amendment to this motion, because I think the work continues. I am confident that what is happening on the ground is that staff across the board are continuing to seek the best outcomes for the environment, as is the cabinet. We may not always agree on how to get there. As there are in this place, there are debates around the best possible pathways. But I do not doubt that we will follow through on this matter and we will—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Members! There are far too many interjections. The member is entitled to be heard without interruption.

**MR RATTENBURY:** The cabinet will continue to seek the best outcomes for the environment. It is clear that there are overlaps between, in particular, TAMS and what is now EPD. It still is not absolutely clear which sections and branches should go exactly where in which agencies. They are the matters that are being worked on, and the directors-general are involved in those conversations. As the Chief Minister has indicated, when those matters are resolved, she will report back to the Assembly. On that basis I will be supporting Ms Gallagher's amendment today.

**MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (3.49):** I will speak to the amendment and close. I, too, am pleased to hear the general tripartisan support for the concept of a single nature conservation agency expressed again today. I guess I should not be surprised that the Chief Minister has attempted to give me a little slap down, because that helps to deflect from the issue—and the issue in question is why it has not taken place to date.

The Chief Minister also mentioned that she was surprised to hear that this was the number one environmental issue for the Canberra Liberals, and that is a fair comment. But whilst I may be the newest member of this Assembly, Mr Assistant Speaker, it is my understanding that the role of representatives in the ACT Legislative Assembly is exactly that—to be a representative. I probably would not have even thought to bring this issue to the Assembly if it were not for representations made by stakeholders in the nature conservation area.

I think it is symptomatic of a complacent, tired, old government that they stop listening to their constituents and their stakeholders in this area and think that they know best. It would be a better approach to listen to those in the sector, take on board their comments and work to implement what may be best for the environment as a whole.

There is not much more I can say other than that we will be opposing the amendment. I commend the motion as it stands. It is something we and stakeholders in the environmental sector believe is in the best interests of our environment.

Question put:

That the amendment 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.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

## Transport—light rail

**MR COE** (Ginninderra) (3.55): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes, regarding light rail:

(a) advice in the 2003 Canberra Public Transport Futures Feasibility Study regarding the staging of a possible ACT-wide network;

(b) criticism from:

(i) Infrastructure Australia;

(ii) the Productivity Commission;

(iii) Mr Bob Nairn;

(iv) the Centre for International Economics; and

(v) Adjunct Associate Professor Leo Dobes; and

(c) significant concern about:

(i) the capital cost of construction, including the relocation of utilities;

(ii) patronage projections;

(iii) operational expenses;

(iv) the risks to the Territory;

(v) the population within walking distance; and

(vi) impact on the bus system; and

- (2) calls on the ACT Government to delay the light rail project until a time in Canberra's development when the population and population density can sustain such a system.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MR COE:** Mr Hanson jokes about the repetition of this issue, but, unfortunately, this is no joking matter. When you have expenditure of perhaps \$1 billion in taxpayers' money on a project that simply does not stack up. Not only do we have perhaps \$1 billion of capital expenditure going towards this project, but we are going to be taking on a liability as well. We are going to be taking on an annual cost for this project. With every other project in the world it seems, you spend a lot of money and then you can reap rewards later on. Well, not so with this one. Not so with the capital metro project.

With this project, we are spending a lot of money—in fact, the most ever spent in the ACT by an ACT government—only to take on an annual liability forever. For all time, ACT taxpayers are going to have to prop up a light rail system that is simply uneconomic and unfinancial all because of this government's flippant political decision to go ahead with light rail at the expense of the ACT taxpayer.

We have spoken just in the last day or two about Minister Corbell's emotional attachment to this issue. It is quite clear to all those who have been in this place how strident Minister Corbell has been on this issue. Even in the face of doubt and caution and scepticism from so many people, so many learned people in this space, Minister Corbell has arrogantly and stubbornly and irrationally gone ahead and said, "No, we are going to do it anyway."

This issue in the ACT is by no means a new one. It has been doing the rounds for, well, perhaps 100 years now. However, Canberra has not been planned for a light rail system. It simply has not been planned for it. In fact, I believe Canberra may well be more conducive to a heavy rail system than to a light rail system. Perhaps if you could actually go from Gungahlin to the city in six or seven minutes at 120 kilometres an hour, or you could go from Tuggeranong to the city at 120 kilometres an hour in perhaps 10 minutes or less—eight minutes—that indeed might attract patronage. It may not; it still may not stack up. Again, this government simply has not done the assessments.

Do we have any idea about what alternative modes have been assessed by this government? Did the government actually consider a heavy rail system for the ACT? I am not saying that we should go ahead and construct a heavy rail system, but I do think we should be making wise assessments about spending taxpayers' money, especially on a project which is the biggest in the ACT government's history.

I imagine Mr Rattenbury is going to chime into this debate at some point today and say, "We spend so much money on roads and you never ask any questions about road projects." As a matter of fact, we do ask a lot of questions about road projects, and it is usually because the government has mismanaged them. One project of particular

interest which is being constructed at the moment is, of course, the Majura parkway. Minister Rattenbury, on several occasions, has made mention of the fact that the Canberra Liberals have not scrutinised the decision to go ahead with the Majura parkway. Well, in fact we did scrutinise it and we supported it. We looked at it, we assessed it and we decided that it was worth while for us to support it.

It is interesting, because the cost-benefit ratio for Majura parkway is \$4. For every dollar invested, you get a \$4 return from Majura parkway. What is it for light rail? An expert commissioned by the opposition—he has done considerable work for the ACT government before and for many other governments and corporations around the world—has said that the cost-benefit analysis is somewhere in the vicinity of 50 cents for every dollar.

It is important to remember that the cost-benefit analysis, as undertaken by the ACT government and as undertaken by Mr Nairn includes social factors. It is all very well for Minister Corbell to go public on 16 July in the *Canberra Times* and say that the rail benefits are beyond economic. That is what the cost-benefit analysis shows—that there is a social benefit, an environmental benefit and an economic benefit, and all of those factors are built into the economic assessment undertaken by this government and the economic assessment undertaken by an expert commissioned by the opposition. What does that economic assessment show? It shows that this project does not stack up, that this government is being irrational and is doing the wrong thing by the taxpayers, who are footing the bill for this extravagant project.

We all know there are people on the other side of this chamber who have doubts about the light rail project. It is well known to many people in Canberra that there are people opposite who have raised questions about light rail, perhaps even do not support light rail, and it has even been reported that some in cabinet have raised questions such as “how much is too much for light rail?” to which it is reported that the Chief Minister responded with “a billion dollars”. One way or another, the project does not stack up. I hope that somebody over there, somebody in the government, will have the confidence to stand up and say that we are not doing the right thing by the people of Canberra by spending \$1 billion on this project.

I have listed in the motion on the notice paper today just some—a sneak preview; a select few—of the organisations and experts that have come out and been critical about the light rail project or about the government’s process for determining light rail. And, of course, the first such organisation to come out was Infrastructure Australia.

The government put a submission to Infrastructure Australia which said, “Bus rapid transit is better by about two to one; light rail transit is not so good but can you still give us money for light rail?” Surprise, surprise, the commonwealth government, led by Julia Gillard, wrote a letter to Mr Corbell and said, “I am afraid you said it best when you said that buses are better, and it is for that reason that we are not even going to give you \$15 million to look into light rail further. It does not even warrant further investigation. What you are better off doing is looking into improvements to the bus system.”

However, in recent months Minister Corbell has gone to great lengths to tell Canberra that bus rapid transit is not an option. He has gone to great lengths to say that bus rapid transit could not take place on Northbourne Avenue. It is interesting that Minister Corbell has absolutely ruled out bus rapid transit. If the government says they have not yet committed to light rail but Minister Corbell says we cannot do bus rapid transit because it does not work, where does that leave us? It leaves us with light rail or nothing.

If they go ahead with light rail, the people of Canberra will lose, because the people of Canberra will take on a \$1 billion construction cost and, who knows, perhaps \$50 million to \$100 million every single year for operational costs, for finance payments, et cetera. This is a huge liability, all for just three per cent of Canberrans who will live within walking distance of the proposed tramline.

We heard the minister come out in the last month or so to great fanfare, saying that these passenger projections are just fantastic. It is interesting that the patronage projections are actually going backwards, because a year ago, when I asked a question about patronage between 7 and 9 am, he said that it was going to be 4,500 people. Last month he said it would be 3,500 people. The minister is going to be spending up to \$1 billion on a light rail project for just 3,500 commuters. It is interesting that ACTION buses, along the same corridor, currently carry more than 3,000 people. So we are getting the same number of commuters on public transport, except that, instead of being on a bus, they are going onto a tram and we are spending \$1 billion to get there. It seems to me to be an irrational proposition by this government and it just goes to the very emotional attachment that Minister Corbell has to this project.

In addition to the fanfare about the patronage projections, the government came out and said, "It's wonderful news that we're going to be able to take a tram from Gungahlin to the city in 25 minutes." Isn't that just superb—going 12.5 kilometres in 25 minutes? We have got a tram, state-of-the-art technology, going an average of 30 kilometres an hour. I am afraid that, if they are determined to get people out of their cars and onto public transport, a tram going 30 kilometres an hour on average is not going to cut it. It is simply not going to cut it, especially when the ACTION timetables show that the red rapid at peak hour does it in 26 minutes. So you have the same amount of time for a bus and for the tram, one involving \$1 billion, and perhaps an extra \$50 million to \$100 million a year, and one that does not.

In fact, the bus timetable has the red rapid bus at other times of the day at 19 minutes. So you are going to have a bus which is actually faster. The current buses are faster than what the minister is proposing with the tram, yet somehow this tram is going to revolutionise Canberra. Well, the only things it is going to revolutionise are the rates and the land tax, not just on the corridor but across Canberra. Madam Assistant Speaker Lawder, taxpayers in your electorate of Brindabella, in my colleague Mrs Jones's electorate of Molonglo and in my electorate of Ginninderra are all going to be paying for Simon Corbell's train set. It is an extravagant, irrational and emotional project of Minister Corbell, all because he latched onto the idea when the Labor Party signed up to an agreement with Mr Rattenbury.

It is interesting that Mr Corbell has made no reference in any documentation that I have seen to the 2003 KBR study with regard to transport options for Canberra. And I am not surprised he does not, because the study that this Labor government commissioned in 2003 does not support what they are doing. They spent that \$200,000 or so on the 2003 study, and it does not support going ahead with light rail, and it certainly does not support the staging of a light rail network which this government has proposed.

When it comes to spending taxpayers' money I do not think it is good enough for Minister Corbell to come in here and say it is not economic, it is not financial; it is social. Spending up to \$1 billion of taxpayers' money on a feel-good project for Simon Corbell does not cut it. It simply does not cut it. It is irresponsible, it is irrational and it is wrong. Unfortunately, it is the people of Canberra, the taxpayers of Canberra, who are going to be paying as a result of Minister Corbell's commitment to this project.

There are significant concerns about every single aspect of the light rail project. I have listed some of them in paragraph (1)(c). Of course, there is the cost of construction, including the relocation of utilities. We still do not know whether the relocation of utilities is included in the \$614 million cost. There is still significant doubt about the viability of the patronage projections. We still do not know what the operational expenses are. The Centre for International Economics said that there are serious risks to the territory. Of course, the population within walking distance is minimal, and the impact on the bus system is unknown.

So, for all these reasons, Madam Assistant Speaker, the opposition is calling on the ACT government to delay the light rail project until a time in Canberra's development when the population and, importantly, the population density can sustain such a system. (*Time expired.*)

**MR CORBELL** (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (4.11): The government will not, of course, be supporting this motion today. We will not be supporting it because, despite the attempts by Mr Coe to personalise the debate, to make it all about me, it is not about me; it is about Canberra. It is about Canberra; it is about the future of our city; it is about better, sustainable, efficient rapid transit for the future of our city.

We have heard some ludicrous claims from the opposition today, and I am going to spend some time detailing those issues. The most extraordinary claim is that the only people who benefit from improvements in public transport are the public transport users. This is the myth, the fallacy, that we hear from Mr Coe again and again. Mr Coe would know—or should know, if he were to be taken seriously as a shadow minister for transport—that if you encourage more people to use public transport and fewer people to use their cars, that is going to improve the operation of the transport network as a whole.

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MR CORBELL:** Madam Assistant Speaker, I heard Mr Coe in silence, and he should do me the same courtesy. He should know that the road network improves in its overall efficiency and operation if there are fewer people using it. How do you get fewer people to use it? You improve public transport. I know this might be a statement of the bleeding obvious for most people, but it clearly is not for Mr Coe. So I reassert it again: the benefits of improving public transit by investing in light rail are not solely given to or taken up by the users of public transit; they are also taken up by the broader commuting public. Reducing congestion has a broader benefit than simply the advantage given to public transit users.

The second point to be made is that Mr Coe makes these silly comparisons about travel time in the current year, or even in 2020, when light rail is due to become operational. He asserts that buses at the moment deliver a service of around 25 or 26 minutes during the peak and that light rail will do it in only a minute or so less. Mr Coe misses the point. Congestion along this corridor will continue to grow. It is not about congestion and travel time at one point in time; it is about congestion and travel time comparisons in 10 years, in 20 years, in 30 years. Those are the comparisons we need to make when we make assessments about this project. Mr Coe dismally fails to even address that question.

We know from the analysis that the government has put forward that without intervention on Northbourne Avenue, travel time for the general commuting public by the year 2030 will be 57 minutes—57 minutes—in peak time for the 12-kilometre journey from Gungahlin to the city. That is the future that Mr Coe and the Liberals want to consign us to. Every single motorist coming out of Gungahlin and travelling down Flemington Road and the Federal and Barton highways, down Northbourne Avenue into the city, will take 57 minutes in the morning peak in 2030 if we do nothing.

How does Mr Coe think buses are going to perform in that scenario? At the moment, buses use general traffic lanes. Presumably Mr Coe thinks that continues to be an acceptable outcome. Of course, what that means is that buses will have a dismal performance time in those outyears due to that increase in congestion.

This is an abject failure on the part of the Liberal Party. This is an abject failure on the part of their so-called advocacy for credible alternatives. They fail to have regard to the significant increases in congestion and travel time that will accrue if there is no intervention to give public transport priority on Northbourne Avenue.

The third issue we hear about from the Liberal Party is the assertion that buses can deliver a more cost-efficient service. That assumes that buses are given priority. I will give the Liberals some credit and I will accept that their position is that buses should be given absolute priority to get up and down Northbourne Avenue and not mix with the general traffic. Let us assume that is the case, because that is presumably their position.

This means one of two things. It means that the left-hand lane northbound and the left-hand lane southbound become dedicated for buses only—buses only. That means

reducing the lanes for other commuters from three lanes to two. Do the Liberals think that is going to lead to better travel time outcomes for the broader motoring public? It is certainly going to lead to better outcomes for public transport users, but benefits to public transport users are not the only consideration; benefits to the operation of the road network as a whole are also a consideration.

The Liberals' proposal, if it does indeed involve reducing the number of general lanes from three to two, means worse travel outcomes for the motoring public, who will still make somewhere around 70 to 80 per cent of all journeys to work if we meet our travel mode shift targets. Is that a good idea? No, it is a terrible idea. Public transport interventions should provide for better outcomes for the transport network as a whole, not create winners and losers.

The alternative for the Liberals is to say, "We're going to use the median, the island in the middle down Northbourne Avenue, to put in a dedicated busway." This entails building a road down the middle of the median strip of Northbourne Avenue. That is what it entails. That intervention in that landscape corridor is the wrong design outcome for that iconic avenue, an avenue with particular protections under the national capital plan which requires a public transport response that integrates into that landscape—not in a way that would devastate it as a bus rapid transit lane would.

Those are the alternatives. The Liberals are mute on this issue. They are completely mute on this issue. They assert that BRT is better, but they do not get down to the nuts and bolts of what it means on this avenue. Until they do, and until they start making comparisons that are reasonable and projected over time in relation to transit and travel time, their arguments simply do not have any credibility.

This government is focused on this project because it will have significant benefits for the city. We have heard the Liberals say that, for example, the Bob Nairn report should be considered a reasonable assessment of the costs and benefits of light rail in Canberra. Let us have a look at what the Nairn report actually concluded and the assumptions in relation to those conclusions.

The Nairn report uses incorrect cost assumptions, for a start. For example, it assumes that light rail will be based on two divided tracks on either side of the kerb northbound and southbound along Northbourne Avenue. This is the most expensive option. Mr Nairn himself is on the record as saying that an alignment centred on the median strip, as proposed by the government, would yield significant cost savings.

Here we have it: a report commissioned and paid for by the Liberal Party that chooses the most expensive option comes out with an unfavourable cost-benefit analysis. What a surprise! The facts are that the author of that report himself concludes that an alignment that is centred on the median strip, and not the alignment Mr Coe told him to analyse, would yield significant cost savings. This has a direct impact on Mr Nairn's calculation of benefit-cost ratio.

The figures in Mr Nairn's report are also difficult to reconcile. It states that a \$44.22 million per kilometre figure has been used in the preliminary estimates used in the report and that the estimated construction cost for the Gungahlin line is



\$915 million. However, the city to Gungahlin line is a 12-kilometre route. Based on Mr Nairn's own assumptions, \$44.22 million per kilometre multiplied by 12 kilometres equals \$566 million, not \$915 million—a fairly basic accounting error that neither Mr Nairn nor Mr Coe have yet been able to explain. These are the failings in the Liberals' critique.

The government has recently completed a six-week community consultation program to allow stakeholders and the community an opportunity to comment and provide feedback on the stage 1 design and contribute to the final design proposals. This consultation program has sought views from a broad range of members of the community, focusing on the strategic approach, about the policy and planning principles that guide the project; the passenger experience, about what you can expect as a light rail passenger in Canberra; the urban design, which is critical, about how the corridor will look and feel with light rail; and what we are building, about the specifications of how it will work.

We have seen really strong interest from the community through this public consultation process, with over 6,000 visits to the website, over 400 people completing an online survey, and more than 30 meetings with stakeholder groups, including Pedal Power, the Master Builders Association, community councils, businesses, schools and other organisations that are based along the corridor. We received some really valuable feedback, including on the location of some of the key stops along the route; issues associated with traffic management, trees and other landscaping along the corridor; and the key issue of integration with other modes of transport, particularly cycling, and integration with the bus network. With more than 800 individual comments from the community through contact, the government's Capital Metro Agency is now taking the time to analyse these responses and will make the results of those community consultation activities available when that analysis is complete.

The government has not chosen this project on a whim; the government has not done so because of some personal ownership on the part of me or any other minister. It is worth reasserting that this was a policy taken to the election by the Labor Party. It was a written policy statement released by me and the Chief Minister.

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MR CORBELL:** Again, I heard Mr Coe in silence, but he just cannot help himself. It was released before the election. Unless I had some amazing ability to predict the outcome of the election and the fact that there would subsequently be a parliamentary agreement with Mr Rattenbury, it is quite extraordinary for Mr Coe to continue to assert otherwise. But, clearly, he does.

We chose this project because it is the best long-term outcome for our city. It delivers dedicated, rapid, reliable public transit services. It establishes the foundation for an extension of a network across the city and it provides us with the capability to galvanise development along key corridors and around key centres that delivers the sustainable pattern of urban development that our city now needs. We have the highest level of car dependency of any city in the country, and it is time to start the journey to change that. That is what this project is all about. *(Time expired.)*

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (4.26): I start my comments today by noting the Canberra Liberals' ongoing opposition to the construction of light rail from Gungahlin to Civic. My position and the position of the Greens are starkly different. I want to reiterate my support for the Gungahlin to Civic light rail project, for light rail as a smart mode choice for our growing city and for investment in public transport generally. This is an approach that will help forge a path to a more liveable and sustainable city and a city with a stronger community and economy. Light rail is an enduring transport and city planning solution that looks well into the future and at the long-term needs of the city.

The contrast to this approach is a sad one. It is a blinkered attitude that does not worry about the future of our city and the challenges it faces, that has no interest in sustainability or public transport and that is focused on slogans for a 2016 election instead of a genuine long-term vision for Canberra.

What I ascertain from Mr Coe's arguments, which are based on his concerns about risks and uncertainties, opportunity cost, patronage differences in peak hour and the fact that, in his mind, the project only benefits one geographical area of Canberra, is that the Liberal Party oppose light rail for any other part of Canberra as well. I expect them to articulate this opposition to light rail in areas such as Woden, Tuggeranong and Belconnen when the government releases its light rail master plan shortly.

This opposition highlights the illusion that Mr Coe tries to maintain to his Ginninderra constituents that he supports building light rail from Belconnen to the city, which is clearly not true. The Liberal Party's arguments similarly apply to such a route. Those would be that light rail to Belconnen is costly and would cost taxpayers, it would interfere with existing buses, it would not serve people in other parts of Canberra, and it would have strong demand into the city in the morning but not as strong out of the city. These are all the arguments we are hearing, and yet we hear Mr Coe and his colleagues flag the idea that a route from Belconnen somehow would be better. I think he is trying to speak to a range of different audiences with a clearly inconsistent position.

The aggressive anti light rail arguments also highlight the illusion that the Liberal Party might want to build bus rapid transit instead of light rail. The majority of criticisms of light rail by the Liberal Party are also applicable to bus rapid transit—expense, disruption to the city, opportunity costs, a supposed lack of patronage et cetera. Despite the convenient ambiguity that the Liberal Party leaves around this topic, I think it is quite clear that if the government had chosen a bus rapid transit project the Liberal Party would also have strongly opposed that. What is most clear in the barrage of criticisms—

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MR RATTENBURY:** Once again Mr Coe interjects, despite the fact that he was heard in silence.

*Mrs Jones interjecting—*

**MR RATTENBURY:** And Mrs Jones, who went to some lengths to complain about her treatment in the estimates process, is quite happy equally to interject, despite the fact that her colleagues were heard in silence.

*Mrs Jones interjecting—*

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER** (Ms Lawder): Order!

**MR RATTENBURY:** And on she goes. What is most clear in the barrage of criticisms and negativity about the light rail project is that the Canberra Liberal Party has—

**Mrs Jones:** A point of order.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** A point of order, thank you, Mr Rattenbury.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Very sensitive.

**Mrs Jones:** Yes, I am very sensitive.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Thank you. Address your remarks to the chair.

**Mrs Jones:** Yes. The minister raises comments that I made in the estimates committee about not being heard with respect, being laughed at and being told that I do not know what happened in my own office—

**Mr Corbell:** That is not a point of order.

**Mrs Jones:** The point that I want to make is that he is misrepresenting what has been said. Under standing order 46, the minister is misrepresenting what happened in the past.

**Mr Corbell:** A point of order.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Mr Corbell.

**Mr Corbell:** There is no point of order, Madam Assistant Speaker.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr Corbell. Mrs Jones, you may wish to make a personal explanation at another time, rather than take a point of order on that.

**MR RATTENBURY:** What is most clear in the barrage of criticisms and negativity about the light rail project is that the Canberra Liberal Party has a very strong anti public transport sentiment. It is notable that this is not consistent with the wishes of Canberrans. Canberrans think it is very important to improve public transport in their city.

The recent polling which showed 55 per cent support for the light rail project also polled people on the issues that are important to them. Canberrans listed health and education as most important, which are usually the top issues in these polls, but next they listed improving public transport, which was equal with the importance of improving housing affordability. That is a strong result for public transport. Canberrans recognise the benefits brought by improved public transport and expect their government to work on this issue.

The benefits of public transport to a city are well documented, just as the negatives of car dependency are clear. That is not to deny there are some advantages to cars in various situations. I have heard various members talk, for example, about the flexibility and freedom that cars bring to Canberra families, and that is a fair point. But problems arise when there is a distorted focus on cars at the expense of sustainable modes, and that is what we have experienced in Canberra.

A counter to the point is that car dependency in a city is also very exclusionary. People who cannot drive—who might be old or young or have a disability—are at risk of being socially isolated. That is a real problem that groups like ACTCOSS have raised. There is also the risk that without good public transport some families suffer from a car-dependent poverty. Again it is well documented, and we should all know how expensive it can be to buy, run and maintain a car, particularly as petrol prices are always at risk of spiking.

Just to clarify, no-one has ever said cars will not be a part of Canberra's transport future. It is a straw man argument. What the Greens and I have always said is that governments have traditionally focused heavily on roads and cars, and it would be short-sighted to continue to do so. Especially as our city grows, we should be focused on dramatically improving sustainable transport options.

I will add some remarks in response to some of the issues raised in Mr Coe's motion. Firstly, he talks about "advice in the 2003 Canberra public transport futures feasibility study regarding the staging of a possible ACT-wide network". It is misleading to suggest that the 2003 Kellogg, Brown and Root report, which was published in 2004, showed that the government should be building a Belconnen to Civic light rail line before any other. The report did suggest that a light rail network could be staged. It suggested that the first stage would consist of a 55-kilometre route that would include four elements—that is, Belconnen to Civic, Gungahlin to Civic, Woden to Civic, and a Manuka-Civic loop.

The report suggests that these initial four routes could be staged according to demand. It says that "based on revenue performance" the first stage should be Belconnen to Civic. The Gungahlin to Civic line is listed last on this list, based on revenue demand.

However, it would be misleading to apply this to the present day. Yes, Belconnen to Civic garnered more public transport revenue back then, over a decade ago. But Gungahlin was only just being developed back then, and certainly transport options were limited. Of course, it did not have the highest public transport revenue at that time because of its population.

As we know, Gungahlin has massively expanded since that time. In the decade from 2001 to 2011, the population of Gungahlin doubled from about 24,000 people to 50,000 people. More than half the population growth that occurred in all of Canberra occurred in Gungahlin. Gungahlin is growing at five times the rate of the rest of Canberra.

Since this time the Belconnen to city route has benefited from an almost complete priority bus lane, including the Barry Drive and College Street sections which I have opened during my time as minister. They give such a reliable journey that during peak hour it is actually quicker to travel from Belconnen to the city on the bus than by car. This, of course, mitigates the need for a new public transport solution in this corridor.

The report also bases its decisions on the uplift potential along the routes. A decade later, of course, this is a different situation, and development opportunities have changed. As I have discussed before, the worst congestion in the territory occurs in the Northbourne corridor. Minister Corbell made some very detailed and salient points on that, particularly about the predicted worse congestion in the future. That again places a strong emphasis on the Gungahlin to Civic corridor.

Mr Coe speaks of criticism that a range of organisations have made about the capital metro project. I think it is fair enough to raise these, and it is valuable for the project to have this scrutiny. They are certainly not, however, a reason for abandoning the project, which still has a very strong case for proceeding.

I think it is always important to analyse some of these cited criticisms and put them in some context. Infrastructure Australia's comments, for example, are about an early submission on the Northbourne corridor that referred to bus rapid transit and light rail, and which lacked the further detailed work that is now informing the government's approach.

The Productivity Commission's comments related to the same Infrastructure Australia submission. It essentially says that the government did not indicate a clear reason for choosing light rail over bus rapid transit when it announced its decision in a media release. That is a valid point, and it is appropriate for the Productivity Commission to point this out given its close interest in the funding of public infrastructure and the use of cost-benefit analyses and other assessments.

As Mr Corbell has previously outlined, though, although they were not articulated in this press release, there are many reasons for choosing light rail over bus rapid transit, and they are a combination of cost and benefit assessments and broader government policy goals around mode shift, city shaping and environmental improvements, for example.

Mr Nairn was commissioned by the Liberal Party to examine the light rail project. There appear to have been some flaws in the parameters he used, because he did not have access to up-to-date information. This has been discussed before, and I do not intend to reiterate it.

The Centre for International Economics made comments about the potential risks of the capital metro project and the uncertainty around costs. Again these are valid comments but ones that are perhaps part and parcel of a very large and complicated project like light rail. There are indicative costs which are being refined, and more and more information is being released as it becomes available. I do not take the centre's comments as a condemnation, merely as a highlighting of the need to continually release accurate information and minimise risks as much as possible. This is, of course, the ongoing work of the Capital Metro Agency, and the funding provided through this year's budget will allow that work to occur.

Associate Professor Dobes's comments in the *Canberra Times* are interesting, and in my view are primarily a call to government to use and present cost-benefit analyses properly. His July article highlights important points for people to consider, such as how much Canberrans value a public transport project compared to other potential projects—and he uses health as an example. He also makes comments on the accuracy or not of presenting jobs data as a social benefit.

His article from today's paper is primarily a warning about optimism bias. That is a well-known concept in the transport planning world and one that has been studied from reviews of previous projects. Interestingly, optimism bias also occurs on road projects in forecasting traffic. The potential for optimism bias is not a reason not to do a project; it is something to be very careful to avoid. The government is aware of the potential for optimism bias, which is why it has expert and reputable people working on all of the assessments and modelling for light rail to ensure they are as robust and accurate as can be.

Again these are all fair comments, and I expect there will be ongoing differences between people who work in and study these academic disciplines. Professor Dobes, of course, has a variety of views on transport, which he raises in his article, some of which I am sure the Liberal Party would actually disagree with. For example, he notes that toll-free freeways will fill up quickly with cars when they are built—referring to the concept of induced traffic, which I know Mr Coe has ridiculed in the past. He goes on to write that congestion tolls might be a better way of achieving reduced congestion and increasing public transport use. Given his enthusiastic endorsement of Professor Dobes's comments, I would be interested to hear Mr Coe's views on that policy.

There is, of course, plenty of other debate going on. I note Professor Dobes has presented a more critical view of light rail, but Professors McMichael, Steffen, Newman and Norman have strongly argued the positives of the project. They wrote in the *Canberra Times* about how the light rail system will deliver major climate benefits through significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and that it will improve accessibility and significant social benefits, and allow land uplift in a way that bus rapid transit cannot.

The way I would characterise the commentary and criticism that Mr Coe is quoting is to say that it primarily highlights questions, risks and uncertainties and some specific criticisms about aspects of the project or the government's explanation for them. But it is not the searing condemnation of the entire light rail project that the Canberra

Liberals suggest it is in their hyperbolic way. And it does not add up to a reason to abandon or delay the project. The team in Capital Metro—which the opposition has opposed funding for—is actually doing a very thorough and very robust job of addressing all the issues and completing the ongoing work that needs to occur. The extensive and quality work from the professionals in the Capital Metro team contrasts starkly with the motion today, which lists a grab bag of questions and quotes as a case for abandoning the entire project.

There are other points that I would like to have had time to touch on, but given the interjections and the points of order, I have run out of time. I did note Mr Coe's comments about the BCR, and it did make me ponder whether, if light rail does end up with a positive BCR, given what he said about Majura parkway having a positive BCR, that will in fact change his view of the project. That is a point I am sure we will discuss at a future time.

**DR BOURKE** (Ginninderra) (4.41): We are used to coming in here with the latest light rail Coe tale of woe. Again he is selectively picking over outdated reports or ones paid for by the Liberal Party to represent the stated position. Once upon a time—and it might seem that it was in a galaxy far, far away—the Canberra Liberals supported light rail and was one of its greatest advocates. Then the Liberals moved to ambivalence and, more recently, to outright opposition. I am not sure if today's motion represents a new position.

Paragraph (1) of the motion is all just Coe woe, and then paragraph (2) is Mr Coe saying, "Whoa, hold your horses! Delay, delay, until the time is right." So this is now the Liberal position? "We support light rail, but wait until Northbourne Avenue is a gridlocked car park morning and evening and the inner north is clogged with rat-runners." Is that the position?

What is especially important to me and, hopefully to Mr Coe, is this: is the Liberal position that we wait before building light rail until Ginninderra Drive, Barry Drive and Parkes Way are backed up and Belconnen roads are chock full to Charnwood? The truth is Belconnen is not an island. Its population is increasing and is crossing the city for all manner of reasons. During peak traffic times in years to come, under a Liberal light rail, lightweight, too-late policy, the congestion on Northbourne would back up roads across north Canberra.

We are trying to do something now to be ready for 2020. And what do we hear from the Liberals chanting now? "What do we want? Light rail! When do we want it? Later—when population density can sustain such a system." Well, we are starting it now so it will be ready before Belconnen and north Canberra are clogged with traffic. Canberra motorists' best friend is this government, which is facing up to the issue of future traffic congestion now.

Let us talk about some of the alleged evidence the Canberra Liberals use for their not now, light rail, lightweight, too-late policy. First, the Productivity Commission report: the Productivity Commission did not speak to the ACT government regarding light rail in the ACT. The Productivity Commission did not seek to understand the sustainable works which have occurred since the earlier Infrastructure Australia submission, nor did it seek to verify the statements made in its report.

The Productivity Commission report does not state that its triple bottom line analysis was performed before a benefit-cost ratio was produced for light rail in Canberra. The report fails to acknowledge the implementation of the government's capital framework; therefore it inaccurately refers to the ACT's infrastructure assessment framework. So, overall, the Productivity Commission relied on outdated information and an outdated framework.

Second, the Nairn report: a report commissioned by the Liberal Party. It uses incorrect cost assumptions and is based on capital expenditure estimate on two divided tracks—we have already heard about this—rather than an alignment on the central median strip that we are looking at. Mr Nairn acknowledged that a central alignment of capital metro would result in significant savings. This is the direction already being studied by capital metro, and it was the subject of the recent public consultation period.

The cost savings of a central alignment would have made a positive impact on Mr Nairn's calculation of the benefit-cost ratio. Mr Nairn's report also excludes a range of benefits resulting from urban densification, including more efficient delivery of utilities, health, education, waste collection and other services. Light rail will improve our transport options. The capital metro project will provide our city with an attractive, integrated and modern form of public transport providing people with a real alternative to the car that can ease congestion and reduce pollution as our population grows.

Light rail will reinvigorate the wider transport network by providing a high frequency and highly attractive spine service between the city and Gungahlin. A detailed study is underway to ensure that capital metro integrates effectively with other modes of transport and contributes to a public network that puts people first. Light rail will support urban infill. Capital metro is helping to support the ACT's planning strategy by encouraging urban infill along the Northbourne corridor and offering a range of housing needs in Gungahlin. Capital metro is a catalyst for development along the Gungahlin to city corridor.

The transport for Canberra's public transport corridors link the city to all the town centres. Amongst these links, the Gungahlin corridor has been experiencing both the highest growth rate as well as presenting the greatest transformational opportunities for urban development. While public transport patronage from Belconnen to the city and Woden to the city are high, neither Belconnen Way nor Adelaide Avenue provide similar levels of urban development opportunities as Northbourne Avenue. Transit lanes and bus lanes have been provided on these corridors for future consideration for light rail.

The capital metro project is complementary to the city to the lake project. The city to the lake project is one of Australia's largest urban renewal projects. It is a transformational project within Canberra's city plan that builds on Walter Burley Griffin's enlightened foundations. It is a long-term and visionary project that will guide public and private investment in Canberra's second century.



Capital metro will provide business and investment certainty, stimulating significant economic activity as land surrounding the light rail increases in value and is used more efficiently. As a modern and attractive transport mode, light rail attracts more passengers out of cars than is typically achieved by buses—up to 20 per cent of new light rail system patronage comes directly out of cars. Modern transport infrastructure such as light rail brings people together, connects them with their destinations, supports a more active lifestyle, greatly reduces emissions and encourages people to explore and interact with the city without being in their cars.

We want Canberra to be a smart and sustainable city that grows through more compact means, high quality transport connections, more active lifestyles and a revitalised city centre. We want and need light rail. When do we want it? Now!

**MR COE** (Ginninderra) (4.48), in reply: It is a pleasure in many ways to respond to those contributions. A lot needs to be said to comment on what Minister Corbell, Minister Rattenbury and Dr Bourke said. They demonstrated why I spoke about the emotional attachment, because they did not speak of facts, they did not talk about patronage, they did not talk about costs; they spoke in the airy-fairy emotional world of, “Wouldn’t it be nice to ride a tram.” Well, Madam Assistant Speaker, the vast majority of people like the idea of hopping on a tram, but if you then ask them to spend a billion dollars on it and \$50 million to \$100 million every year to simply have the same numbers currently riding a bus hopping on to a tram, perhaps you might get a different response.

Minister Corbell spoke at length about this being about freeing up the roads and getting people on to public transport. As we know from the patronage figures released by the government, it is not getting people out of their cars; all it is doing is taking them off the bus and putting them on to a tram. The patronage figures are the same for buses as for trams on the same corridor. But we are spending a billion dollars to get there. It seems very extravagant to me.

It is interesting that Minister Corbell should personally attack Mr Nairn—again. The point Mr Corbell attacks Mr Nairn on is with regard to the alignment. The executive summary of the URS report, which Minister Corbell waves around on demand, says:

The concept design in this report recommends a kerbside alignment for either LRT or BRT along Northbourne Avenue, transitioning to a median alignment before Barton Highway and running in the median to the Gungahlin Town Centre ...

That is what Mr Nairn’s report went off—he went off your report! So the very report that Dr Bourke thinks is immoral for the opposition to quote from has actually got its underlying assumptions from the government report. For some reason when the government quotes from one of their commissioned reports it is okay, but when the opposition quotes from an opposition-commissioned report, it is immoral. There is a tremendous double standard in this place.

Mr Rattenbury talks about an enduring solution that will come about as a result of light rail. If he was so committed and was the real deal as a Green, how could he support the release of more land in Moncrieff? How could he support the release of land in Denman and in Coombs and in Lawson? If he was the real deal, he would not support those. If he wanted an enduring solution, he would say, "No more greenfields development. You've got to build higher density along the tram route and along transit corridors." But he is not the real deal; he wants a legacy project, and he thinks light rail is going to be that.

If he was the real deal and he genuinely wanted a more sustainable mode of transport, if he genuinely believed in peak oil, if he genuinely believed that cars are bad for Canberra and bad for our environment, he would block off a lane of Northbourne Avenue and put buses down it. It would not cost a cent to have the existing bus network going straight down Northbourne and with the three lanes going down to two. I would not support that, but if he was the real deal as a Green, he would not support a billion dollars and millions of tonnes of embedded carbon on a light rail project. He would simply say, "Let's use the existing infrastructure, block off a lane and say buses have to go down that." But he is not the real deal; he wants a legacy project.

I would not support for one minute the cutting off of a lane on Northbourne to make way for bus rapid transit. But if Mr Rattenbury was true to his conviction, he would not support the expenditure of a billion dollars and the embedded carbon and the electricity consumption of a light rail network when you could simply at no cost whatsoever put a bus lane down Northbourne Avenue and reduce cars down to two lanes. As I said, I do not support that, but I am very surprised that Mr Rattenbury does not.

It is interesting that Dr Bourke should rip into the Productivity Commission and rip into others. Very little needs to be said about that. The Centre for International Economics used open-source information, and so based on the publicly accessible information, the project does not stack up and it is a risk to the territory. Infrastructure Australia says, "Based on what we've seen, it doesn't stack up." The Productivity Commission says, "Based on what we've seen, it doesn't stack up."

Somehow, it is wrong for the Productivity Commission to say the government has not published enough information to warrant going ahead with light rail. The very point that Dr Bourke makes—that the Productivity Commission should have sought more information from the government and should have sought clarity—is, in fact, the very point the Productivity Commission is trying to make—that is, the government has not made the case for light rail.

Yet here in the Assembly today we have Minister Corbell once again over-reaching, once again saying capital metro is going to be great for Canberra, "We need it, there's no other option." Mr Rattenbury is there saying, "This is superb. Bring it on." But then we have the Chief Minister saying, "Oh, well, look, we haven't made a final decision yet. You know, sit tight. We'll let you know in October." Which is it? Is it the Minister for Capital Metro or is it the Chief Minister? Because the Chief Minister says they have not made a decision, yet we have a Minister for Capital Metro who regularly over-reaches when it comes to the delivery of light rail. He regularly says

that it is going to be the best thing since sliced bread when the reality is, as their own patronage projections show, we have got 3½ thousand people on buses that hop on to a tram. We will still have the same 3½ thousand people riding public transport. When is the government going to address that key point? The key point is: where are all these extra people coming from? A billion dollars is a huge amount to spend.

It is all very well for Dr Bourke to say, “Maybe we’ll wait 20 or 30 years and Barry Drive and Ginninderra Drive are going to be clogged.” Well, quite frankly, light rail from Gungahlin to the city is not going to do much for Barry Drive. In actual fact, crossing Northbourne Avenue when you have light rail is going to be mayhem, and the banking up of traffic on Barry Drive is only going to get worse as a result of light rail going north to south on Northbourne Avenue. The same can be said about Macarthur Avenue. The same can be said about Antill Street. At present you can turn into Dickson from northbound traffic, or from southbound traffic you can turn into Lyneham at Lyneham High School. That is not going to be possible under light rail. There are many unintended, unknown or undiscussed consequences as a result of this commitment.

I find it amazing that the government has already committed to \$60 million of expenditure—\$60 million of expenditure—yet the Chief Minister is saying, “We haven’t made a final decision.” We have got numerous staff over at capital metro—who, I might add, are doing the best they can with their very limited mandate of building a tram from Gungahlin to the city—on five-year contracts. Who puts staff on a five-year contract if you have not committed to the project? It seems absolutely bizarre. We are going to sack all these people if, in two months time, the government says, “It doesn’t stack up. The business case doesn’t support light rail”.

As we speak, I am sure Minister Corbell is trying to massage every figure he possibly can and donning every hi-vis vest he can possibly get his hands on to try and demonstrate that this is real. Well, it is very real to the ratepayers and taxpayers of Canberra. The situation the vast majority of Canberrans will be in following the construction of light rail is exactly the same if not worse as it is today. They will be paying more but they will not be getting any benefit. We believe this project needs to be delayed indefinitely until a time in Canberra’s future when we can sustain such a system.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 9

Mr Coe  
Mr Doszpot  
Mrs Dunne  
Mr Hanson  
Mrs Jones

Ms Lawder  
Mr Smyth  
Mr Wall

Mr Barr  
Ms Berry  
Dr Bourke  
Ms Burch  
Mr Corbell

Ms Gallagher  
Mr Gentleman  
Ms Porter  
Mr Rattenbury

Question so resolved in the negative.

## Executive business—precedence

*Ordered that executive business be called on.*

### 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 from 12 August 2014 on amendment No 13 [*see schedule 1 at page 2537*] moved by Mr Barr.

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.

**DR BOURKE** (Ginninderra) (5.03): In last night's debate on the education budget items I was bemused at best by Mr Hanson's comment on the Gonski reforms and their complete absence in his education spokesperson's speech, despite them being central to education funding now and despite Mr Doszpot's flip-flopping over education funding in the lead-up to the ACT 2012 election.

In 2012 Mr Doszpot chose only to ask questions about the Gonski reforms in terms of the Catholic and independent schools allegedly being disadvantaged by them—allegedly, Madam Deputy Speaker. He showed no interest in the ACT's public schools. They even forgot the CIT in their election policies. He showed no interest in the ACT's public schools education funding or the principle that additional funding should be targeted to areas of need, irrespective of school system. Indeed, he seemed to want to re-run the early 19th century conflicts over education policy and state funding that have long been resolved and that were nothing to do with the Gonski reforms. In 2012 the Canberra Liberals and their spokesperson only wanted to shoot down the Gonski reforms by trying to drive a wedge between the government and the Catholic and independent schools using Gonski as a smokescreen.

It is a tribute to the professionalism of the Catholic and independent schools that they saw through this tactic and supported the Gonski package this government negotiated. Yet the Canberra Liberals continually attacked the Gonski breakthrough until the then federal—

**Mr Hanson:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I wonder whether you could rule on whether the member is being relevant to the debate which is on the current budget as opposed to the 2012 election policies of the Canberra Liberals.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr Hanson, on your point.

**Ms Burch:** On the point of order, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** On the point of order.

**Ms Burch:** Mr Hanson made great comment about the arrangements that were included in the Gonski arrangements. It formed, I think, the bulk of his conversational statements in the house yesterday.

**Mr Hanson:** And on the point of order, indeed I did, Madam Deputy Speaker, because the Gonski funding that we discussed is the money that was appropriated last year and that is embedded in this budget. Talking about Liberal policies from 2012 is irrelevant to this budget. It is not part of this debate. Dr Bourke knows that. He is just trying to make a political statement that is not relevant to the debate that we are having, which is on the estimates committee report and the appropriation bill.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you very much for all your points of order. I did listen somewhat to the debate last night towards the end of the evening where it appeared that indeed you were going to this very subject that Dr Bourke is addressing at the moment, which is the lack of funding. It seemed to me that there was the assertion by Ms Burch that this money in fact has not been forthcoming and you disputed that. I think that that is what Dr Bourke is going to now.

**Mr Hanson:** That is not what he has been going to. What he has been talking about is the Canberra Liberals' policy from 2012 which is not relevant to this debate. I would ask that you call him to order. If that is what he is going to, he needs to go to that and not have a debate about something not relevant to this budget that occurred two or three years ago. It is just a misuse of the Assembly's time if this is where he is going.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr Hanson. Dr Bourke, would you just stick to the subject matter of the proposed expenditure and the effects of the federal budget in relation to the proposed expenditure if it is relevant.

**DR BOURKE:** Coming back to education funding, the Canberra Liberals have believed in the full Gonski after Mr Pyne gave his pre-election reassurance that you can vote Liberal or Labor and you will get exactly the same funding for your school. They fell into line with their federal colleagues.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson!

**DR BOURKE:** Like the Canberra Liberals, Mr Pyne had spent the period prior to this also attacking Gonski and trying to stop state Liberal governments signing up to it. To Mr Pyne's horror, many state Liberal governments did see the long-term fairness of the Gonski funding model, in particular New South Wales with Adrian Piccoli as education minister, but of course he is in the National Party.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson!

**DR BOURKE:** Now we see the Canberra Liberals supporting Mr Pyne in ripping up his assurance that you can vote Liberal or Labor and you will get exactly the same amount of funding for your school—ripping it up, Madam Deputy Speaker. Mr Hanson yesterday spent his time bizarrely attacking anyone and everyone for believing Mr Pyne's promises over Gonski. Mr Pyne pre-election said effectively, "A dog ate my homework." Then, like the Canberra Liberals, we have no policy other than to agree that the Gonski reforms under Labor are pretty good.

Post federal election, Mr Pyne pulls out of the drawer a series of badly thought out plans he had hidden from public scrutiny as an alternative to the Gonski reforms that he had publicly committed to implement. Yesterday at best the Canberra Liberals committed themselves to supporting—

**Mr Hanson:** No wonder you were sacked, mate.

**DR BOURKE:** Ouch, that must be hurting, Mr Hanson.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson and Dr Bourke, there should not be a conversation going on across the chamber. Direct your comments through the chair. Mr Hanson, please stop interjecting.

**DR BOURKE:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Yesterday at best the Canberra Liberals committed themselves to supporting the federal Liberals' broken schools funding promise, from the "no surprises, Gonski comb-over" Abbott government. I ask the Canberra Liberals the question Sarah Ferguson asked Joe Hockey on budget night after throwing the Gonski reforms overboard: is it liberating for a politician to decide election promises do not matter—

**Mr Hanson:** Madam Deputy Speaker, on a point of order.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Yes, Mr Hanson, on a point of order.

**Mr Hanson:** Standing orders 42 requires that members address their comments through you. Dr Bourke just said, "I am going to ask the Canberra Liberals a question," and then addressed a question to us. I would like to point out that when sitting in that chair earlier today, he warned Mr Smyth for doing exactly the same, for not addressing comments through the chair. I would ask you to provide guidance to Dr Bourke not to commit the same sin that he warned a member of this place for earlier today.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr Hanson. I uphold the point of order. Dr Bourke, will you please address all your comments through the chair.

**DR BOURKE:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Canberra Liberals need to be asked the question Sarah Ferguson asked Joe Hockey on budget night after throwing the Gonski reforms overboard. Is it liberating for a politician to decide election promises do not matter? Where do the Canberra Liberals stand on Gonski? Is it the deal they backed when Mr Pyne supported Gonski or his position post election when it turned out that he lied?

**MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (5.11):** On the issue of education and training, we now have a portfolio of higher education that is not matched by an output. The interesting thing is where it sits. Is it actually in education? It seems to be more of a business-related approach to higher education, and both are valid, both are reasonable. But unfortunately there are strategic objectives or accountability indicators for the whole notion of higher education contained in this budget.

This came up last year at estimates. It was a brand new portfolio at that stage. There were Chief Minister's officials there. There was somebody from the department of education there. The Chief Minister said, "This is something that we think is important and that we are working on." We would concur. But we are not sure what the portfolio does. I think that in something like the budget it would be reasonable to expect this, because across just about every other portfolio or responsibility there are strategic objectives and accountability indicators, but not for higher education. I will say a few words also about regional development, which falls into the same category.

Recommendations 71 and 72 of the estimates committee look at this issue. Recommendation 71 states:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government establish an output entitled 'Higher Education', and develop strategic objectives and accountability indicators for the output.

This is to make sure that whatever it is that the government intends to do in higher education as a portfolio actually happens and that we have got some way of measuring whether or not the government has achieved against its own targets. The government's response is curious. It says:

Noted.

While policy responsibility for higher education rests with the Commonwealth Government, the ACT Government is committed to supporting growth in the higher education sector and continues to engage closely with the Territory's tertiary institutions to that effect. Given that the Commonwealth Government is currently considering reforms to the higher education sector and federalism arrangements which may see a shift in roles and responsibilities between Commonwealth and state governments, the ACT Government will develop appropriate strategic objectives and accountability indicators for the higher education portfolio.

It seems to me that we have now established a portfolio. We are not sure what we are going to do in it. We have not got any strategic objectives or accountability indicators, but now the federal government has thrown up this wonderful excuse that they are reviewing higher education; so we will wait until that is done before we then develop appropriate strategic objectives and accountability indicators. It seems a bit strange.

If the Chief Minister had a purpose in establishing a portfolio, then she must be able to say how we achieved the objectives and how we have accountability to make sure that that is occurring. It is not an unreasonable request. I am disappointed that the government only noted the response. They do not need to wait for the federal government on this. They could actually do this today. They should have done it before the budget. They should have done it last year. They should be able to tell us what it is they seek to achieve in higher education as a portfolio and, indeed, in regional development as a portfolio.

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (5.15): I would like to take my second 10 minutes, Madam Deputy Speaker. It gives me enormous pleasure to speak on this important line item in the budget, child care, partly in response to comments made by those opposite last night but mostly to reiterate the importance of this topic without resorting to invective, personal attack and the obvious, though clumsy, attempt at class warfare we saw last night.

However, the spray, especially from Ms Berry last night, was far too entertaining, in a fictional, made-up sort of way on the spur of the moment, to let pass without having another word on the topic. What we heard last night was some sort of bizarre, muddled, and clearly, may I say, fallacious recollection by Ms Berry of my MPI speech last week in relation to—as I said at the time, as I said last night, and as I say again now—an important topic for Canberra families: affordable, available, quality child care.

I am not sure if Ms Berry last week during her own MPI was asleep, had selective hearing, or perhaps did not have her glasses on, but she clearly did not comprehend what I said. I repeat now for the record—

*Ms Berry interjecting—*

**Mr Hanson:** Madam Deputy Speaker—

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson.

**Mr Hanson:** I may have misheard, but I do believe I heard Ms Berry say, “She’s a cow.” I stand to be corrected. If that is the case, I would ask that she withdraw.

**Ms Berry:** I withdraw.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms Berry. Ms Lawder.

**MS LAWDER:** Thank you for proving my point. I repeat now, for the record, some of what I said last week during the MPI. I encourage her to read the *Hansard* rather than rely on her own patently inadequate recollection. I quote:

I, too, see that there is a strong importance of investing in quality childcare and early education in the ACT, but I would also like to add to the discussion today that along with quality, the cost and availability of childcare is also a serious matter of importance to Canberra families.



And:

... childcare operators warned that paying the rebate directly to parents rather than centres would have an inflationary effect, and this is exactly what has happened.

And:

It is at a tipping point where people say it is not worth going back to work. While the value of high-quality early learning has got enormous potential for long-term productivity, the cost is making it unsustainable for some who need it most.

And:

The quality of the system must be maintained to give all children a fighting chance of doing well at school, but the cost must be monitored to ensure parents earning low ... incomes do not decide to give up work because childcare is too expensive.

So Ms Berry's ham-fisted attempt to categorise my statements last week as pitting some upper class of the rich and powerful against some sort of victims here is clearly, I repeat, fallacious.

If one attempts to hoist someone on their own petard—sorry, perhaps that is too complex a saying for some of those opposite. If one attempts to damn someone with their own words, it might help if you actually use their own words, not make them up to suit yourself as you go along.

To end Ms Berry's confusion, I reiterate that if you cannot afford something, there is no point talking about the quality of it. It might be the most fabulous, best-quality child care in the world, but if it is unaffordable no-one can use it except the wealthy. That was the whole point of my analogy, which obviously was lost on those opposite. In future, I will try to keep it a bit simpler for their benefit.

For example, there are also those who are unable to tell the difference between "salacious" and "fallacious", perhaps also "audacious", "capacious", "crustaceous", "flirtatious" or "rapacious", or a whole heap of other "acious" words. I understand that for some in the chamber opposite, technology is not their area of expertise, so they possibly will not use an online dictionary—it might be too difficult for them. So I did bring down an old-fashioned printed one here. I am happy to share that, if anyone needs it in addition to the one at the front of the room.

But unfortunately it does not help with pronunciation, such as Ms Burch taking the best part of the year to get my name correct, despite my taking every opportunity to tell her in person or by email on the occasions where she said it incorrectly. But I digress.

Last night—

**Ms Burch:** Enjoying it, though.

**MS LAWDER:** I am enjoying myself immensely, thank you. But an interjection: I apologise for responding across the chamber, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Last night the intent was to again categorise me as some sort of champion of the rich. However, as some others of those opposite have so kindly pointed out on a few occasions, this could hardly be further from the truth. I personally find it reasonably tiresome to keep referring to my previous work in homelessness and disability. However, I would proudly shout that from the rooftops rather than admit I work for a union, for example. We can all see how well that is working out with reports we have all read in the media about corruption charges, misuse of members' money, the royal commission. So those opposite can hardly take the moral high ground here.

**Ms Berry:** Point of order.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Ms Berry, you have a point of order.

**Ms Berry:** Yes, I do. Ms Lawder is making an implication that, through my work as a unionist, I may be corrupt.

**MS LAWDER:** On the point of order, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** On the point of order.

**MS LAWDER:** I do not believe that was the implication—that Ms Berry was corrupt. My point was to say that I would prefer to work in homelessness or disability. Again, perhaps it was a little too complex. I am happy to take your ruling.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Yes, Ms Lawder. Could you just withdraw the reference to the—

**Ms Burch:** Point of order. After that, Ms Lawder went to that job and made reference to Ms Berry's employment in a union—and said how did that work out for her, given the corruption.

*Members interjecting—*

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms Burch. Don't keep all talking at once, please. I was about to make a ruling before you hopped up, Ms Burch. On the point of order, Ms Lawder, I require you to withdraw the reference to corruption, please.

**MS LAWDER:** I withdraw.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you very much.

**MS LAWDER:** To continue, as Sir Robert Menzies said, we have the rich and powerful, and there is the mass of unskilled people. Government does have a role in providing them with security and improving their conditions, although this is more the job of their own trades unions. And most importantly, there are the forgotten people, the middle class, many of whom live in my electorate, and I would have thought many in Ms Berry's electorate too, those who want and need to work and for whom child care is a pressing concern, especially women.

What we have here is a tired old government who are out of ideas. To cover their tracks, what they say is that the opposition have not come up with any policies about child care. This is where they bluster and use personal attacks to fill up this empty space left by their own lack of effective policies.

Well, I have some news for those opposite. This is your job. You are the government. Get on with it. It is not the opposition's fault that child care is becoming unaffordable for Canberra families. How about if the government stopped making the cost of living so high and life difficult for people, if they got on with fixing the problems?

Think of it as a simple join the dots picture. See if you can make it all work out so that you understand how the constant rise in fees and charges, in rates and in the cost of living contribute towards making life unaffordable. We, the opposition, are here to hold you to account and make sure your spending is transparent to the public. Quite frankly, putting \$1.3 billion in the budget without explaining how you will spend it is not transparent.

I repeat one more time, in the hope that it will break through the little self-imposed cone of silence over there: we need affordable, available, quality child care. That is what is at issue here, not some clumsy trumped-up class war reference—affordable, available, quality child care. If those opposite take issue with that—that I said last week, that I said last night, as I have said again today—they are clearly out of touch with Canberra families.

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra) (5.24): I would like my second 10 minutes, please.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms Berry.

**MS BERRY:** It appears that I might have gotten under somebody's skin in some of the comments that I have made about early childhood education. I am very happy, however, to hear that the Canberra Liberals appear to be 100 per cent rock-solid supportive of affordable, quality early childhood education and care.

When we are talking about quality early childhood education, yes, it does cost money, because it costs money to get people qualified. And parents expect the highest quality education when they are putting their children into early childhood education. It is not about putting them into a babysitting service and paying a teenager a small amount of money. The people who work in this sector have fought for over 20 years to have the recognition of their qualifications and their work valued. By making statements around quality, it undermines the work that the people who work in that sector are doing every day—that is, providing the highest possible care and education for our children.

When we are talking about affordability, quality has to be part of that conversation. It cannot be affordable just for the parents who are dropping their children into early childhood education and care; it must be affordable also for the people who are working in that sector. People who are working for between \$17 and \$23 an hour also need to have the option of affordable, quality, accessible early childhood education and care. Quality absolutely must be part of that conversation. I am thankful to Ms Lawder for clarifying her position and the Canberra Liberals' position that they are 100 per cent, rock-solid supportive of affordable, accessible, quality early childhood education and care.

**MR SMYTH** (Brindabella) (5.26): I might take my second 10 minutes as well. It is patronising in the extreme to get something wrong, have somebody correct you and then stand up and say that Ms Lawder has clarified her position. What should have happened is that Ms Berry should have gotten up following the withdrawal of the use of the word "cow" about a fellow member in this place and apologised and said that she had got it wrong. Then she should have sat down. To try to justify what has occurred by somehow suggesting that Ms Lawder misunderstood what she had actually said is ridiculous in the extreme. If we are going to have a debate in this place—yes, there is argy-bargy—and we get comments from members opposite laughed at by ministers who thought it was funny, the standard of this place goes down.

**Mr Barr:** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, under standing order 46, I have been misrepresented by—

**MR SMYTH:** I did not name you, Mr Barr.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Do you wish to make a statement about being misrepresented, Mr Barr?

**Mr Barr:** Madam Deputy Speaker, yes. I laughed at the remark coming from Ms Lawder about Ms Berry's glasses and the pettiness of that. I was laughing at that moment, yes. Then Ms Berry made what was an inappropriate comment that she has withdrawn. I certainly will not have it stand on the record that I have laughed at that comment. I was laughing before that moment at the exchange between the two members. I will not have it stand. I will not have it stand, Madam Deputy Speaker. That is a slur. If those opposite wish to make it outside this place, go ahead. I will not have that stand. It is an outrageous slur, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The level of debate is, I believe, from sitting in this chair and listening to it from both sides, deteriorating. I think we would like to get back to the subject matter of proposed expenditure. Mr Smyth, have you anything more to say about the proposed expenditure?

**MR SMYTH:** I do, Madam Deputy Speaker. I will finish by simply saying that, given her wealth of experience in these fields, people should listen to Ms Lawder and what she said more closely and not attempt to misrepresent her. What they should do is listen to years of experience in the community sector, whether it be in disability or

whether it be in homelessness—in so many areas—with years of dedication and great work, dedicated to those less well off in our community, to the betterment of our society. To have it twisted in the way that it was twisted last night and again today is just unacceptable. If members talk about the level of debate, perhaps some of those throwing the allegations that have been thrown should look at what they are saying and what they are doing.

Ms Lawder is a great advocate for the community sector and for those less well off in this community, based on years of experience. Her words should not be twisted; her efforts should not be denigrated in the way that they have been last night and today. I truly believe there should be an apology forthcoming for the language used here today.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson, have you got something to say? Do you want to raise a point of order? You wanted to raise a point of order, Mr Hanson?

**Mr Hanson:** No.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you.

**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) (5.31): I rise to make a few comments on early childhood education and care, the cost of it and the fact that this community rightly is seeking access to quality placements in the ACT. I remind those in the chamber of the investment that this government has made over its time in office—a close on 94 per cent increase in places, effectively a doubling. Since 2011 I think there are 2,500-plus places that have come online, 700 places just in the last 12 months alone. There has been the investment in the Franklin early childhood centre, including long day care, the Holder long day care centre, which I spoke about in the Assembly, and upgrades to centres. We have seen growth in places across the properties owned through the various directorates that are leased out to childcare providers, and we have seen an increase in land release to make sure that we continue to meet the demand.

Ms Lawder has gone on to say that it is not the opposition's job, it is the government's job. Indeed, it is. It is the government's job. I think Ms Lawder used the words "just get on with it". A 94 per cent increase, over 2½ thousand places, in the last three years, 700 in the last year, I think is getting on with it.

As to cost and availability, cost has an impact on families. There is no doubt about that. The average cost of child care in the ACT is around \$100. Depending on the number of children, depending on the income streams and what rebate or benefit you can access, that would decrease, but that is the base cost. There is a question to anyone interested in this: what are some of the elements that go to those costs? There is the rent or the capital cost of the building that you need to pay down, the other costs within it and the workforce cost.

We are unlike any other jurisdiction in that the bulk of our long day care centres are actually within the non-profit sector. Our community groups manage the bulk of our long day care centres. The bulk of those are in government-owned buildings and are heavily subsidised in the rents that they pay. A couple of years ago, when we were looking at cost, we did a survey around the long day care centres and tried to see the cost variables between private providers that were in their own buildings or paying commercial rents and the community providers that were in government buildings and paying supported rent. The cost difference was minimal. I think there was less than \$2 in the cost difference between private providers in their own buildings or paying their own rents, full commercial rents, and the non-government sector, our community organisations that do a great job in supported accommodation, so to speak.

There are costs that are inherent in the workforce, and that is the point that I believe Ms Berry was going to, that it is absolutely unreasonable to consider that we would put our young ones into an early education and care environment and not have a notion of the quality of the care that was being provided or of the quality and the training that sit within the workforce that provides that care. They are recognised already as being undervalued; many would say underpaid. Many would say there has certainly been a very strong effort through the big steps campaign to get fair, professional wages for the people that work in this industry. And I support their efforts.

When we do look at cost, we have limited ability, particularly as a government. We have pulled all the levers we can in land release, in building the bricks and mortar, in supporting the workforce by scholarships for training. The providers have to pay the base salaries. And if we are looking to say here that we can pay them any less or ask them to look after any more children, then what are we saying? We are saying that we will not have an eye to quality or not have an eye to the ratios that are so important for quality care of children.

I would welcome debate about how we can look at cost and availability. I will continue to work with those that are interested and make sure that our land release can keep up to the demands of providers that want to come into this place. We will continue to invest in our own bricks and mortar and expand the places where we can have that influence. We will continue to invest in workforce support.

The other side of this equation is the federal government and the contributions that they quite critically need to make to this. Today we had a motion that was seeking that federal funding continue for universal access to preschool. That, I would consider, was not voted against. So I have drafted a letter to the relevant ministers saying that there was support of this Assembly for that funding to continue.

But we do need to look at what are the constraints and what can we do to make sure that this continues. I think this government is on the record on this. It is recognised by many within the sector that we probably are ahead of the game compared to other jurisdictions and the effort and the resources that we directly invest into early education and care to make sure the availability is there and that the cost for the levers that we can pull on it are there.

I was disappointed at what Ms Lawder was saying when she started. Again, I do not want to be accused of verballing or misrepresenting Ms Lawder but there was a notion that the debate was getting personal, that she was beyond that and that it was really about cost and availability of child care. But then she went on to very direct, in my view, personal digs at Ms Berry and me. Ms Lawder made reference, to which Ms Berry has admitted she made an inappropriate remark, to: “Maybe she did not understand because she did not have her glasses.”

**Mr Hanson:** Are you making excuses?

**MS BURCH:** No, but there are some who need glasses—I am one of them—to read. And if anyone said that I was somehow deficient because I needed reading glasses, I would take offence at that. There was a mention of glasses in a direct reference—

**Mr Hanson:** This is an excuse. You’re trying to deny it.

**MS BURCH:** No, that was a direct—let *Hansard* stand.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, Mr Hanson. Ms Burch, direct your comments through the chair.

**MS BURCH:** Sorry, Madam Speaker. Through you, there was a reference to Ms Berry—

*Members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Sit down, Ms Burch. Mr Barr, Mr Hanson, desist, or I will warn you. And then I will name you. Ms Burch has the floor.

**MS BURCH:** Thank you. As I was saying, Ms Lawder—and I do not have the words right—made the inference that the debate should not get personal. She went on, then, as I have said, to make a personal attack on Ms Berry by the reference that she was not up to speed because perhaps she did not have her glasses. As I have said, I need glasses to read, and I would take it personally as offensive that someone would make reference to this lack of ability by me to read without glasses. And then again, there was the reference—and we have had it from Mr Hanson today—to, was it, “salacious” or “fallacious”? I made a mistake. I misspoke. But others have misspoken. What about that “Canadia” and the “suppository of knowledge”? People misspeak. They apologise, they make remedy.

**Mr Hanson:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order of relevance, this is a budget debate. If the minister wants to make a defence of Ms Berry’s comment, then I would have thought that would be coming under—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** But what is the point of order?

**Mr Hanson:** On relevance. This is not relevant to the debate. People from federal parliament or elsewhere misspeaking is not relevant to the debate. If the minister wants to make a defence of Ms Berry that should be done in another forum, not as part of this budget debate.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The budget debate is wide ranging and it covers a wide range of issues. And it has, from my limited contact with the debate this afternoon, become somewhat heated. I think that it is reasonable to use debating techniques and to draw analogies from elsewhere but perhaps in the spirit of not dwelling on the past, not raking over the past and getting on with the debate, perhaps, Ms Burch, you would do us all a service if you were more relevant to the question that the appropriation be agreed to. And then we may be able to get on with the debate with a little less acrimony.

**MS BURCH:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, I will. I was actually making reference to Ms Lawder's comment. Again it was "salacious", "fallacious", "audacious". There was a list of words. I am making comment on the comments in Ms Lawder's second speech.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Sit down please, Ms Burch. Ms Burch, I actually asked you to be relevant to the question that the appropriation be agreed to. And I am not making a ruling, I am actually appealing to you so that we can get the debate back on track rather than have a rehash of the issues that, from where I was sitting somewhere else, were pretty unedifying. I am not making a ruling at this stage but you might press me enough just to force me to make a ruling, but I am appealing you to try to get the debate back on track.

**MS BURCH:** Madam Speaker, I will. I absolutely agree with you that most of the comments made in this place have been unedifying and I will no longer go to some of them that were made by the Canberra Liberals. But I agree with you wholeheartedly that they were absolutely unedifying this afternoon.

The appropriations for Education and Training are sound, they are robust, they provide education across all fields, from early childhood education and care, primary school, high school, to college and training years. I commend the line to the Assembly.

**Ms Berry:** Madam Speaker, I am seeking your guidance. I would like to make—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** You have already spoken twice.

**Ms Berry:** Yes. I want to make a brief statement if that is okay.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** No, there is no scope for making a brief statement. If you want to make a statement under standing order 46, there has to be no question before the house. At the moment there is a question before the house. You could make a statement at the end of the debate or you could make a statement in the adjournment debate. But at the moment the question before the house is that the appropriation be agreed to. You have already spoken twice on the appropriation.



Proposed expenditure agreed to.

**Ms Lawder:** Madam Speaker, I seek leave to make a brief statement in relation to earlier comments.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Not at this stage. We are in the middle of an appropriation debate. The question is that the appropriation be agreed to. When we get to the end of the debate, perhaps before the adjournment debate or in the adjournment debate, I am happy to give people leave under standing order 46. But at the moment I am not prepared to do that and the standing orders do not allow me to do so.

### **Suspension of standing orders**

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (5.44): I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent Ms Lawder from making a personal explanation.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Do you want to speak to the motion? You have to give a reason why you need to suspend standing orders.

**MS LAWDER:** It is in relation to making a statement on earlier comments made in the Assembly.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The question is that standing orders be suspended. Is there going to be any debate on the suspension of standing orders?

**MR BARR** (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Housing and Minister for Tourism and Events) (5.44): We are not going to agree to that. It can wait 45 minutes.

Question put:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent Ms Lawder from making a personal explanation.

*A division being called and the bells being rung—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I am sorry. I do apologise to the Chief Minister. Somebody pointed out to me that I called for the doors to be locked before the Chief Minister was in.

**Ms Gallagher:** It is all right; I would have knocked.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I have done that twice this week and I do apologise. Mr Barr, it is contrary to the standing orders to move from your chair once the bells have been rung.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 9

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

Question so resolved in the negative.

**Mr Smyth:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I seek leave to move that all standing orders be suspended that would prevent Ms Lawder making a brief statement about events that have occurred in the last—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I am sorry, that offends the same-question rule, Mr Smyth. We have just resolved that question.

Environment and Planning Directorate—Schedule 1A, Part 1.11—\$72,452,000 (net cost of outputs), \$5,914,000 (capital injection), \$1,852,000 (payments on behalf of Territory), totalling \$80,218,000.

**MR COE** (Ginninderra) (5.49): As tempting as it is to speak on other matters at hand, I will talk about the expenditure of many millions of dollars with regard to the planning of our future. Of course, the portfolio is a very important one in the territory, and, once again, we have a new Minister for Planning. Mr Corbell, again, has been relieved of his responsibility for planning, perhaps the catalyst being the Planning and Development (Project Facilitation) Amendment Bill 2014, the bill that was to give Minister Corbell the power to approve any development anywhere. Understandably, it was overwhelmingly rejected by the community, and the Chief Minister was forced, in an embarrassing way, to tap Mr Corbell on the shoulder.

The bill would have given the government the power to build whatever it wanted wherever it wanted by simply calling it a special project. The community was rightly incensed by this attempt to remove any requirement for the government to properly consult. Every single witness and every single submission to the planning committee's inquiry slammed the bill, but the new Minister for Planning, Mr Gentleman, went against public opinion and backed the bill. He backed Mr Corbell. So, despite Minister Corbell being relieved of his duties, perhaps in part because of the project facilitation bill, Minister Gentleman was right behind Mr Corbell with regard to that bill. So we are getting like for like. We have a new minister who believes that the government should have the power to build whatever it wants, wherever it wants, whenever it wants simply if it calls it a special precinct.

The construction industry in the ACT is currently under severe pressure. The government continues to subject the industry to red tape and excessive regulation. The government is making it hard for businesses and individuals through significant delays in the development process. Slow processing and approval times hold up developments and cost people real money.

The estimates committee has recommended that the minister provide details of the failure to meet statutory deadlines for development applications. It will be interesting to see why the DA process is taking so long in some cases. However, knowing why the approval processes take so long is not the only answer. Until delays are actually dealt with through a simplification of the process, the minister should not feel that he has solved the problem.

The effect of unreasonable variation 306 continues to be felt in the construction sector. The variation was opposed by the Institute of Architects, the Institute of Landscape Architects, the Master Builders, the HIA, the Property Council, the Planning Institute and others, yet the government arrogantly decided to go ahead with it anyway. Some of the provisions have been rolled back in the last year but, if the government is serious about stimulating the construction industry, it should repeal the whole variation and start again.

The territory plan is an unnecessarily complicated and lengthy document, all 2½ thousand pages of it. Given its size, it is no surprise that builders and architects alike cannot understand or comprehend it. What hope of making sense of it do families wanting to extend or neighbours wanting to raise concerns have if even architects, builders and other professionals cannot make sense of the territory plan?

The only people, it seems, who understand the territory plan are the people at ACTPLA, and even they may struggle to keep on top of the couple of thousand pages of documents. Along with the Planning and Development Act, the building code and other associated legislation, it is simply cumbersome to navigate. What this does is concentrate all the power in the planning space within ACTPLA. Individual proponents can have their projects stopped at the whim of an ACTPLA official. When you have a document which is so complex, which is impossible to comply with fully, all the power rests with ACTPLA, because, quite frankly, if ACTPLA want to stop you, they can. There will be a technicality somewhere in the documents. There will be something in amongst the 2½ thousand pages of documents in the territory plan that will be able to stop any development.

This government continues to fail to consult with the community on changes to planning legislation and major projects. It is disappointing but not surprising when the government fails to listen to the community on projects like the brickworks and light rail. The estimates committee discussed in some detail the poor state of the ACT's land release strategy. In fact, it is interesting that a majority of the estimates committee, composed of two Liberal and two Labor, endorsed the following:

The Committee recommends that in regard to land release in the ACT that the ACT ... return to one third Land Development Agency ... one third joint venture/one third private development.

This means, Madam Speaker, that at least one of the Labor members—and perhaps both on the committee—were not happy with the government's monopoly supply of land through the LDA. Whoever did support that decision, whether it was Ms Berry or Ms Porter, is obviously quite justified in their view, because the private sector is more

than capable of delivering land to market. Many of Canberra's best regarded suburbs were done by the private sector, and we should be trusting them, once again, to deliver a better product at a lower price.

Madam Speaker, as I have already flagged in the debate on a prior line item, I 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.

At present the government say that they want to see high development in the city and town centres to support sustainable and active living. However, their taxation arrangements are counterintuitive and do not support this policy objective. Recommendation No 25 of the estimates committee report is all about ensuring the lease variation charge does not actively work against the government's published densification objectives. If anything, you would think the government would be providing incentives to redevelop land, not the opposite.

Madam Speaker, the final recommendation I would like to touch on as part of my remarks on the government's land release strategy within planning is No 26 of the estimates committee report, which 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.

We all know of stories, Madam Speaker, about Canberrans, honest Canberra business people, being caught by ridiculously high extension of time fees. Just in the last day or two I liaised with a person in my electorate who has a \$21,000 bill on his project in Gungahlin. However, I am aware of some bills in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. These people are already paying very high rates with embedded land tax if it is a commercial decision. Yet that is not enough for this government; they want to sting them again and again, but this time for failing to commence construction.

The premise of the government's case is that these people must have been land banking. That could not be further from the truth for the vast majority of those people. Those people bought land, often off the LDA, with the intention of constructing a property and harnessing enterprise and entrepreneurialism. However, with a downturn in the Canberra economy, there simply is not the demand for office or commercial space, so the projects have not been commenced. So, at present, there are people across Canberra with land, paying rates, paying embedded land tax and a mortgage but not deriving an income, and the government thinks these people are doing it deliberately. I doubt that anybody is doing this by choice. The people I have spoken with are desperate to develop their blocks or sell on their land, but there simply is not a market to do so. These people are not land banking; in fact, they are struggling. These people, as I have said, are not land banking; in fact, they are probably holding a liability. This is not an asset which is increasing in value; it is perhaps a block of land that is going backwards in value.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, it is time for a total change to the way planning in the territory operates. We need a complete simplification of the system. The new minister should commit to a comprehensive review of the territory plan and genuine consultation with the community about how to bring this about.

*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.*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Before I call the next speaker, I want to reflect and do a mea culpa. I have just reflected on the discussion. Ms Berry sought to speak on the last question again, and I did not give her the call, and after that Ms Lawder sought to make a personal explanation. I presumed she was using standing order 46. On reflection, it is possible that both members may have been intending to use standing order 47, because it referred to the debate. On reflection, I think I may have made a wrong call, especially in the case of Ms Berry, because the question was still open for debate. So I apologise to Ms Berry; I think I made the wrong call.

However, having admitted that I have done the wrong thing, could I seek the indulgence of the members who wish to make a statement and ask that we do it either before we go to the adjournment debate, rather than interrupt this debate, which is a different question.

I do apologise to members. On reflection, I may have been a little short and not sought enough information from the members about what it was that they were going to do, certainly in the case of Ms Berry, because the question had not been put about the appropriation. Standing order 47 would have stood up, but after the question had been put neither 46 nor 47 really would have stood up. So I do apologise. But, with the indulgence of members, can we put a pin in that, and if members want to make a statement, can we do it before the adjournment debate?

The question is that the appropriation in relation to the Environment and Planning Directorate schedule 1A part 1.11 be agreed to.

**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) (6.01): I reiterate that this 2014-15 budget reinforces the ACT government's commitment to achieving positive outcomes for development in the territory. The ACT remains a leader in developing and implementing sustainable outcomes which have greatly improved the overall amenity of the city. Recent surveys by the Property Council of Australia have confirmed what we already know—that the ACT is the place to live within Australia, and that the ACT government continues to deliver for the city and our community through measures in this budget.

The city centre remains the heart of our great city, and this status will be enhanced by our commitment to the city plan, which will reinvigorate the city centre and guarantee it remains an inviting place to meet, live and work. The \$150,000 allocated in this

budget will be used to better understand transport movements through the area to achieve the most efficient outcomes and integration with the city to the lake project. The ACT government is committed to ensuring the Northbourne Avenue corridor remains the key entry point to our magnificent city, with work to be undertaken to ensure that all opportunities are identified and make certain that the maximum benefits are derived.

Key to the corridor development is capital metro. We are focused on harnessing the social and economic benefits of the capital metro project that will be delivered, ensuring that all Canberrans will benefit from this transformational project. This will be achieved through the government's \$0.8 million urban infill program.

The Government Architect will continue to contribute his extensive experience in achieving the best design outcomes for our city. The ACT government has committed \$0.4 million to continue the work of this important role for another four years. The Government Architect provides specific project design advice to directorates in architecture, urban design and engineering, design direction for development of the city centre and design and development coordination between directorates.

Ensuring that parking needs of the city are met now and into the future is a key priority for the ACT government. As such, we have allocated \$300,000 over the next two years to investigate feasible sites for parking investment in the city and town centres. This will include a review of the current parking rates and an analysis of supply and demand. It is expected that this work will develop solutions to manage pressure on transport infrastructure and parking while ensuring that development within these areas can continue to deliver the benefits that urban infill brings.

Swimming pool safety continues to be a priority for this government. To make sure home owners are aware of their obligations, we will increase communication with pool owners and provide education on the fencing requirements for both new and existing pools. This will comprise of an advertising campaign and the development of easily accessible advice and handy tips.

The ACT government has committed a further \$1.077 million to the master planning program, which will continue throughout 2014-15. Master planning is an effective way of engaging with communities to explore opportunities and strategies to manage development and change over time within our suburbs, particularly within town centres, group centres and transport corridors. It helps to define characteristics of a place that are important to the local community and how its unique character and quality can be conserved, improved and enhanced.

A number of master plans have reached completion or have recently commenced consultation, such as the Oaks Estate draft master plan and the Weston master plan, the events for both of which were strongly attended. The feedback received during this process will now be incorporated into the final plans. The government will also finalise the master plan for the Woden and Mawson centres and commence work on a further four master plans. These master plans seek to define what is important to the residents and business community of each area and how the character and quality can be conserved while still delivering on the long-term viability of the centre.

I recently tabled DV318, which was the conclusion of an intensive consultation process over a period of four years. This territory plan variation will guide development in Tuggeranong for many years to come, and showcases the benefits of the master planning program.

The directorate will continue to provide a vital role in the release of land in the ACT. It is expected that investigative work relating to urban infill and greenfield sites throughout Canberra will be delivered within the next 12 months. This work will ensure that there is a steady supply of land to meet the housing demands as they arise.

In 2014 the development application process will continue to be refined to incorporate comments provided by the Auditor-General in her recent report on single-dwelling development assessments. This report highlighted that the process itself was already strong and not subject to influence, but the government agreed with the recommendations to continue to strengthen this process and allow for a greater level of transparency and accountability in the decision-making processes.

The government is currently developing a number of territory plan variations to ensure that the ACT's planning framework remains contemporary and responsive to the needs of the growing city. Currently three draft variations have been released for public comment: DV297, the public land overlay and zone changes; DV321, Pialligo, which draws on the outcomes of the master plan released in November 2013 and provides a clear direction for the future character of this area; and DV320, the Erindale group centre, which again draws on the master plan to continue to develop Erindale centre as a thriving business and community hub.

This government is working to ensure that building quality in the ACT is given the highest priority. To achieve this, we will be finalising the review of the Building Act in the coming 12 months. This will provide a path forward to ensure that processes are clear and well defined, skill levels in the industry are increased and that construction practitioners are accountable for that work. We want to ensure our community enjoys safe, well-built houses for their families.

To complement the Building Act review, the directorate will continue its review and enforcement activities. In the past 12 months, the directorate has successfully undertaken a number of actions which have held builders, other construction practitioners, and landowners accountable for their obligations in respect of compliance with development conditions, building rules, and lease conditions.

The government is strongly focused on the growth of the ACT economy. The recently announced stimulus package has already resulted in an increase in activity. The removal of high fees associated with extension of time to build and the addition of further remissions on lease variation charges will continue to contribute to incentives for business investment in the territory.

Active transport options will be a focus of this government as we work to deliver our emission reduction targets and active living priorities, which are an important part of helping to deliver outcomes under the Chief Minister's healthy weight initiative. Promoting walking, cycling and use of public transport are key to combating growing levels of obesity in our community.

The ACT will finalise the strategic cycle network plan that will ensure the territory has a highly connected network of cycle infrastructure so all Canberrans have the option of leaving a car at home and helping both the environment and increasing their own health and wellbeing.

The government has recently released the low emissions vehicle strategy discussion paper. The principal aim of this paper is to develop a policy which will reduce transport-generated emissions. This work will complement the freight strategy discussion which I launched in July. This will guide how freight moves into, around and out of Canberra.

These actions are all clear priorities of the government's transport for Canberra action plan. This plan strives to reduce traffic congestion, provide the community with more transport options, reduce the cost of building and maintaining transport infrastructure, and improve outcomes.

As already highlighted, we will remain committed to delivering transparent decisions and active consultation with the community throughout the plans and process I have made mention of. Through the planning and development forum, the directorate continues to actively engage with community to ensure that planning decisions are made which take the community's view into account and continue to ensure that people who live in our city are able to contribute and have a say on the city of our future.

To comment on Mr Coe's earlier assertions, I believe in a strong, independent and robust planning system. I look forward to working with all stakeholders in a consultative manner over the forward years.

To conclude, this budget is a great outcome for planning in the ACT. It delivers on the government's commitment to maintain the ACT as a great place in which to invest and work. It helps the ongoing prosperity of the territory by investing in the areas which will lead to economic benefit in the future.

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (6.12): This budget builds towards the government's 90 per cent renewable energy target. This target is increasing costs for Canberra's families while having a negligible effect on the ACT environment. Despite the Chief Minister's earlier remarks, the Canberra Liberals do and always have supported environmental initiatives. I will take a few moments to remind members of that today. The Canberra Liberals introduced many initiatives first into this Assembly. I am sure some of you will recall that a Liberal government introduced the ACT's first minister for the environment in the early 1990s. It was then also a local Liberal government in 1997 that introduced the first greenhouse reduction targets for any jurisdiction in Australia.

We support environmental initiatives, but, at the same time, we also consider the cost impact on families. We must always keep in mind in this place that the decisions we make, whether based on ideological grounds or scientific research or both, have a huge impact on the everyday lives of Canberrans. It is irresponsible for us to support any initiative at any cost, no matter the portfolio. We will not support any initiative blindfolded without an understanding of the costs or ramifications.



Mr Corbell has made it clear time and time again that his environmental plans will increase prices for Canberrans. When we stop to think about it, that is happening right across the board. The renewable energy targets will increase costs, and there are increases in rates and child care. But they keep saying it is not a huge amount, just a cup of coffee. This government thinks it is okay for increases in parking and transport costs. Let us just add a bit more for the environment portfolio in this budget and the budgets to come. While alone, each of these costs do not seem very much, they add up, and we have to remember that families are already struggling. Each of these increases will make their lives harder. Add them together, along with everything else the government is increasing the cost of, and suddenly enormous pressure is added to Canberra families.

We continue to move towards Mr Corbell's 90 per cent renewable targets at a cost to families, and we continue to spend hundreds of thousands of taxpayers' dollars on items they see as a priority, like a contraceptive pill for kangaroos. I am pleased the government has agreed to the estimates committee recommendation 77 asking for a strategy and accountability indicators for water quality to be developed for next year's budget. That is a good thing.

Ultimately, I cannot help but come back to the overall management of environmental and conservation issues. This area will always be a bit ad hoc and disjointed as long as it is spread across different agencies, as we have covered earlier today. Yet the Chief Minister dodged the issues and provided us with no reason as to why this has not occurred so far. I will say it again—I am not sure why the Chief Minister seems to think this is a non-issue. This structural change would have an impact on everything we do in the ACT relating to the environment.

The Chief Minister said she is aware of the commitments made in the parliamentary agreement and that members will be updated soon. I am not quite sure exactly what that means. The Chief Minister also said that when she is convinced that it will improve service to the community, that it will improve protection of the environment and that the systems in place that support that transfer will deliver an outcome for the staff and for the executive who have been given the responsibility by the people of Canberra to manage these matters, that is when the decision will be taken. We have all been agreeing on it for nearly two years, but apparently the Chief Minister is saying she is not convinced it is a good idea yet. She is not convinced that a single nature conservation agency will improve protection of the environment, despite the recommendation in the estimates report.

The Chief Minister said that she has been doing some of the work. I am not sure what is worse—promising to do something and not, or admitting that ministerial egos might be halting her action. The rest of the environment funding and programs really comes back to why this has not been done. Why are we not looking for efficiencies within the organisation and why are we not trying to achieve better integration of biodiversity policy, planning, research and management? It is an important priority for the environment in the ACT. Everything else that comes from this area could be done more efficiently and effectively. I am looking forward to waiting a few more months to be told it is still under consideration by the government.

**MR CORBELL** (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (6.17): I am pleased to speak to funding in this budget that delivers the government's program and agenda in relation to the protection of our natural environment, the maintenance and improvement of biodiversity within our city and a program that delivers our city a climate-friendly future, a program that delivers 90 per cent renewable energy for our city, a program that helps reduce the costs of energy use in our community, saving both greenhouse gases and the environment.

But I cannot let pass the comments from Ms Lawder in this debate when she indicated that the Liberal Party really are the party of the environment; they did all of these fantastic things. Yes, they did do good things, but I would welcome any indication of the Liberal Party's positive program and agenda this century. I think that would be a helpful thing. It is all very well to assert things that happened over 20 years ago, but I am interested in what the Liberals stand for today.

What we know is that the Liberals today do not stand for a program that supports renewable energy in our city, do not stand for a program that supports transition to a low carbon future, do not support a program that invests in renewable energy in a way that drives a new economic opportunity for our city, and do not even support a program that saves households money on their electricity bills. They stand up here and assert how concerned they are about the cost of living, and they do not even support a legislative scheme that has demonstrated, through a rigorous cost-benefit analysis, a rigorous regulatory impact statement, that it saves households money on their electricity and gas bills. They do not even support that. So they have little credibility.

The most we heard from the shadow minister for the environment in her speech tonight was that she wanted some changes to the administrative orders; that is it. That is the Liberal Party's program when it comes to the environment.

In contrast, the government is going to continue with its broad-ranging policy and program on providing for a more sustainable Canberra. In the coming financial year the government will continue to provide opportunities for ACT residents to reduce their environmental footprint. Programs such as ACTSmart and the energy efficiency improvement (cost of living) scheme—a scheme opposed by the Liberal Party—will continue to help Canberrans to reduce their resource consumption. This not only has an impact on the climate by reducing our emissions but it also improves overall the cost of living for Canberrans.

To date ACTSmart has delivered in excess of 325 megawatt hours in savings to businesses across the ACT. The program has achieved results in all areas of the community. Savings have been achieved through a reduction in waste to landfill, a large decrease in water consumption and a general increase in awareness across the territory of actions residents can take to reduce their consumption and their impact on the environment.

The government is strongly focused on assisting low-income households in the territory to manage their energy and water costs, improve environmental outcomes and reduce the impact on their budget. This year's budget includes funding to assist those households to reduce their electricity and gas consumption through the retrofitting and replacement of older, less efficient appliances. The outreach program has already had an impact on over 1,000 households.

The energy efficiency improvement scheme has now been in operation for 18 months, and during that time it has assisted 23,500 Canberra households. During 2015 the government will be giving consideration to a range of new initiatives flowing from this program as a result of the payments that have been collected from tier 2 retailers. These initiatives will contribute to an ongoing objective to reduce the city's carbon emissions.

The government is, of course, committed to the generation of electricity by renewable energy. Our commitment to a 90 per cent renewable energy target will be achieved with only a minor impact on consumers, and this will be offset by savings from the programs I have already mentioned. So contrary to the claims from the shadow minister for the environment, the increase in costs associated with the transition to renewable energy is about \$4 per household per week when all generation is in place and operating in the year 2020. That is offset by average savings per household per week of \$4 through the energy efficiency improvement scheme. This government is demonstrating how improvements in energy use and consumption, improvements in efficiency, can offset the transition to a renewable energy future.

The government has recently announced a new wind auction process which, once completed, will generate over 200 megawatts in renewable energy from wind generation. This, combined with the solar projects that are already underway or about to commence, will underpin the ACT's reputation as a leader in meeting the challenges of climate change.

The government is also strongly focused on matters in relation to biodiversity management. The review of the Nature Conservation Act will be finalised in the coming year. The Nature Conservation Act is the chief legislation for the protection of native plants and animals in the ACT, and it sets the framework for the management of our nature parks and reserves. The government has undertaken extensive consultation to hear the community's concerns and aspirations for this legislation.

Kangaroo management is a critical element of the management of our biodiversity. This year's budget allocates just under \$1 million—\$924,000—to further deliver on research work for this important task. These studies will enhance the already significant understanding the government has in relation to the impact of kangaroo populations on broader biodiversity values. The government is committed to developing non-lethal solutions and, as such, this funding will be used to research options for the dart delivery of fertility drugs to better maintain the kangaroo population.

The government is also strongly focused on ensuring that it achieves carbon neutrality in its own operations by the year 2020. The government's carbon neutral framework has delivered funding for projects worth over \$6.2 million. The implementation of these projects has seen a dramatic reduction in electricity and resource consumption across all areas of government. It is another great example of the government implementing a program in relation to its own operations that it aspires to for the city as a whole.

This year the government will also pursue measures through the Environment Protection Authority to continue to monitor industry to ensure they meet their obligations under the Environment Protection Act. This is in terms of both the remediation of development sites where required and obligations on industry to carry out its activities in an environmentally responsible and sensitive way. We will continue to maintain a proactive approach to ensuring that risks to our environment are mitigated and, in the event of an incident, responses are quick and effective.

In the coming year the government will also strengthen governance arrangements in relation to water management. This will ensure the roles and responsibilities of all areas across government are clearly defined and coordinated. Together with the commonwealth contribution through the \$85 million basin priority project, the ACT will work to build a thorough understanding of the issues affecting water quality in the ACT and how they can be best tackled. Once we have developed this comprehensive knowledge base, we will be in a position to put in place the necessary infrastructure to see improvements and tangible outcomes for water quality—both water flowing through the territory and across our border. All of this will have significant benefits for our community.

To assist in this work, the government has recently committed funding to ensure that the valuable community-based contribution of Waterwatch can continue. Waterwatch funding was cancelled by the federal Abbott government. The ACT government has maintained and replaced this funding cancellation to ensure that Waterwatch can continue to provide awareness on catchment health issues and host clean-up and planting events. The program regularly attracts over 160 volunteers from around the territory to assist in monitoring more than 200 sites.

I recently announced the development of an adaptation strategy for the ACT. This is an important element in meeting the challenges that climate change will have for the ACT and is a key element of action plan 2, the government's climate change action plan to implement our greenhouse gas objectives. Consultation on this strategy will continue throughout 2014-15 and will provide a clear set of actions that will help protect ACT residents from the potential harmful impacts of a changing climate, such as increased vulnerability due to increasingly uncertain, unpredictable and severe weather events.

In 2014-15 we will also carry on work with the commonwealth government to deliver the caring for our country program. This program will deliver a number of projects across the ACT, including sustainable agriculture. It is being delivered by community partnerships such as catchment groups and Greening Australia.

Action plan 2, our climate change strategy, will continue to be our road map for guiding our response to climate change and adaptation. The government will continue to implement these actions throughout 2015 which reinforce our commitment to the targets set out in legislation.

This is a budget that delivers on two of this government's key election promises. Firstly, it reinforces the ACT as a leader in innovative solutions to reduce our city's greenhouse gas emissions. Our response to the challenges of climate change for our city are now being considered as a leading example throughout many parts of the world. We are being noticed for the significant steps we are taking and the innovative way in which they are being delivered.

Secondly, we are achieving this at the same time as we are reducing the cost of living for Canberra households. By delivering savings in energy and water use, we are helping households manage their energy costs whilst we make the transition to a clean energy future—striking that balance between maintaining our economic sustainability now and securing the health of our environment into the future.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Smyth**) adjourned to the next sitting.

## **Ms Moira Lye**

### **Statement of condolence**

**MS GALLAGHER** (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Health, Minister for Higher Education and Minister for Regional Development), by leave: I thank members for allowing me to provide this statement to the Assembly. Tonight I would like to honour the life of Ms Moira Lye, a wonderful Canberran, a devoted mother and wife, a dearly loved daughter and granddaughter, a sister and an aunty, a friend and a colleague of so many, and I welcome to the Assembly tonight Moira's parents, John and Mary Watts and Moira's son Zac.

Moira passed away in the loving care of her family on 5 July this year after a long and courageous battle with breast cancer. Moira had worked for ACT Health for more than 13 years. She worked in a range of different roles across the directorate including medical records, payroll services, the clinical practice improvement unit, executive coordination and various policy areas.

Her last job, which she remained in until her recent retirement, was as the manager of fundraising areas at Canberra Hospital, which later grew into the manager of the Canberra Hospital Foundation. Moira was instrumental in establishing the foundation and her vision helped shape what the foundation is today.

Whilst there are many examples I could give of how good Moira was at her job—how she led the foundation, grew the foundation, brought supporters to the foundation—perhaps the most obvious way I can demonstrate her extraordinary capacity, skills and her dedication is through the amount of money raised by the foundation under her leadership. When she started her work in 2005 in the fundraising office, the office raised \$90,000 a year. In her final year with the foundation she had incrementally raised that turnover to \$1.6 million.

I know that Moira believed in supporting the good work of clinicians at the Canberra Hospital and this really drove her passion at the foundation. This job was perfect for her and she delivered in spades. It was through her leadership of the Canberra Hospital Foundation that I first met Moira. In life sometimes you meet people who make an impact on you. For me, Moira was one of these people. No job was too hard or too small, everyone and everything was important—to listen to, to learn from, to treat respectfully. Her team was absolutely devoted to her, which is always a sign of a good leader.

I watched Moira work over the years to build the Canberra Hospital Foundation into what it is today—a highly successful and reputable charity arm raising much needed funds for our local hospital. At the opening of the cancer centre last week Moira's touch was there, even though she was not, as the Canberra Hospital Foundation donated 40 recliner chairs across the centre to make sure people receiving cancer treatment and their families are as comfortable as possible while visiting the hospital.

In the past three years or so Moira achieved all of this at the foundation whilst undergoing relentless and aggressive treatment for cancer. Some days she would even leave her desk to go and have chemo or radiotherapy before returning to her duties, and always with a smile on her face. She never hid her illness and she did not complain, although she had more than enough reasons to do so. She dealt with her illness like she dealt with everything in life—with optimism, hope, laughter and a fierce determination to get on with the day, even if that meant including having to deal with the cancer treatment and all that that meant.

Moira was an incredibly brave person. I often wondered where she found the strength and courage—and then I saw her with her husband and her children and I did not wonder anymore. They were the love of her life—Greg, her devoted husband, and their five incredible children—Maddie, Zach, Harry, Sebastian and Oliver. She simply adored her family. Whenever we caught up we would end up talking about the children, how they were, who was the naughtiest—always easy for me to answer that one—and our hopes for them as they grew up. She could not bear the thought of leaving them all, yet as her illness progressed she tried in her own gentle and pragmatic way to prepare them for that day.

In April the Lye family helped Canberra to welcome the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge to the National Arboretum. Sebastian and Oliver helped plant the oak tree and I think they really stole the show on that day. I remember looking up and seeing Moira, Greg and the kids all looking so proud and happy on that day. The gorgeous photo of the twins on the front page of the *Canberra Times* the next day remains my favourite front page ever because I know how proud Moira was of her family that day. Moira told me later that she would treasure those memories forever.

On 11 July a celebration and thanksgiving service was held for Moira's life. We gathered to remember Moira, to honour her and to pay our respect to her family. Moira had organised most of the arrangements herself, generous as always. As members would know, St Christopher's is a very hard church to fill but that morning it was filled to overflowing as hundreds and hundreds of people gathered to celebrate the life of such an incredible woman and to support each other in our grief. It was an incredibly touching service.

Greg spoke with such love and tenderness of a woman who had endured so much through her treatment and who was taken from him too soon. Maddie stepping up at such a difficult time and spoke of her love for Moira and how proud she was of her mum. Moira's dad John gave a heartfelt speech from him and Mary, from parents who had loved this girl for 41 years and will miss her forever. Sorry, members.

Moira Lye was a wonderful person. She was generous, loving and gentle. Her warmth and generous spirit attracted people to her and this was never more clearly displayed than by the crowds who gathered to celebrate her life last month. I feel honoured and privileged to have met and worked with Moira. I am lucky to have known her.

To Moira's family, to John, Mary, Greg, Maddie, Zach, Harry, Seb and Oliver, who join us here tonight, we cannot take away your loss or the pain you feel but we can stand with you to honour, respect, celebrate and remember Moira and I hope that this offers you some comfort at this time.

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition), by leave: Firstly, Chief Minister, I would like to commend you for the brief statement you have made today. Your words were beautiful and I am sure that Moira, listening, would be inspired by them and humbled by what you have just said.

To John and Mary and Zach who are here today, I say welcome. It is good to see you here and I hope, as the Chief Minister said, that these words do give you some comfort and certainly, if you do not know already, add to the knowledge that she has left a tremendous legacy.

She is so respected by many in our community across all walks of life but in particular those who have been touched by her personally—and sometimes directly as she took money from us in one form or another. I know that the Chief Minister and I have both been at Wellness Foundation dinners or Canberra Hospital Foundation events where we have been encouraged to dig into our pockets.

I think it was a Beatles disc that you bid on at a function, Chief Minister, or David did, and I took home the Eric Clapton signed guitar, which hangs proudly in my office. There are several thousand dollars of memory of Moira there for me to enjoy.

She has done a magnificent job. As the Chief Minister outlined, the individual initiative to take fundraising from \$90,000 to \$1.6 million is just extraordinary and that is money now that has gone to the hospital. It is not only saving lives but providing great comfort to people who are going through their sickness, their cancer journeys and other illnesses at the Canberra Hospital. To all of the family, I join with the Chief Minister in offering my condolences and my admiration for this magnificent woman.

**MR CORBELL** (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations and Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development), by leave: Madam Speaker, I simply rise to commend the Chief Minister for making this statement this evening and to add my

acknowledgement for the work of Moira Lye. The reason for that is that Moira was a departmental liaison officer in my office when I was the Minister for Health many years ago now, but I always recall Moira's great humour and sense of fun, the energy that she brought to the office and the very fond memories that I and my staff at that time have of her.

I want to express my condolences to her family and friends on her very sad passing and acknowledge the very significant contribution she has made to our community.

## **Adjournment**

### **Planning—concessional leases**

**MR CORBELL** (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (6.40): I move:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Tonight I wish to make some brief comments about the administration of leasehold in the ACT. The administration of leasehold in the ACT has been a matter of significant public interest before and since self-government. The latest manifestation of this debate has been in relation to the process of deconcessionalisation of leases granted for less than market value to not-for-profit organisations such as sporting clubs.

Today in the *Canberra Times* Mr Jack Waterford was critical of my decision last year to agree that it was in the public interest for the Planning and Land Authority to consider deconcessionalisation of the lease for the Canberra District Rugby League Football Club adjacent to Northbourne Oval in Braddon. The Planning and Land Authority approved the deconcessionalisation last year, and this decision was upheld on independent review by the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal in July this year.

Mr Waterford is dead wrong if he considers that I am unable to determine or understand the notion of public interest in relation to the administration of concessional leases. Given his self-professed knowledge of the history of the administration of leasehold and of the Braddon site in particular, I was disturbed to learn that he was unaware until my staff pointed out to him this week that Northbourne Oval itself was not subject to any redevelopment proposal.

During my previous tenure as planning minister during the years 2002 and 2003, I acted on a number of occasions to seek to reject proposals to redevelop concessional leases for private development. In 2003 I recommended to the government that the controversy surrounding the future of the defunct Hungarian-Australian club in Narrabundah be resolved by facilitating the club's surrender of the site to the territory. This was in the context of the club having entered into an arrangement with a private developer to redevelop the site for a private housing development. Regrettably, I was unsuccessful on this occasion in convincing my cabinet colleagues of my recommendation and, instead, the proposal was allowed to proceed. These matters are now a matter of public record, with the relevant cabinet submissions and decisions now released under the ACT's 10-year rule.



In 2004 I was successful in rejecting proposals which would have seen the Phillip Oval converted to a range of uses, including serviced apartments and aged care housing. Again, the leaseholder, ACT AFL, had an agreement with a private developer to convert the site to private housing development. They requested that I agree to the transfer of the lease to the developer and its deconcessionalisation. I refused. As a result, the government was able to negotiate a surrender of the site to the territory, with payments made for improvements by ACT AFL. The result is a modern, refurbished enclosed oval in the heart of the Woden Valley available for sporting use.

Again, these matters are now able to be discussed thanks to the public release of cabinet documents which are now over 10 years old. Both of these cases highlighted to me at the time that the system for administering leases granted for less than market value, without any transparency or review, on the whim of the minister needed to change. As a result, the Assembly subsequently enacted new provisions in the Planning and Development Act that provided for a statutory public interest test to be administered, with the minister required to decide whether or not it was in the public interest for a deconcessionalisation to be considered by the planning authority. It also enacted provisions for judicial review of such decisions.

In the Braddon case, the tribunal ultimately found it was satisfied that the deconcessionalisation of the lease would not disadvantage the community. Whatever those opponents of the Braddon redevelopment may think, suggesting that I do not understand the idea of the public interest and the need for transparency in leasehold administration is simply not supported by the facts.

## Visitors

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Before calling any other members, I would like to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of members of the Ginninderra Sea Scouts, and I would like to divulge a conflict of interest: my older children, all three of them, were members of the Ginninderra Sea Scouts in a previous century, in the olden days when they operated from St Monica's hall. Welcome to your Assembly.

## Adjournment

### Personal apology

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra) (6.45 pm): I rise tonight to apologise to Ms Lawder for some inappropriate language that I used in this place. I apologise to Ms Lawder and to the Assembly.

### Members—conduct

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (6.45): Over the past year, I have sat in silence listening to each and every one of those opposite, without interjecting or interrupting, and I had hoped that the same courtesy could apply in return. It is one thing to participate in the cut and thrust of debate but comments like the one we heard today have no place in our Assembly and contribute to the dim view many in our community have of our proceedings.

On a more personal level, this type of comment is pretty hurtful for my children and grandchildren to hear on the news, and I find it especially sad that it came from another woman. I am not going to say anymore, as I think we all need to move on. I would like to thank Ms Berry for her apology.

### **Commissioner Deegan—retirement**

**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) (6.45): I rise today to speak about the career of Barbara Deegan, who is retiring as fair work commissioner and whose farewell I attended last Thursday, 7 August.

Commissioner Deegan began her career in 1979 after obtaining a bachelor of laws from the University of Tasmania in 1977. She has played an important role in the protection of the rights of workers over the years, contributing both here and internationally.

In 1992 Commissioner Deegan was an Australian government delegate for the Keating government to the International Labour Conference with the responsibility for the development of the C173 Protection of Workers Claims (Employer Insolvency) Convention 1992. Her international work has covered very interesting ground. Along with work for the International Labour Conference she was an Australian government delegate to the World Summit for Social Development in Geneva in 1995 and the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995.

Closer to home, Commissioner Deegan has held many roles within the field of workers rights and industrial relations, including having a role as commissioner for the Australian Industrial Relations Commission from 1996 to 2009. In 2008 she was appointed by the commonwealth Minister for Employment, Education and Workplace Relations and the commonwealth Minister for Immigration and Citizenship to conduct a review of the temporary skilled migration—457—visa system, which was later known as the Deegan commission. Following this, Commissioner Deegan was appointed to the Australian Fair Work Commission in 2009, the position from which she recently retired, and to the Tasmanian Industrial Commission in 2010.

I have personally had many interactions with Commissioner Deegan on a professional level over many years. Appearing before Commissioner Deegan was often an intimidating task. You always had to know your stuff, as the chance that your evidence and argument would be picked apart was very high. She presented herself as a formidable audience, always taking into account all of the facts and ruling in a just manner. I remember the sweaty palms and furious re-reading of notes that occurred before hearings with the commissioner.

In regard to Commissioner Deegan's retirement, there are a couple of issues that I would like to raise that are relevant to the ACT. Commissioner Deegan was not only the longest serving commissioner prior to her retirement but also the only

commissioner to be based in the ACT. It has come to light since the announcement of her retirement that not only will her position be lost, as a commissioner based in Canberra, but she will not be replaced with another permanent Canberra-based commissioner. This issue concerns me greatly. Without a commissioner permanently in Canberra, problems are likely to arise with the length of proceedings and ease of access for employees and employers within the ACT. I wish to urge Fair Work Australia to reconsider this decision.

The reduction in the number of commissioners in general sheds some light on the lack of commitment from the current federal government to protecting workers rights and settling workplace disputes. It shows little respect for the commission to be reducing the number of commissioners who sit on it, and can be seen as in line with other federal cuts we have seen outlined in federal budget decisions. I have written to Minister Abetz regarding my concerns and would urge others in this place to do the same. Reducing resources to settle workplace disputes is not something that benefits anyone.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the people who have worked with Commissioner Deegan during the last 18 years, mostly all of those who attended her farewell. They include Magistrate Cook; Justice Iain JK Ross AO; Professor Breen Creighton; Geoffrey McCarthy; members of the CPSU, ETU, United Voice, ANMF, TWU, AMWU, Professionals Australia and the ACT & Region Chamber of Commerce & Industry; and various academics and other individuals who have worked with Commissioner Deegan over past 18 years. Commissioner Deegan has truly given excellent service to Australia and the people of the ACT, for which I am very grateful.

### **Australia India Business Council**

**MR COE** (Ginninderra) (6.49): I rise this evening to talk about the Australia India Business Council. The Australia India Business Council was formed in 1986 and aims to improve the bilateral relations between the two countries.

Each year, the economic relationship between Australia and India gets stronger. For the last six years, Australia-India bilateral trade has been growing at 20 per cent. Annual trade with India is now estimated at \$23 billion, and both governments are committed to raising this figure to \$40 billion in the next five years. I am proud to note that one of the key supporters of the relationship with India was former Prime Minister John Howard, whose government led large business delegations to India in 1996 and 2007.

With the relationship growing ever closer, it is vital that organisations such as the Australia India Business Council exist to foster relations between businesses in both countries. Each year, the organisation attracts government ministers, embassy officials, business figures and key stakeholders to events in order to facilitate networking. The business council also played a leading role in informing the Australian community about the changes in India's political dynamic after the new Prime Minister was elected this year.

I speak of the Australia India Business Council today because I had the opportunity last month to attend an event at the invitation of Deepak Raj-Gupta, the president of the ACT branch of the council. The event was hosted by Yellow Edge, an Australian consulting company based in Canberra. They provided the opportunity for Canberra individuals and businesses to network and better understand the business opportunities which both India and Australia present. The event was very well attended, was very informative and included an address by the member for Canberra, Gai Brodtmann.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in the ACT branch of the council. The council is run by volunteers and comprises the president, Deepak Raj-Gupta, who also doubles as the national director of the council; the vice-president, Mithun Alexander; the secretary, Kiren Chitkara; the treasurer, Bik Ray; and committee members Sukhvinder Saggu and Gagandeep Singh.

The ACT branch of the council works within a national organisation. I would like to congratulate their national team—the national chair, Dipen Rughani; the national vice-chair, Sheba NandKeolyar; the national treasurer, Con Livissianis; the national secretary, John Cox; and the directors, Ravi Bhatia, Randeep Agarwal, Adrian Vicary and Omesh Motiwalla.

Finally, I would like to thank Andrew Simon and everyone else at Yellow Edge for facilitating and promoting the event. For further information about the Australia India Business Council, including information on upcoming events or to sign up to their newsletter, I encourage members to visit their website at [www.aibc.org.au](http://www.aibc.org.au).

### **Mr Peter Sculthorpe**

**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) (6.52): I rise today to comment on the passing of Peter Sculthorpe. Peter Sculthorpe, one of Australia's most significant contemporary composers, died last week in Sydney. I would like to take a short time to pay tribute to this wonderful artist and to acknowledge my respect and that of this Assembly for his contribution to the definition and development of a modern Australian culture.

He was a remarkable man of superb talent with an enormous gift of vision and foresight. He was a generous artist who interpreted, through music, the landscape of Australia, in the same way that Sidney Nolan and Russell Drysdale did in paint and Judith Wright and Patrick White did in literature.

Peter Sculthorpe will have a lasting impact on Canberra, a city he first visited in 1956 and returned to over many decades. His most recent visits included commissions from the Canberra International Music Festival. Peter Sculthorpe has left his papers and manuscripts to the people of Australia through a generous gift to the National Library of Australia, allowing scholars and composers to research and to rediscover his music and observations.

While he was not the first contemporary composer to have written for the didgeridoo, he was, however, the most sensitive and prolific. From a very early age in Launceston he began collecting local Indigenous words, legends and songs of the first Australians, which he incorporated into his first landscape works, the *Irkanda* “scrub country” series in the 1960s. This was followed by his remarkable *Rites of Passage*, commissioned for the opening of the Sydney Opera House.

In the mid-1950s, on a visit to the ANU School of Music, he stood on the roof and drew a pencil outline of the contour of the hills surrounding the city, in a similar style to those most famous Marion Mahony Griffin silk paintings. He then placed this pencil outline onto the lines of a music score and created *Irkanda I*, a solo violin work that is a wonderful and stylistic reflection of our early city. These sounds and rhythms, so sensitively combined with the calls of the birds, the undertone drone of the didgeridoo and the clarity of his observation, will make Peter Sculthorpe the most influential composer of his time.

Under the artistic direction of Chris Latham, who has joined us here this evening, and proudly supported by this government, the Canberra International Music Festival showcased Peter’s early significant works, including the recommissioning in 2009 of *Rites of Passage* after a gap of 35 years, and the recommissioning of works which became *Great South Land* for the 2013 festival.

The Canberra International Music Festival also had five new commissions by Peter Sculthorpe, showcased in Canberra and often exported as live radio broadcasts. These included *Kyrie* in 2010, *Shining Island* and *Requiem* in 2011, *OTI* or *Oh Thursday Island* in 2012, and this year, in 2014, *Salve Regina*. Peter was a prodigious talent and one of Australia’s hardest working artists. He showed little sign of easing up, continuing to work and compose well into his 80s.

I want to recognise here Chris Latham again, the brains trust and director behind the Canberra International Music Festival, and also his son Johannes, who was Peter’s godson. I thank you for coming here and recognising this Assembly paying tribute to Peter Sculthorpe.

Vale Peter Sculthorpe, an artist who gave us much to celebrate, and made an exceptional contribution to Canberra and Australia. His work will feed our souls for many years to come.

## **World Ranger Day**

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (6.56): Colleagues, 31 July was World Ranger Day, which commemorates park rangers who have been killed or injured in their line of duty. World Ranger Day was created by the International Ranger Federation to pay respect to the work of rangers around the world who work to protect our natural environment and to recognise those who have lost their lives or been injured in the course of their duties. In the words of His Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge, rangers “are the frontline—the thin green line—of our planet’s critical conservation battle”.

In the ACT our rangers are fortunate not to face the same risks as those in places like the Congo, where rangers have been killed by poachers and armed militia, but there are still real risks to the job, such as dealing with illegal pig hunters in Namadgi, injured kangaroos on busy highways, removing venomous snakes and battling bushfires.

As part of World Ranger Day activities, the Namadgi visitors centre held screenings of the documentary *The Thin Green Line* which highlights issues faced by rangers across the globe. The documentary was created by an Australian park ranger named Sean Willmore, who set out in 2004 on the trip of a lifetime to experience the world's protected areas. Sean's drive to see the world's wild areas was not driven by tourism but rather by a passion to draw attention to the brave men and women who regularly put their lives on the line to protect the world's biodiversity.

With camera crew in tow, Sean produced the internationally acclaimed documentary *The Thin Green Line* in 2007. This budding documentary maker braved ambushes by militia, being held at gunpoint and being charged by elephants as he brought to light the dangers faced by many rangers all over the world in their pursuit of nature conservation. In the last 10 years it is estimated that over 1,000 rangers worldwide have lost their lives in the line of duty—80 per cent murdered by poachers or armed militia groups.

With the proceeds of the documentary, Willmore founded the Thin Green Line Foundation, an active foundation which recently held a large fundraiser in Melbourne with Gotye and Tex Perkins, amongst others. Its adage is “protecting nature's protectors” and it does this by providing support to park rangers and their communities. The foundation works predominantly in developing nations and conflict zones and also with indigenous park rangers within Australia and abroad.

31 July each year is thus a day for reflection. World Ranger Day is an opportunity to recognise that in some countries protecting the natural environment can demand a terrible toll. This fact is not lost on our own territory rangers, who are indeed fortunate to share the support of their community for a job that can be risky at times but rarely if ever demanding the ultimate sacrifice.

Unfortunately, however, as recently as 2009 our ACT parks rangers lost a colleague when ACT ESA Fire & Rescue employee David Balfour was killed near Marysville while helping to battle Victoria's bushfires.

Tragically, just a couple of weeks ago, a government environment worker in New South Wales was killed in the course of his duties when he was shot. It was on World Ranger Day itself that we heard the reports that Glen Turner, an environmental compliance worker from the New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage, was shot by a landowner while visiting a property at Croppa Creek, north of Moree in northern New South Wales. The landowner, who had been investigated and prosecuted several times for illegal vegetation clearing, was later charged with murder. It is a great tragedy that in our neighbouring jurisdiction a public official has lost his life while fulfilling his duty to enforce the laws that have been put in place by the parliament to protect the natural environment.

I would like to take the opportunity to pay tribute to all those who put their lives on the line to protect our planet and its precious natural resources, whether they be rangers, Environment Protection Agency staff, compliance workers, firefighters or indeed environmental activists.

### **Peter Sculthorpe**

**MR SMYTH** (Brindabella) (7.00): Madam Speaker, I am sure you will agree with the minister's speech about Peter Sculthorpe. I know you are a great patron of the arts and would also like to have on the record your appreciation of the efforts that he has made over an amazing lifetime. His work is interwoven into modern Australia. I do not think there are too many people who can say they had a significant part in the opening of the Opera House. To have composed the piece that was played at the opening is a remarkable achievement. I think somebody who has done a great deal to make sure that particularly the Canberra community is aware of the work of Peter is, of course, Chris, and it is a pleasure to welcome you and your son, Johannes, here this evening.

It is important that the works are played, it is important that the works are revisited and it is important that the works are interpreted so that they are not a static piece that relates to just one instant in time. I think Peter understood intimately that the Australian landscape was changing constantly and that his work needed to be reinterpreted many times over.

I am particularly pleased that, beyond the musical legacy, there was the announcement that his papers will be given to the National Library of Australia so that those that come after him may be able to go back and say, "What was he thinking at that point in time? How did he arrange this? Have I got this right or can I challenge what he did?" I do not think Peter was ever afraid of people challenging what he had done, because he had spent a life challenging all of us to try to listen to the Australian landscape through his music. And that is a remarkable talent.

There was a book published just recently, I think it was called, *What colour is music?* I think Peter would have intimately understood the colour of music, because he was able to portray in his works the colour of our magnificent landscape. In the European context, everything is pretty much green—for most of Europe, shades of green—whereas in Australia it is everything from black to white, from green to grey. It is those tremendous colours in the landscape, whether it be the reds of the soil, the black soil in Queensland, the grey soil of the western plains, the red soil of the interior.

When you hear particularly *Great South Land*, what was it he was trying to say? I guess that the challenge for all of us is to keep listening to it to see if we can hear what it was he was trying to say.

Particularly for the members of the Ginninderra Sea Scouts, if you have never heard a piece of work written for the didgeridoo, perhaps your leaders might dig some up and on a night soon you might have a Peter Sculthorpe night down by the lake and then listen to it in the context of the water. Again, it is that great challenge of what we hear as opposed to what he was saying.

I think the challenge for all of us, if you really want to keep this man's memory alive, is: play his music, listen to his music. If you can play an instrument, get a piece of his manuscript, interpret it and then see whether the challenge that Peter laid down for us as Australians still lives. I think the answer would be that the challenge that he laid down to all of us to understand our environment is quite real, and that challenge will last forever. That may be perhaps his greatest legacy.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

**The Assembly adjourned at 7.05 pm.**



## Schedule of amendments

### Schedule 1

### Appropriation Bill 2014-2015

Amendments moved by the Treasurer

**13**

**Schedule 1**

**Page 6—**

*omit schedule 1, substitute*

### Schedule 1 Appropriations

(see s 6 (1))

| column 1<br>agency                       | column 2<br>appropriation unit         | column 3<br>net cost of<br>outputs | column 4<br>capital<br>injection | column 5<br>payments on<br>behalf of<br>Territory | column 6<br>total |
|--|--|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|-------------------|
|  |  | \$                                 | \$                               | \$  | \$                |
| <b>Part 1.1</b>                          |  |                                    |                                  |   |                   |
| ACT Executive                            | ACT Executive                          |                                    |                                  | 117 000   | 117 000           |
| <b>Part 1.2</b>                          |  |                                    |                                  |   |                   |
| ACT Gambling<br>and Racing<br>Commission | ACT Gambling and<br>Racing Commission  | 177 461                            |                                  |   | 177 461           |
| <b>Part 1.3</b>                          |  |                                    |                                  |   |                   |
| ACT Local<br>Hospital<br>Network         | ACT Local Hospital<br>Network          | 22 286 000                         |                                  |   | 22 286 000        |
| <b>Part 1.4</b>                          |  |                                    |                                  |   |                   |
| ACTEW<br>Corporation                     | ACTEW Corporation                      | 428 000                            |                                  |   | 428 000           |
| <b>Part 1.5</b>                          |  |                                    |                                  |   |                   |
| Canberra<br>Institute of<br>Technology   | Canberra Institute of<br>Technology    | 2 586 132                          |                                  |   | 2 586 132         |
| <b>Part 1.6</b>                          |  |                                    |                                  |   |                   |
| Commerce and<br>Works<br>Directorate     | Commerce and Works<br>Directorate      |                                    | 33 845 490                       | 271 799   | 34 117 289        |
| <b>Part 1.7</b>                          |  |                                    |                                  |   |                   |
| Community<br>Services<br>Directorate     | Community Services<br>Directorate      | 37 505 689                         | 10 083                           |   | 37 515 772        |
| <b>Part 1.8</b>                          |  |                                    |                                  |   |                   |
| Cultural<br>Facilities<br>Corporation    | Cultural Facilities<br>Corporation     | 300 000                            |                                  |   | 300 000           |
| <b>Part 1.9</b>                          |  |                                    |                                  |   |                   |
| Economic<br>Development<br>Directorate   | Economic<br>Development<br>Directorate | 4 129 000                          | 233 000                          | 3 850 000   | 8 212 000         |

| column 1<br>agency   | column 2<br>appropriation unit                               | column 3<br>net cost of<br>outputs | column 4<br>capital<br>injection | column 5<br>payments on<br>behalf of<br>Territory | column 6<br>total |
|--|--|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|-------------------|
|  |  | \$                                 | \$                               | \$  | \$                |
| <b>Part 1.10</b><br>Education and<br>Training<br>Directorate                     | Education and<br>Training Directorate                        | 18 039 000                         |                                  | 13 116 000  | 31 155 000        |
| <b>Part 1.11</b><br>Environment<br>and Sustainable<br>Development<br>Directorate | Environment and<br>Sustainable<br>Development<br>Directorate | 735 000                            |                                  |   | 735 000           |
| <b>Part 1.12</b><br>Exhibition Park<br>Corporation                               | Exhibition Park<br>Corporation                               | 20 000                             |                                  |   | 20 000            |
| <b>Part 1.13</b><br>Housing ACT  | Housing ACT  | 1 671 500                          | 200 000                          |   | 1 871 500         |
| <b>Part 1.14</b><br>Legal Aid<br>Commission<br>(ACT)                             | Legal Aid<br>Commission (ACT)                                | 275 000                            |                                  |   | 275 000           |
| <b>Part 1.15</b><br>Public Trustee<br>for the ACT                                | Public Trustee for the<br>ACT                                | 47 615                             |                                  |   | 47 615            |
| <b>Part 1.16</b><br>Territory and<br>Municipal<br>Services<br>Directorate        | Territory and<br>Municipal Services<br>Directorate           | 14 083 000                         |                                  |   | 14 083 000        |
| <i>Total<br/>appropriated to<br/>agencies</i>                                    |  | 102 283 397                        | 34 288 573                       | 17 354 799  | 153 926 769       |

## Schedule 1A Appropriations

(see s 6 (1A))

| column 1<br>agency  | column 2<br>appropriation unit        | column 3<br>net cost of<br>outputs | column 4<br>capital injection | column 5<br>payments on<br>behalf of<br>Territory | column 6<br>total |
|---|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|-------------------|
|   |                                       | \$                                 | \$                            | \$  | \$                |
| <b>Part 1.1</b><br>ACT Executive                            | ACT Executive                         |                                    | 264 000                       | 8 006 000   | 8 270 000         |
| <b>Part 1.2</b><br>ACT Gambling<br>and Racing<br>Commission | ACT Gambling and<br>Racing Commission | 4 436 539                          | 127 000                       |   | 4 563 539         |
| <b>Part 1.3</b><br>ACT Local<br>Hospital Network            | ACT Local Hospital<br>Network         | 579 439 000                        |                               |   | 579 439 000       |

| column 1<br>agency   | column 2<br>appropriation unit                                | column 3<br>net cost of<br>outputs | column 4<br>capital injection | column 5<br>payments on<br>behalf of<br>Territory | column 6<br>total |
|--|---|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|-------------------|
|  |   | \$                                 | \$                            | \$  | \$                |
| <b>Part 1.4</b><br>ACTEW Corporation   | ACTEW Corporation   | 10 695 000                         |                               |   | 10 695 000        |
| <b>Part 1.5</b><br>Canberra Institute of Technology                              | Canberra Institute of Technology                              | 66 261 868                         | 6 134 000                     |   | 72 395 868        |
| <b>Part 1.6</b><br>Capital Metro Agency  | Capital Metro Agency  | 23 535 000                         | 96 000                        |   | 23 631 000        |
| <b>Part 1.7</b><br>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       |
| <b>Part 1.8</b><br>Community Services Directorate                                | Community Services Directorate                                | 194 585 311                        | 4 784 917                     |   | 199 370 228       |
| <b>Part 1.9</b><br>Cultural Facilities Corporation                               | Cultural Facilities Corporation                               | 7 945 000                          | 2 181 000                     |   | 10 126 000        |
| <b>Part 1.10</b><br>Education and Training Directorate                           | Education and Training Directorate                            | 590 203 000                        | 100 089 000                   | 239 240 000                                       | 929 532 000       |
| <b>Part 1.11</b><br>Environment and Planning Directorate                         | Environment and Planning Directorate                          | 72 452 000                         | 5 914 000                     | 1 852 000   | 80 218 000        |
| <b>Part 1.12</b><br>Exhibition Park Corporation                                  | Exhibition Park Corporation                                   | 425 000                            | 552 000                       |   | 977 000           |
| <b>Part 1.13</b><br>Health Directorate   | Health Directorate  | 257 615 000                        | 132 251 000                   | 7 619 000   | 397 485 000       |
| <b>Part 1.14</b><br>Housing ACT  | Housing ACT   | 41 787 500                         | 26 648 000                    |   | 68 435 500        |
| <b>Part 1.15</b><br>Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission            | Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission             | 548 000                            |                               |   | 548 000           |
| <b>Part 1.16</b><br>Justice and Community Safety Directorate                     | Justice and Community Safety Directorate                      | 280 070 000                        | 86 432 000                    | 158 301 000                                       | 524 803 000       |

| column 1<br>agency  | column 2<br>appropriation unit                     | column 3<br>net cost of<br>outputs | column 4<br>capital injection | column 5<br>payments on<br>behalf of<br>Territory | column 6<br>total |
|---|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|-------------------|
|   |  | \$                                 | \$                            | \$  | \$                |
| <b>Part 1.17</b><br>Legal Aid<br>Commission<br>(ACT)                      | Legal Aid<br>Commission (ACT)                      | 9 670 000                          | 234 000                       |   | 9 904 000         |
| <b>Part 1.18</b><br>Public Trustee for<br>the ACT                         | Public Trustee for the<br>ACT                      | 1 190 385                          |                               |   | 1 190 385         |
| <b>Part 1.19</b><br>Superannuation<br>Provision<br>Account                | Superannuation<br>Provision Account                |                                    | 198 209 000                   |   | 198 209 000       |
| <b>Part 1.20</b><br>Territory and<br>Municipal<br>Services<br>Directorate | Territory and<br>Municipal Services<br>Directorate | 315 303 000                        | 207 145 000                   |   | 522 448 000       |
| <b>Part 1.21</b><br>Territory Banking<br>Account                          | Territory Banking<br>Account                       |                                    | 214 000                       | 82 159 000  | 82 373 000        |
| <i>Total<br/>appropriated to<br/>agencies</i>                             |  | 2 650 720 603                      | 1 027 799 427                 | 560 359 201                                       | 4 238 879 231     |
| <b>Part 1.22</b><br>Treasurer's<br>Advance                                | Treasurer's Advance                                |                                    |                               |   | 29 500 000        |
| <i>Total<br/>appropriations</i>   |  | 2 650 720 603                      | 1 027 799 427                 | 560 359 201                                       | 4 268 379 231     |