



Debates

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Wednesday, 17 September 2014

Mr Harry Evans (Condolence statement by Speaker).....	2765
Schools—infrastructure	2765
Energy—renewable.....	2781
Leave of absence.....	2805
Questions without notice:	
Canberra Hospital—bed occupancy rates.....	2805
Health—costs.....	2808
Transport—light rail	2810
ACT Ambulance Service—case management system	2811
Education—curriculum	2812
Education—teacher concerns	2814
Children and young people—disability services	2817
Planning—proposed swimming pool	2819
Economy—stimulus	2820
Civic—revitalisation	2822
Canberra Hospital—adult mental health unit	2842
Arts—support.....	2859
Tourism—visitor numbers	2874
Adjournment:	
Education—awards.....	2888
Mr George Lemon	2888
Tuggeranong United Football Club	2890
Tuggeranong Hawks Football Club.....	2890
Spence Children’s Cottage	2891
Dementia.....	2892
Lions clubs.....	2893

Wednesday, 17 September 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.

Mr Harry Evans
Condolence statement by Speaker

MADAM SPEAKER: I wish to advise members of the recent death of Mr Harry Evans, former Clerk of the Australian Senate. He was a prominent Canberran who will be remembered for his fierce defences of the Senate as an institution, the rights of individual senators and of the value of parliamentary democracy. As a mark of respect to the memory of Mr Evans, I ask all members to rise in their places.

Members standing in their places—

MADAM SPEAKER: I thank members.

Schools—infrastructure

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (10.02): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) recent research has shown that many ACT public schools are at capacity or will reach capacity within a few years;
- (b) that same research indicates that capacity issues are most evident in the north and inner south;
- (c) the Labor government closed 23 schools in 2006-2007, with five of those schools located in the north and inner south;
- (d) the Education and Training Directorate response to claims of over capacity indicates a lack of medium to long term planning with the most common solution being increased use of transportable buildings;
- (e) that adding to the pressures of capacity is the fact that the majority of ACT schools are already over 40 years old;
- (f) that several schools have had recent incidents involving faulty wiring and switchboards;
- (g) the additional concern of teachers at the absence of heating and cooling in many of our schools; and
- (h) the Labor Party's 2012 election promise to commit \$70 million to upgrade and maintain public school infrastructure which is yet to be delivered; and

(2) calls on the government to:

- (a) undertake more regular and more detailed maintenance audits of our public school infrastructure so that Canberra families can be certain their children are safe at ACT public schools;
- (b) consult more widely with the community on the future needs of Canberra families in respect of school size, location and facilities;
- (c) commit additional funds this financial year to deliver improvements to those schools that have been waiting years for upgrades including cooling and heating in classrooms;
- (d) make public the government's plans and timeline for future upgrades to Canberra schools; and
- (e) make school infrastructure a priority.

On Tuesday, 6 May this year, there was an electrical incident at Gowrie Primary School that resulted in a staff member being hospitalised and students at both the primary and preschools being forced to relocate for three days. The primary school classes were relocated to Birrigai. Later that month, Canberra Girls Grammar was forced to cancel a camp at Birrigai due to asbestos concerns. Last month, an electrical fault emergency at Belconnen High School forced the school to evacuate 450 students and staff. Last week, a fire alarm at Lyneham High School forced staff and students at that school to be evacuated. In 2012, Taylor Primary School was closed for 18 months after wind damage exposed loose asbestos and the school required \$13 million of emergency restoration and rebuild.

Gowrie Primary School was opened in 1983. Belconnen High School was opened in 1971 and is awaiting a \$28 million 2012 election commitment to be upgraded. Lyneham High School was opened in 1959. Taylor Primary School was first opened in 1978.

One could suggest, and no doubt the minister will say, that these incidents are just unfortunate happenstances. Unfortunate, yes, they are; happenstance, no, they are not. Happenstance in my dictionary suggests something that happens by chance. In these incidents, it was not chance that the switchboards were faulty. It was an inevitability. And I suggest these recent events will not be, and are not, isolated cases.

We have an impressive public education record in the ACT. Our schools regularly score well in NAPLAN testing; our teachers are the recipients of national awards for teaching excellence. And it is true that even some of our school buildings have won national awards for architecture. Gungahlin College is, by any measure, state of the art. It cost \$63 million to build and, my understanding is, several million more dollars were spent in fitout. But it is one of a small handful of schools that fit that category. We heard recently that Coombs school, a \$45 million promise in the 2012 election which was due to start last year, is now a \$47 million dollar promise with proposed construction to start this financial year. Harrison school is impressive in its design and layout.

But pre 1980s and 1970s schools are far more common and so are their faults. If you look at the map on the ACT education directorate site, there are 97 public school sites, often with several levels of schooling co-located on the one site. At those sites a significant and overwhelming majority of the buildings are over 30 years old. Many—too many—are over 50 years of age. And all of these older schools have building issues. Too many of our schools have leaky roofs; most have asbestos; some have appallingly antiquated toilet facilities, cracked and dangerous play areas.

The five-year schools infrastructure refurbishment program for older ACT public schools wound up in 2011 and cost \$86 million. The intention of the program was for upgrades and refurbishments in schools more than 12 years old. The fact that many schools felt compelled to write to the Gonski committee when it sought submissions from schools on what they were lacking, at about the time the refurbishment program was being wound up, suggests funding fell short and the refurbishments were not completed.

Many Canberra schools listed such basic things as roofs, repairs to ceilings, lighting and ceiling upgrades, refurbishments of toilets. Dickson College bemoaned the fact that while the school had two lifts to provide disabled access to the second level of the schools, the lifts were unreliable and regularly broke down, frequently trapping students for a considerable time. Others referred to asbestos. And indeed, given the age of the school, many have some form of asbestos or other hazardous material. To manage this, schools are audited for asbestos annually and for dangerous and hazardous materials every three years. Building condition assessments of all schools are also conducted on a three-year rolling average.

The 2012-2013 DET annual report advises a total of \$14.131 million was spent on school repairs and maintenance, and in 2012-13 28 schools were assessed. But as there were 86 schools in that reporting period, and most were over 30 years old, is an audit every three years enough? Given the spate of incidents in the last few months this year, perhaps it is not. I am not suggesting work is not being done, but is there sufficient money to keep up with the demand?

At the 2012 election Labor promised an infrastructure fund of some \$70 million, presumably to replace the obviously inadequate \$86 million schools infrastructure refurbishment program. Called school infrastructure for the future, this new fund is intended to be spread over four years to upgrade and maintain public school infrastructure, particularly in older schools. At the same time there was a \$28 million commitment to upgrade Belconnen High School. The intention was, and I quote from the costing request, “to ensure Belconnen High School has access to the latest in school learning environments”. The intended implementation date of the commitment was during the 2013-2014 financial year.

In both commitments the money has been somewhat slow in coming. In this current year’s budget there is an allocation of \$250,000, and last year there was a \$2 million allocation for Belconnen. That leaves a shortfall of \$25.5 million and it is already 12 months behind its completion date.

Last summer, Canberra saw a particularly hot summer. The winter before, we had some savagely cold days. In many of our classrooms, temperatures were as high as 43 degrees; in winter some classrooms were at sub zero temperatures. Parents and teacher unions alike have been calling for a proper policy. The direct response has been that it does not have a set temperature at which schools would close and, in response to parents' complaints, suggests that schools were managing appropriately. If only people would listen to what the parents and teachers are saying!

If the only strategies available are to move students into a cooler space or send them home early, that has its limitations. If the only air-conditioned space the school has is a library, there is a limit to how many students can fit into that one space. And sending students home early is not always possible when working parents and bus timetables are involved. We are about to move into another summer, and still there is no formal policy and little evidence that appropriate cooling and heating systems have been installed in the worst of our schools. And does this include the various transportable options that appear to be the directorate's approach to overcapacity at our schools?

The minister was recently quoted as suggesting that the government spent more than \$20 million annually in planned and unforeseen school repairs and maintenance, an average of \$230,000 per school per year. But we all know that this does not mean that each school gets that amount. If they did, we would not have faulty switchboards, leaking roofs and dodgy lighting, not to mention blocked drains and unsafe playing surfaces. Here we have an ACT education system that is severely overrepresented by ageing and inadequate buildings, many of which have no heating and cooling, many of which have asbestos, many of which have outdated toilet systems, poor lighting and old glazing, with a minister who appears to suggest that \$250,000 a year should be enough to solve the problems.

We then opened the *Canberra Times* a couple of weeks ago to learn that there are five schools currently operating with more students than they are designed to fit, and this number could rise to 25 by 2017. *Canberra Times* journalist Markus Mannheim is to be congratulated for his research into this because it highlights what many parents have long suspected. I note that the directorate has since corrected and modified some of his assessment, but the fact remains we have some pretty tightly packed schools.

Only last month I spoke with a parent who was worried that her child was in a class of 29 students, while at another school a parent advised her child is in a composite class of 38, with two part-time teachers. We learned that there are particular pressures in the north of the territory and in the inner south. Coincidentally, it is in the Belconnen area that the ACT Labor government closed five schools, dating back to 2006-2007.

The government's response is that schools are not at overcapacity; they are merely experiencing enrolment pressure. However, when you read down the list provided by the directorate, schools are clearly overpopulated. One of the oldest schools, North Ainslie Primary School, built in 1958, has a capacity of 400 with an enrolment of 418 now. Garran has a capacity of 475, with a February 2014 enrolment of 534. Ngunnawal is similarly pressured. Amaroo is a new school but already it is bursting at

the seams. Two double transportable classrooms were to be in place for term 3 this year. And my latest understanding is that the demountables should be, may be, handed over by the end of this week, which means that they will be just in time for the school holidays to start and for term 4 to begin by the time they get back. One would hope these transportables would have air-conditioning. However, Ngunnawal, built in 1997, is already over its design capacity but transportable additional classrooms will not be available there until 2015.

The concern that the opposition has with all of this is the lack of planning that seems to be occurring. Remember, it was only a few short years ago that the government believed that 39 schools could close or amalgamate. They reduced that number eventually to 23, but it is clear that in some suburbs they simply got it wrong.

We move to 2014, and among the suggested strategies to address enrolment pressure is to reduce the priority enrolment area. That is all very well but it assumes that there are other schools in the area to send children to, and that is not currently the case. It is all very well to suggest that schools like Coombs and Moncrieff will address and reduce the problem, but the problem is here and now. Other strategies include temporary and medium-term capacity increase in the form of transportable and modular classrooms. We have an ageing school infrastructure that has maintenance issues that current budget allocations are not keeping pace with, and we have regional pockets and individual schools that are overpopulated.

How will the government address the current lumpiness in our school population? Is their only response a transportable option, and if the overcrowding is serious they move to a modular solution? Are we creating a Legoland school asset base?

One can only wonder what the school sector could do if it had available the money being spent on light rail. In fact, even the addition of a quarter of the cost of the train set would make an enormous difference. If you are asking families anywhere in Canberra, and even along the golden train set line, whether they would be happy to have a greater investment in their children's schooling instead of a train set, the answer would be an overwhelming yes to more and better-equipped schools. There are always competing priorities for tax dollars, as the conversation earlier this week about Mr Fluffy homes has shown, but when we have a quality education system put under threat by old, overcrowded, hot classrooms, surely it is time to reassess priorities.

My motion calls on the government to get on the front foot with audits and not just undertake a three-year rolling assessment. It might be better risk management to have more frequent audits of these older schools and those schools that are under capacity pressure. The motion also proposes more active dialogue with the community so that we better understand community needs and references.

Why, for example, does one primary school in a suburb have capacity issues when another in the same suburb and just down the road is only half full? Does the directorate know why some schools are more popular than others, and have they examined and assessed those reasons?

We do not want a repeat of what we are currently seeing, and that is schools closing and less than 10 years later overcrowding in that very same area. And when schools are so old, serious examination of how best to restore, replace, rebuild needs to be done and not have the case, as we saw with Taylor primary, when storm damage forced a very good but nevertheless very expensive rebuild. There should also be an absolute priority that every school classroom has appropriate and effective heating and cooling systems that involve more than just windows and blinds that can be opened and shut as required. It is terrific to have schools like Gungahlin College in our stock but we cannot leave behind pupils in schools and colleges that are so much less resourced.

When we have schools in such need, is it really a sensible option to proceed with a train set that few people need, fewer people want, and in a town that simply cannot afford such whimsies? Education is one of the most important functions of government. In the ACT it also commands one of the largest budgets, but those hundreds of millions of dollars are at risk if the education of our children is being delivered in run-down schools without heating and cooling and in overcrowded classrooms. It is time this government got their priorities right: education, health and a host of other issues before something like the light rail we are talking about. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

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) (10.18): I thank Mr Doszpot for bringing on this motion and giving me an opportunity to talk about our schools, the work that the directorate does in building and maintaining our schools and the planning that goes in to school capacity. Let us be very clear from the get-go. I move the following amendment that has been circulated in my name:

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

“(1) notes that:

- (a) recent Education and Training Directorate projections show the continued growth of ACT public schools and the continued confidence ACT families have in the public education system;
- (b) this work shows that, in each of the four school networks, school capacity will remain comfortably above projected enrolment growth;
- (c) the ACT Government has well established mechanisms to ensure that all schools have the capacity to meet the needs of their local communities;
- (d) no child is denied entry to a government school in their priority enrolment area;
- (e) the ACT Government has invested heavily in school infrastructure and new schools to deliver on the education needs of ACT families, including two new schools in Gungahlin—the Neville Bonner Primary School and the Franklin Early Childhood School in February 2013;

- (f) the ACT Government will open a new school in the Molonglo Valley in 2016;
 - (g) the ACT Government has invested more than \$800 million over the last decade in school capital works, plus an additional injection of \$150 million through the Commonwealth's Building the Education Revolution program; and
 - (h) the ACT Government allocates more than \$20 million each year for schools maintenance; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to continue to:
- (a) use the most up-to-date data available to guide school planning and construction;
 - (b) invest in school infrastructure across the ACT to ensure the continued confidence of ACT families in public schools;
 - (c) consult with the community on the future needs for schools and education across the ACT;
 - (d) invest in upgrades to existing ACT schools;
 - (e) inform the ACT community about future plans for education infrastructure; and
 - (f) ensure that schools and education remain a government priority.”.

Mr Doszpot ended, disappointingly, with a reflection that will now stay on the record. He believes our education system has run-down schools which are overcrowded and without heating and cooling. That was his final statement. That is the memory left after 10 or 15 minutes of standing on his feet.

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Doszpot!

MS BURCH: That is his interpretation and view of our education system, which has the second-highest budget in the territory. His personification of our system is one of run-down schools without heating and cooling, and with overcrowded classrooms. Nothing could be further from the truth. His motion as it stood noted that we do good work, but I think it was misguided and ill-conceived; hence the need for—

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Doszpot!

MS BURCH: I did listen to you in silence, Mr Doszpot.

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Sit down, please, Minister Burch. Can you stop the clock? Mr Doszpot, you were heard in silence, and I have called you to order I think three times.

MS BURCH: I think that the best that Mr Doszpot's motion does is to call on us to do more of what we are already doing. Mr Doszpot is not necessarily complaining that we have got it wrong. He seems to be complaining that we are not doing enough. That is the reason why I have moved the amendment.

The reality is that Mr Doszpot knows the truth about the quality of our ACT schools, even though he is trying to paint the picture that they are run down. He has stood in this chamber previously and declared that ACT education enjoys a favourable reputation around Australia and that that is well deserved. Indeed that was backed up by Mr Hanson, who, in May of last year, stated:

We excel in the ACT ... We have got a great non-public and public school system. We support it. There are problems in it, but when you look at the stats, compared to other jurisdictions we get good results.

That is closer to the reality of our system. We do get good results and we should be very proud of our education system. Mr Doszpot has also spoken, after every school visit that he has made, about how fantastic they all are.

The document that forms the basis of the motion is the Education and Training Directorate's "ACT public school enrolment projections—2013-2017". This is one of the tools that the directorate uses to plan for school growth in response to demographic change in the ACT. It shows that in every school network there is ample capacity to ensure that every student has access to a quality education.

Mr Doszpot has also sought to ignore the decade of investment through budget after budget. All of that investment has been opposed by the Canberra Liberals. Over the last 10 years the government has spent or budgeted to spend more than \$800 million on capital works in education and training. I repeat: \$800 million on capital works. When the federal government funded the building the education revolution, with the benefits that it brought to the ACT, capital investment in ACT schools reached over \$950 million.

As the Assembly is already aware, the government has just awarded the contract for the construction of the new Coombs school, a \$47 million school. I say to Mr Doszpot that whilst we might put in a budgeted figure, if we get a contract that can deliver that for less and still give us a quality product, I would have thought that that should be encouraged and given a tick. But that is not how Mr Doszpot operates.

This school in Coombs will be the first of several new schools to be constructed in the Molonglo valley. It will cater for 720 preschool and primary school students. The new Franklin Early Childhood School and the Neville Bonner Primary School were opened at the start of last year. These projects involved an investment of \$70 million. They came in on time and under budget.

Also last year, several major education projects were completed ready for the start of this year. They included the very successful redevelopment of Taylor Primary School. This success is proven by all three preschool sessions there being fully enrolled in 2015. I do not know if Mr Doszpot has been down to Taylor. I have a memory that in one of the adjournment debates he spoke about going to Taylor. If he could go in to Taylor school and not think that that restoration absolutely was money well spent then I do not know who he is talking to.

The teachers, the parents and the community, as one, wanted that school maintained and wanted it to be restored with as much of the original facade as possible, and that has been delivered. I take my hat off to that school community and the principal there, Simon, for the work he has done to hold that school together when they were offline and offsite in Namadgi School and then with the move back in to Taylor. And their enrolments are growing. So the local community do not see Taylor as a disadvantaged school, as a run-down school; they see it as a fabulous local community public school.

The government has also invested over \$10 million to expand both the Majura and Macgregor primary schools to increase their capacities from 525 to 700 students. The Duffy school has had additional funding of \$2.8 million to provide an additional seven classrooms. Older school upgrades at a cost of \$4 million were completed at Hughes primary and Yarralumla primary.

This year the government has delivered the \$8.6 million trade training centre. This was funded by the previous federal Labor government. The previous Labor government also made provision for and supported an investment in the Belconnen trades skills centre. Whilst the Canberra Liberals here describe our schools as run down, without heating and cooling and with overcrowded classrooms, the federal Liberal government has put an end to the trades training program. This means that program will cease and many students across our government schools here and in other jurisdictions will be worse off.

The significant projects that are currently being constructed, for Mr Doszpot's information, include the Canberra College Cares facility, a fabulous program that is operating currently at Stirling for pregnant teenagers and teenage mums and dads. This is an investment of \$15 million. We also have the Tuggeranong introductory English learning centre at Wanniasa Hills at a cost of \$1.8 million. And we have commenced the modernisation of Belconnen high with an investment of \$2.5 million.

Over the past few years this government has spent \$6.2 million on expansion and upgrades at 13 preschools. Every year the government allocates \$20 million for repairs and maintenance, and more for upgrade works at schools. The repairs and maintenance funds are used for a range of works, including planned maintenance, painting, carpeting, asbestos removal, safety issues and replacement of sewer and stormwater pipes. The upgrade funds are used for front entry upgrades, toilet refurbishments, staffroom refurbishment, additional car parking, new lifts, environmental sustainability, security, older school upgrades, landscaping, hearing assistance systems and technology upgrades.

Reflecting on front entry upgrades, on a recent visit to Gold Creek high I was greeted by a crew of about a dozen young fellows, some students there, who did a brick and block course, and there had been a complete renovation of the school entry. It looked a treat and I could not pick the difference between a professional job and the job done under the watchful eye of the teacher there. Certainly, hats off to the school and to those students involved in that entrance upgrade.

Environmental sustainability is one area where this government has a proud record. All of our schools now have a solar photovoltaic system and smart meters to measure in real time the consumption of water, gas and electricity. The ACT is the first jurisdiction to achieve this. Mr Doszpot, it is the first jurisdiction to do this. That is a million miles away from your explanation of our schools being run down and without heating and cooling. Other environmental sustainability works include installation of energy efficient lamps and solar hot-water systems for pools.

To support the ACT government's healthy weight initiative, water refill stations are being installed across schools, learn-to-ride facilities have been constructed and a dirt bike track has been constructed at Melrose high.

Mr Doszpot also asked the government to undertake more regular and more detailed maintenance audits of public schools. We do this. Mr Doszpot recognises this. This is good practice. A full condition assessment report is prepared every three years. Every school also has a hazardous materials survey and management plan. Every school has its asbestos report updated every year and every school has a tree audit report updated every year.

In relation to some recent electrical incidents, the directorate has commenced the following works at every school. All of the electrical boards will be inspected, cleaned, cables tightened and have a residual circuit device, or circuit breaker, installed on all single-phase electrical circuits. The three-phase circuits will be tested to check that the cables are not damaged.

Mr Doszpot complained about the absence of heating and cooling in many of our public schools. All of our schools have effective heating systems. In relation to the cooling of schools, the directorate investigates concerns raised by schools and assists with managing extreme heat conditions. These actions include rotating classes to cooler areas. But Mr Doszpot knows this. So he is not acknowledging that we are talking about extreme weather conditions that schools operate in. It is quite concerning that Mr Doszpot can stand in this place and run down our schools as he has.

He mentioned that many of our schools are over 30 and 50 years old. From his tone, would Mr Doszpot and the Canberra Liberals support knocking down old schools? He then went on to talk about refurbishment, which we did at Taylor, but he appeared not to be satisfied with that. I would question the community's response if we went to North Ainslie or Telopea school and suggested, "After 90 years, you've had your time. Mr Doszpot thinks you may be too old, ill-fitted for purpose. We'll knock you down." I do not think the Canberra community has any interest in that notion whatsoever.

Mr Doszpot's motion also calls into question the ACT government's and the directorate's ability to plan. We plan routinely and for good purpose, because it is important to know where our schools' demands are and to recognise the need to respond to changing community demographics. In the report that I think Mr Doszpot was referring to—it was I think the source of information for the *Canberra Times* article—very early in the piece it clearly sets out, in table 4, the projections network by network right through to 2017, when there is a total student expectation number that is, to my count, 11-odd thousand short of the total capacity across those networks.

We do change school environments. We do put classrooms in when there is a demand. We have done that with Duffy. It was the right thing to do. We are investing \$47 million in a school for Coombs. But student pressures were being felt. So it is about having a smart and responsive directorate. As I said over 10 years \$807 million has been spent or budgeted. If we include the BER this will take it to over \$950 million. That, in anybody's book, is a good investment in our school community. It addresses school upgrades and new schools, and makes sure that contemporary learning spaces are available for each and every student.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (10.32): Mr Doszpot's motion today is commendable in seeking to ensure that education and school infrastructure are a government priority, but I would suggest that in many ways it is fair to say that they already are, and will continue to remain so. As members heard yesterday, education is a top priority for both the parties in cabinet—the Greens and the ALP—and again this is against a backdrop of federal government policy and funding uncertainty. We are certainly operating in a space where it is unclear what the policy directions are in education from a federal level and where the money will be coming from.

This priority for the Greens is because we believe that education is about ensuring that we have a healthy, smart and socially inclusive community where every child is valued and is given the skills to succeed in life, and so much of that will come through having a strong and well-resourced education system. This obviously includes the built environment where learning takes place, and I recognise that we do have some older schools in Canberra that do require maintenance and upgrades as they age. I think this is an issue that can be cleverly responded to, however, and that includes developing a proactive approach to maintenance so that some of the issues that have been discussed here today do not arise.

I have no doubt about Mr Doszpot's commitment to his shadow portfolio and I am certainly impressed by his efforts to visit as many schools as he has over the past few years, no doubt having a very good knowledge of the physical environment of many of the schools. I also note Mr Doszpot's frustrations and that he believes that the increased planned capital upgrades to local schools are not happening quickly enough.

That said, I also have some sympathy for the position of Minister Burch, and I have listened to her comments very carefully this morning. Managing the ongoing, reactive and proactive needs of the 86 public schools, including preschool sites, is a complex task and one that is subject to change in order of priority each year, if not each month, as circumstances change and new matters arise that require addressing that perhaps

were not seen before. That requires Minister Burch and the directorate to work through the maintenance and capital requirements of schools on a needs basis in a similar fashion to the education funding we were all promised.

Mr Doszpot's motion refers to "recent research" which, while perhaps technically correct, I believe does not really explain the document that he was referring to. My understanding is that the Education and Training Directorate provides an annual update to the minister on projected population and enrolment movements and is used as a broad guide for internal planning processes. The ACT public school enrolment projections 2013 to 2017 show that key data sources used for the projections included ACT public school census data conducted in February each year, data from the ACT Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages on the number of births by suburb, and work produced in conjunction with both CMTD and EDD demography forecasts.

The projections were also formed using input from school principals and estimates of enrolments from any proposed new residential development. Taken on a school-by-school approach, it is clear that there are some areas that are experiencing more pressure than others, as you would expect in areas of high growth such as Palmerston, Crace, Amaroo and Harrison. As you would also expect, there is some anticipated pressure in the new areas of urban development such as North Weston, Wright and Coombs and the impact this is having on certainly some of the schools in the Weston Creek area in the shorter term. On an area level, it is true from reading the projections that in Belconnen, for example, Kaleen and Hawker primary schools are on track to reach or exceed capacity in the new few years.

But let us be clear: these are just projections at this stage and, further, this is exactly why the directorate produces this work—to support the ACT government in its planning and budget allocations over many years to prepare and respond to population changes. I note that Ms Burch's amendment to the motion before us calls on the government to continue to use the most up to date data available to guide school planning, and I support that approach. The document referred to is quite obviously a sign of that work in progress, as it clearly is about having the analysis to hand from which the government can make forward decisions.

Paragraph (2) of the motion calls for ongoing investment in public schools to ensure confidence for ACT parents and carers. Again, my understanding is that public school enrolment figures are growing beyond just population figures, suggesting that there is confidence in the public education system and it is growing, and I think that is a very healthy sign. Our public schools in the ACT have a very strong track record. We have seen in the last couple of years a trend of increasing enrolments and I think that reflects that the community is seeing the real strength of our public schooling system, and that is a very welcome sign.

Paragraph (3) is another one that I am happy to support. It calls for the government to continue to consult with the community on future needs. This is a strong principle of the ACT Greens. Some members may recall that my former colleague, Ms Hunter, made it her priority soon after entering the Assembly in 2008 to amend the Education Act to ensure that never again would the community feel ignored about any possible school closures. I think it is important that we continue to talk to those on the ground

who have that lived experience, have an intimate knowledge of particular facilities and can often provide very useful information and suggestions about what is needed and the most effective way to do it.

Having made those remarks, I will be supporting this motion, as amended, today. I recognise that maintaining such a large number of assets requires a strategic approach. I am confident that, if any unique and pressing concerns are raised to members of the Assembly about the safety and security of children in our public schools, the issues will be responded to with the attention they deserve. There is a necessary balance to strike between having clearly laid out capital investment program and maintenance programs and having the flexibility to respond to matters that arise perhaps more urgently or for a range of reasons can suddenly come to the top of the list.

Certainly when TAMS was responsible for the Property Group we had those situations where there was a planned maintenance program, yet at the same time matters arose for a host of reasons, whether it was some weather influence or perhaps a group having a particular emerging need or community demands changing, where those needed to be altered, and I think having that level of flexibility is very valuable as well. As I said, on that basis I will be supporting the motion, as amended, today.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (10.40): I rise to speak in support of Minister Burch's amendment. I am going to talk about maintenance and upgrades for educational facilities in my electorate of Ginninderra and what has been going on lately, because there is some very important work that is being done to support our schools and our teachers and to help the students and parents.

The Canberra High School insulation program has been undertaken as part of the pilot school carbon neutral project. The roof is also being re-sheeted at Canberra High School. There have been car parking extensions and improvements which have been very much called for by parents and school communities at Weetangera Primary School, on which I have received a number of representations, as well as Southern Cross Early Childhood School. Not only that, but there have been designs completed for car park extensions at Macgregor Primary School, and construction work is underway. Moving down the age groups, in the childcare centres we have some childcare centre expansions and upgrade programs happening at Totom House in Kaleen. And, of course, there has been the Macgregor Primary School expansion.

Solar panels, as we have heard from the minister, have been installed throughout all public schools in the ACT as a result of the completion of the stage 3 installations to 34 schools. This program provides an opportunity for schools not only to participate in developing carbon neutral programs but also to gain some additional feedback from the rebates that come through from the electricity suppliers. The staffroom upgrades at Macquarie Primary School have been very much welcomed, I understand, by the staff there who are enjoying the new facilities.

Then there are the security fences which have been so effective at reducing vandalism and damage to our schools. And, Madam Speaker, this is not just an economic question of cost-benefit analysis; it is also about the disheartening effect on teachers, students and parents as well as the general community when they see educational

facilities vandalised. These security fences have been very effective at doing that across the territory. In my electorate of Ginninderra they have been installed at Mount Rogers Primary School, Macgregor Primary School, Maribyrnong Primary School and Fraser Primary School.

The master plan and stage 1 works designs for Belconnen High School have been commenced. It is one of our older schools. In fact, as I recollect, the school hall was the tally room for the 1972 federal election which brought the Whitlam Labor government to power. It is one of those icons of history that we have here in Canberra. So that master plan and those stage 1 works will be upgrading one of our older high schools in Ginninderra.

At Macquarie Primary School there has been carpet and painting done—very important for providing an environment which is welcoming and friendly for children and their parents and, of course, the teachers. Across the territory water refill stations have been installed through the water refill station program and this has been done at 18 schools. Finally, I mention the upgraded early childhood facilities to comply with the national quality framework in Latham Preschool.

Madam Speaker, these upgrades and maintenance work on our schools in my electorate of Ginninderra have been part of this government's work across the territory to make sure that our education facilities for our children are world best. And we know that the results coming out of our schools are equivalent or better than in other states and territories, with the NAPLAN results showing that the ACT is Australia's leading jurisdiction. So I support Minister Burch's amendment and commend it to the Assembly.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (10.45): Madam Speaker, I was forced to interject a number of times during Ms Burch's—

MADAM SPEAKER: No, you were not, Mr Doszpot. You were never forced to interject; you chose to do it.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, I chose to interject a number of times during Ms Burch's response to my motion, as I do not think she listened to any of my comments and simply stuck to her prepared speech which is obviously based on misquoting me and refusing to accept the realities I presented about the state of ACT infrastructure, not the state of ACT education.

As I understand it, in 2012, during the ACT election campaign, ACT Labor issued an education policy which made commitments totalling an additional \$250 million over four years. Included in those commitments was a significant amount of \$70 million to refurbish older schools. To the ordinary person—to us mere mortals, not Labor officials but the ordinary voters—that commitment sounded like \$70 million of extra money. But ACT Labor now says that figure should be read as capital upgrades; that is to say that it should be understood as standing for an already existing, ongoing, routine, recurrent program of maintenance of public schools. Now, if we accept Labor's explanation that that \$70 million worth of refurbishments of older schools really meant \$70 million already budgeted and programmed as capital upgrades then we have to conclude that ACT Labor's election commitments are \$70 million less.

And this, Ms Burch, is probably the issue that you should have been trying to explain to us—that is, if my understanding is accurate, and it does seem to explain the discrepancy between what is being done compared to the extravagant election promises. I did not run down the schools, Ms Burch. If anything, I ran down—

MADAM SPEAKER: Please address the chair, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Madam Speaker, I did not run down, as Ms Burch indicated, the public schools in Canberra. I did not run down the government schools. If anything, I ran down Ms Burch's lack of understanding and her response to my speech, and the motion highlights exactly that: her lack of understanding and being able to respond to stating what is happening instead of just the political window-dressing that she came up with.

In closing, Ms Burch comments that she finds it quite concerning that I stand here in this place knocking the government school system, yet again I have to stress that, if Ms Burch listened to any of the speech or in fact read the motion, she would have noted that I believe they are an excellent education sector in the ACT. But I have to stress, and I cannot ignore the point, that a majority of our schools are old and that serious decisions need to be made about their maintenance and upgrade.

I take some of the points Mr Rattenbury came up with. As usual, he seems to be torn between accepting some of the realities of life that the opposition presents from time to time and his understanding of those realities of life. He is torn between his commitment to the government and to making sure that the government get his support, as the terms of understanding or contractual terms in their partnership indicate.

But the reality that we have pointed out here today is quite realistic. It is there for everyone to see. But this seems beyond the capacity and the capability of Ms Burch who, through her amendment, has failed. I have to repeat that I think she has failed to understand and address the concerns of the ACT parents and the community. This is not just me talking, Ms Burch. The issues I have mentioned are what I have heard from parents, from the community and from representations from various sources.

We have schools that are under severe enrolment pressure and the only option appears to be the reduction of enrolment areas or to put in transportable classrooms. On the one hand, the directorate suggest that schools can be repurposed and restructured, but at the same time they advise that, when constructed, schools are designed to accommodate a specific number of children. Yes, and those numbers have been or soon will be extended in many schools.

Ms Burch spoke about the document that the directorate put out. Yes, some of the things that are in there obviously have been planned, and have been planned to the best of their abilities. But when you have areas like Amaroo, with an enrolment of 1,529, and people saying that the capacity will be increased to 1,722 by putting in transportables, that is only a band-aid approach. It will fix the problem perhaps to the end of this year, and then we are back to the same situation in 2015.

Ngunnawal is a perfect case in point. Ngunnawal had 548 enrolments at the beginning of 2014. So 545 students started the year. The capacity was 525. Now two double transportables will be put in place, so that will give it an additional 100 places. But that will only happen next year when you will have additional enrolments, Ms Burch. So these are the issues that somehow you have failed to understand.

I have gone through Ms Burch's amendments. I think there are only marginal changes, if anything. I cannot see what this government cannot accept when we call on the government to undertake more regular and detailed maintenance audits of our public schools infrastructure so that Canberra families can be certain that their children are safe at ACT public schools. I cannot understand why the government or Mr Rattenbury will not accept any of these requests. For example:

consult more widely with the community on the future needs of Canberra families in respect of school size, location and facilities ...

Consult. This is what this government has been told through various portfolios time and again. Again:

commit additional funds this financial year to deliver improvements to those schools that have been waiting years for upgrades including cooling and heating in classrooms ...

These are urgent issues that the community is raising loud and clear, but Ms Burch is apparently the only one who does not seem to hear that constant refrain from the community and from every level—teachers, students and the community. Paragraph 2(d) of the motion states:

make public the Government's plans and timeline for future upgrades to Canberra schools ...

What is wrong with asking for that? Paragraph 2(e) states:

make school infrastructure a priority.

I refer to paragraph 2(f) of Ms Burch's amendment just to highlight how similar all of her points are. It states:

ensure that schools and education remain a government priority ...

Well, I am saying that the government should make school infrastructure a priority, because currently it does not appear to be a priority of this government.

Ms Burch's amendments to my motion can only be described as a complete whitewash. It should be noted that the serious concerns that I and others in the community have raised about faulty electrical wiring in switchboards have been completely dismissed by Ms Burch. I have visited Taylor School and I have been very impressed with everything that has happened there, Ms Burch. Again, you misquoted me on that. What I said was that the circumstances surrounding why they had to move had to be addressed, and they have to be addressed at other schools so that it does not happen again.

I think what is best for, and wanted by, Canberra families, by students and by the teachers who work in these schools is that the government reassesses its priorities and gives serious commitment to bringing our schools into the 21st century. As the situation gets worse it places unfair pressure on all of those involved and engaged in the educational sector, and that is just not good enough.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 7		Noes 6	
Mr Barr	Ms Gallagher	Mr Doszpot	Mr Smyth
Dr Bourke	Mr Gentleman	Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall
Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury	Mr Hanson	
Mr Corbell		Ms Lawder	

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Energy—renewable

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (10.58): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that the:

- (a) ACT has established a 90 percent renewable energy target for electricity by 2020;
- (b) Royalla Solar Farm is now generating energy to the grid and, at 20MW, is the largest PV farm operating in Australia and the first large scale solar facility to be connected to the national electricity market;
- (c) 13MW solar park at Mugga Lane has now gained planning approval; and
- (d) reverse auction for 200MW of wind energy generation received 18 proposals, reflecting strong industry interest;

(2) further notes that:

- (a) the Canberra community overwhelmingly supports the Government's renewable energy plans with 80 percent strongly supporting action on climate change and 93 percent supporting the Government's plans to demonstrate and promote new energy technologies;

- (b) Canberra is becoming an internationally recognised centre for renewable energy innovation and investment; and
- (c) this investment in renewable energy is being achieved at an affordable price to consumers; and
- (3) calls on the Commonwealth Government to end the uncertainty for the renewable energy industry caused by its recent policy shifts, and to commit to supporting certainty for investment in renewable energy.

Madam Speaker, the ACT is proudly forging ahead with our 90 per cent renewable energy target for electricity by 2020. We have the Royalla solar farm, the largest PV farm in Australia, already online; we have the Mugga Lane farm on the way; and we have industry very interested in our wind energy auction.

There is support, strong support, by Canberrans for renewable energy, action on climate change and new energy technology. It is a very good news story for our industries and economy, with new expertise delivering these benefits at an affordable cost to consumers.

The ACT's climate change strategy and action plan announced in 2012 set the pathway to achieve the greenhouse gas reduction targets set out in our Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act 2010. The ACT has the most ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets in Australia, with a 40 per cent reduction on 1990 levels by 2020 and zero emissions by 2060. Around 73 per cent of the emission reductions under action plan 2 will be achieved by ensuring 90 per cent of the ACT's power consumption is sourced from renewable energy by 2020. In 2013 renewable energy is estimated to have accounted for about 19 per cent of the ACT's electricity consumption.

The renewable energy target is made up of several renewable energy sources. Large renewable energy generators supported by large-scale feed-in tariffs, extended under the electricity feed-in act, account for around two-thirds of the renewable generation needed to reach the target. Other renewable energy sources make up the other third, including the ACT's share of energy generated through the national large-scale renewable energy target scheme in addition to the territory's rooftop solar generation and ACT purchases of GreenPower.

The ACT's energy efficiency improvement scheme commenced on 1 January 2013 for an initial term of three years. From 1 July 2013 the scheme was expanded to small to medium enterprises, including private businesses and non-government community organisations. Over 24,000 households received energy efficiency saving help under the scheme up to March 2014. Of those households, 30 per cent were low income households, who stand to benefit the most from energy saving activities.

In September last year the Environment and Planning Directorate released survey research results of ACT residents showing that the majority of residents, 88 per cent, believe that climate change is a genuine problem for the future; 76 per cent of residents believe it is moderately or very urgent for the ACT government to take action to tackle climate change; and 81 per cent want the ACT government to take a

strong leadership role to help ACT residents tackle climate change. Almost all the respondents, 93 per cent, indicated their support of the ACT government's plan to demonstrate and promote new energy technologies such as renewable energy technology. And 87 per cent of respondents were supportive of the government's plan to invest in large-scale renewable energy sources such as solar and wind energy.

The ACT held Australia's first auction for a solar feed-in tariff entitlement. It consisted of two streams: a fast-track stream concluded in September 2012 and a regular stream concluded in August 2013.

Royalla solar farm, at 20 megawatts, is the largest photovoltaic power station in Australia, producing approximately 38,000 megawatt hours of zero emission renewable energy each year. It has approximately 83,000 fixed photovoltaic modules. Fotowatio Renewable Ventures is a Spanish-based company specialising in the complete management of solar generation assets. It began construction of the Royalla solar farm in October last year and completed it in August. It commenced full generation on 21 August.

Zhenfa is a China-based company that specialises in photovoltaic system designs, supply of materials, contracting and project finance. Its Mugga Lane solar park is due to be completed in 2015. This is a 13-megawatt solar farm including half a megawatt of panels attached to ground-mounted tracking units. The use of single-axis trackers will demonstrate this innovative technology, which increases electricity output by tracking the sun over the course of the day. Zhenfa's DA was approved on 3 September 2014. The site is presently a designated government horse holding paddock, and government agencies are working with the ACT Equestrian Association to relocate the horses to alternative suitable paddocks.

An independent review of the solar auction found that it was a very competitive process, giving the ACT government high quality proposals to select from, and resulted in relatively low feed-in tariff rates, providing value for money.

In May 2013 the government released feed-in tariff entitlements to be granted directly to community solar projects at a price of up to \$200 per megawatt hour. Proposals must be more than 200 kilowatts and no more than one megawatt and must be located in the ACT. If worthwhile proposals are received, a second release under the act may be considered.

While community solar will not contribute a large amount of renewable capacity, it will demonstrate and establish a different business model for delivering large-scale renewable energy through direct community financing and ownership, an opportunity for that overwhelming community support that I talked about before to be demonstrated in some practical action through people's involvement in community solar. Proposals for community solar may be made up to May 2015.

The government will commence an EOI process for the provision of next generation solar later this year. There is substantial national and international industry interest in this process from potential project proponents. Following the announcement, the government has been contacted by more than 30—more than 30—local, national and international technology providers.

In March 2014 Minister Corbell announced a wind auction for 200 megawatts of new wind energy generating capacity. A request for proposals and other proposal documentation was released on 17 April. The deadline for proposals was 3 September 2014. Eighteen proposals have been received for the ACT's first wind power auction, reflecting keen industry interest. Successful proposals under the wind auction will produce about 560,000 megawatt hours per annum. This is equivalent to around 24 per cent of current forecast electricity consumption in the territory in 2020—24 per cent. Two hundred megawatts of wind generation capacity is expected to cost an average ACT household up to \$1.34 per week in 2020, declining after that time.

At the launch of the ACT's wind auction, the then New South Wales Parliamentary Secretary for Renewable Energy, now the Minister for the Environment, Mr Rob Stokes, praised our minister's wind auction initiative and the potential it created for investment in the local region. The auction is open to proposals for wind generators located anywhere in the national electricity market, which includes all jurisdictions except Western Australia and the Northern Territory. The benefit of this approach is that the territory stands to receive a broader range of quality proposals that will result in the best value for money outcome to ACT electricity consumers. Wind generation is the most cost-effective renewable energy technology, around half the price of solar.

In my electorate of Ginninderra, we have led the way in Canberra's renewable energy generation, in the form of bioenergy from the west Belconnen landfill, for a number of years. A regional bioenergy facility could convert ACT and regional organic wastes, which do not have another market, into renewable electricity. Existing recycling practices would be continued and enhanced. The ACT government is exploring options to deliver an energy-from-waste facility in combination with one or more new materials recovery facilities to recover and recycle paper products, plastic and metals that currently end up in landfill.

In conclusion, let me say that the only dark cloud on our solar array is the federal Liberal Party. Joe Hockey is tilting at the Lake George windmills and wants to take the puff out of wind power. We know that before the federal election, the Liberal Party abandoned any concern about global warming. "Axe the tax," Mr Abbott droned, as though it and the mining tax were the source of all our economic woes.

They removed Australia's pricing on carbon pollution but now want to go further in dismantling action on climate change. We were told by Mr Abbott that there was bipartisanship on the national renewable energy target by 2020, before the election. Well, the Liberals are busily walking away from this election commitment as well. Again, as with so many of his promises in opposition compared to the reality in government, Mr Abbott's renewable energy target commitment was over-promised and will be under-delivered.

However, renewable energy is the way of the future, and history will be kinder to the ACT government's stance than the federal government's.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (11.10): I move:

Omit all words after paragraph (1)(a), substitute:

- “(b) ACT renewable energy target is the highest of any Australian jurisdiction; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to table all documents relating to the following by the last sitting day in November:
- (a) the modelling and analysis relevant to the effect of the Renewable Energy Target and Action Plan 2 on electricity prices in the ACT; and
- (b) the community consultation which was undertaken relating to renewable energy, including the questions, answers, methodology and timing of surveys.”.

In 1997 the then Prime Minister, John Howard, released the federal government’s broad climate change strategy. This included measures to promote renewable energy. This was the first of its kind in Australia and it included mandatory targets for the uptake of renewable energy power supplies across the country. This policy was legislated in 2000 and required electricity retailers and other large-scale electricity buyers to source an extra two per cent of their electricity from renewable energy sources by 2010.

Then, during the mid-2000s, there were aspirational targets developed by individual states and territories. In 2009 the Rudd government amended the commonwealth scheme and replaced it with the renewable energy target scheme, known as the RET, which aimed to reach 45,000 gigawatt hours of additional electricity being produced from renewable sources by 2020, which was expected to account for about 20 per cent of electricity demand. Then in 2010 the RET was split into two separate categories: small-scale and large-scale renewable energy generation.

During the decade from 2000 to 2010 many states had introduced their own targets and started to wind them back once a broader commonwealth scheme was announced. Across the states we have New South Wales following the commonwealth target, Western Australia following the commonwealth target and the Northern Territory following the commonwealth target. Victoria had their own scheme of 10 per cent by 2016 but rolled this into the expanded commonwealth scheme when it was introduced in 2010. Queensland had targets to double renewable sources every five years but changed this in favour of making budgetary savings and reducing utilities’ costs. South Australia had a target of 20 per cent by 2014, which I believe they have met.

Then we have the ACT, the smallest jurisdiction of all. In May 2011 Minister Corbell set the ACT renewable energy target of 15 per cent of total electricity usage by 2012 and 25 per cent by 2020, not too far above par relative to the other jurisdictions surrounding us. However, in November 2013 the second target was dramatically increased. It was increased to a whopping 90 per cent by 2020.

Madam Speaker, I would like to briefly address that part of Dr Bourke’s motion that refers to community support. Dr Bourke’s motion states:

The Canberra community overwhelmingly supports the Government's renewable energy plans with 80 percent strongly supporting action on climate change and 93 percent supporting the Government's plans to demonstrate and promote new energy technologies ...

I have no doubt that this is actually the case, and I agree, but the relationship between attitudes and behaviour is something that has often been studied and researched in social psychology. There are a range of definitions for the term "attitude". For example, Hogg and Vaughan in 1995 defined attitude as:

a general feeling or evaluation about persons, object or issue as well as a relatively enduring organization of beliefs, feelings and behavioural tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events or symbols.

We may presume from this definition that there is a close relationship between attitudes and behaviour—that is, you might expect the behaviour of a person to be consistent with the attitudes they hold. This is known as the principle of consistency. However, there is also a large body of research showing that attitudes have little predictive power on behaviour. This started with research way back as far as 1934 by LaPiere, and ever since then the relationship between attitudes and behaviour has been investigated in social psychology in research after research.

As this large body of research now demonstrates, it is actually quite naive to think that attitudes and behaviour are linked directly and consistently. While the principle of consistency reflects the ideas that people are rational and attempt to behave rationally at all times and a person's behaviour should be consistent with their attitudes, you can see for yourself the evidence that people say one thing and do another.

They say they want to keep fit but they do not exercise. They say they are worried about global warming but they drive high-exhaust cars and use air conditioners. They smoke cigarettes but say they know smoking causes lung cancer and heart disease. Another study called "The link between environmental attitudes and behaviour" demonstrated that, when attitudes about environmental issues were measured, their predictive ability was unlikely to be higher than about 30 per cent and could be much lower. As the report concluded:

Results such as this inevitably pose the question of why so much effort is expended in measuring attitudes when their effect on behaviour ... is so small.

So while the principle of consistency may appear sound, based on the pub test, it is clear that people do not always follow it and sometimes behave in seemingly quite illogical ways. In general, the relationship between attitude and behaviour is weak. Yet the government trot out this research on attitudes as if it were the answer to life, the universe and everything. Using questionnaires to measure attitudes may lead to inaccuracy in predicting behaviour. Just because someone says they are in favour of renewable energy targets does not mean they will change their behaviours, especially when it comes to their own hip pockets.

I move this amendment to Dr Bourke's motion today because I am deeply concerned about the effect that pursuing these ideological targets will have on our city. Surely we cannot all sit here knowing that electricity generated from wind power will cost three to four times more than our current electricity supply and say that prices will not increase for ACT residents by more than a cup of coffee a week. We are talking three or four times more. Who is absorbing that cost?

The climate change and greenhouse gas reduction annual report 2012-13 states:

... electricity prices are forecast to increase by up to 16% to fund renewable energy investment and ensure our greenhouse gas abatement targets are met.

It goes on to say:

... the costs are distributed across all electricity customers.

These targets will increase electricity costs for households and businesses in the ACT. I know prices will increase. Minister Corbell knows prices will increase. It is no secret. But the real question is by exactly how much. In response to Dr Bourke's motion today, I am calling on the minister to table the documents which relate to the modelling and which show electricity prices will increase by 16 per cent—the modelling that makes Minister Corbell comfortable with enforcing this unrealistic, idealistic target on the smaller jurisdiction of the ACT. If the minister has nothing to hide then I have no doubt he will cooperate and agree to table this modelling today in the Assembly and support the amendment. Based on previous statements by our Chief Minister, this government would want to be so open and transparent.

The ACT accounts for not even half of one per cent of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions—not even half of one per cent. In the ACT in 2011 our emissions accounted for 0.212 per cent of the emissions produced in Australia. It is important to reduce our emissions, but we are more concerned here about having bragging rights than anything else. As long as the government can say their tram line is underway and we have the highest renewable targets in the country, they seem to be happy and, as we covered yesterday, take all the credit without any of the negative consequences. The minister has found a way to have the bragging rights of the targets while just throwing the negative consequences of the policy over the border. Those residents cannot vote for him, so why would he care?

The review which was commissioned by the federal government into the current commonwealth renewable energy targets states:

... the RET is a high cost approach to reducing emissions because it does not directly target emissions and it only focuses on electricity generation. It promotes activity in renewable energy ahead of alternative, lower cost options for reducing emissions that exist elsewhere in the economy. In the presence of lower cost alternatives, the costs imposed by the RET are not justifiable.

The government continually attempts to paint the Canberra Liberals as anti-renewable energy. This is not at all the case. However, as we have stated before, we need to

balance the environmental, social and economic impacts of any policy we bring forward. I cannot stand here as a representative of my constituents who are struggling financially and commend a policy that is going to make life harder for these people.

In fact, it is an interesting position we find ourselves in today in terms of, I guess, a constituent inversion. Dr Bourke's motion calls on us to end uncertainty for industry while the Liberals here are concerned for average families and believe that priorities for government should reflect the priorities of the average person. So it is the Liberals promoting the concerns of the average person while Labor appear to be most concerned about industry in this case. It is a very interesting situation. I encourage the government to be open and transparent and share with us the modelling that they have used. I commend the amendment to the Assembly.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (11.21): I am pleased to stand here today in support of Dr Bourke's motion on renewable energy and its role in the national capital and the broader region. I thank Ms Lawder for the psychological analysis of opinion polls, but no amount of twisting and turning will allow the Liberals to get off the hook on the fact that there is very strong support for renewable energy generation and for this Labor government's renewable energy agenda across the community and, indeed, across the region and in many other parts of the country.

At a time when we have the federal Liberal government significantly rolling back support for renewable energy generation, rolling back policies that support a transition to a low carbon future—abrogating their responsibility to make sure that as a nation, as a society, we are prepared and ready for the implications of a changing climate—this jurisdiction, the ACT, is seeking to make sure its citizens are well prepared and ready to adapt to a low carbon future.

There is nothing more reckless than continuing to pin the energy needs of our citizens and the costs of that energy on fossil fuel generation. The cost of that fossil fuel generation will only continue to increase over time. If we refuse to make the transition to a renewable energy future, we are chaining citizens to those ever-increasing costs of fossil fuel generation. It is a reckless and irresponsible act. We need, as a society and as a community, to recognise that the sooner we transition to low-cost renewable energy generation, where once the up-front cost of infrastructure is met the fuel input is a free input, the better. You do not pay for sunshine or wind, but you certainly do pay for coal or gas, and we know how volatile those fuel prices will be now and into the future.

Look at what has happened with gas. As a community we are very vulnerable to movements in gas prices. Because we are now pursuing, as a nation, a significant export-led gas industry, we are paying what overseas economies are paying for our gas. Gas used to be a cheap fuel, but it is not anymore. Is it responsible of us, in a city like Canberra, where we use gas a lot in our household heating, for example, to continue to hold ourselves hostage to those types of variations in gas prices? Or should we have policy settings that allow us to transition away from that reliance, to reduce that reliance, and to provide greater price stability for energy for householders into the future?

This government says that is the transition we need to make. We do need to reduce that reliance. We do need to stop households being hostage to the increases in fossil fuel generation costs that we know are going to continue to occur. The government has set out a strong and proactive program to achieve this. The 90 per cent renewable energy target is designed to address our greenhouse gas emissions, to meet our legislated greenhouse gas target, and at the same time to support jobs and economic activity in our city and in our region.

Labor do care about the everyday family, the everyday citizen. We care about what they are going to pay for electricity and gas into the future. We know that if we stick with electricity and gas from coal and other fossil fuel sources the prices are going to continue to increase, but we also know that the prices will stabilise and be much more reliable if we switch to renewable sources. We know also that if we support energy efficiency measures we can reduce the costs to households.

Once again we hear the Liberal opposition stand up in this place and say they are concerned about household energy costs. But this is from the party that voted against an energy efficiency law that delivers savings, for every household that participates, of \$300, on average, on their electricity bill and their gas bill. They voted against that law. They voted against a piece of legislation that drives down household energy consumption and therefore household costs. They have no credibility, Madam Speaker, on this so-called claim that they are interested in these issues. If they were, they would have supported a law that saves households money on their electricity bills and on their gas bills, but they have continually failed to do so.

The 90 per cent renewable energy target is important. It is important because the key sector for our city's greenhouse gas emissions is electricity consumption in the residential building area and in the commercial building area. If we are to achieve a 40 per cent reduction on our greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, decarbonisation of the electricity supply sector is critical to meet that objective. That is why the 90 per cent renewable energy target is in place.

We hear criticism from the Liberal Party that our targets are too high and too ambitious when it comes to greenhouse gas emissions, but they were not thinking that back in 2008, Madam Speaker. In 2008 the Liberal Party released a policy called "Leadership on climate change: cleaning up our ACT". In that policy they said very clearly that their reduction targets were a cut of 60 per cent on 1990 levels by 2050 and a reduction of 30 per cent on 1990 levels by the end of 2020. So it is not substantially different from what is now enacted into law. In fact, it is pretty close. There was a big debate about it at the time, back in 2009-10, but the facts were the Liberals had a policy that they unilaterally walked away from after the 2008 election. Ever since then they have been missing in action on the issue of climate change and on making the transition to a low carbon future. Whether it is supporting renewable energy, whether it is supporting energy efficiency or whether it is giving people more choices when it comes to better public transport, they have been missing in action.

The renewable energy target will drive the uptake of large-scale renewable energy generation in our city and in our region. As a city and as a region we are blessed with

a large and very abundant range of renewable energy resources. We have very good sunlight here in the ACT. It is not as good as perhaps places further to the north—certainly not—but compared to most other capital cities in the country it is one of the best solar resources in the country. We have excellent wind resources immediately to our north in the areas around Lake George, through to Goulburn and out towards Cootamundra. They are some of the best wind resources in the eastern coast of Australia.

These are resources that we should be utilising, and we are doing that. We are supporting it through the development of the Royalla solar farm. We are supporting it through the development of the Mugga Lane solar farm that received its planning approval in the past month. We are supporting it through the large-scale wind auction and we are supporting it through the proposed Uriarra solar farm which is, of course, subject to a development assessment process right now.

Those are the very strong policies that this government have put in place. But we are not just interested in the renewable energy outcomes; we are also interested in the economic outcomes. That is why we are saying to companies that are bidding in the wind auction right now that they should not only deliver great value for money when it comes to renewable energy; they need to deliver jobs and investment in our city and in our region. They need to show us how they are going to support institutions like the ANU or the CSIRO, who do world-leading research in renewable energy, and how they are going to support the local economy through services, contractors and suppliers. They need to demonstrate how they are going to make a long-term commitment to our economy—not just for the energy supply but also for the economic growth and development of our city, which is so critical for so many people.

Madam Speaker, the Labor government has a strong and progressive policy on renewable energy. Cities around the world are responding in similar ways. We are not exceptional in global terms. What is exceptional are the policies of the Liberals nationally and here in the ACT, who refuse to recognise that these changes are critical for our community's future. (*Time expired.*)

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (11.31): I am very pleased to discuss these matters today and I thank Dr Bourke for bringing forward the motion because it is an area of contentious policy at this time. So it is timely to discuss these exact matters that Dr Bourke has raised in his motion.

What we have in the Abbott federal government is a bunch of climate deniers. This is clearly demonstrated by their head-long rush to dismantle the architecture put in place to tackle the issue. All they have managed to do since they have come to power is undo action on climate change. We have seen that in a range of areas with the repealing of the carbon tax, the desire to abolish ARENA. The abolition of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation was certainly on the list. They may have been talked out of that but it seems their funding is going to be gutted anyway.

We have seen now the considerable push to demolish the renewable energy target and we have seen a cut in funding for climate science at the CSIRO because, of course, if you are going to be a denier at least you do not want to have people inconveniently

telling you what might actually be going on from a scientific perspective. It is, of course, possible, that they are not deniers. Perhaps instead it is simply that dealing with climate change and moving away from our dependence on fossil fuels just does not suit the fossil fuel companies very well, which I think is actually a worse motivation for their actions because it effectively means that the Abbott government is a government driven by the profits and profit motivation of the fossil fuel sector, with no thought for the impacts of their action on the rest of us.

It is not just future generations we are talking about here. Those generations are now our children. Children that are born today will live to see the impacts of climate change, substantial impacts that have been forecast by scientists. Anyone who thinks that somehow this is someone's problem in the future, I think, is ignoring the fact that the science tells us it is real and it is here. So we see the federal government choosing to prop up the profits of the fossil fuel and mining companies rather than protecting the life support systems which sustain human beings on this planet.

Earlier this month the CSIRO published research in the journal, *Climate Risk Management*. The new research shows that there is a 99.999 per cent probability that global temperature increases are the result of human activity. I think it is worth repeating that statistic, a 99.999 per cent probability that global temperature increases are the result of human activity. That is an extraordinary finding, and one that really must put us at a point where those who pull out the odd, "You know, down in East Gippsland at the lighthouse the temperature has not changed for the last 20 years," which we have heard in this place before, have no credibility and where anybody who has any adherence to hearing the evidence and the science would not bring those stories to this place.

The ACT stands alone as the only jurisdiction that is taking the science seriously with our target to reduce emissions by 40 per cent by 2020, our target to have 90 per cent of our electricity coming from renewable sources by 2020 and the commitment to make the government carbon neutral by 2020. These are serious policy measures and ones that will ensure that this city and its residents are taking their responsibilities seriously.

Building a renewable energy future for our city does not just mean we are responding to the science as we should. We will also insulate this city against price shocks that we will inevitably see in coal and gas prices into the future. Certainly gas prices are forecast to rise significantly as Australia starts to export gas offshore and as we push into places where extracting gas is simply more expensive to get to.

Inevitably the policy will catch up with the prices. It will be untenable to rely on black energy. The ACT has started with what is effectively the low-hanging fruit, our electricity sector. It is a significant part of our generation mix and by ensuring that energy is coming from those clean sources we are also ensuring that we have sustainable prices into the future.

Our next challenge will be heating. One of the reasons the Greens have pushed so hard on energy efficiency over the years is that that is clearly an important part of dealing with the issue. We are going to need to be creative and clever when it comes

to heating our homes and offices more effectively and using less greenhouse-polluting fuels. Minister Corbell has spoken about this already. The energy efficiency scheme is certainly one measure, again a very concrete measure, that is actually addressing that and ensuring that ACT households are better prepared for the future and are having their electricity and heating costs reduced as a result of the measures that have been put in place.

I would like to turn specifically to the renewable energy target. This was a Howard government policy designed to give the sector a kickstart. It was only a two per cent target. It was a pretty unambitious program. Certainly at the time I was working for Greenpeace, I was urging federal parliamentarians to take a more ambitious target. But at least we got a target underway. We saw the ALP lift the target to 20 per cent by 2020, and the Greens would have taken that target even higher, because our policy is firmly one of 90 per cent renewable energy in Australia by 2030.

The irony is that the reason the Abbott government is being asked to tear the renewable energy target down is that it is working. Generators, big electricity companies, are lobbying for government to cut the renewable energy target, and what they are saying is that Australians are actually using less electricity; people have taken the energy efficiency message seriously; the growth is not there in their sector; the renewable energy sector is producing too much; and therefore we need to get rid of the target, when in fact it is doing exactly what it is designed to do.

Strangely enough—and I am sure that our Liberal colleagues in the Assembly will be interested in this—the federal government's own modelling indicated that consumers would be better off if the target was kept intact. The Warburton review of the renewable energy target commissioned ACIL Allen Consulting to undertake detailed modelling of the impact of the renewable energy target on the Australian electricity market. That modelling found that the best financial outcome for electricity consumers would be to increase the renewable energy target.

There is an inconvenient truth, and I think it flies in the face of the comments Ms Lawder made today that the RET is the high-cost option and that the costs imposed are not justifiable, when in fact the detailed modelling undertaken for the Warburton review found that the best financial outcome for electricity consumers would be to increase the renewable energy target. The modelling found that the second-best option for consumers will be to leave the renewable energy target as it was, and the modelling found that the worst, most expensive, outcome for consumers would be to scrap the renewable energy target. Yet that is exactly what the Warburton review chose to recommend.

So once again, we see the evidence being ignored because it is a little inconvenient for the ideology and the rhetoric that we are seeing put forward by the federal government. It is a really fascinating finding actually, and one worth reflecting on. I am happy to share with colleagues the link to the detailed modelling if anybody would like to have a closer look at that, because it really is worth a read.

At the other end of the spectrum, a May 2014 report by Bloomberg Energy Finance warned that any decrease to Australia's renewable energy target would risk more than

10,000 jobs and result in \$20 billion less of investment in Australia. We saw further reports in early July where Bloomberg projected the global investment in renewable energy infrastructure would surge to \$5.1 trillion.

Australia is going backwards under the Abbott government, and we are going to pay handsomely for that patronage of the coal and gas miners. But the Bloomberg report again was a fascinating read. It talked about the fact that renewable energy would reap as much as two-thirds of investment forecast for building new power plants by 2030, with about half of the investment being in Asia, the region where power capacity will grow the most.

They went on to talk about the fact that fossil fuel's share of power generation will shrink to 46 per cent from 64 per cent now and that the capacity in the renewable sector, particularly in solar, will expand the most in Asia, where new solar sites will exceed gas and coal combined. They talk about the fact that this is all happening because the economics stack up so well and that it is actually an economic case as much as an environmental case that is driving this. So what we are seeing in Australia is a risk to jobs in the sector if the target is cut, a risk that there will be a loss of expertise and the risk that there will be a loss of confidence.

It is interesting to reflect on the history. During the period of the last election campaign Prime Minister Tony Abbott promised that there would not be a change to the renewable energy target. On 19 September 2013, the shadow environment minister, Greg Hunt, told Sky News:

We agree on national targets to reduce our emissions by five per cent by 2020. We also agree on the renewable energy target. And one of the things we don't want to do is become a party where there is this wild sovereign risk where you are, where businesses take steps to their detriment on the basis of a pledge and a policy of Government. And we're very clear that that's not what we want to be.

Then in a doorstep interview on 29 September 2011, Tony Abbott told reporters:

Look, we originated a renewable energy target. That was one of the policies of the Howard Government and yes we remain committed to a renewable energy target. I certainly accept that the renewable energy target is one of the factors of the current power system which is causing prices to go up but we have no plans to change the renewable energy target ... our position is to support the renewable energy targets.

I would have disputed his argument at the time about the cost drivers, and certainly what we now see, from the ACIL Allen modelling provided to the Warburton review, is that in fact those claims that he made in 2011 have been overtaken by the more recent modelling.

But what we see here is very clear undertakings from Liberal Party members when they were in opposition. We heard a lot last term about how Prime Minister Gillard had changed her position on a price on carbon, which I think was confected anyway, when nonetheless we see now that any moral high ground the Liberal Party might have claimed is simply not there today.

I will be supporting Dr Bourke's motion. Far from these measures we are putting in place being bragging rights, as Ms Lawder suggested, I think that we in fact have a clear responsibility to take these steps. The ACT has the highest per capita emissions in Australia when it comes to greenhouse gases, and these are the sorts of steps that will help us turn that around. It is simply, I think, morally reprehensible to be in a situation where we are the highest per capita emitters of greenhouse gases, given the science I talked about earlier.

Our response to the measures talked about by Dr Bourke in his motion is economically responsible. Mr Corbell has talked about the evidence of that being available, the evidence of the impact on consumers.

I certainly will not be supporting Ms Lawder's amendment, for two reasons. One is that in moving her amendment she has actually removed all the rest of the motion, which I do support. If she had simply sought to add the final part of her amendment, part 2, which is the calls on section, I perhaps could have looked at that, although again as that information is already publicly available, it is undoubtedly unnecessary. On that basis I am very happy to support Dr Bourke's motion today.

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) (11.45): I rise today to support the motion moved by Dr Bourke. The move towards renewable energy is one of the biggest challenges and the most important hurdles of our lifetime, and I am proud to be an elected member of a jurisdiction whose constituents are highly motivated to reduce our emissions and subsequent impact on the atmosphere. Given that 87 per cent of people surveyed by the Environment and Planning Directorate in 2013 were supportive of the government's plan for tackling emissions, I am also very proud to be part of a government which is so accurately focused on the issues which concern its community.

It is my strong belief that one of the most important pieces of legislation that has been passed in this place was the Electricity Feed-in (Renewable Energy Premium) Bill 2008, which provides the framework that enables capital investment into renewable energy generation to be recouped within a reasonable period. I was very pleased to present this bill to the Assembly and to see it passed in July 2008. I was also very pleased to see all members of the Assembly support the legislation, including the Canberra Liberals. This bill was one of the key factors in the facilitation of the eventual turning of the sod at the Royalla farm on 16 October last year, which I was pleased to attend.

The feed-in tariff also facilitated the official opening of the Royalla Solar Farm less than two weeks ago, on 4 September. This solar farm is the biggest in Australia. It now produces 20 megawatts of clean, carbon-free electricity—to the benefit of not only residents of the ACT but the wider global community, through emissions reduction.

It is through projects such as the solar farm at Royalla that we see that the ACT's renewable energy target, which aims for 90 per cent of electricity used in the ACT to be from renewable sources by 2020, is very much achievable. It was exciting to see the solar park at Mugga Lane gain planning approval, and I look forward to seeing this 13-megawatt facility reach its full potential.

In regard to planning for the future and the greenhouse gas reduction targets, the ACT has the most ambitious target in Australia as stipulated by climate change action plan 2. I am pleased that this government has a strong commitment to move towards a 40 per cent reduction on 1990 emission levels by 2020 and zero emissions by 2060. Imagine that, Madam Speaker: a real sustainable city, free from emissions within the lifetimes of our children.

This target fits in with the advice from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the IPCC, which states that, in order to avoid catastrophic effects of climate change, the increase in average global temperature must not exceed two degrees centigrade, and in order to achieve this, all industrialised nations must implement a 40 per cent reduction from 1990 levels by 2020.

The weather events that have already been seen around the world and in Australia show the dire need to reduce our carbon emissions. The 2014 report by the IPCC which came out in March explains that in south-eastern Australia the impacts of climate change have already been seen on food production, terrestrial ecosystems and aquatic ecosystems such as rivers and lakes. The federal Department of the Environment states that annual rainfall could decline by up to 10 per cent by 2030 and 25 per cent by 2070 in relation to 1990 levels. Given that water security has been an issue raised in this place in the past, the potential for future resources is worrying.

As part of climate change action plan 2, not only have these emissions targets been set, but energy efficiency has been targeted for improvement. The ACT's energy efficiency improvement scheme commenced on 1 January 2013, for an initial term of three years. Energy efficiency is an important factor in the reduction of greenhouse gases. Obviously, the more we reduce our overall energy use the less we rely on non-renewable energy production. As of March this year, under the energy efficiency improvement scheme, over 24,000 households had received energy efficiency saving activities. The lifetime abatement due to these activities is estimated to be approximately 237,908 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent.

As I stated earlier, planning for the future and not just for the present is something that the vast majority of Canberrans agree with. To quote Ms Lawder yesterday, "This isn't just a decision that affects us today." No, Madam Speaker; these decisions on renewable energy and greenhouse gas reduction are decisions for the future, plans for the future, preventative supporting measures put in place for the future.

It has been evident for a long time that the vision for the future is something that the Liberal Party lacks on both a local and federal level. We can see this through Ms Lawder's active dismissal of any positive impact any form of renewable energy may have. One of the themes that just keeps reoccurring in discourse from those opposite is the cost of renewable energy production. We have heard members refer to this this morning. It is something that Ms Lawder raised yesterday, and again today.

I would like to reiterate, as many on this side of the chamber have done in the past and as those opposite already know, that renewable energy will, in the near future, be cheaper to produce than our current non-renewable methods. The *Australian energy technology assessment* developed cost estimates for 40 electricity generation technologies and came to the conclusion that by 2030 some renewable technologies, such as solar photovoltaic and wind on-shore, are expected to have the lowest “levelised” cost of electricity of all the evaluated technologies, while coal and gas prices will continue to rise dramatically.

Madam Speaker, I agree wholeheartedly with Ms Lawder’s comments yesterday that this is not just a decision that affects us today. No, it is not. These are decisions that will have a positive economic and environmental impact long into the future.

The review of the commonwealth renewable energy target gives a worrying insight into the way in which the future is considered by the Liberal Party. The review recommends that the large renewable energy target, which deals with large-scale projects such as the solar farm at Royalla or the capital wind farm south-east of Lake George, be completely closed to new entrants. This recommendation, if implemented—a move which I fear those opposite would support—would be catastrophic for the Australian renewable energy industry. It would cost jobs, increase our carbon emissions and pass billions in profits to coal-fired generators. And while Ms Lawder may feel that the ACT government is looking for bragging rights through the development of our renewable energy industry, I can tell you that in the future the only bragging rights those from her party will have will be that they will have simultaneously contributed to the destruction of a budding industry and our environment, all for the benefit of large, carbon-based energy production company shareholders who may not even be Australian citizens.

I support both the federal and ACT renewable energy targets. Both are working towards the betterment of our society through regard for our environment and future generations to come. I sit on the side of 80 per cent of Canberrans who strongly support action on climate change and 93 per cent of Canberrans who support this government’s plans to demonstrate and promote new energy technologies.

I do not just support it here in the chamber, Madam Speaker; I support it in action. Currently, while we are sitting in here, my photovoltaic panels are generating 3.8 kilowatts of power while I am consuming almost zero. What is more, I support the work that Minister Corbell, as Minister for Capital Metro, is doing to move forward with the biggest single investment in public transport we have seen in the territory. An electric light rail system powered by renewably sourced electricity has a large potential to reduce the number of cars on our roads and therefore the amount of greenhouse gases produced by our community.

On an amenity note, I still have not been able to figure out why federal Treasurer Joe Hockey finds the capital wind farm so offensive. I certainly do not. I have been out there; I have visited the wind farm; I have stood alongside those turbines. I do not believe the general public finds these turbines offensive either.

In closing, I commend Dr Bourke's motion supporting the ACT government's efforts to move to renewable sources of energy such as the capital wind farm and Royalla solar farm.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Health, Minister for Higher Education and Minister for Regional Development) (11.54): I am pleased to rise in support of Dr Bourke's motion, and I speak to the amendment as well.

We know that the public accepts that climate change is real; that the great majority of the Canberra community, some 80 per cent, want to see action; and that we must transition to renewable energy sources and away from polluting fossil fuel based energy sources. The government is proud of the steps we have taken to achieve this and the significant achievements to date.

As Dr Bourke and Minister Corbell have explained, these include our target of 90 per cent renewable energy by 2020; the recent opening of the 20 megawatt Royalla Solar Farm, the largest of its kind in Australia; ambitious plans for wind power, including the current wind auction; and tapping the enormous scientific expertise developing renewable energy technologies here in Canberra. This government's renewable energy policies are stimulating growth of local renewable energy businesses and research partnerships that will underpin the development of the next generation of technology.

But we also know that what we are doing here in the ACT is part of a much larger global story, where a growing number of jurisdictions and nation-states are taking similar measures in renewable investment and in carbon pricing.

According to the World Bank, 39 national jurisdictions and 23 subnational jurisdictions internationally have implemented or are about to implement carbon pricing regimes. In 2013 carbon pricing regimes began in eight new countries; and with the world's two largest emitters, China and the USA, now hosting carbon pricing regimes, there is emerging optimism that most of the world will embrace both carbon pricing and strong greenhouse gas reduction targets.

Meanwhile, the world's largest carbon market, managed by the 27 members of the European Union, has recently strengthened its greenhouse target. In 2014, around 144 countries have renewable energy targets, and 138 countries have renewable energy support programs.

Developing and emerging countries have led the renewable energy target country count expansion in recent years, with the number growing from 15 in 2005 to 95 by early 2014. China, which currently generates 17 per cent of its electricity from renewables, aims to generate 20 per cent of its electricity from renewables by 2015, and the EU as a whole aims to generate 20 per cent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2020. The systems operating in these countries are not perfect, but they are vital economic architecture, a first step to a much more sustainable future.

As members would know, Australia has one of the highest levels of greenhouse gas emissions in the world. In 2013, these carbon emissions totalled 538.4 million tonnes. This makes Australia the 15th largest emitter in the world. Australia also has the 12th highest per capita CO₂ emission, of 16.9 tonnes, almost 50 per cent higher than the OECD average and 3.5 times the global average.

Responsible governments across the world have accepted the science of climate change, and are increasing their efforts to reduce emissions. We in the ACT also accept the expert advice that there will be deep and lasting negative impacts on our climate, as well as on how we live, if these emissions are not significantly reduced.

As this motion calls for, the ACT government wants to see the commonwealth reconsider its stance on renewable energy and climate change. With the introduction of carbon pricing having finally begun to correct a monumental market failure, its repeal is a clear instance of policy failure propping up the polluting industries of yesterday against the technologies of tomorrow.

We all know that pricing carbon is the most economically efficient way of reducing emissions across an economy. A price on carbon internalises the cost of pollution into business decisions and drives innovative solutions to reduce emissions. By promoting sustainable investment decisions, such as in renewable energy generation and energy efficiency, carbon pricing promotes innovation through the people who do it best, the entrepreneurs. For this reason, the ACT government continues to support a national carbon pricing scheme. With the repeal of carbon pricing by the commonwealth, Australia's big polluters are once again free to emit carbon and pass on the cost of doing so to the community and to future generations.

The scepticism underpinning the direct action approach to emissions reduction is also apparent in the review of the commonwealth RET scheme. The renewable energy target is a policy that has significantly contributed to reducing the carbon intensity of one of the largest sources of emissions in Australia, fossil-fuelled electricity generation driven by coal-fired generators.

If the carbon price had not been repealed, the importance of the renewable energy target in reducing our emissions over time would have diminished. Electricity market pricing would have gradually internalised the social and economic costs of carbon pollution; and combined with continuing reductions in the cost of renewable energy supply, carbon pricing would have delivered the required emissions cuts at the lowest cost to the community.

Given the dominant role played by the electricity generation sector in Australia's high level of emissions and the repeal of a carbon price, the ACT government believes it is critical that the current target of the RET scheme is maintained and strengthened over time. After a long history of increasing, Australia's electricity emissions have recently started trending downwards, in large part because of the RET. It is important that this momentum is sustained through maintenance of the current RET. I was pleased to hear Mark Butler on the radio today looking for continued bipartisan support for the RET, and discussions are underway between the two major parties.

The RET has also helped create a significant renewable energy industry in Australia that has no doubt generated jobs and promoted much needed investment in regional communities and has incentivised research. It has even managed to reduce wholesale electricity prices, a point that is conceded by its critics. Today's motion seeks a move back in this direction.

We have been saddened to reflect on the recent history of emission reduction policies at the national level. These policies initially commenced with bipartisan support as well as the support of all Australian state and territory governments. Both the major parties took emission trading to the national election in 2007, and both supported the current RET.

This motion calls on the commonwealth to commit to supporting certainty for investment in renewable energy. It needs to show the type of leadership that the Canberra community has shown and continues to show in taking strong action against climate change and making the steps to transition to a carbon-free economy.

The ACT will benefit from becoming an internationally recognised centre for renewable energy innovation and investment. By doing this, the territory will reinforce its knowledge economy status, and stands to share in the estimated \$7 trillion that is forecast to be invested in renewable energy globally over the coming decade. I thank Dr Bourke for bringing this motion to the Assembly today.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 6

Noes 7

Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne
Mr Hanson
Ms Lawder

Mr Smyth
Mr Wall

Mr Barr
Dr Bourke
Ms Burch
Mr Corbell

Ms Gallagher
Mr Gentleman
Mr Rattenbury

Question so resolved in the negative.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Housing and Minister for Tourism and Events) (12.05): I thank Dr Bourke for bringing this motion forward today. As we have seen this morning from the contributions of my colleagues, the territory government has a very strong commitment to renewable energy. To illustrate this I would like to discuss a few examples of how various elements of the government are giving effect to this commitment.

In regard to land development, in the new suburbs of Wright and Bonner a trial was undertaken of the introduction of rebates as an incentive for residents to install solar hot-water systems. This was followed with a trial of mandating solar hot-water

systems in the new suburbs of Coombs, Harrison section 4 and Jacka. The potential for mandating solar hot water is being investigated for the future suburbs of Denman Prospect and Throsby. Wright and Coombs achieved accreditation in four categories of the Urban Development Institute of Australia's EnviroDevelopment tool, including energy.

These suburbs introduced for the first time the solar access requirements which will help to facilitate passive solar design and renewable space heating. Home owners in Wright and Coombs also have access to the LDA's home sustainability adviser, who provides advice on passive solar design and options for and optimal location of renewable energy installations such as solar hot-water systems and photovoltaic panels.

Meanwhile the new suburb of Lawson in Belconnen is a pilot for the Green Building Council of Australia's green star communities tool, which includes an assessment of renewable energy options. Lawson also has mandated solar hot water on all single residential blocks. West Belconnen is also a pilot of the Green Building Council's green star communities tool and a range of renewable technologies are being explored, including a potential location for a solar farm.

In the planning for the proposed Molonglo demonstration precinct, known as Scope, research was undertaken into a range of renewable energy options. This included requirements for cabling to be installed for future installation of photovoltaic panels. Planning for the precinct achieved all six categories of the Urban Development Institute of Australia's EnviroDevelopment certification, including energy, water, waste, materials, ecosystems and community. This research and accreditation is now available for potential adoption by a future developer for the site.

Back in 2012 I launched the government's business development strategy—growth, diversification and jobs. The strategy committed additional funding each financial year to the 2014-15 fiscal year to boost the innovation connect program to include a new funding stream for clean technology or sustainability-oriented companies.

Clean tech grants support commercialisation and proof of technology projects that improve environmental quality, reduce environmental impacts or improve efficiencies in the use of energy resources and lead to the development of new, innovative clean technologies and services. Since this funding stream was launched in late 2012 five projects have been successful in receiving a total of \$210,000 in ACT government funding.

The South East Region of Renewable Energy Excellence was formed in 2011 and received further momentum through a grant from the Department of Industry to map and scope the needs and capacity of the capital region's renewable energy sector. The territory government's commitment to the South East Region of Renewable Energy Excellence industry cluster is \$20,000 per annum for three years, with the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate and the Environment and Planning Directorate each providing \$10,000.

The government has been very pleased to participate in this project since its inception and has provided a range of financial and in-kind support, including membership of the steering committee and hosting several seminars and business networking events. There is also strong regional support with the New South Wales government seeking to build local community and business support for renewable energy in the south-east region of New South Wales.

In August of this year the Australian Renewable Energy Agency committed to provide \$305,000 for a three-year work program of the South East Region of Renewable Energy Excellence industry cluster through a funding agreement with Regional Development Australia. This agreement will help the capital region generate industry development benefits from the territory government's renewable energy target by building a renewable business network and disseminating information about opportunities for investment and jobs in renewable energy in the region. SERREE has also committed to building a renewable energy visitor trail in the Australian capital region with a focus on school tours and enhancing the understanding of renewable energy in the community.

The annual Canberra BusinessPoint awards showcase the innovation and diversity of small businesses operating in our region. There is a category within the awards, "clean and green", that recognises emerging environmental or clean technology businesses that are providing new, innovative products and services to the market. Previous winners include sustainable energy-efficient builders Jigsaw Housing and waste management solutions company Envirolove.

The territory government's strategic opportunity funding program has awarded two grants totalling \$120,000 to support the development of a Canberra science and innovation precinct, a collaboration between the CSIRO and the ANU. The precinct project team is looking to identify areas that will focus cross-disciplinary and cross-sector collaboration in Canberra. Of these areas two are relevant to the ACT's renewable activities—namely, the crop and plant science area which will look at how new developments are transforming agricultural production and environmental management, and are creating new biologically-based manufacturing industries; and the Centre for Environmental Informatics, which will take advantage of the territory's high concentration of researchers in this field to address the challenges facing researchers in making use of the exponential growth in environmental data from multiple sources.

In addition the territory government's \$1.1 million investment in the Canberra High Resolution Plant Phenomics Centre is helping researchers to develop new and improved crops, healthier foods and more sustainable agricultural practices. The ACT government's contribution has supported outreach activities such as post-doctoral fellowships and international promotion. As a result the centre has attracted international scientists and recognition as a world leader in plant phenomics science. The centre has also secured a \$20 million funding contribution from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The territory government is also a very proud supporter of National ICT Australia. NICTA's Canberra laboratory is teaming up with solar energy experts from the ANU, ActewAGL and local ACT companies Armada solar and LAROS Technologies to develop ways of predicting the expected power output from rooftop solar energy systems.

Finally, in another area of my portfolios, territory venues such as GIO Stadium, Stromlo Forest Park and Exhibition Park are taking a range of measures to become more environmentally sustainable as venues. This includes the installation of solar panels to help power the lights at GIO Stadium, Biolytix sewage treatment at Stromlo Forest Park and water harvesting at Exhibition Park.

As you can see, Madam Assistant Speaker Lawder, across the ACT government, in areas of business development, in venue management and operations, the government has in place a range of programs and initiatives that demonstrate our commitment to renewable energy. It is very pleasing to see the success of ACT businesses in taking this research and innovation nationally and internationally, and long may it continue.

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) (12.15): I too rise in support of Dr Bourke's motion today. As Dr Bourke's motion points out, Canberra is a national hub and, indeed, an international hub for renewable energy. I am proud to be part of a government that has prioritised renewable energy. Indeed, I believe that is the only responsible thing a government can do given the challenges that climate change presents us. The government knows that the science of climate change is a fact. It is beyond a debating point. We know that action must be taken at every level of government to confront the challenge, and many speakers here this morning have gone to those points.

Madam Assistant Speaker, I too join with others who have spoken on the ambitious targets that we have set here because we know it is the right thing to do. This stands in stark contrast to the conservative Liberal governments that we have. They have done all they can not only to trash environmental sustainability but also to stand in the way of innovative Australian businesses and others who are keen to invest. The community agrees with the government's approach to renewable energy. As Dr Bourke has outlined, and as I think Mr Gentleman has said, more than 80 per cent of the community support our approach to addressing climate change.

Madam Assistant Speaker, our schools are playing their part to ensure that they operate in a carbon constrained world. In 2011 the ACT entered the national solar schools program to install solar panels. As I mentioned this morning, all our schools now have solar panels and smart meters. This is the first jurisdiction to do so. The schools benefit from this. The meters not only allow the schools' leadership to monitor and plan their energy use but they are also integrated into the curriculum. This provides students with access to real-time data and information that they can use to learn about not simply the environment but photovoltaics and energy efficiency and building design.

The collective size of the ACT public schools' contribution to renewable energy is 1,192 kilowatts. As an example of how effective these systems have been at schools, Franklin Early Childhood School expects its solar panels to provide 58 per cent of its energy needs. At Neville Bonner school the solar panels are predicted to provide 79 per cent of its energy requirements. That is a very positive outcome for the schools and again it demonstrates the investment that this government is making in our schools to address the matters of climate change. But perhaps more important, it has prevented the release of 1,806 tonnes of carbon dioxide.

The commitment to renewable energy in schools is only one part of the overarching approach to reduce the carbon footprint of schools. Ten schools have been selected as part of a program to reduce their carbon footprints: Theodore Primary School, Canberra High School, Arawang Primary School, North Ainslie Primary School, Alfred Deakin High School, Evatt Primary School, Fadden Primary School, Weetangera Primary School, Stromlo High School and Caroline Chisholm School. Canberra High School and Theodore Primary School are intended to be the first carbon neutral schools, and this will be achieved through a variety of ways, including ceiling insulation upgrades, LED light upgrades, florescent lamp upgrades and replacements at seven schools and also reducing the cost of lighting.

I also would like in the time I have left to go to an article—as we are spending time here this morning reflecting on climate change—in the *Canberra Times* of 17 February, headed “Liberal government’s ideology threatens renewable energy future”. I think it is important because you made the point earlier, Madam Assistant Speaker Lawder, that our amendment supports industry and you made the comment about your support of people.

I hope that there is no motion coming from the Canberra Liberals that supports small business but is devoid of supporting Canberra families because the two are linked. You do not support industry, you do not support Canberra families and you do not promote economic participation of people who are striving to get a job, run a small business and look after their families. It was a bit of an irony when you uttered those words this morning, Madam Assistant Speaker.

But back to this article. It reads:

I was astonished to read Nicole Lawder’s advice on these pages (“Helping the environment needs a realistic approach” (Times2, February 13, p5) that Canberrans should focus on “keeping ponds clean and viable” instead of building a solar power station to provide 4500 households with environmentally sustainable electricity.

It’s an extreme example of what psychologists call “displacement activity”.

Furthermore, she accuses the ACT government of being “ideological, not environmental”, a statement that psychologists could classify as “projection”.

I am reading from this article of February 17:

After all, it is the federal government that is implementing an ideological program to terminate climate action and in particular to stop the growth of renewable energy.

It's attempting to remove the modest carbon price, abolish the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, cut the renewable energy target, and further undermine future wind farms by holding yet another inquiry into the sham "wind turbine syndrome".

It has already cut \$800 million from the Australian Renewable Energy Agency and abolished the Climate Commission, which provided independent advice to the public. (Fortunately, it has been relaunched as the public-funded Climate Council.) A single one of these actions could be interpreted as simple ignorance, but the whole set clearly compromises a deliberate plan to try to slow the inevitable shift away from polluting fossil fuels to renewable energy.

The article comments that the federal opposition may step up and be somewhat more proactive in its horror at these moves. It goes on:

The "justification" of these federal policies is ideological, because it is anti-climate science, because investment in the growth of renewable energy (and energy efficiency) can generate more jobs than are being lost in the fossil fuel industry, and because the Clean Energy Finance Corporation is leveraging much private investment and is actually making a profit.

The subsidies to the production and use of fossil fuels in Australia are running at more than \$10 billion a year and seem to be permanent, dwarfing the small declining subsidies to renewable energy.

It is worth a very good read but it points out that any step away from supporting ambitious renewable targets is not in the community's interests, it is not in families' interests, it is not in industry's interest, it is no-one's interests. The Canberra Liberals choose to come to this place with such wanton disregard for, one, the climate change facts, and, two, supporting the 80 per cent of Canberrans who support our position on doing all we can to address this. It is out of step with the public's view.

In closing, I make reference to the petition you tabled in this place yesterday, Madam Assistant Speaker, supporting those who have concerns around the wind power at Collector. I think it was pointed out to you yesterday—in closing I point it out again—that that power arrangement, the wind turbine, was approved by the New South Wales National and Liberal parties, and the current Liberal-National sitting member was here objecting to something that his government actually gave the tick of approval to do.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (12.24), in reply: This morning, Madam Assistant Speaker, we heard a history lesson from the Canberra Liberals on renewable energy targets and their evolution in this country. But we did not hear the latest instalment—the latest instalment of Liberal flip-flops on policy leading out from the Warburton review, a missing part of the story. I am glad, Madam Assistant Speaker, that the Canberra Liberals agree that the Canberra community supports Labor government policy on renewable energy targets—overwhelming community support.

But then, Madam Assistant Speaker, two arguments were advanced: firstly, that the effect of the ACT is so small that what we do does not matter. Well, I tell you, Madam Assistant Speaker, it certainly matters to the Canberra community. It matters, as they have said over and over again, as we have heard this morning, as I have talked about previously—overwhelming support from the Canberra community to do something about climate change.

Then we had an academic theory lesson on individual behaviour and attitude. If we are going to talk about academic theory, Madam Assistant Speaker, I would draw your attention to Garrett Hardin's theory in "The Tragedy of the Commons". This is an economic theory about the overexploitation of common resources by individual action—resources such as oceans, rivers, fish stocks, atmosphere and global warming. Canberrans intrinsically understand this notion, that only by working together as a community can we achieve outcomes for our common good. And that is why they overwhelmingly support ACT government policy and a strong and progressive policy on renewable energy targets. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to.

Leave of absence

Motion (by **Mr Corbell**) agreed to:

That Ms Porter be granted leave of absence for this sitting week as she is representing the Government at the International Association of Volunteer Effort 23rd World Volunteer Conference.

Sitting suspended from 12.28 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Canberra Hospital—bed occupancy rates

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, on 11 September the executive director of the Canberra Hospital emergency department addressed staff concerns in an email entitled "Current ED issues" in which he reported that the "Canberra Hospital is frequently operating at levels over 95 per cent". He raised concerns about the ability to access beds inside the hospital in a timely manner. He further stated that this had generated pressure on staff and that strategies implemented since 2012 "might be viewed to be the less than perfect solution for ED and the broader hospital". Minister, are you aware of the less than perfect solutions that have been implemented and what, if any, negative impacts have they had?

MS GALLAGHER: If that email is the same email I have seen, it was quite a detailed email that went on to list a whole range of strategies that had been implemented. It was the new executive director who has been appointed to that position in the last two weeks communicating with staff about the range of initiatives that have been introduced and also accepting that bed occupancy and getting people out of the emergency department and into the rest of the hospital still requires further

work. I do not think there is anything new that has not been ventilated in this place or across the hospital in that information to staff. There was a commitment in that to continue working with staff to address concerns that they may have now, and mapping out very clearly from the new executive director the leadership that he will show and the way he will work with management across the hospital to address pressures that are being experienced by the ED staff.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Are the “less than perfect” solutions that the executive director referred to continuing to be implemented?

MS GALLAGHER: I think what Mr Hanson is trying to suggest is that these initiatives should not have been implemented. If you go through it—

Mr Hanson: I am quoting from the email.

MS GALLAGHER: If you go through the email, if it is the same one that I saw, unless it has had those bits chopped out, you will see that it is about all of the different changes that have been brought in, which include extra staff, extra beds across the hospital, the mental health assessment unit—a whole range of initiatives, including changes to the model of care and the way that the emergency department itself operates internally. There are a range of strategies that have been implemented to address the pressure. Some of them have had more impact than others, but I do not believe any of them have been ceased, because they all form a part of the solution going forward.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, why, after six years as health minister, are patients unable to access beds in a timely manner?

MS GALLAGHER: My answer to that, Mr Doszpot, is that they can access 200 more beds than they were able to when you were last in government. The Labor government has been investing in beds in every single budget that actually had for the first time taken our bed numbers to equal that of the rest of Australia. We now are on par with the rest of Australia after the Canberra Hospital was imploded and beds were lost. That is what happened. We had hundreds of beds cut from the system and we have built them back. Yes, the situation is under pressure now.

Mr Smyth: It’s true.

MS GALLAGHER: Yes, it is, but imagine what it would have been like if we had not been making the bed investment that we have made over the last 10 years.

Mr Hanson: Thirteen years you have had—13 years—and you are still making excuses.

MS GALLAGHER: I know when Mr Hanson does not like the answer. I know when it gets uncomfortable. It is when everyone starts interjecting. But that is the reality: the hospital is well placed to deal with the demands that are being placed on it. I am very proud of the record that the Labor government has in relation to the investments in health—

Opposition members interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: and I am happy to list them all for you as I did yesterday if that addresses the facts as opposed to the heckling that is coming from those opposite.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, are your priorities wrong when you have hospitals that are full but announce \$800 million in light rail?

MS GALLAGHER: As Mr Doszpot will know from the debate yesterday, the government has already invested \$878 million in capital expenditure across the health system since 2008: \$878 million.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: I am not sure what aspect of that infrastructure Mr Coe does not like. Is it the new enhanced Belconnen Community Health Centre that serves his constituents? Perhaps it is the Tuggeranong one. Maybe it is the Capital Region Cancer Centre. Maybe it is the women's and children's hospital. Maybe it is the neuro suite. Maybe it is the additional operating theatres. Maybe it is the new ICU at Calvary. Maybe it is the new emergency department facilities across both hospitals.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order!

MS GALLAGHER: Is it that that you do not like: \$878 million in infrastructure into the health system, and that is just year to date? Wait until the additional investment in the health system continues with a new hospital at the University of Canberra and the significant rebuild that is yet to happen on the Canberra Hospital site.

MADAM SPEAKER: Before I call the next person to ask a question could I remind members of standing order 42 that says that remarks in the chamber should be addressed to the chair and that if members want to make a rhetorical point they can make it just as well by addressing the issues through the chair rather than talking to members on the benches opposite them.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: I did hear someone scoff but I did not hear who it was. Although it is disorderly, people need to reflect on how they conduct themselves.

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I believe it was disorderly and I think it would be appropriate that Mr Rattenbury withdraw his disorderly remark.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Can I have some order, please. There is a point of order. Mr Hanson is entitled to be heard in silence.

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, given that you did hear it—and I think others did—it was disorderly and I think it would be appropriate if Mr Rattenbury were to withdraw.

MADAM SPEAKER: I do not know who made the scoff. I think that it is disorderly and people can reflect on that. If the member responsible—

Mr Corbell: Madam Speaker—

MADAM SPEAKER: Sit down, Mr Corbell—wants to own up and withdraw, that is fine.

Mr Corbell: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, if we are reflecting on behaviour of members in this chamber, then could I ask you to give any indication whether you believe the level of interjection during the Chief Minister's answer to the last question was in any way reasonable, given that she had to shout to be heard.

MADAM SPEAKER: I will take that in the superficial spirit, on the basis of the words and not the tone, and I will remind members in this place that I have said that I do not believe that the debate in this place should be conducted in silence. The rules that I would put in place are that there should not be personal reflections, there should be a capacity for people to be heard. And you will recall that there have been a number of times this morning when I called people to order when a speaker could not be heard. I called people to order during the answer to questions. You will also recall that I am fairly quick to call people to order when I think it is necessary and to warn people. And I will name them when the need arises.

Health—costs

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, in the *Canberra Times* on 7 April this year you said that the high level of growth in health costs was unsustainable and that you would take moves to slow the increase. You said: "It's clear we have to look at new ways to manage our growing health costs." This week in the *Canberra Times* of 15 September a report headed "Canberra's public hospitals are Australia's most expensive" states that if Canberra's hospitals were compared only with other principal referral hospitals, we still have the highest national costs at \$6,365 per patient, 25 per cent more than the national average. The ACT Health Care Consumers Association executive director, Darlene Cox, said: "There's a whole lot of waste and duplication in the system that we need to address." Minister, is there "a whole lot of waste and duplication in the system" as observed by the ACT Health Care Consumers Association?

MS GALLAGHER: That is certainly a comment that has been used nationally across the health system. I have heard it from the national body of the Health Care Consumers Association. I have no doubt that there are opportunities for efficiencies across the healthcare system. There is work underway across government, from Health and Treasury, to look at the costs across the ACT public health system and ways to drive efficiencies within it. Indeed in this year's budget a large sum of money was returned to Treasury from Health for operating under budget. That is the first time that that has occurred. We continue to liaise with Calvary Public Hospital about their budget each year.

So there is no doubt that there are efficiencies. I have not come across waste. In using the word "waste", what some people think is waste, others will argue is essential. Some of the issues around cost that we are looking at, and would have to be looked at when you compare us with other hospitals, is the level of service that is offered here. I have certainly been criticised in this place when people have had to go to Sydney for treatment for particular things, but that certainly contributes to the cost.

We provide a level of service here in the ACT that far exceeds what would be provided to a population base of our size, and we do that for a reason—because we would like to see our community treated here at their local hospital. But that comes at a cost. That, to some people, will be considered waste; others will think that it is an essential service. Certainly, driving efficiencies in health care is part of the solution in terms of returning our budget to surplus. We will be ensuring that the health budget does not grow between eight and 10 per cent per year but is more in line with five to seven per cent, which is indeed what has occurred in the last year.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, are Canberra's public hospitals the most expensive in Australia even when compared only with other principal referral hospitals in particular?

MS GALLAGHER: In that dataset it certainly looks to be the case, although—when I questioned Health officials about it—there is some uncertainty about what is included in those figures and whether we are comparing apples with apples. There is a whole range of different costs laid into that. But also, when you do separate out some of those issues—for example, some of the level of service issues that I just spoke about in my previous answer—the additional costs of superannuation for the ACT are in the order of \$30 million a year. That is the actual difference that we pay because all of our employees are not on 9½ per cent per annum. That contributes to overhead costs.

So yes, in that dataset, that looks to be the case. I think there probably are some reasonable explanations, including that we service our community here with a much higher level of service and specialty than you would for a population of 380,000. If that is something that the Assembly has a view on, about whether that is right or whether we should cut costs and remove those services, I would suggest bringing a debate to the Assembly.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Why are our hospitals full and why do we wait longer than any other jurisdiction if we are paying more for services?

MS GALLAGHER: We do not wait longer than any other jurisdiction. Go to the MyHospitals website, Mr Hanson, and you will see that that is not the case. You will need to update that element of your question because it is simply not true. Go and look at a whole range of similar sized hospitals to Canberra and then come back and say that we wait longer here than anywhere else.

In terms of the costs, again, I would welcome the view of the Leader of the Opposition about whether providing cardiothoracic surgery is essential and whether providing neurosurgery at the microvascular level is essential.

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: The argument here, Mr Doszpot—and I should not digress—is about too much money spent in the health system. This is the argument. I do not know whether you were updated in the party room that that was going to be the argument. Not everything goes back to capital metro, Mr Doszpot. This argument is about the costs currently paid in the hospital, and I am arguing that if the opposition has concerns then it is going to have to look at the level of service that is provided here. Sure, we can bring our costs right back down, but that will mean that people will need to travel to the major centres for treatment. That is certainly something that can be done, and I will be interested to hear whether that is going to be a position of the Canberra Liberals.

DR BOURKE: Minister, will the new after-hours home GP service have an effect upon this issue?

MS GALLAGHER: The home doctor service has been operating now for just a month. In fact, we were in contact with them just recently—in fact, earlier today—and they have been inundated with demand for their service to a much greater degree than was predicted. What we are seeing at the moment is a busy Canberra Hospital and a busy Calvary Hospital. The two walk-in centres are both busy. Tuggeranong walk-in centre is seeing more than 70 patients a day. GPs are busy and the home doctor visiting service is busy. Whether the new services are generating demand, they are certainly not easing demand from the public hospital system at this point in time.

Transport—light rail

MR COE: My question is for the Minister for Capital Metro. Minister, why aren't you releasing the full business case if it has been completed by the consultants and approved by cabinet?

MR CORBELL: For the reasons I outlined yesterday.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, why is there going to be a six-week delay between the public announcement for light rail and the supporting documentation?

MR CORBELL: For the reasons I outlined yesterday.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! I want to be able to hear Mr Smyth. Mr Coe!

MR SMYTH: Minister, will the government be making another bid to Infrastructure Australia for commonwealth funding now that the business case is complete?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Smyth for the question. We would if the federal Liberal government had indicated any interest in urban rail projects. The facts are that Tony Abbot has said to all the states and territories he would not support urban rail projects. This is a shameful position on the part of the Canberra Liberals because all they are interested in doing is building more roads, more highways, more tollways, but they are not interested in investing in public transport for the public.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, does the full business case include consideration of other modes of public transport or just light rail?

MR CORBELL: For the same reasons I outlined yesterday, the government is releasing the business case on 31 October and we will not be pre-empted in relation to the detail within the business case ahead of that release.

ACT Ambulance Service—case management system

MR SMYTH: My question is to the minister for emergency services. Minister, the ACT Ambulance Service uses an electronic case management system called VACIS. I understand that the ACT Ambulance Service uses version 2.2 of VACIS. Many of the other Australian jurisdictions are now using version 3.0. More than two weeks ago ACTAS attempted to upgrade the ACTAS system and the upgrade failed, forcing our paramedics to return to less efficient paper record-keeping systems. Minister, why did this happen?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Smyth for the question. As to whether or not the claims made by Mr Smyth are accurate, I will have to seek verification of this. I will take the question on notice and provide a further answer to the member.

MR SMYTH: Before I ask a supplementary, Madam Speaker, I am happy to table the ACT Ambulance Service clinical education notice, for the education of the minister, entitled “VACIS EPCR printing issues”.

MADAM SPEAKER: You would need leave to table that.

MR SMYTH: I seek leave.

Leave granted.

MR SMYTH: I table the following paper:

ACT Ambulance Service—VACIS ePCR Printing Issues—Clinical Education
Notice CSN 01-14, dated 12 September 2014.

It is a good read, minister. Minister, is it true that the ACTAS version of VACIS is now so old that it is not supported by the provider?

MR CORBELL: Whether or not the claims made by Mr Smyth are true is yet to be tested but I will take further advice on the ESA and provide a further answer to the member.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, when will the system be fully back online?

MR CORBELL: I refer the member to my previous answer.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, why have you ignored your responsibilities as minister for emergency services due to your fascination and preoccupation with capital metro?

MR CORBELL: I have not.

Education—curriculum

DR BOURKE: My question is to the Minister for Education and Training.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Just a moment, Dr Bourke. Could I have a bit of quiet here so I can hear Dr Bourke? Some members' voices do not carry nearly as much as others. Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My question is to the Minister for Education and Training and refers to her recent announcement that English will be compulsory for all senior secondary students in the ACT. Can you inform the Assembly, minister, what happens at present in ACT schools and colleges and why is it important that all students undertake a level of English study in the senior secondary years?

MS BURCH: I thank Dr Bourke for his question. He is quite right in identifying that from next year English will be a required component for senior secondary studies for all ACT students. In October last year I asked the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies to review the study of English in years 11 and 12 as part of their broader review of the ACT year 12 certificate. This was the first time the year 12 certificate had been comprehensively reviewed for many years and was designed to ensure that the ACT secondary curriculum and year 12 certificate are meeting the needs of our students for their future studies and careers.

One issue that quickly emerged during discussions of the year 12 certificate was the level of English that students in the ACT were required to undertake to successfully receive a year 12 certificate. It came as a level of surprise to me—and it may have to many other members—that at present English is not compulsory for ACT senior secondary students. This makes the ACT the only jurisdiction in Australia where students are not required to study English in the senior secondary years.

Whilst some schools do mandate the study of English, others do not. I personally think that they should. So I am pleased with the result of the BSSS review that, starting with the 2015 year 11 cohort, all students will study English in years 11 and 12. This will be a requirement for receiving a year 12 certificate from 2016.

At present in the ACT students choose from a range of courses to obtain a year 12 certificate. Whilst I understand that the vast majority of students already do undertake a level of English study, I think it is important to recognise that the knowledge, understanding and skills developed through the study of English are vital for all young people.

The study of English equips students with valuable insights about our language and culture and provides a platform for the students to participate in and contribute to the community. As such, the community and particularly employers, rightfully, expect our students to be competent in reading and writing.

I would like to thank the BSSS and the review committee for their work. I think it is a solid piece of work that will serve our students and the ACT well now and into the future.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, what other recommendations did the BSSS review make about changes to the requirements for a year 12 certificate?

MS BURCH: The BSSS review committee made a number of other recommendations about changes to year 12 certificate requirements. They have said that the study of maths should be highly recommended to students studying in the senior secondary year. Whilst this recommendation does not mandate the study of maths in the same way as English will be mandatory, it does send a clear signal to students, teachers and schools that maths is a very important area of study for students for ensuring ongoing success in life and careers.

Other recommendations include an increase in the number of courses studied to meet the minimum requirement for the award of an ACT year 12 certificate, and this is a welcome change that will enhance the breadth and depth of students' knowledge, skills and understanding and aligns with the government's commitment to lift the attainment of year 12 graduates in the ACT.

To streamline course structures for repeat, mature and older students, the review committee recommended that a number of different courses, packages, be collapsed into a single, abridged package. The simplification of these packages has the potential to enable more students from diverse backgrounds to obtain a year 12 certificate.

Other recommendations made by the committee include further investigations of online, adaptive literacy and numeracy testing in the senior secondary years and processes by which vocational education and training is included in the year 12 certificate.

The final recommendation of the committee is that the BSSS will implement a practice of year 12 review on a regular basis. This recommendation will ensure the integrity of our year 12 certificate is maintained, and that it is responsive to the needs of the future.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, will senior secondary students be required to pass English in order to receive their year 12 certificates?

MS BURCH: What we have now in the year 12 certificate is a streamed approach—those that want to seek tertiary studies and those that seek a competence level. The BSSS will make the requirements known to schools in preparedness for the first cohort of next year. All that documentation will be clearly outlined for schools, parents and students.

Education—teacher concerns

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the minister for education. Minister, the ACT branch of the Australian Education Union recently published results of a survey it conducted amongst ACT school teachers. The results indicate a high level of dissatisfaction across a wide number of areas. Ninety-eight per cent of teachers believe their overall workload has increased over the last five years, that there has been an increase in the number of tasks they are required to complete and that there has been an increase in the number of bureaucratic and compliance tasks. What is the government doing to address teachers' concerns about the level of administrative workload that they have?

MS BURCH: I thank Mr Doszpot for his question. Yes, the survey you are referring to was a survey by the Australian Education Union and coincided very nicely with discussions on EBA arrangements. So it should be no surprise that the union are doing their bit to position themselves for these negotiations. Certainly, when you look at our

level of teachers' workload, so to speak, we have the lowest in any state or territory, the lowest face-to-face teaching hours in the country—here in the ACT, in our government schools.

Mr Doszpot: So 98 per cent of teachers are wrong?

MS BURCH: Mr Doszpot, these are the facts. These may not be found in a union survey but these are the facts. We have the lowest student ratio number in any state or territory. Again, I think that teachers, respectfully, do have, and I think they highly regard the fact that they have, the lowest face-to-face teaching hours in any jurisdiction. In response to the comment on paperwork, the advice I have is that—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order Mr Hanson! I cannot hear Minister Burch because of your conversation with Mr Barr.

MS BURCH: the AEU has publicly identified four administrative tasks undertaken by teachers. One of the tasks is individual learning plans for students with an identified learning need. The individual learning plans are developed each semester, with input from parents and specialist teachers. I believe that that is not an administrative function; that is a core function of a teacher—an individual learning plan. The other administrative tasks include recruitment panels, which is completely and absolutely voluntary for teachers to participate in, and the fortnightly absence record form which was introduced a number of years ago. It is my advice that this task takes approximately one to three minutes each fortnight.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, how many hours per year are set aside for teacher professional development, given that 79 per cent of teachers say that they do not have enough time to engage in collaborative professional learning?

MS BURCH: Our teachers' employment arrangements allow for good professional development opportunities, whether that be attendance at conferences within Canberra or interstate, whether it is attendance at activities with the TQI, whether that is indeed a professional development activity that is conducted within the schools. Teachers, as Mr Doszpot knows, are required to produce a number of hours each year for professional development to maintain their teacher registration. This survey represents to me their positioning for their EBA negotiations. I will see it as that. Teachers are supported and graduate teachers have the lowest teacher—

Mr Doszpot: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Could I request that the minister answer the question that was asked?

MADAM SPEAKER: What was the question that was asked? The question that was asked was about the number of hours of professional development available to each—

Mr Doszpot: I am quite happy to read it out again. Can I read it out again?

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes.

Mr Doszpot: Minister, how many hours per year are set aside for teacher professional development, given that 79 per cent of teachers say that they do not have enough time to engage in collaborative professional learning?

MADAM SPEAKER: The standing orders require that the answer be directly relevant. The question was a quantitative question, so I ask the minister to see if she can answer the quantitative question.

MS BURCH: It is my understanding that the current EBA sets out a range of activities that provide for professional development, so does the demand for maintenance of their professional standards.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, what is the current average of classroom hours for teachers?

MS BURCH: I think face to face, remembering, for senior secondary years is 19 hours a week and for primary school is 21.5.

Mr Barr: That sounds correct.

MS BURCH: Thank you, Mr Barr; you have a longer memory than I do. So again our ACT government school teachers sit at the lowest face-to-face teaching hours of any state or territory.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, what impact does face-to-face teaching hours have on educational outcomes?

MS BURCH: I heard the question as: what does the face-to-face teaching hours have on educational outcomes?

MADAM SPEAKER: Sorry, if you did not hear Mr Smyth, I am happy to have him repeat the question.

MS BURCH: Yes, if he could, please.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Smyth,

MR SMYTH: I will speak more slowly and clearly, Madam Speaker. Minister, what impact does face-to-face teaching hours have on educational outcomes?

MS BURCH: The hours that a teacher spends in front of a student teaching, I think have a significant impact on an educational outcome.

Children and young people—disability services

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! We are getting a little raucous. Mr Wall has the call; I would like to be able to hear him.

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Disability. Hopefully, she is a bit more across this portion of her brief. Minister, since your announcement that the ACT—

Ms Burch: Madam Speaker, can I make a point of order? Is that allowed within a question—to have that level of preamble? Thank you for clarification.

MADAM SPEAKER: There are no injunctions about preambles in initial questions. I think that if you had listened to Mrs Jones's question—if you want to make a point of order or something, you can stand up and make a point of order or be quiet. If you had listened to Mrs Jones's question, for instance, earlier on, it was quite a lengthy preamble, all of which is in order. Mr Wall, you had a question.

MR WALL: As I said before, my question is to the Minister for Disability. Minister, since you announced the ACT government's closure of early intervention units for children with a disability, you have stated on numerous occasions that “no child will be left behind” when it comes to the continuity of these services. Minister, will you stand by your previous statement that no child will be left behind?

MS BURCH: I thank Mr Wall for his interest in this question. We will transition the young folk, children and young people, through to the national disability insurance scheme and they will be supported by community providers. A child that is receiving a service now will continue to receive a service. I have made that commitment and I will work very hard to make sure that community providers are there to pick up where government will withdraw from specialist disability early intervention services currently delivered through Education and Training Directorate because those services will come to an end this school year.

On the weekend, on Saturday—I am not sure if Mr Wall took advantage of attending the expo—I would hope that Mr Wall took advantage of seeing the around 50 organisations that attended there and the many hundreds of individuals and families that went to have a direct conversation with community providers. The feedback I got when I spoke with families and with the community organisations that were there was that that was a great opportunity. Parents were seeing opportunities that they had not even thought about before.

That is the change of our community. Yes, we are withdrawing from services. That is a hard decision to take; we have taken it. Yes, it will no doubt cause a level of distress and concern for some. But, over the edge of that, the horizon that they will have, the opportunities and the breadth of services that the NDIA can now provide I think will put those families in better stead than the services they have at the moment.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, will you guarantee that there will be at least 300 placements available for children in need of early intervention services by the commencement of the 2015 school year?

MS BURCH: The NDIA is now in the middle of a tender process. It has called a tender for providers of services. This is the first type of purchasing that the National Disability Insurance Agency has undertaken. It has done it to ensure that it allows a market to be there and ready for 1 January next year when these services should be on-line. This is a first; to ensure that the market has time to grow into it.

Around 300 students are currently enrolled. I do not know what the enrolment figures are for next year. The bulk of those little ones that are currently in the services are moving through into preschool and into school, with different arrangements anyway. I do not have the enrolment figures. I do not have that information in front of me. But make no mistake, to those here in the Assembly: I made a commitment that from the beginning of term 4 we will advise families of those providers, and I will honour that commitment.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, will you guarantee that suitable premises will be available on an ongoing basis for any non-government service provider who successfully tenders for the provision of early intervention services?

MS BURCH: Certainly I made a commitment that existing facilities were to be made available through Education and Training, should they want to use them. Not every service will want to move in to a current arrangement. They may have their own premises. The Education and Training Directorate and the Community Services Directorate have certainly had briefings with those organisations that are interested, and the terms of the arrangements and availability have been made very clear and are available to those interested organisations.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, will you guarantee that all families currently receiving early intervention services provided by the ACT government will know exactly what services their children will be able to access by the end of the 2014 school year?

MS BURCH: The only services that are changing this year are the withdrawal of education and training early intervention services. Services through Therapy ACT will remain until the young child transitions into the NDIA or chooses to go into a community provider.

You are using the figure 300, again, I think, Mr Doszpot, or maybe I am just harking back to Mr Wall. Those are the numbers that were in the services this year. A number of those are moving on into preschool or school.

Mr Wall: It is somewhere around that 300 figure?

MS BURCH: Yes. The majority—

MADAM SPEAKER: Standing order 42 again.

MS BURCH: Sorry, we should not talk across the chamber, Madam Speaker. I am absolutely confident that the services will be in place.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! It is very difficult. Minister Burch, have you finished?

MS BURCH: I most certainly have.

Planning—proposed swimming pool

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Economic Development. Minister, a *Canberra Times* article of 15 September said:

The swimming pool on the lakefront, which includes a quarantined, possibly heated, swimming area in the lake itself, looks likely to go ahead.

Minister, can you confirm that this project is going ahead?

MR BARR: Within the city to the lake project there are a number of individual infrastructure projects of which a new Civic swimming pool is one and, yes, it is going ahead.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, what environmental impact studies will be done with regard to the pool project?

MR BARR: Those that are required in the assessment of a development application.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, what studies or consultations will be undertaken with Canberra residents with regard to this project?

MR BARR: Extensive. They have already begun.

Mr Wall: Such as?

MR BARR: Such as there have been about 17,000 Canberrans engaged—

MADAM SPEAKER: You have had your question, Mr Wall.

MR BARR: in various elements of consultation in relation to the city to lake project. There have been a number of exhibitions held on the site in the CBD. Online there has

been a range of surveys and other interaction with Canberrans. In relation to specific projects, they will of course be subject to individual development applications and each of those will have a consultation process.

There will also be a consultation process on the estate development plan that the Economic Development Directorate is currently preparing for the first stage of works of city to the lake, which will commence next year and include the West Basin waterfront, the boardwalk, cyclepaths, footpaths and a range of other amenity upgrades in West Basin. That will be the first stage of the project. There are also a number of other elements associated with the Parkes 3 site that is currently under community consultation—in fact, it closed last month—and that will be subject of course to further engagement with the community as that particular element of the project moves towards a construction phase.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, what cost will be associated with the use of geothermal technology to heat this pool, as previously reported?

MR BARR: The proposal was put forward as an idea in relation to geothermal by those associated with the development of the project. Geothermal is not something that the government has endorsed at this stage. It is simply an idea that was put forward at an industry forum and that was reported by a journalist. It has never been ACT government policy. We will look at a range of environmental initiatives associated with the city to the lake project. Neither I nor anyone within the cabinet has suggested or endorsed that particular approach. We will look at a range of options for heating a swimming pool. Geothermal will be amongst them, but it has not been endorsed as the proposal for heating that swimming pool.

Economy—stimulus

MS BERRY: My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, what actions has the ACT government taken to support the territory economy in the past 12 months?

MR BARR: A significant number of actions. I thank Ms Berry for raising this important matter. We have provided a range of new initiatives within the budget and within the stimulus package that the Chief Minister announced. That has included a range of targeted tax cuts and a range of incentives to bring forward new investment.

We have established Invest Canberra, our investment facilitation body. We have been actively seeking national and international-level investment in the economy. We have advanced and fast-tracked the release of four civil contracts for estate works in Moncrieff and we have established the Canberra innovation network to link business and entrepreneurs with an aim of accelerating innovation and promoting growth to maximise wealth creation within the economy.

We are focusing on a number of key areas of strength within the ACT economy, most notably in higher education, ICT, our export markets, and also seeking to reduce red tape in partnership with industry through a number of bills. One, I understand, is soon to be brought back for debate in this place.

Our 2014-15 budget contained record investments in health, education, community services and included funding for a range of transformational projects for the city, a number of which have been the subject of extensive debate in this place in recent times. Our forward year \$2.5 billion infrastructure program will create jobs and economic activity and we will continue to work with a range of private sector investors to progress these important projects.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Treasurer, why has the ACT government had to act to support the territory economy?

MR BARR: Because the commonwealth government had mugged this city's economy. The commonwealth has significantly reduced its spending and employment. We are a year into this new government and the Australian government's share of employment in the Australian Capital Territory has fallen from 31.3 per cent in 2011 to now down to around 30 per cent. There have been significant additional reductions in employment from the commonwealth and significant additional cuts to the Canberra-based workforce and, indeed, to their expenditure in our economy.

We have seen more than 2,000 public sector job losses this financial year and an additional 6,500 to come. We have seen cuts in funding for national education reform, national health reform, the national partnership on Indigenous early childhood development and the national partnership on financial assistance for long-stay older patients. All of these cuts are impacting upon our economy.

We are seeing some of the leading indicators, particularly associated with consumer confidence, take a real nosedive as a result of the commonwealth budget. The commonwealth government want to talk about anything but their budget at the moment because their plans are to whack a tax on every Canberran who wants to visit a GP. They want to make going to university in this city cost \$100,000. That is their desire—to make it more expensive to access health and education services; to cut funding from public health and public education. That is the Liberal agenda and we are seeing it writ large in this city at the moment. It is no wonder that consumer confidence is low, because the Liberal Party and the Liberal government federally have mugged this economy.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Treasurer, what future actions is the ACT government taking to support our economy?

MR BARR: In marked contrast to the Liberal Party, we will invest in this community and in this economy. We will invest in health and education. We will invest in public transport, and we will invest in helping people who are vulnerable because they are living in a Mr Fluffy home. We will invest in them. We will invest in those key priorities to ensure that this city continues to grow, that we have a heart, that we are fair and that we bring everyone with us.

We are not about making it more expensive to access health services. We are not about making it more expensive to access education. We are about investing in public transport. We are about ensuring that this city is fair, that this city ensures that everyone has an opportunity to reach their potential. We are about ensuring that this economy continues to grow, and we will invest in Canberra. We will seek private sector investment partners in our city. We are about seeking to grow this economy. The federal Liberal government are out there seeking to apply a sledge hammer to this economy, to reduce spending, to reduce employment. That is what they want to do. We are working hard against that tide, doing our very best to continue to see Canberra grow. That is what this government is about—investing in health, investing in education, investing in public transport and cleaning up the Mr Fluffy mess.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Treasurer, why is it important for the ACT government to support the territory economy?

MR BARR: As we have seen, the commonwealth government are slashing jobs and slashing expenditure in this city. Their efforts in a number of portfolio areas have seen significant reductions in a number of key indicators for the territory economy. Their slashing of public sector travel has seen passenger numbers drop significantly through Canberra Airport.

We are also seeing that impacting in our domestic tourism figures. The fact that they have cut all funding from Tourism Australia for any domestic tourism promotion is impacting here in the ACT, as it is in a number of other jurisdictions. Seventy per cent of tourism in this nation is domestic tourism, and the national government has absolved itself from any responsibility for domestic tourism marketing through Tourism Australia. That is very disappointing and it is starting to be seen in tourism figures.

Tourism is an important part of the territory economy, employing 17,000 Canberrans and contributing around \$1.8 billion to our territory economy each year. There has been no contribution in terms of domestic marketing from Tourism Australia since the Abbott government was elected. They cut that program. It is disappointing and we are starting to see that in tourism figures, which of course we will be debating later on.

The government will continue to make investments in the territory's infrastructure, we will continue to support health and education services, and we will continue to invest in public transport, because they are key priorities for this government, key priorities for this community. They go exactly against what is being delivered to this community by the federal government, and that is cuts to health, cuts to education and no interest at all in investment in public transport.

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

Civic—revitalisation

MR COE (Ginninderra) (3.23): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes, regarding Civic:

- (a) the need for revitalisation and rejuvenation of many of much of the public realm;
- (b) poor access to City Walk and Garema Place;
- (c) recent contributions to the debate about the city centre by Mr David Tickle, Associate Professor Richard Hu, Mr Hamish Sinclair and Dr Ed Blakely;
- (d) the vast majority of Canberrans access the city centre by car; and
- (e) the need for better transport infrastructure; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to facilitate the publishing of an options paper by March 2015 that would detail the alternatives open to the Government for revitalisation of Garema Place and City Walk.

I am pleased to bring this motion to the Assembly today. Civic is supposed to be the heart of our capital. But if Civic is the heart then Canberra is in a bad way. It is high time that serious attention was paid to the state of the city centre so that Canberrans can have pride in the heart of the city.

Members will be aware that I published an article in the *Canberra Times* earlier this month calling for a discussion about how to bring life back to the centre of Civic. In my opinion piece I raised the possibility of reopening City Walk to limited traffic. While I believe it is important to bring back life to the city, I am not necessarily tied to the idea of bringing back cars. Instead, I want to start a conversation. For too long we have ignored the problems in the city centre. We have allowed it to become a wasteland while we focus on other areas around the city. I am not discouraging the development of other areas of the city. I believe development is good but we cannot ignore the city centre.

My proposal, which I said I was not wedded to, included a single-lane road, perhaps cobblestone, which would be open to limited traffic during the day and general traffic at night. It would help bring people to the city centre and also make the area far more accessible for people with a disability. It could, perhaps, resemble the shared zone by the lake outside the front of Reconciliation Place. It does not need to be a busy road, just something to bring people to the doorsteps of the businesses and public realm. Given that the width of the pedestrian mall is near 50 metres, there would still be in excess of 40 metres open for people on foot.

I am not the only person to have noticed that the state of the city centre is not what it could be. In fact, a piece from 1976 by a University of New South Wales lecturer E Duek Cohen, published in the *Canberra Times*, reports the following:

Yet, why is it that today with a population of nearly 200,000, Canberra still has less of a sense of urbanity and vitality than the main street of a country town of ... only 10,000 people—Why is it that the new pedestrian mall in Civic, one of the best-designed street conversions of its kind in the world, and Canberra's most lively and active area by daytime, in the evening falls dead and soulless?

I am afraid that, nearly 40 years on, we are perhaps no better placed. Sure, the mall has activity during the multicultural festival, lunch hour and the odd other event, but that is probably only one or two per cent of the year. For the other 98 per cent, the pedestrian mall is not operating as well as it could or should.

Some people have said that the problem is the Canberra Centre taking activity away from the rest of the city. Regardless of whether that is the case or not, the Canberra Centre is there and it is not going anywhere. We need to work with what we have got.

Earlier this year, Catherine Carter said:

The truth is, a city without a vibrant centre is a city without a heart—and large parts of our city centre are in need of urgent CPR.

Hamish Sinclair from the Planning Institute noted that City Walk and Garema Place have been left out of the urban renewal projects the government has funded. He agrees that the centre of the city has been neglected whilst other areas have received significant investment. Speaking before the government decided to abandon many of its major projects, he said:

You have a multitude of projects—you have the Convention Centre, the swimming pool, the sports stadium and West Basin, you have all these activities happening and they are not pulling together; they are actually pulling things apart.

The centre of Civic has become an empty part of our city. People regularly complain that there is nowhere to eat in Civic after 5.30 on a weeknight. Whilst that is not necessarily always the case, the fact is that Garema Place and City Walk, if they were functioning well, would actually be a very attractive place for people to set up businesses. However, at present it obviously is not. Sometimes the city is so deserted that people have told me it feels unsafe to walk through it. People make an effort to avoid going through the city at night because it is deserted and uninviting.

During the day things are not much better. The area around City Walk and Garema Place is often dirty and sometimes unpleasant. The merry-go-round is regularly boarded up and there are many empty stores. Those people who do venture into the area are likely to be accosted by people asking for money for charities, in effect begging. It is rare to see City Walk and Garema Place busy. Even at lunchtime, when you expect it to be bustling, there are often not many people there at all. This is unacceptable and not best practice.

The centre of the nation's capital should not be somewhere that people are afraid to go or choose not to go because it is unpleasant. Instead, it should be a place where people

want to go. It should be somewhere that attracts people and that shows everything that is good about our national capital.

The ACT government likes to produce glossy brochures that show bustling streets full of people socialising under shady trees and at busy cafes. We all know that these glossy brochures are unrealistic but if anywhere in the city should be like these artists' impressions, it should be the city centre. If only it was full of people enjoying the shady trees and clean paths!

People are also avoiding the city because it is difficult to access. The people who want to drive to the city may struggle to find a park. Those who travel by bus have to walk a long way to get to many parts of the city centre. They walk through City Walk or Garema Place but perhaps they do not even stop. It is disappointing, but not surprising, that most people choose to keep walking through City Walk and Garema Place. When it is so uninviting, people just want to get through it as quickly as possible. If there is no incentive to stop, they will keep going and eventually they will avoid the area entirely.

I am amazed by how many people have told me, since I wrote that piece, that they live in the city, in Canberra, and have for many years, yet they have not visited City Walk or Garema Place for perhaps a decade. So many people have told me that in just the last week or two. It has been quite staggering.

It is a reality that to actually get to City Walk or Garema Place is quite a production. Where does someone park their car if they want to go there? They have either got to park in the inside of London Circuit or park on the other side of Bunda Street in one of the Canberra Centre car parks. Of course, there are so many competing attractions either from London Circuit towards City Walk or from Bunda Street and from the Canberra Centre car parks towards City Walk that it is no wonder that people never quite get there.

You have examples of areas in Canberra that are alive. You only have to look at New Acton or Braddon to find places where people want to go. Canberra is not a boring place but Civic in its current state does not do much to contradict the idea that Canberra is lifeless.

I was pleased that my article inspired contributions from many people about their thoughts to improve the City Walk and Garema Place precinct. Some of them believe that reintroducing traffic would be a bad idea. Others believe that it would only give a perception of life in the city.

David Tickle from Hassell said:

Opening up City Walk to cars may mean ... people will pass through the space, but this activity will be an illusion of vibrancy unless these people are given a reason to stop and stay.

I agree. Revitalising Civic should be about making the area more interesting and giving people a reason to be there, not just about looking busy.

Associate Professor Richard Hu said that increasing pedestrian movement was vital to revitalising the city centre. He believed that this is more important than increasing vehicle movement.

I was heartened to read a piece in the *Canberra Times* about the views of Honorary Professor Edward Blakely, who was executive director of the Office of Recovery and Development Administration for New Orleans following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. The article included:

For example he recently advised the council to allow light traffic through shopping areas, so people “could cruise through and see if their friends were there” and pick out a cafe.

He suggested the best medicine for pedestrian-only areas of Garema Place and City Walk may be for them to be broken up until the city has better public transport.

“If you had a strong transport network, like Melbourne, you pedestrianise, because people can get there, in Canberra’s case, you are going to have to mix it, because the automobile is still your principal mode of transport,” Dr Blakely said, suggesting one-way, single lanes of traffic and median strips to keep traffic minimal.

He said Pasadena, a city in Los Angeles County in California, had recently been advised against a purely pedestrian mall, which he said “turned out to be the right decision.”

Others with an interest in the state of the city centre made suggestions about practical changes that could improve the vibrancy of the area. Some suggestions included more use of the public space by businesses as well as buskers and street traders. Some suggested using empty spaces for short-term pop-up stores. Others suggested encouraging businesses on the ground floor to engage with the public rather than closing themselves off.

I was very pleased to read the opinions from planners and others with an interest in the space. I believe that discussing the issues in Garema Place and City Walk is a good first step towards improving it. Revitalising the city centre will require simple improvements like more regular cleaning and more attention being paid to the amenity of the area. It may also involve loosening restrictions on what can be done in the area. Encouraging private investment always involves some element of risk but, as we have seen in other parts of the city, the rewards can be significant.

My motion calls on the government to facilitate an options paper to detail the alternatives for renewal of Garema Place and City Walk. It is not simply restricted to land use planning. An options paper does not lock the government into large spending. It allows people to share ideas and investigate them. An options paper is part of the discussion process. After options have been considered, the government, in consultation with the community, can decide the best way to invest in the city centre.

Given the interest that my article produced, I think planning professionals and the general public would have plenty of suggestions for ways to improve the area. I suggest that both government and private sector investment should be part of any revitalisation plans. We have seen the willingness of the private sector to get involved in developments at New Acton and Braddon and other parts of our city. Now is the time to encourage the private sector to help revitalise City Walk and Garema Place.

I believe we owe it to the traders along City Walk and Garema Place, including businesses such as Sam Catanzariti, Kindle, Bica Photographics, King O'Malley's and the dozens of other businesses who contribute so much to our city. These traders put so much on the line to be able to do what they do. They take risks, and their livelihood is directly determined by the decisions that they take. I commend them and thank them for being risk takers and creating opportunities for staff, customers, suppliers and many others.

The ACT government is happy to spend \$783 million on light rail. It is time to invest some money in revitalising the city centre and, if not money, simply some attention. A vibrant city centre is something that Canberrans could and should be proud of.

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) (3.35): While we all wish to see an active city, I cannot see how the introduction of another roadway in place of a pedestrian plaza would bring that revitalisation to the city. With that in mind, I move the amendment circulated in my name:

Omit all words after “notes, regarding Civic”, substitute:

- “(a) the ACT Government is committed to revitalising and rejuvenating the city centre;
- (b) the ACT Government has invested in improving the amenity of the city in partnership with local business;
- (c) evidence suggests that slow speed and highly ‘peopled’ environments are a good way to create vibrant, safe and economically successful urban environments;
- (d) a large number of cars use the city and it would benefit from improved alternative transport options;
- (e) the ACT Government is committed to improving active transport and public transport in and around the city, including through the Civic Cycle Loop, Bunda Street Shareway and future provision of light rail;
- (f) the work undertaken by the ACT Government through the City Plan, which engaged the ACT community on the future of the city centre;
- (g) recent contributions to the debate on the future of the city centre by various interested parties, including Mr David Tickle, Associate Professor Richard Hu, Mr Hamish Sinclair and Dr Ed Blakely; and

- (h) the impact the withdrawal of more than 800 Commonwealth public servants has had on local business and pedestrian traffic within the city centre; and
- (2) calls on the Government to:
 - (a) develop the city centre in a way that ensures it is sustainable, safe, vibrant and economically prosperous; and
 - (b) update the Assembly on the progress of implementation of the City Plan and what engagement has occurred with local stakeholders in the first sitting period of 2015.”.

This amendment relates to the ACT government’s commitment to the revitalisation and rejuvenation of the city centre. Following the completion of the city plan earlier this year, the ACT government now has an overarching document that sets the future for the whole of the city centre. The city plan provides the direction and impetus to bring new life to Canberra’s city centre.

The plan was developed to guide development across the city centre that will result in more people living in the city, less through-traffic, better connections across the city, and in particular to the lake, and a modern built environment that will foster a dynamic and vibrant city atmosphere.

In October 2013 extensive community consultation was undertaken on the draft city plan. More than 7,000 interactions with the plan were recorded across a range of consultation and engagement activities, including open house sessions, websites, social media, workshops, feedback forms and written submissions.

From the consultation it is clear that Canberrans love parts of the city centre but want to see change to give it a stronger identity—one that is less about cars and more about people and connections.

Canberrans feel that the city centre should be the cultural and economic focus of life in Canberra; have strong, walkable connections across the city and down to the lake; develop a clearer and stronger identity as a local, regional and national capital but maintain elements of the existing character; respect Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin’s planning visions, particularly through its views, vistas and tree-lined streets; have a good range of innovative and well-designed facilities that bring people to the city to celebrate and enjoy; be more alive, more active and attractive to locals and visitors; and be serviced by better public transport systems.

One of the strongest messages we heard was, “Just get on with it.” People want to see change. In response to this feedback the ACT government agreed to five priority projects that will begin delivery of the city plan. As such, the Environment and Planning Directorate are now embarking on the development of the city plan implementation project, which includes four of the five priority projects.

The current work that is underway includes an urban design framework which will guide the development of high quality building and capital works outcomes across the city and particularly for gateway sites around City Hill and the Sydney and Melbourne buildings; an economic development analysis to develop a strategy to encourage new development, redevelopment and reuse across the city centre; a transport and movement action plan to develop options to reduce through-traffic in the city centre whilst identifying options for the management of parking as well as options for the improvement of public transport and active mode linkages to, from and across the city centre; and the redevelopment of the Allawah, Bega and Currong, or ABC, flats, which will investigate the development of more than 1,000 new residential units.

In relation to the existing amenity along City Walk and Garema Place, it is worth noting that a pedestrian audit completed in 2011 which examined pedestrian flows along the two corridors identified that average flows were between 600 and 900 pedestrians per hour along City Walk and approximately 800 pedestrians per hour along Garema Place. This, in comparison to other city centre streets, demonstrates a significant pedestrian demand and confirms these two streets as critical sections of the city centre functional walking network.

On urban renewal within the city, the city centre has experienced significant growth over the past 10 years with substantial investment in new building projects. The ANU exchange precinct, resulting from a close collaboration between the ANU and the government, has brought the ANU and city together while providing accommodation for 2,530 students close to the amenities of the city. Investment by the government in upgraded streetscapes and improved bus facilities has also attracted significant additional commercial office space in the area, with around 82,000 square metres of new office space constructed.

The final stage of the Canberra Centre was approved in 2011, which will provide 300 apartments, 41,000 square metres of additional commercial office space and 12,500 square metres of new retail floor area.

The development of New Acton, which was completed earlier this year, has set a new benchmark in terms of the quality of urban renewal projects. This precinct has created a new destination for the city through its innovative events programs, a highly sustainable approach to building design and the diverse range of uses, including residential, cinemas, restaurants, hotels and commercial space. New Acton has gained at least 20 awards from a variety of peak design and property bodies, including the 2008 Canberra Medallion and 2014 Planning Institute of Australia award. The Molonglo Group are to be congratulated on their ongoing investment in Canberra.

The city remains the location of choice for both commonwealth and private office tenants, with almost 350,000 square metres of new office space developed over the last 10 years. During this period an additional 1,300 apartments were also constructed in the city.

The government remains committed to improving the quality of pedestrian space and cycle infrastructure in the city. The Civic area action plan released in October 2010

identified a range of projects, including upgrades to footpaths, lighting and general accessibility to the city. At least \$20 million has been invested in these improvements, including the completion of the city cycle loop, since the release of the plan. The city cycle loop has seen a significant increase in cyclists in the city area.

In relation to Braddon, the Braddon commercial area previously had little incentive to redevelop sites due to a two-storey height limit and restrictions on uses. Lower quality buildings and cheaper rent attracted a diverse range of alternative uses, allowing a unique character to emerge. However, this also led to redevelopment limited to office and large retail outlets, which provided no diversity for after-hours activity.

Changes to planning controls for the Braddon commercial area were developed during 2007 and aimed to retain the emerging character of the area while encouraging redevelopment. Key aspects of the changes included increased building heights, requiring active street-front tenancies and consistent awnings, as well as encouraging upper-level residential uses, which will provide additional after-hours surveillance and activity as well as increased safety.

The changes to the controls have been well received by the community, allowing Braddon to develop its character while retaining a clear point of difference to the adjacent city area. Since 2008, when the controls were adopted, development applications have been approved for 40 of the 67 blocks covered by the controls, including 450 new apartments. Braddon has moved from what we saw as a car-centred industrial area to hipster central and is a great result, I think, for Canberra.

The government is also developing an active travel framework to provide an overarching direction on active travel in the ACT. The framework will establish an overall vision to guide continued investment in cycling and walking infrastructure, policies, education, planning and behavioural change initiatives, enabling more active lifestyles and increasing the uptake of active travel modes across the ACT.

The active travel framework will specifically outline how we can better plan, build, encourage and manage the potential of walking and cycling and active travel's role in an integrated transport system, such as enhanced planning of walking and cycling networks to further leverage infrastructure improvements, like integration with public transport and better built form outcomes, that would cater to greater numbers of walking and cycling trips; promotion and behavioural interventions to further raise awareness and encourage walking and cycling participation; and ensuring best practice governance arrangements, monitoring and implementation.

The city is a key active travel destination and the government is working hard to improve access to, from and within the city centre for people on foot, bikes and public transport. The government has already implemented a major initiative to support active transport in the city, including the city cycle loop.

Mr Smyth: How about talking about the motion?

MR GENTLEMAN: It is my amendment to the motion, Mr Smyth. The 3.2-kilometre-long Civic cycle loop provides a high quality path for bicycle riders

travelling in the city centre of Canberra. The path helps to separate bicycle riders from both congested pedestrian footpaths and motor vehicle traffic. Once completed, the loop will connect Marcus Clarke Street, Rudd Street, Bunda Street and Allara Street in the city centre.

Six million dollars of funding has been committed for the design and construction over a four-year period. The loop is being delivered in four stages. The first two stages were opened in March 2013 at Marcus Clarke Street and Rudd Street. Design for the Bunda Street and Allara Street stages is underway and completion is due by 2015. The Bunda Street section will be a “shareway” for bicycles, pedestrians and motor vehicles.

Canberra has embraced the motor car and invested heavily in road infrastructure, and as a result our main avenues are car thoroughfares and the city centre has declined as activity spreads outwards with urban sprawl. We have one of the highest car dependency rates of any major Australian city and we travel further in our cars than residents in any other major city in Australia. As the city grows this car and road reliance will become unsustainable and even the grandest road network plans will not allow us to keep growing sustainably and responsibly. With a projected population growth of another 200,000 by 2050 we need to change this approach.

To ensure that Canberra develops as a more compact and sustainable city the government’s transport and planning strategies are working together to manage projected population growth along high quality transport infrastructure, often referred to as “transit-oriented development”.

Light rail has been selected as the spine of an integrated transport network due to its proven ability to catalyse urban transformation with higher employment and population densities along the route. Stage 1 of the network has been chosen for a number of reasons, but importantly for the important role it will play in rejuvenating Northbourne Avenue and the city centre. But remember, Madam Assistant Speaker Lawder, that this is only stage 1, and I am really looking forward to seeing the light rail extend all the way through Woden to Tuggeranong and down to Lanyon valley in our electorate in the future.

Light rail has been used for its potential to drive urban renewal in many other cities across the world. Light rail transport and urban renewal are intrinsically linked. For example, the Docklands light railway project stimulated the opening up and regeneration of the run-down eastern area of London. The Docklands and Canary Wharf area were previously cut off from the rest of London by the River Thames, leading to low levels of new development and high levels of unemployment.

Light rail was the backbone of the redevelopment project as it connected the area to the rest of London and provided investment certainty. Light rail helped revitalise the area and changed the image of the Docklands. The light rail connection encouraged the construction of approximately eight million square metres of new commercial space and 24,000 new apartments. .

Light rail is the only transport mode that has consistently demonstrated this urban renewal capability. In Australian cities with tram networks we can see how communities, investment and business grew around those networks. Rail has shaped our cities in the past and it can reshape our cities in the future.

Through the linking of planning and transport strategies, the Northbourne Avenue corridor and city centre can expect rejuvenation benefits from investing in light rail. In addition to attracting business and investment, capital metro will make areas along this corridor much more accessible, increasing the sense of community along the corridor.

In conclusion I want to emphasise the ACT government's strong commitment to and action in revitalising and rejuvenating the city centre. I might add that this commitment is in stark contrast to the attitude of the opposition's colleagues on the hill towards investment in our city centre, most recently evidenced by their withdrawal of 800 public servants from the heart of the city, the impacts of which are being felt heavily across local business in the area.

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) (3.50): I am pleased this matter is on the agenda today because I think it is a very worthwhile discussion. It is interesting to hear members' perspectives on the issue. The dynamic of the city is quite diverse and quite interesting. There are parts of the city that are very successful and very vibrant and there are other parts that seem to struggle. It even ebbs and flows both at different times of the day and at different times. I think of an area like the north quarter, which is bustling, and I think of the corridor that leads from Gus's into Garema Place, which is a very vibrant and popular area. In fact, we have seen some good revitalisation in Garema Place in the last couple of years. We have seen new venues opening there and making that a much more friendly and vibrant place than it would have been even five years ago.

You see a level of vibrancy around some of the areas of public art, where people stop and take photos of the city on or around the public art. Without opening up the whole public art discussion, you do see it. The new sculpture out the front of the Canberra Centre, which was deliberately designed for children to be able to play on, brings an energy to the space; it is very popular. I think of Tosolinis, which has been in place for many years. Despite the ebbs and flows of the city, it continues to remain a popular location. I think of City Walk more specifically and the new grass patches at the eastern end that were rebuilt. The redoing of that area of City Walk in recent years has made it, certainly at lunch time, a much more friendly and vibrant space.

On the negative, there clearly are empty shops. The area around Centrepont has really struggled in recent years. The Garema Court building has been another area that has been problematic, and certainly parts of Garema Place at times. I was interested in Mr Coe's comment on the impact of the charity collectors down City Walk. I know that many people find discomfort in saying no to those collectors. Just thinking about my own experience of those spaces, they are quite diverse—you really do see some differences across the city—and that is a challenge.

For me, the Canberra Centre is a really interesting part of that dynamic. The Canberra Centre is generally bustling almost all of the time you go in there. That is what we want to see in City Walk. There are constant crowds of people in there. That probably speaks to the quality of the offer in terms of the shops, the space and the dynamic. At the same time, it is my personal view that the way the Canberra Centre has been designed has a very significant impact on the rest of the city.

The Canberra Centre is designed to be a drive-in facility. It is designed in a way—wherever the car parks are placed—that you drive in, park in those car parks and then stay inside the Canberra Centre; you do not go further necessarily. It is a very deliberate commercial decision on the part of the operators of the Canberra Centre. In my view, there can be little doubt that that has had an impact on the rest of the city. In that facility there is essentially a wall between the parking facilities and the rest of the city, and that is a real challenge.

My understanding from the work that has been done and the surveys that have been done—and Mr Coe made some commentary about the parking—is that there are plenty of parking spaces available. The surveys, I understand, show that the level of availability in the parking spots is pretty high all the time through the various segments of the day. Again, my own personal experience of the limited occasions on which I seek to drive to the city, outside of probably Christmas when you get a particular impact, is that the rest of the year it is very easy to find a parking spot in all of those Canberra Centre car parks. But the way they are designed, they are difficult to access out of hours at times, and even during the day they tend to lead people straight into that shopping centre and no further into the city.

Those are my personal observations on the way that the city operates and the challenges that presents. There are periods when areas around City Walk in particular are struggling to have people around. I never feel unsafe travelling through City Walk, but I heard Mr Coe's comments that others do find it unsafe. I think that is very regrettable. I think it has improved in recent times, but again it certainly ebbs and flows.

Mr Coe challenged me informally across the chamber—I indicated to him I intend to support Mr Gentleman's amendment, which I do—to say which part of his motion I disagree with. I do not particularly disagree with any of it. I think that he has raised some interesting questions. Probably the "calls on" section was the primary place where I would have differences. I am not sure that producing another options paper is the answer for the city. That is where I did speak with Mr Gentleman in the preparation of his amendment. What he has detailed in that "calls on" section is probably a better response in the sense that doing another options paper is not the answer.

We have seen the city plan, which Mr Gentleman spoke of, and the very extensive consultation that was undertaken during the preparation of that strategy and the large number of people engaged. I think members will have seen the tents up in the city where people were invited to come in and talk with people there. I know there is extensive discussion with groups like Canberra CBD Ltd. Some of the traders around

the city are prominent citizens that each of us chats to on regular occasions. I think they have some pretty good ideas. Some of the primary feedback that came through the city planning process was: “Don’t talk any more. Don’t do any more plans. Just get on with things.” That would certainly be part of my substantial hesitation in wanting to go through another options paper, because I am not sure that that is what we need to do to revitalise the city.

I am very encouraged by some of the things that are happening already, and I think they will make a difference. Things like the 40-kilometre-an-hour speed zones in the city do make a difference. They are targeted at areas that have high levels of retail and pedestrian activity. That goes to City Walk specifically but is also in the broader context of the centre of Canberra. A measure like that is designed to make people feel safer in high pedestrian areas. Of course, there was the initial trial and the further implementation of the zones across the city. They are now in other areas such as the group centres. That reflects the fact that they have had a positive influence.

The Civic cycle loop, which Mr Gentleman spoke about, is providing greater access and safety to cyclists. The majority of the loop is segregated from general traffic. Stage 1 was described by one of the world’s leading transport planners, Dr Tim Papandreou, as “world’s best practice”, which I think is a good reflection on the effort that went into planning that.

Stage 2 of the cycle loop along Allara Street is nearly finished and I expect to see that completed in the coming weeks. Then we have the Bunda Street shareway between Mort Street and Akuna Street, which will start construction this month. It features a shared space for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists where speed limits are low at around 20 kilometres per hour. No user group has priority, except at raised crossings where pedestrians have right of way. Creative pavement treatments, trees, seating and lighting will also be part of the rejuvenation of Bunda Street. The shareway will create a more people-friendly environment that encourages pedestrians and cyclists. Cars will still be allowed, but drivers will need to negotiate with other road users in a slow speed environment. TAMS have been working closely with local businesses throughout the planning phase—and will continue during construction, which is to start this month—and talking to them about the benefits the shareway will bring to the area.

Recent evidence from other Australian cities and around the world shows that slow speed and highly “peopled” environments do help to create vibrant, safe and economically successful urban environments. They are good for business because they create an environment where people like to linger, and when people stay they bring their business.

There was an interesting report from the Heart Foundation called *Good for Busine\$\$: the benefits of making streets more walking and cycling friendly*. It investigates this issue by summarising the current national and international literature relating to retail and economic value and activity of improvements to streets. It includes peer review papers and existing literature reviews, as well as relevant case studies from Australia and overseas. It makes a strong argument, pointing out that a high proportion of all retail expenditure comes from local residents and workers; space allocated to bicycle

parking can produce much higher levels of retail spend than the same space devoted to car parking; many car-borne shoppers are drive-through shoppers, stopping to pick up one item on the way to their eventual destination, rather than people for whom shopping is their main purpose for visiting the area; it is difficult to estimate the value of non-drive-in spend for main streets—however, it is always bigger than we think—and, finally, retail vitality would be best served by traffic restraint, public transport improvements and a range of measures to improve the walking and cycling environment.

That was a very interesting piece of work from the Heart Foundation. It really looked at the evidence of what assists with improving urban vitality. We know from the experience of other cities that the debate about vehicle and pedestrian access to city centres is not all or nothing. We understand that there is a place for the private vehicle in our city, but the government needs to create an urban environment that suits the needs of its people.

The best way to revitalise the city centre is to create places that encourage walking, cycling and strolling. Light rail will provide a fast and convenient way for Canberrans to access the city centre. The shareway will help create an environment where those people will stay and linger. I was interested to see in Mr Coe's motion the need for better transport infrastructure. I can reassure Mr Coe that that is exactly the intent of light rail.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MR RATTENBURY: Members, in the next two years, essentially, that we have left to go in this place I will be interested to see if we can conduct a single debate in this place without mention of light rail. Our friends across the way will have an endless pot of money to spend on whatever they like, if we do not do light rail. I must start a tally on that. I am sure it is going to go well beyond the likely price tag of light rail. It is now the pot of gold for everything they want to spend on. I will be interested to see if we can conduct a single debate without somebody needing to bring it into the discussion. It is certainly popular when it comes to the debates in this place.

There is a possibility that when light rail extends from the proposed station on Northbourne Avenue and Alinga Street it may go through the city centre. That will have a profound impact on the way that pedestrians, cars and cyclists use and access the city centre, including City Walk and Garema Place. The government has indicated that it is canvassing the option of extending light rail through to Constitution Avenue and Russell. It is certainly something that the capital metro team are having a look at. How that passes through the city is an important part of that consideration. For example, whether it might pass through City Walk is an interesting consideration. My own experience of living in the Netherlands, where trams pass through the pedestrian areas, is that they are very compatible. It will be interesting to see what the study looking at that produces.

When it comes to revitalising the city, I think we have much to do. I must congratulate Canberra CBD Ltd on their very considerable efforts and partnership with government in bringing things to the city space. Things like skate in the city and

Christmas time in the city have been very successful. I think Mr Coe mentioned earlier the possibility of having more markets and the like in places like City Walk. I would completely agree with him on that. I must revise why that is not possible. There was an attempt just a couple of years ago to start a Saturday morning market in the city. I think this was before I was the minister. There was a series of leasing limitations which meant that those people were not allowed to establish one in City Walk. The fact that that is not possible, and is enforced by other lessees in the space, is a sad reflection because I think that sort of thing would bring a whole lot more dynamism to the city space.

I do not disagree with some of Mr Coe's points. I think he has raised some really interesting questions. The reason I am supporting the amendment today is that I think the "calls on" section is a better approach to this. An update to the Assembly on the process of implementation of the city plan means we can weigh up what has been done and what has been implemented out of all the work that has already taken place and we can then work out whether further steps need to be taken. I do not know that simply sitting down and trying to do a whole new round of talking to all of the people we have got to talk to through that process will add value at this point. That is the primary difference as to why I am supporting the amendment today.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Housing and Minister for Tourism and Events) (4.05): I thank Mr Coe for raising the issue and Mr Gentleman and Mr Rattenbury for their comments. I do not think anyone is going to disagree with the objective of improving public infrastructure in our city centre. It has been pleasing that since the October 2010 release of the city area action plan more than \$20 million worth of capital funding has been allocated to improve parks, public transport, lighting and footpaths in the city area.

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MR BARR: We have spent \$20 million, Mr Smyth.

Apart from the obvious aesthetic and public safety improvements, the broader economic objective was to attract and support private sector investment. It is very pleasing to see that as a result of that government public infrastructure investment, we have seen a number of private sector co-investments in particular areas around the CBD. This has included the significant investment that has occurred along Childers Street, in city west; on the eastern side of the city near Glebe Park, the Manhattan apartments development; the new Acton development that is attracting national and international recognition; and, perhaps most pleasingly, as the planning change that allowed this to happen was one of mine in 2008, in Braddon, where we are seeing Mort and Lonsdale streets undergoing particular rejuvenation, leading to increased private sector investment, entrepreneurship and innovation in that particular precinct.

That wave of growth that we have seen in Civic and Braddon is complemented by recent land sales. The demand and public interest associated with the Constitution Avenue upgrade, and the land release there for a range of mixed use outcomes, give us confidence that future sites along that Constitution Avenue corridor will be well supported.

Important partnerships have been formed not just with the development industry, though. That is an important point to stress here. There have been a number of opportunities created for small businesses to open out onto these expanded walkways and improved streets. Civic and Braddon are now more enjoyable and active places in which to live and work and to visit.

Partnerships have also included international-level ones. Ten embassies have adopted the Latin American Plaza in City West, and have donated significant public artworks as a show of their support for this part of the city, and indeed for the ACT government's efforts to lift the quality and image of our CBD.

It is also worth acknowledging the outstanding work of Canberra CBD Ltd, an organisation of property owners who are responsible for a number of fantastic events in the city that have been mentioned already in the debate, including Skate in the City and Christmas Carnival in the City. They have also utilised the funds that the government collects on their behalf for a number of infrastructure improvements. We have all seen the significant lighting of a number of the street trees, additional hanging flower baskets, cleaning of the private areas within the city, and a range of other upgrades where they have co-contributed with the ACT government.

Since the CBD action plan was released just a little less than four years ago, the territory's capital investment has delivered 17 projects. The areas that we have focused on are ones that have not had public investment for more than 40 years, I am advised. This has included important replacement of all of the non-compliant street lighting within the city with new modern street lighting. It has included the refurbishment of Veterans Park; the upgrading of verges on London Circuit, and you can see the upgrades just outside this building; and, as Minister Rattenbury has indicated, the significant improved amenity on City Walk. This is on top of a couple of really important transport projects for the city, including the Belconnen to city busway and the Civic cycle loop.

With all of these projects, the government worked purposefully with the private sector to ensure that disruptions were kept to a minimum during construction phases and that the completed work would in fact enhance business opportunities.

The government has evaluated the work done to date in the post-occupancy evaluation report and in a detailed survey of pedestrian activity throughout the CBD, including City Walk and Garema Place. The research shows that the program has improved Civic's pedestrian environment, both day and night. A secondary outcome has been the considerable improvement in the CBD's appearance and the fostering of a greater sense of pride in the city.

However, there is further work to be undertaken to meet modern standards and to adapt other parts of the city to the more intensive developments that are generating increased vibrancy and activity. The focus in the immediate term will be through capital metro, the city plan and the city to the lake projects, presenting opportunities for public-private partnerships to invest in the CBD to meet changing needs, to continue to attract private sector investment. It has been pleasing to see a number of recent announcements, and we recognise the popularity of these upgrades and their usage by the Canberra community.

In the four years since the action plan was launched, the government has followed through and delivered 17 upgrade projects, invested \$20 million. We are seeing the benefits of that, and there is more to come associated with future stages of that action plan, city to the lake, the city plan and capital metro. We also anticipate that, as we have seen with the 11 expressions of interest associated with ACT government office accommodation, there will be significant urban renewal associated with that particular project.

Fundamentally, for the longer term we do need increased residential capability within the city through the city to the lake project, particularly the sites at the northern end. The sites I am referring to here are opposite the Sydney and Melbourne buildings, which are part of the city to the lake project and part of the project that is progressing through various design elements. It has interaction with the National Capital Authority, but that element is progressing well. Design guidelines have been endorsed and are off to the NCA for final approval, which will facilitate that land release.

When you consider those two sites, together with the PPP for the Supreme Court project, the feasibility study that is underway in relation to the Canberra theatre, the continuation of work to get the Australia forum project to an investment ready status, the Constitution Avenue upgrades, the further work associated with section 63 that the private owners have undertaken in their change in plans in relation to an increased residential component, the investment we have seen in the QT hotel that is leveraging off the investment we have seen next door in New Acton, and the continuation of the ANU exchange project and the remaining three sites there, you can see that there is a huge amount of activity occurring within the CBD. It is perhaps most visible and most popular in Braddon at the moment, but it will move from that area to a number of other parts of the city in the coming months and years. It is very encouraging to see, and the government will continue to make investments off our own budget and seek to encourage the private sector to make complementary investments—the private sector locally, nationally and internationally.

What is particularly pleasing in recent times is the level of national and international interest. That competitive process is certainly going to engender better outcomes for Canberra. It has got to be about more than just this economy; we are too small in and of ourselves. We need to attract new capital, and we are seeing that interest nationally and internationally. It is fantastic to see. I will be in Singapore and Tokyo next month, and one of the key elements of that particular mission will involve seeking to attract new investment into a number of those key projects.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (4.15): I thank Mr Coe for bringing on the motion. It is interesting that all those opposite have simply avoided the motion: “We don’t want to have that debate. We want this big amendment so we don’t have to talk about the nub of what Mr Coe wants.” It says simply:

... calls on the ... Government to facilitate the publishing of an options paper ... that would detail the alternatives open to the Government for revitalisation of Garema Place and City Walk.

It is not real hard. If we all walk across the road now, and we could safely walk across the road because there is not much traffic on London Circuit at any time, we could travel across six or seven different sorts of pavers. You could almost do a sort of David Attenborough: “Yes, we are here with the pre-NCDC pavers, then a different shade of grey pavers, then the NCA pavers and then the ACTPLA pavers.” And on it goes.

When we got to City Walk and Garema Place, you would find very few people walking in Garema Place or on City Walk. That is a shame. At the heart of great cities are CBDs, and at the heart of CBDs are people. This city lacks a genuine CBD, and it lacks the people, the density and the activity to be recognised as a great city. That is a shame. After 13 years, that rests well and truly at the feet of the Labor Party and their allies the Greens.

Perhaps it is time for a history lesson; history is always good. I would like to read from *Urban renaissance: Canberra: A sustainable future*, produced by the OECD in 2002. What does it say Canberra needs? It entirely supports Mr Coe’s argument. It says:

The synergy between a vital town city centre and the prosperity of the city as a whole is widely recognised. The importance of Civic was apparent in original hierarchical town centre structure. The question is how the core, Civic, can be strengthened to produce a more sustainable overall outcome. This is consistent with the logic of territorial development based on efficient land use and the valorisation of the strengths and assets of places, and on strategies to release their potential. Strategies for Civic should reaffirm Civic as Canberra’s pre-eminent business centre; allow and encourage the widest possible range of uses; encourage innovative design solutions; develop an ACT cultural identity; link Canberra more positively to an enriched range of nearby national capital uses; build on the existing asset base; reduce the dependence on the car; and encourage increased use of public transport.

And clearly it should be done overtly. It should not be done covertly or by stealth, as this government does in their obsession with and hatred of the car.

Canberra is probably unique in the world in the way it was constructed. When it was constructed, primarily in the 1960s, it was built to accommodate the automobile. As a consequence of that, we have the highest participation in cultural activities, the highest participation in organised sporting activities, and the highest participation in volunteering. We have a city where people go and do things that would take you days in Sydney or Melbourne, things that we manage to get done in our lunchtime or in an afternoon. It allows us to be more active participants in our children’s school life; it allows us to be more active participants in each other’s cultural, social and personal lives.

There are, unfortunately for those opposite, some advantages for the car. It is shown in the way the ACT is. Churchill said that first we shape buildings and then buildings shape us. I think the same can be said of Canberra. First we shaped Canberra, and Canberra has shaped its residents in the way they participate. If there is one thing that

people value about living in Canberra, it is the ability to participate. And if there is one thing that visitors like about Canberra it is easy access. That is not to say that we do not do more. That is what Mr Coe's op ed says: let us have a think about how we make more of that which we have got. If you look at the last 13 years, it is abject failure.

We had a dinner recently with Larry Olmanns, one of the great planners, designers and architects of the world. I said to him, "What do you think about City Hill?" I said, "It is like our Central Park." He said: "Well, you are wrong. The centre of New York is Manhattan and Broadway. It is Wall Street. It is where people are, where there is activity, where things happen on the street." He said: "Central Park is off to the side; it is not central. You cannot even reach your central park; it is a dead end. And you have got a bypass which whips through the city and carves the city in half."

That is why City Walk is important. When we did work on City Walk, it was to link the east and west along the walkway that was easily accessible. For all the things that those opposite have quoted, the majority are the good things done by the private sector. They are always very keen to take credit for having worked in conjunction with the private sector, but if you talk to the private sector on most of those projects they say they were far more costly than they should have been and they were held up for years because we have got a government that does not get it. They prove they do not get it today by not agreeing to this motion.

Let us continue the history lesson. The OECD report came out in 2002. What did we get in response to that from Mr Corbell in 2005? We got *City Hill: A concept for the future*. Fantastic! We have finally got a plan from the government on City Hill. If you go to page 6 in *City Hill*, there are about 16 identifiable initiatives. Madam Assistant Speaker, you will be shocked. None of them have occurred. Nine years later, not a single initiative here has occurred. That is a shame, because some of them are quite worthy. They do talk about convention centres. They actually talk about a new Legislative Assembly. Imagine that! They talk about a new Supreme Court, which has not happened. They talk about a hotel development with public car parking; it has not happened. They talk about a Civic heritage precinct; it has not happened. They talk about Northbourne Avenue realignment; it has not happened. They talk about a city gateway; it has not happened.

That is the problem. This is the glossy government. This is the glossy government that produces documents but never delivers. We know they do not deliver because earlier this year they tabled a report, the city plan, and said they were going to get on with it. Indeed, it was the advice to the Chief Minister from all the participants. We see it on page 5:

One of the strongest messages we heard was "just get on with it"—people want to see change.

Yes, they do. They want a city heart that works. At the heart of the city heart is Garema Place. Accessing Garema Place is about City Walk; hence Mr Coe's motion. But of course the government does not want that to happen.

Although there is a lovely chart on page 123 about what is going to happen, the government are already walking away from it as well. We now know they are not going to progress the convention centre because they are going for light rail. They are not going to progress the Civic stadium because they are going for light rail. He called it the Civic pool in question time, so I wonder if the aquatic centre is off the agenda and it is just a pool, the Civic pool.

What about projects underway and project delivery? What about the Constitution Avenue upgrade? Now there is an interesting thing! Mr Rattenbury brings up Constitution Avenue and the option of running capital metro down Constitution Avenue. Wouldn't you have thought they might have thought about that before they rebuilt Constitution Avenue, a project which is underway now? There is good planning from the government, which has got good intentions for Civic. "We are going to rebuild Constitution Avenue, and then, when we work out what to do with capital metro, we might rebuild Constitution Avenue and lay capital metro down the middle. Wouldn't you have thought they would be doing it now?"

This is not about capital metro; this is about the government and the \$600 million piece of infrastructure that keeps them there, that they pay Mr Rattenbury. Let us face it: that is what has happened. This is about keeping Labor in office, not about building a city of the future. That is a shame.

We now know that, having walked away without delivering one iota of the City Hill concept for the future, they are already backpedalling on the city plan. The people have expressed that they want a vibrant city. It is in spite of the government, not because of the government, that this is happening. New Acton happened because of the courage of some private sector developers to get on with the job in the absence of a government that had any interest in the CBD. Braddon is happening because of private developers who got on with it, and at times were fighting the government against what the government wanted. We can see the pop-ups, we can see the Braddon traders, and we can see things happening because of people, not because of the government.

Mr Rattenbury also talked about the Canberra Centre. If you notice it, near Target it is open. I insisted that be left open so the tram could eventually come through there. Bunda Street there is open, with shops facing onto the street, because we wanted active shop frontage with a view to drawing people back to Garema Place. So we had these areas people could walk through that would lead them to the city heart, which is Garema Place.

The government have done nothing to make that happen. They are willing to quote all these numbers and things again. It is all about inputs for them. Have they achieved the purpose? No, they have not. That is why this motion is important. That is why this discussion is important. That is why Mr Coe's motion should be supported. And this amendment should be defeated, because the amendment is the mediocre "Do the same" game from the Labor Party. (*Time expired.*)

MR COE (Ginninderra) (4.25): To conclude debate, I would like to thank all members for contributing to this discussion, in particular my colleague Mr Smyth. To the relief of those in the gallery, perhaps not here for this very motion, let me say that I do not intend to speak for very long.

What we heard here today is exactly why we need to be focusing on City Walk and Garema Place. The government spoke about the great success story of Braddon, the ABC flats, city to the lake, the ANU and the New Acton precinct. Of course, all are drawing away from the heart of the city, being Garema Place and City Hill.

This is not necessarily a debate about land use planning, as the government tried to sculpt it. It is actually about how we use the space better. It is about removing regulations which restrict people from setting up shops in City Walk. It is about removing the bureaucracy and the insurance hurdles that are in place at present which restrict people from expanding into that space. I think we need to have a debate about this. I think we need to have a genuine discussion about all the hurdles which are in place now which are restricting that being a vibrant and active place.

In conclusion, Madam Assistant Speaker, I urge members to vote against the amendment and to support the motion as published in the notice paper.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended agreed to.

Canberra Hospital—adult mental health unit

MRS JONES (Molonglo) (4.27): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes that, regarding the Adult Mental Health Unit at The Canberra Hospital (TCH):
 - (a) staff at the Adult Mental Health Unit filed 57 reports of attacks on workers as well as 37 reports of physical or abusive threats in 2013-2014;
 - (b) the number of incidents involving physical contact with staff at the unit is increasing and there was a rise from 49 incidents in 2012-2013 to 57 in 2013-2014;
 - (c) there has been a rise in incidents of reported abuse directed at staff working in the Adult Mental Health Unit from 112 in 2012-2013 to 135 in 2013-2014;
 - (d) in 2013-2014, 18 staff took leave due to injury at the Adult Mental Health Unit at TCH;
 - (e) the time off work for injuries in 2013-2014 for staff of the Adult Mental Health Unit was 152 weeks;

- (f) the Adult Mental Health Unit was issued with a Provisional Improvement Notice in July which has been extended until October, and calls for beds to be closed or for staff numbers to be increased;
 - (g) although staffing levels have been increased by one extra nurse per shift as an interim measure, the Provisional Improvement Notice calls for a permanent response;
 - (h) the post-occupancy review on the Adult Mental Health Unit is six to nine months overdue according to the Government's own timeline;
 - (i) there was a fire lit by one of the patients inside the unit on Monday, 8 September 2014, which resulted in the evacuation of 60 people; and
 - (j) the Government has failed to provide a safe workplace for staff; and
- (2) calls on the Government to:
- (a) review security and nurse safety of the Adult Mental Health Unit at TCH and for the review to be tabled in the Assembly no later than November 2014;
 - (b) update the Assembly on the program for, and implementation of, improvements in both March 2015 and August 2015;
 - (c) introduce permanent measures that will significantly reduce or prevent incidents of violence and abuse directed at staff; and
 - (d) adopt a model of care that serves employee safety as well as patient care, and that neither one be weighted as superior to the other.

I am very glad to stand here today to call for a review of safety at the adult mental health unit. Workplace health and safety laws state that the workplace should be, as far as possible, without risk. With 57 assaults in a year and rising, and 18 out of perhaps approximately 85 staff off work due to injury, staff at this unit have a right to go to work with a fair expectation that they are not going to be assaulted or intimidated. Families have a right to know that their loved ones are safe at work.

The attitude that this is a dangerous work environment would not be acceptable on a building site, in a pub, at a school, and should not be acceptable for nurses in the adult mental health unit. If this is the norm, then it is a sure recipe for post-traumatic stress disorder and other long-term injuries to what is already a scarce and precious resource in mental health nursing staff.

According to our ACT Work Health and Safety Act 2011:

The person with ... control of a workplace must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the workplace, the means of entering and exiting the workplace and anything arising from the workplace are without risks to the health and safety of any person.

In essence, the workplace must be without risk to the health and safety of staff. That is this minister's responsibility. It is a complete cop-out to say that because nurses knowingly work with volatile people they effectively have to accept that being assaulted is a part of the job.

Regarding government-run workplaces generally, *The World Today* radio program just this week covered the case of a Victorian school in which a teacher suffered a mental breakdown as a result of the experience of teaching a very challenging class. That teacher sued the Victorian government for not providing a safe workplace and won.

I am here today to shed more light on what is happening behind closed doors in our mental health facility and to draw the Assembly's attention to the fact that if a minister stands by and allows assaults to occur by not providing a suitably staffed, equipped or appointed facility, then that minister is responsible.

So let us just go over the situation in our own adult mental health facility. In the 12 months from July 2012 to July 2013, staff at the adult mental health unit reported that there were 49 incidents of physical attacks, three cases of near misses, 47 cases of verbal or physically threatening behaviour. There were 13 duplicate reports made. There was a total of 112 reported incidents. This is on average one reported incident every 3.2 days.

In the 2012-13 financial year 14 staff were away from work for a combined total of 160 weeks because of workplace injury. This equates to 11.4 weeks per worker. In the following financial year the situation deteriorated. In the 12 months from July 2013 to July 2014, staff filed reports of 57 cases of physical attacks on staff. This is an increase of 10 incidents from the previous 12 months. There were 13 near misses reported. This is up from three reported in the previous 12 months. There were 37 incidents of verbally threatening behaviour and physically threatening behaviour. A total of 28 duplicate reports were made, a total of 138 incidents being reported. This on average works out at an incident every 2.5 days.

A provisional improvement notice was issued due to staff at the unit having to work in an aggressive and violent environment. Over the 2013-14 financial year there were 18 staff from the unit off work due to injury, which was defined by Comcare as a workplace injury. In the financial year 2013-14 and through to September 2014, the combined time off work for work-related injuries was 152 weeks. In the financial year so far, two staff have taken time off due to work-related injury, as far as I know.

This facility is not remotely a safe work environment. It is the employer's responsibility to provide such an environment and, with an incident of assault or threatened assault every 2.7 days, not many of us would be prepared to work in this environment.

As a result WorkSafe has issued this provisional improvement notice on the facility. Let us be clear, to have a PIN issued, there has to have been a contravention of the act. The act says that, for a PIN to be issued, there has to be a belief that there is a

contravention of the act occurring or having occurred and there is a strong belief that it is likely to occur again, as per division 5.7 section 90 of the ACT Work Health and Safety ACT 2011.

This is no small matter in a facility which I am sure the minister sees as a jewel in the crown of her portfolio achievements. Nurses are too scared to go to work and have lost faith in the ability of the minister to sort out the problems. The law has been contravened and the workplace is not safe. It is not safe.

It is interesting that the minister yesterday jibed us in the opposition across the chamber by asking us how many shifts we have done in the facility. I have toured the facility. We too were warned about the threat that being in the unit involved. However I put the question back on the minister: how many shifts would you be prepared to work in the facility? My guess is none.

This unit was only opened in April 2012 and it seems to never have been in any way a safe working environment. It is a failure of the system or of the model of care that such high levels of assault are occurring and have been from day one. The facility is evidently not being run properly.

We do not know from the reporting the precise events which have taken place in this facility. We only know the category of incident. However, if we take a look at reports from Victoria and New Zealand, assaults in their reporting include staff being bitten, punched in the face, threatened with broken glass, lacerated, having bones broken and being knocked unconscious. I would like to think that the incidents here were not of this nature, but it seems to be commonplace in such facilities.

In the *Age* newspaper late last year an article was published about Victoria called "Mental health nurses punched, bitten as work violence rises". In the article Henrietta Cook reported that people go to work not knowing if they are going to be assaulted on the day. The article also reported an incident where a medical practitioner was chased about the room with a piece of glass.

In New Zealand, as per an article in the *Daily Mail* on 14 June this year, the New Zealand Nurses Organisation reported that there are measures that can be taken to reduce incidents, including improving the line of sight around the facility and the layout. However, the New Zealand Nurses Organisation also said that they are having to convince the nurses that they represent that violence is not just a part of the job.

However, the nurses at the adult mental health facility here in our city do not need convincing. They have called in WorkSafe because they are dissatisfied that the government is not acting fast enough. And I agree with them. ACT Health claim to be working on the issues. They have stated that early recognition of psychological distress by staff is an area they can improve in, that reducing the acuity of those in the unit would assist and that staff having better rostering and training would assist. That all sounds very good but also pretty basic for a facility such as this.

Are there not currently systems or training for the early recognition of psychological distress? Presumably the concern regarding acuity is that the secure mental health

facility may take out of this facility a few of the most acutely affected, thus easing the burden on the unit. However, the secure unit is not due for completion for some time yet and even when it is it will not miraculously fix issues if there is such a significant number of assaults and incidents at the moment. The secure unit being built will not fix the issue with flaws in the model of care, if there are any, at the adult mental health unit.

A snapshot of staffing levels includes that, according to the ACT Health model of care document, at the end of the 2012-13 financial year the total full-time equivalents in the unit was 79. In this financial year there were 14 staff away from work due to work-related injury, equalling 17.7 per cent of the workforce in the financial year. If the total FTEs at the end of 2013-14 remained at a similar level, then, with 18 staff members away due to work-related injury, this equates to 22.7 per cent of the workforce. We learned from that document also that wards people work 12 hours shifts through the night.

Regarding the number of seclusions, the 2013-14 budget paper, at page 88 under Health Directorate strategic objective No 6, states:

The proportion of mental health clients who are subject to seclusion episodes while being an admitted patient in an ACT public mental health inpatient unit has reduced and is achieving target. This measures the effectiveness of public mental health services in the ACT over time in providing services that minimise the need for seclusion.

In 2012-13, the target was less than three per cent, with an estimated outcome of 1.4 per cent. In the 2014-15 budget statement, the target was less than three per cent, with an estimated outcome increasing to 2.1 per cent. With regard to seclusions—and the numbers are very good—why is the only measure of success for this facility the low number of seclusions and why is there no budget reporting on the success of creating a workplace friendly to employees as well as clients? I would suggest that it is not okay to serve one group well to the detriment of the other.

Is it acceptable to lead the nation in reducing seclusions while staff suffer so drastically? No, it is not. The focus needs to be balanced. Both patient care and staff care are equally important and, as an employer, the minister knows well her responsibility to the staff of this facility.

The philosophy of this government is fundamentally flawed when it comes to running facilities such as this. We do have a philosophical problem. They are keen to look after a group in the system they label as victims or potential victims, because of preconceptions of historical practice. They are keen to treat them with perfection, and that is great.

However, the downside of this philosophy is a tendency to take another group and label them with the tag of potential aggressor, and there is little sympathy for the potential aggressor in this philosophy. As a result, the group are treated with diminished respect. The response inevitably is, “They will just have to lump it; they can just put up with it,” because it is a perception that historically they may have held more power in relation to the patient. However, the minister’s slowness to act is telling of callousness and, by her own actions, she has created a new group of victims.

What is more, the government's own modern work health and safety regulations require that they fight this tendency and protect workers. What a conundrum the minister has! She has to protect the workers but she is also so stuck in her political ideology that she cannot see the new victims for the trees. It is tough being at the top. However, in the case of this facility it has meant that a new group of victims has emerged and it is just too much for the people to cope with, I think. It is possible to look after both workers and clients. That really has to be possible and the balance has to be fair, not weighted all one way or the other.

The story of this health minister is, "I am working on it, I am working on it." While that seems a very reasonable response, it is not acceptable for nursing staff in this facility or across Health. It is not acceptable to just say, "It is a dangerous place." How will this government and this minister resolve the danger that staff are in? It is all very well and good to get up in this place and claim to have the lowest seclusion rate in the country by far but, as to the nurses, it is a tough place to work. That would not be acceptable in any other workplace. If staff ratios have to rise, then it needs to be done. If wards people need to be rostered on during the day time as well as the night time, then it needs to be done. If patients need to be proactively assessed more times per day to assess their exact state of mind, then do it.

Are we ticking off best practice? Do the staff in the facility undertake critical incident stress debriefing to understand what has happened to them in these incidents, and are all the steps necessary for proper care of employees to re-enter the workforce after such incidents taken?

There is no such thing as a super nurse. Nurses are just people like you and me, and they can only take so much physical and mental strain. They are not soldiers or police. They are not trained for assault. Even those personnel have their limits. Is it because this is a predominantly female workforce that we are used to saying, "Dear, that's tough but you choose to work in this facility so you have to cope"?

The minister needs to guarantee that safety in this facility will improve. So I call on the government to review security and nurse safety at the adult mental health unit and for the review to be tabled no later than November, to update the Assembly in March and August next year on progress in changing the situation, to introduce permanent measures to very significantly reduce the incidence of abuse and violence, to adopt a model of care which serves employee safety as well as patient care, neither being weighted more important than the other.

This minister is manifestly and evidently failing the nurses of the adult mental health facility. She has a duty to make the workplace safe within reason. With a rising number of assaults and a facility that appears to never have been safe for employees since it opened and is progressively worsening, the minister must effect a change and demonstrate that such a change has occurred.

It is not acceptable in a modern workforce to say that a workplace is dangerous and that is it, end of story. It must be made safe by whatever means necessary. For the sake of the nurses and their families, let us see a significant improvement to this facility immediately.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Health, Minister for Higher Education and Minister for Regional Development) (4.42): I welcome the opportunity of speaking to Mrs Jones's motion today and indicate that we will be supporting the motion, with the amendment I shall move and which has been circulated.

Opposition members interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: I move the amendment that has been circulated in my name:

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

"(1) notes:

- (a) the Government's commitment to mental health services and infrastructure;
- (b) that the Adult Mental Health Unit at The Canberra Hospital, which opened in 2012, provides inpatient services for Canberra residents with acute mental illness;
- (c) that the Adult Mental Health Unit includes a high dependency wing; low dependency beds; a central socialisation, living and dining space; a therapies wing; and support areas for treatment, assessment, staff, visitors and reception, and was designed following extensive consultation and extensive input from consumer, carer groups and staff, on both the design of the building and the model of care;
- (d) that the safety of staff, patients and visitors is of paramount importance to the Government and active measures are being taken by ACT Health to ensure staff and patient safety is not compromised at the Adult Mental Health Unit;
- (e) that a Provisional Improvement Notice was issued in July 2014 and work to address this notice is substantially complete;
- (f) that ACT Health is undertaking a post occupancy evaluation of the Adult Mental Health Unit;
- (g) that, following this evaluation, an action plan will be finalised collaboratively with staff to address any issues that may be identified; and
- (h) that the Government is continuing to deliver an enhanced network of mental health facilities and services through:
 - (i) forthcoming amendments to the Mental Health (Treatment and Care) Act;
 - (ii) the construction of the Secure Mental Health Unit; and
 - (iii) enhanced community mental health services; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) ensure staff and patient safety at the Adult Mental Health Unit remains a priority; and
- (b) report to the Legislative Assembly by no later than the last sitting day in 2014 on measures being pursued by ACT Health to enhance mental health services across the ACT, including the progress of the post occupancy evaluation.”.

Opposition members interjecting—

I listened to Mrs Jones in silence, and I would expect similar courtesy from the opposition benches.

I do believe that, a number of times during Mrs Jones’s address, I was verballed, particularly around her allegation that I basically said, “Well, it is a tough workplace so just accept it.” That is not what I said. I think it does require us to be honest that the workplace is a challenging workplace. However, my comments yesterday also clearly indicated the fact that management need to do whatever it takes to ensure a safe workplace for staff. But I think if there is any suggestion that we will be able to eradicate aggressive or unacceptable behaviour from this workplace, that is a different thing, because I do not think we can, no matter what strategies we put in place. But I never, ever suggested that it was just a tough workplace and therefore nurses just have to put up with it.

The adult mental health unit was commissioned in April 2012. The main role and function of this unit is the provision of safe, voluntary and involuntary admission for people requiring crisis stabilisation of their mental illness or mental disorder. In many ways, Mr Assistant Speaker, it is the intensive care unit of the mental health service system in Canberra.

The services provided include comprehensive assessment, active treatment and support, and provision of opportunities to promote recovery for the individual in the acute phase of their mental illness or mental disorder until that person has progressed to where treatment can be safely and effectively provided in a less restrictive setting such as the general community. The services provided range across the health profession, but the majority of staff are from the nursing profession and are highly skilled and committed members of the ACT health workforce.

In recent years a number of drivers have prompted redesign and redevelopment of health care more generally across ACT Health. These changes have been prompted by various factors, including health care demand projections, national and local reform agenda, and continually evolving evidence relating to best-practice service models. All of this has influenced the decisions the government have taken around our mental health service system, and some of the new facilities that have been put in place include the mental health assessment unit, the adult mental health unit, and a number of community-based services, including the step-up, step-down facilities that are run by the non-government sector in the community.

As members would also know, we are currently in the process of designing the new 25-bed secure mental health unit and mental health inpatient rehabilitation and day services which will be provided at the University of Canberra public hospital. Other work also underway at the moment is a review of the child and adolescent mental health service model of care, which has been undertaken. The alcohol and drug service is also currently reviewing its inpatient model of care to inform planning and design of a specialised inpatient unit as part of the broader redevelopment of the Canberra Hospital.

In terms of the model of care—Mrs Jones touched on this—ACT Health is developing a comprehensive service model for adult mental health services that encompasses and integrates community-based, subacute, acute, inpatient and emergency department care. This work is ongoing. As one of the last components of our adult mental health service model, the community-based components of our service system need to be redesigned to meet demand and address service gaps. So there is a lot of work happening around models of care, and the model of care does influence some of the issues that have been raised by staff in the Adult Mental Health Unit.

I will go to the issues around what happens when someone comes into the acute mental health system. If a person presents to the Mental Health Assessment Unit experiencing a mental health crisis, an assessment of that person's mental health is undertaken and a treatment plan is developed. That plan includes the option for discharge to community care or family home or for admission to the adult mental health unit. The adult mental health unit is a gazetted inpatient facility which provides acute mental health treatment and care for people, including those subject to the Mental Health (Treatment and Care) Act 1994. The adult mental health unit provides an environment for people who are in the most acute phase of their mental illness.

Staff working in this unit, in the inpatient unit, are often providing care to people who are complex and challenging both in terms of their illness and their behaviour. Episodes of aggression and violence are experienced in varying degrees and frequency in mental health units worldwide, and I think Mrs Jones confirmed that in some of the content of her speech. People admitted to these units are often experiencing acute psychological distress, which in some instances leads to severe behaviour disturbance requiring acute management and containment.

The assessment and management of aggression and violence is a dynamic process and it requires a high level of clinical skill in order to ensure that compassion for the person is balanced with sound clinical care and environmental safety. Unfortunately, as I have indicated before, from time to time there are incidents of violence and aggression within these units.

All people who are admitted to the adult mental health unit have formal risk assessments completed as part of their comprehensive mental health assessment process. Using a tool, the clinical risk assessment is undertaken to monitor the risk profile and it is reviewed by the treating team, and the observation schedule is determined based on the outcome of that clinical risk assessment.

These risks are assessed, I am advised, on a daily basis, and staff monitor people as per their allocated observation level. If required, redeployment of staff occurs to ensure that staff-to-patient ratios are appropriate, and extra staff are provided if acuity is high, although I do accept from my dealings with the ANMF that there is still probably disagreement about whether those patient ratios are appropriate, and that is subject to ongoing discussion between the union and management of the unit.

All staff are aware of or trained in early support and intervention principles which are used to de-escalate episodes of acute distress or agitation which may lead to an episode of aggression. I did lose Mrs Jones's logic or understanding towards the end of her speech about my ideological crusade. I was not entirely sure how she formed that view or where there is any evidence of that. But, if it is around balancing the needs of the patients with the safety of the staff, I do agree that there is a balance to be found there, but I certainly do not rate one higher than the other, nor have I ever sought to push that view or put forward that view in any way.

I would go to the issue of seclusion, though. I have met with staff in the adult mental health unit and prior when staff were working in a greatly inferior facility in the psychiatric services unit, which is about to be demolished, at Canberra Hospital. The staff were actually very proud of the low rate of seclusion. It reflects the skill that they have demonstrated in treating people that there is not the level of demand for seclusion. So it is a direct correlation to their professional capacity. Yes, we are proud of that result because I think it reflects very well on our staff, but if a person needs seclusion or restraint that option is available to staff and it is used by staff as necessary. But rather than seeing it as a tool that is used against staff it is actually much more linked to the outstanding work they perform in supporting patients and de-escalating some of the challenging behaviour in their workplace.

Some of the information quoted in the *Canberra Times* and the motion regarding the number of staff that have had time off work due to workplace injury, as Mrs Jones alluded to, was from the accepted Comcare claims and includes all categories of workplace injuries not just those relating to aggression from patients within the unit. There is further work being undertaken on the RiskMan reports to date; however, early indications suggest that the incidence of aggression and violence in the unit is not increasing year on year.

If we go to the provisional improvement notice, on 25 July the health safety representative at the adult mental health unit placed a PIN, under section 90 of the Work Health and Safety Act 2011, on the adult mental health unit. The PIN contained three specific points: that within 8 days—and this is in early August or by early August—the number of consumers in the unit must be reduced to a level satisfactory to the health and safety rep or temporary measures to increase the number of skilled nursing staff to a level satisfactory to the health and safety rep; that within six weeks—ie, by 5 September—the number of permanent nursing staff within the AMHU must be increased to a level satisfactory to the HSR; and that within six weeks the post-occupancy evaluation must be finalised.

In response to point 1 of the PIN, there are a couple of different areas here. In relation to point 1, management has, as an interim measure, increased the staffing levels at the adult mental health unit. The intention is to keep staffing levels increased while further work is done and negotiations and discussions are had around the safety of staff within the unit to the following levels: nine staff on the morning shift, which is one additional nurse; nine staff on the afternoon shift, which is one additional nurse; and seven staff on the evening shift and one wards person, which equals one additional nurse. Since 25 July 2014 there have been an additional 2.3 staff on each of the morning, afternoon and evening shifts providing one-to-one nursing care. This is in addition to the interim increase of staffing level done in good faith following the receipt of the provisional improvement notice. The currently endorsed model of care, which did go through quite a round of discussion and consultation, has eight staff on morning and eight staff on afternoon and six staff on the evening and one wards person.

In response to point 2, management will be working through a number of different strategies with staff to increase their safety, and this work is ongoing. The issue of the permanent increase in staffing levels referred to in the PIN is an industrial issue and I do not think anyone doubts that. The issue of their staffing will be progressed through the existing industrial framework of the directorate consultative committee or the DCC and the reasonable workload committee or the RWC. The work associated with the application of nursing hours per patient day to mental health inpatient units through the DCC commenced earlier this year.

The nursing hours per patient days are used across most areas of the Canberra Hospital, and the Chief Nurse has agreed and will be doing the work for the development of a nursing hours per patient day for the staffing profile for the mental health inpatient units as a priority. This work will include external benchmarking against four other jurisdictions, which include Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales.

In response to point 3 in the PIN, ACT Health expects to be provided with the post-occupancy evaluation report in the first week of October—6 October. The delivery of the report is delayed as additional staff, I think for a number of reasons, including additional staff sessions, were requested to allow staff from the morning, afternoon and evening shifts to participate in the process.

In the time that is allowed to me, there have been a number of consultation processes underway across staff and management to discuss the issues that have been raised by staff through the PIN notice. In relation to the first item of the PIN notice, that matter has been completed. In relation to the second item of the PIN notice, that is being managed outside the PIN as an industrial issue. Within the third one about the post-occupancy evaluation, this will be required to adjust the timeframe for this recommendation but is agreed along those timetables.

In terms of the amendment that I have moved, I do not think it takes away from what Mrs Jones is seeking here but I do not believe that another review is required. I think the issues are well understood. Contrary to what Mrs Jones said in her speech, I do not

believe that the facility is not being run properly. I think it is, by some highly trained, skilled and dedicated professionals and there is a level of goodwill between management and staff to work through the issues that are emerging in the workplace.

I do believe that the Assembly requires further information, and my amendment says that I would report by no later than the last sitting day in 2014 on measures being pursued by ACT Health to enhance mental health services across the ACT, including progress on the post-occupancy evaluation and update the Assembly on that and, of course, on issues relating to the PIN as they have been explained in my speech today.

But there is a lot of work underway. I do thank the staff at the adult mental health unit for the work that they do. The government has heard their concerns and I think they are actively being addressed by management.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (4.57): The care of some of the most vulnerable people in our community, and people who may have very complex needs, is quite rightly a matter of ongoing concern. Our obligations as employers of thousands of health staff, and in fact our obligations to all ACT public servants, is also clearly a matter for the Assembly, the media and the broader community to scrutinise. I have some comparisons in my own portfolio of Corrective Services with the AMC, and I understand the need for the community to be kept abreast of issues that arise.

Mental health is certainly a complex area of care. Personally, I do not have any particular expertise on the details of therapeutic interventions or the day-to-day challenges of nurses in providing this care. What I do know, however, is that it is clear there are problems for both patients and staff at the new adult mental health unit.

Considering the highly complex interactions of staff and patients or consumers in the closed environment of the adult mental health unit, it is not at all surprising that there are daily difficulties. It is when patterns emerge and become systemic that we must give pause to standard operating procedure and take stock, and this does now appear to be the case. The media attention aside, stakeholders have been raising some concerns about staff safety and we do need to look at those issues. But it is the genuine, qualified advice and the very real concerns of staff and advocates that we need to be considering, not just the occasional sensational headline in the press.

My office regularly speaks to a range of people who either work in this space or represent staff or consumers. As a result I believe that the ACT Greens can support the thrust of Mrs Jones's motion but not the content.

The Minister for Health's amendment to the motion that is before us goes to the heart of the issues, clearly explains the work in progress and provides the Assembly with further review of the issues without misrepresenting the situation. Further, the amendment clarifies a point regarding "superiority of care" that illustrates that the Canberra Liberals, while sometimes well meaning, do not always fully appreciate the systems they attack.

Let us be clear: a health safety representative at the adult mental health unit placed a provisional improvement notice under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 on the

AMHU in July of this year. This is not a small thing, and indicates the seriousness of the concerns and complaints of the staff who do not feel safe in their workplace. They are being attacked and hurt while providing care and they need more support to reduce these types of incidents. It is in everyone's best interests, consumers and staff alike, that the adult mental health unit is a place of therapy, quiet and healing, not a place of tension, undue stress and violence.

This is a serious matter, as I know that the nurses who go to work in that place every day are committed to and passionate about the work they do. You have to be to do that kind of job, and I have nothing but respect for their ongoing professionalism in responding to the more serious manifestations of poor mental health. It must be a demanding and yet highly rewarding career path, and we must acknowledge their legitimate concerns, for we cannot possibly care for those who need it without them.

I understand that the Chief Minister and her directorate are taking these concerns seriously, through a range of actions that, while they might not be as immediate as some would like, are in fact in train. I do not know whether Mrs Jones has sought a briefing on these matters, but there are a few things going on that the Chief Minister has outlined and that I think are worth repeating.

It is my understanding that while the post-occupancy review on the adult mental health unit may be slightly delayed, it is in train, and I am also advised that staff will be provided with any action plan that may be produced, in line with the adult mental health unit model of care that was developed in 2012. It is essential that staff are kept informed of this work, are part of that work and are respected for their input and views on any outcomes of that work. We cannot ignore the reasons that the PIN was issued, just as we cannot ignore the work that ACT Health have undertaken to date to address these problems. Extra staff have been rostered on, and more work is happening behind the scenes.

We in this place can only speculate as to the increased levels of violence against nursing staff. The *Canberra Times* today talks of increased rates of methamphetamine use, and the horror that that is causing both the users and their loved ones. We can look at other social trends, increased incidents of mental health and others, but we have no real right to assume or even make educated guesses.

What we can and should do is support the staff, trust that their concerns are valid and do everything we can as an employer to provide a safe workplace. We have seen the attention given to industrial workplace injuries in the ACT, and we must provide that same level of basic safety to all in our community, to make sure that we have a similar level of concern right across the workplaces that we are responsible for here in the territory.

As the amendment notes, the secure mental health unit, a parliamentary agreement item and a personal priority of the health minister, is being progressed. The secure mental health unit will undoubtedly provide some relief for both the adult mental health unit and the AMC but it will not reduce the need to provide a full suite of programs and places of care, and it will not in any way reprioritise the need to ensure a safe workplace for the doctors, nurses and other staff.

It is also worth repeating that there are two, not one, post-occupancy evaluations underway, for both the adult mental health unit and the mental health assessment unit. Again, while acknowledging that there has been some delay in undertaking these evaluations, I understand that they are being actioned as we speak, and I look forward to hearing more about the outcomes. This will form the foundations for the more permanent response to the problems that Mrs Jones, and in fact I am sure the Chief Minister, wants to see.

The amendment that is before us allows for more information and an update to be provided to the Assembly before the end of the year. I think that is an important part of the amendment. It provides not only information on the steps that are already being taken but also a clear undertaking to come back to the Assembly with an update on the implementation.

Perhaps the thing of most importance is that we have transparency in this place that progress is being made. That is the thing by which we can truly measure whether staff safety is being improved. I refer to the steps that have been laid out by the Chief Minister in her amendment, in the noting section about work that has already been done. The report back to the Assembly provides us with the opportunity to ensure that we are able to keep a watching brief on this issue, and we as an Assembly can monitor whether progress is made in ensuring that staff safety is being enhanced in the adult mental health unit.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (5.04): At the outset I would like to thank Mrs Jones for bringing this issue before the Assembly today. It is a very important issue and I know it is one that she is very passionate about—both mental health and the health workforce, and in this case in particular mental health nurses. We on this side certainly recognise the importance of mental health in our community. That is why we have created a separate shadow ministry and that is why Mrs Jones was given that shadow ministry, so that we can make sure that its importance is elevated in our community.

It gives me great pleasure to speak today on this motion because, although it is going to be watered down by the minister, the reality is that as a result of this motion today it would appear that things will happen and, as a consequence, those very dedicated, very hardworking staff in the adult mental health unit will hopefully find themselves in a better and safer working environment. Ultimately, when we cut through, that is what we are doing here today.

I rise today as well in my role as the shadow minister for health, because obviously the whole health system is integrated, while acknowledging that we have a dedicated shadow minister for mental health. But I am aware that because of the issues that have been raised by Mrs Jones, by others and in the media, a number of nurses and other staff—wardsmen—have come forward and who work elsewhere within the hospital. I think it is worth reflecting on the fact that with the issues that we find in the mental health unit, we want to make sure that as we address those we are also paying attention to other very hardworking staff, be it in EDs, which we know are under great strain, or across the rest of the hospital.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the ANMF—I will make sure that I do not say ANF; it is the ANMF—who are here with us today in the gallery and acknowledge the work that they do in representing the staff not just at the hospital but nursing staff and midwifery staff throughout our community, and commend them for the work that they have done in advocating on this issue. I know that they do a great job in providing the advocacy role for the nursing and midwifery staff—as they should, because being a nurse, and in particular a mental health nurse, is about as tough a job as you could imagine.

As we sit here in a very safe, comfortable and easy environment, we can all imagine how difficult it would be to work in an environment where you are dealing with people who are mentally ill, the complexities of that and how difficult that is. I know that they do that with compassion and I know that they do that professionally. But there is no doubt that it is a risky environment. We have a responsibility in this place—in particular the minister has a responsibility—to make sure that, as far as is humanly possible, not only are we treating and looking after mental health clients but that the nurses, the carers, are provided with a safe environment in which to do that work.

It is clear that that has not occurred. We know it has not occurred because there has been a provisional improvement notice put on the adult mental health unit. This is not fear mongering. This is not some sort of political exercise. This is in response to the fact that there has been a failure, there has been a breakdown, the system has not worked, and now we have a provisional improvement notice and things need to be fixed.

The minister has moved an amendment. Although she has said she is supporting Mrs Jones's motion, what she is actually doing is omitting all words and then coming up with something completely new. I think that it is better than nothing—there is no doubt about that—and we will walk away today with a result for the nurses. But it is disingenuous indeed for the minister to say that she is supporting the motion when she is doing anything but, as she is essentially watering down Mrs Jones's motion. If she supports the motion then she should not move an amendment. That is what I would say.

With regard to the comments from Mr Rattenbury, it is disappointing that Mr Rattenbury, on an important issue like this, which should evoke some passion, cannot seem to muster it. He is just blindly following the government again. If only he could show the same sort of passion for the safety of our nurses as he does for light rail and debates on renewables, as we have seen this week, and perhaps on euthanasia tomorrow, we would have a situation where nurses could have greater confidence in the Greens minister. But that was a bland, passionless speech, and I think it reflects the attitude that we have seen.

I know that he is in a battle of his own—and he did refer to it—at the jail. Staff there are concerned about their safety. I know that the CPSU today has raised concerns about staff safety there. This government as a whole need to pay attention to their staff, and to the staff unions, when issues of safety are raised. There are always going

to be debates about wages, working hours and conditions, but when it is a matter of safety then ministers, be it in health or in the health environment of the jail, need to listen more closely.

Going to some of the detail of what Mrs Jones has raised today, I think she went through the issues extremely well, and the case has been well made. But it is quite clear that the minister has a responsibility to provide a safe working environment. The statistics, which are alarming and which are increasing in terms of the number of assaults and other incidents outlined, make it entirely clear that it is not a safe working environment. With respect to those figures, there have been 57 cases of physical attacks on staff this year, and that is an increase of 10 incidents from the previous year. There have been 13 near misses and 37 incidents of verbal threatening. A total of 135 incidents have been reported. That is why that provisional improvement notice has been issued by Comcare.

It is not going to be an environment that will be without incident. We are not trying to pretend that this is a utopian environment; it is not. The question is: is this government doing enough? Has this minister done enough? I think it is very sad that we are only having action taken on this in a substantive way through a motion in this place because the government has essentially had to be dragged kicking and screaming to this point. Since 2012 there have been incidents, and this situation has been allowed to develop and go on to a point where a PIN has been issued. I think that is disappointing.

What Mrs Jones is asking for is entirely reasonable. I think it is thorough. In her motion she raises all of the relevant points. To water that down is to pay disrespect to those hardworking nurses who really deserve thorough action and the most fulsome response from this government.

The opposition will not be supporting the minister's amendment, which seeks to water down Mrs Jones's motion, and I commend Mrs Jones's motion to the Assembly.

MRS JONES (Molonglo) (5.14): I will deal with the amendment and sum up. I thank all members present for their contributions to this debate. This is a very serious debate; it is a very important debate. I thank Minister Rattenbury for the recommendation that I seek a briefing. Yes, I have sought a briefing. But you should also be very clear that the facts of the PIN and the statements of nurses on their treatment in this unit speak for themselves.

With 49 incidents of physical or abusive assault on nurses in the first year of operation, increasing to 57 incidents in the second year, with 112 overall reports, increasing to 135 reports, I find it amazing that the minister stands here and says there is no evidence that there is an increase in assaults and attacks in the unit.

With more than one physical attack per week, it is not okay. It is not providing a safe working environment. The act states that, in order for a PIN to be placed on a facility, the act has to have been contravened, is being contravened or will continue to be contravened. And this is a real concern for those who are working in the facility.

As far as the amendment goes, I find it interesting that Minister Rattenbury says he cannot support my motion. He says it is very important that we hear back about what steps and measures are being taken. I think he needs to read my motion, because (2)(c) says:

... introduce permanent measures that will significantly reduce and prevent incidents of violence and abuse directed at staff ...

The minister would need to outline the measures and steps that are being taken. I am not sure which part of the motion cannot be agreed to. The first part outlines a series of facts, and the second part only calls for a review of security to update the Assembly in November—which is in fact exactly the same as what the minister has said, because our last sitting week of the year will be in November—and to explain to us the program for implementation of improvements.

Going directly to the amendment, the government is attempting to strike off my entire motion in order to water it down. Nobody is claiming that there was not extensive consultation, as the minister has put at (1)(c), and extensive input from consumer, carer groups and staff on the design of the building and the model of care. (1)(d) refers to ensuring that patient safety is not compromised. Well, it already is. That is clear. That is why there has been a PIN issued.

In the “calls on” section, it asks the government to “ensure staff and patient safety at the adult mental health unit remains a priority”. I would hate to see what it was like if it was not a priority, because if this is what a priority looks like, it is a great failure. In (2)(b) it proposes that the government report on “measures being pursued by ACT Health to enhance mental health services across the ACT”. That is great, but unfortunately the government’s own review is six to nine months late, apparently, by their own time frames. I suppose it is better late than never, but in reality perhaps it is time for a review.

We will not be supporting the government’s watered-down amendment to my motion. I make a plea to the minister to act faster and fix the problem. It would not be acceptable in a pub, a school or any other workplace to say that the difficulties associated with the cohort of people that are being cared for mean that it is impossible to make it safe. It needs to be made safe. I know she claims that I am verballing her but that is the logical outworking of the things that she has said.

This is an area that the government has clearly failed in. It is not good enough. If it was your brother or sister going to work in this facility, or your mother, wife or husband, you would like to know they are going to come home in one piece. It is a basic responsibility of this government to fulfil its requirements as employers under the workplace safety act 2011.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 7

Mr Barr	Mr Corbell	Mr Doszpot	Ms Lawder
Ms Berry	Ms Gallagher	Mrs Dunne	Mr Smyth
Dr Bourke	Mr Gentleman	Mr Hanson	Mr Wall
Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury	Mrs Jones	

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Arts—support

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (5.22): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the ACT community is strongly engaged with the arts and cultural activities;
- (b) Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures show the ACT has the highest attendance rate at cultural venues and events (93 percent) than any other jurisdiction in Australia;
- (c) ABS figures show 100 percent of young people aged 15 to 24 years in the ACT attended a cultural venue or event in the 12 months prior to interview in 2009-2010;
- (d) the ABS figures show 79 percent of ACT children aged five to 14 years attended a public library, museum or gallery or a performing arts event at least once outside of school hours;
- (e) the ACT had the highest attendance rates at museums and art galleries in 2011, with 46 percent of those aged 15 years and over attending at least once, compared to the national average of 26 percent;
- (f) the Live Performance Australia Ticket Attendance and Revenue Survey found a 29.4 percent increase in attendances at live performances in the ACT in 2013;
- (g) in 2009-2010, the *Masterpieces from Paris* exhibition at the National Gallery of Australia, supported by the ACT Government, broke attendance records for public exhibitions in Australia and boosted the ACT economy by approximately \$94 million;
- (h) in 2009-2010, cultural funding provided by the ACT Government totalled \$95.3 million, which equated to \$268.41 per person in the ACT;

- (i) the Australia Council on the Arts currently does not fund the ACT at a fair level compared with other jurisdictions; and
 - (j) Federal, State and Territory Arts Ministers will meet at the Meeting of Cultural Ministers in Alice Springs in October; and
- (2) calls on the Minister for the Arts to:
- (a) continue to support the development of arts and cultural activity in the ACT;
 - (b) continue to advocate on behalf of ACT artists with the Australia Council and the Meeting of Cultural Ministers; and
 - (c) report to the Assembly later this year on the outcomes of the Meeting of Cultural Ministers.

The ACT community is one of the most artistically engaged communities in Australia. We are fortunate to have magnificent national galleries and museums, as well as a thriving local arts culture. It is clear that Canberrans take advantage of this because we have the highest attendance rates at cultural venues and events of any jurisdiction in Australia. The ACT government recognises the benefits of providing the people of Canberra with opportunities to enjoy and participate in arts and culture.

Providing broad access opportunities for our community to participate in the arts at all levels is one of the key principles of the ACT arts policy framework. The arts play an important role in society and the local community. The arts enrich us all in our daily lives. There is a large body of evidence that demonstrates the strong links between participation in arts and cultural activities and improved wellbeing, and improved social cohesion and inclusion.

The government provides significant arts funding and a broad range of quality arts facilities to support our artists and arts organisations. These organisations provide a diverse range of opportunities for the community to access and participate in across the arts, and to nurture and develop individual artists. Canberra artists are nationally and internationally recognised across all fields. The ACT is home to many highly regarded artists and art organisations that underpin the quality of arts experiences for the community.

Developing arts hubs, such as Gorman House and Ainslie arts centres and the Kingston Foreshore arts precinct, are a significant part of achieving the goals of the ACT arts policy framework. We have also provided capital upgrades for the Tuggeranong Arts Centre and the Street Theatre.

Early engagement with the arts provides for a life-long love of the arts. Arts programs for young people can improve a student's enjoyment of school, and thereby their academic achievement and job readiness, and have been shown to reduce anti-social behaviour.

The ACT government supports 20 key arts organisations. These important organisations recorded more than 300,000 attendances at arts events and activities in 2013. These organisations include Ausdance ACT, Canberra Youth Theatre, Canberra Youth Music, Music For Everyone, QL2 Dance, Warehouse Circus and the community outreach program delivered through the ANU School of Music and School of Art. The ACT government also supports graffiti art through the Territory and Municipal Services legal graffiti art sites.

Between them, our key arts organisations provide a significant and broad-reaching range of arts programs for our youth. Indeed, in 2013 more than 10,000 participants under the age of 12 took part in programs run by our key arts organisations. Research highlights the positive impact of young people's involvement in the arts, including increased motivation, self-confidence and creative thinking, student engagement and improved school attendance.

The government is also committed to ensuring that people with disabilities or experiencing disadvantage have opportunities to engage in arts and cultural activities. The community cultural inclusion program operating from the Belconnen and Tuggeranong arts centres focuses on support for people across our community. From programs like dancing with Parkinson's, delivered through the Belconnen Arts Centre, and exhibitions like *Touch*, from the Tuggeranong Arts Centre, arts and cultural engagement embraces and supports members of our community to have a voice and to share their experiences.

In 2013 there were more than 30 dedicated programs available for people living with a disability provided through the key arts organisation network, engaging more than 400 individuals. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in 2009, 78 per cent of people in the ACT aged five years and over with a disability and 74 per cent of people aged 60 and over attended at least one cultural venue or event in the 12 months prior to interview.

There is increasing evidence in the correlation between participation in creative activities and positive health outcomes. Engagement in the arts often serves to strengthen social bonds and to forge connections that may not have existed before. Arts and culture are vital tools in promoting a stronger social fabric and in improving the social health of the community.

Arts activities are both personal and social experiences. They involve the individual act of creating or observing and the communal act of sharing with others. The opportunity to discuss one's artistic experiences can intensify the experience and serves as its own unique event. Whether this involves reliving moments from a play, a recent book or discussing the progress of one's own work, such conversations help people to explore the experience more deeply and to benefit from different perspectives. We have a community that is very supportive of the arts who willingly give their time, energy and passion in volunteering within the sector.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics' *Work in selected culture and leisure activities* 2007 report, almost one-third of all people living in the ACT undertake

some paid or unpaid work in culture and leisure activities, with 9,000 adults undertaking volunteer work in an arts or heritage organisation. These figures are supported by our key arts organisations, which in 2013 reported a total volunteer work contribution of more than 17,000 hours.

Canberra's visual art scene remains first class. Beyond the national cultural icons such as the National Gallery, the National Museum and the National Library, there is a wonderful network of local galleries including the Canberra Glassworks, Craft ACT, Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Canberra Museum and Gallery, Megalo, M16 and PhotoAccess.

Collectively, hundreds of artists create and exhibit their work and thousands of patrons visit these galleries each year. These organisations are especially important in linking the ACT community with its cultural output, in defining our identity, telling our own stories and finding opportunities for us to listen and reflect upon our common experiences as Canberrans.

Similarly, the performing arts scene is also thriving. Organisations including the Canberra Theatre Centre, the Canberra Symphony Orchestra and the Street Theatre present a diverse range of performances where tens of thousands of patrons attend every year.

However, it is not just the professional end of the spectrum that is supported here in the ACT. To gain a full appreciation of the work of the theatre sector, the wonderful community and amateur theatre scene in Canberra is also very significant for participants and audiences. This area of practice develops theatre practitioners, creating a rich list of Canberra artists and theatre technicians alike appearing on or behind stages across Australia and internationally, and remains a notable achievement of the facilities and support that this government gives to the arts.

Overall, this paints a strong picture of how the ACT community participates in the many opportunities provided and how the arts can enrich our daily lives. Continued support to our artists and arts organisations underpins this participation. Government has a strong track record in providing significant arts funding and support for a range of arts facilities. The government is committed to ensuring that the ACT is known for its great art and artists and that it is recognised nationally. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (5.31): This is a welcome motion, and I thank Ms Berry for putting it on the notice paper. A lot of what she says is true. The ACT community is strongly engaged with the arts and cultural activities. I notice that she has quoted from the ACT arts policy framework in a number of parts of the motion—part (b), part (g) and some of the others. It is an impressive list of statistics and something we all should be quite proud of.

Access to the arts, which is very strong in the ACT, and the fact that we have got access to the national collecting institutions, which we can get to so readily and so easily, really boost what happens in the ACT, but it really is about what we do with it and where we take it. Having sat with Ms Berry and Mrs Jones on the estimates

committee, I know that there was a lot of discussion about the arts in the committee, particularly from the Belconnen Arts Centre and the Childers Group. One of the criticisms—certainly the Childers Group was talking about it—is about a long-term arts strategy for the ACT.

One of the recommendations, recommendation 20, was:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government create a long-term arts strategy with particular focus on funding of the sector, facilities development, increasing participation, developing events, and cultural tourism.

The government's response was:

Agreed.

The government says it has an ACT arts policy framework as a long-term strategy which is regularly reviewed.

I want to stop right there. The ACT policy framework is hardly a strategy. It might be a framework of things that the government hopes to achieve, but there is very little detail, if any, on how they will achieve it. Like all frameworks, it has some principles in it:

Principle One: Facilitate Community Participation ...

Principle Two: Support Artistic Excellence ...

Principle Three: Strengthen ... Sustainability ...

Principle Four: Foster Artistic Innovation ...

It does not actually say how they are going to do it. As a strategy, you would think it would outline what the government might do.

Let us just look at principle 1:

Principle One: Facilitate Community Participation in and Access to the Arts ...

Key elements of the principle are funding local arts organisations, championing importance, encouraging the community, embracing Canberra's position and fostering relationships. But when you look at the detail on how that might be done, there is no detail, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I acknowledge your long-term, and I know very heartfelt, interest in the arts and the importance of the sector.

That is the problem. You have got a government that says, "Because we have a document we have done it." The reality is that they have got a document and they do not do it. Like so many things in this city, the arts community runs despite the government; there is certainly no leadership in the arts in that regard. To say that "We have got a framework" is a long-term strategy—there are no targets; there are no time frames; there is no indication of how it will be achieved.

There is one good thing, and I do give the government credit for this—moving arts into Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development. I think that was a recommendation of previous estimates committees. That is where it is more properly aligned and where it will be more effective in developing the city and developing our artists.

But you need a strategy that is looking to achieve real outcomes. Again, it is always about inputs with this government: “We spend this much.” It is not about what we achieve. How are we going to create, for instance, the new eX de Medici Canberra schoolgirl—someone who went to school in one of our local high schools, who was doing art from an early age and who has gone on to be, quite bizarrely, a world-renowned tattoo artist. She has tattooed one gentleman from his head to his toe, and I understand that his will says that his skin is to be left to the National Gallery of Australia. I would be very interested to see how they display that one.

But eX has also been a war artist. I think she went to the Solomons. Some of her work is stunning and provocative; the use of flora and fauna, particularly flora, with armaments in art is quite extraordinary. And if you have ever seen any of her botanical studies of Australian flora, they are stunning. This is a local artist who sells for enormous amounts of money around the world. We are not all going to reach that height as artists. Some will; some will not. But how do we develop the next eX? How do we keep them here? How do we celebrate them? How do we make sure they get the local acknowledgement of somebody who is in galleries around the world?

You do not hear or see that in this strategy, because there is not really a strategy. There are bits going on. An acknowledgement of our recommendations is that the theatre review might look at the prospect of a national performing arts centre. I take it that the government accepts that, and that is a good thing. But look at some of the other recommendations, some of the simple things that the community asks for. For instance, we saw Belconnen Arts Centre and we saw the Childers Group again. All of them said that we need to build a second stage of the Belconnen Arts Centre. Four members of the committee—two Liberal, two Labor—agreed with that, but the government noted that this is a matter for future budget consideration. Given that they want works that are ready to roll, I understand the DA for this could be lodged at the drop of a hat. But there is no funding.

Recommendation 16 in the report was:

... that the ACT Government review the ACT Arts Fund with a view to an immediate increase of base funding ... and further consideration of increases in line with the growth of the ... sector.

The government said:

“Noted.”

I note that part (i) of this motion says:

... the Australia Council on the Arts currently does not fund the ACT at a fair level compared with other jurisdictions ...

I did not hear any evidence to suggest that that is true. I have an amendment to remove that, because I do not know that to be true. Indeed, my understanding is that the funding for 2012-13 under Labor was \$1.3 million for the ACT from the arts council and funding for 2013-14, which started as a Labor budget, was also \$1.3 million. So I do not know that there is any evidence. I would be interested, when Ms Berry closes, that she put the evidence on the table to support (i). My understanding is that Australia Council on the Arts funding is a competitive process. If the problem is that we are not putting forward enough applications for grants, or if they are of not suitable quality, perhaps we need to lift our own game instead of blaming the council. If there is some evidence of a bias with the Australia Council on the Arts, I would like to see it, but I have not heard any today. It will be interesting to see if the government can actually produce any.

While it is good to deflect activity away from yourself by blaming somebody else, the local community put forward a number of valid suggestions in the estimates committee to enable it to go ahead. For instance, recommendation 17 says:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government increase “One-Off Arts funding” back to \$1.1M and maintain funding in out years.

If you want to see an attack on the arts, remember that this government reduced funding in the one-off arts fund. It is well and good to blame the arts council, but look at yourself first. The government responded:

Noted.

This is a matter for future Budget consideration.

Ms Gallagher interjecting—

MR SMYTH: Sorry, Chief Minister.

Ms Gallagher interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: That would be disorderly, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Yes, that would be disorderly. But there she is, sniping away. Good luck.

Recommendation 18 says:

The Committee recommends that the ... Government ... conduct an economic analysis ...

The response was:

Agreed.

Apparently that is underway, and we would welcome that.

Let me go to recommendation 20. Again, the Childers Group suggested that the government establish a full-time arts officer and that that person be embedded in the education directorate to assist with education. But no. The government response was:

Not agreed.

The Education and Training Directorate (ETD) has existing established structures to facilitate and support arts education in ACT public schools.

The whole suggestion was that someone who had been in the arts world as an arts person should go into education so that they could use their knowledge and their experience to assist with education. We should always be open to the suggestion that relevant and appropriate outside individuals come into our education system and assist. We clearly did not see that. We clearly do not see that. The art community does not see that. The art community is concerned about it. Again, it is a good suggestion that was made that really could have helped.

There is a real failure of the ACT government in this. Yes, there is a framework, but there is no real strategy to make it happen. You hear from many arts groups that they are concerned about their funding. What about ArtSound FM? We know that part of the proposal is that they might shift from Manuka so that Manuka Oval can be redeveloped, and that they may end up in the arts precinct that apparently will be occurring at Kingston foreshore. But the real question was about that vital infrastructure that they have built up. How does it move? How do they get there? What guarantees will the government give that they are not disadvantaged by the government's desire to redevelop the land around Manuka.

We know that part of the framework talks about these sorts of things, making sure that there is appropriate infrastructure for support. That is good, but how are you going to ensure that existing infrastructure, when you want to move it, is not disadvantaged? Again, those concerns are there; those concerns are real. The last time I spoke with ArtSound they said that they are really not getting a great feeling of security about the government's intention. It has been built up. They have lost their key arts status. A lot of us, I think, felt that was questionable because it is one of those real venues to allow people, through the medium of the radio, to be able to access art in the ACT. There is a lot of local art that features on that station.

We can go off to the cultural ministers meeting in Alice Springs in October. We can take on the federal government to say that the Australia Council on the Arts currently does not fund the ACT. But at the heart of it, if you are not getting it right before you start throwing stones, the old "people in glass houses" line, you should really look at your own framework, your own structure, what you are delivering and how you are making it work, and really work out whether or not you could be doing things better.

We have not heard any evidence for the motion. We have got a swag of quotes that have been apparently taken from other documents. We seem to be waving the Minister for the Arts farewell and wishing her bon voyage as she travels off to Alice Springs for the cultural ministers meeting in October. It is important for ministers to go to meetings where it is appropriate.

If we look at section (2), the action part of this motion, we see that it calls on the Minister for the Arts to “continue to support the development of arts and cultural activity in the ACT”. I hope that when you get your review of the importance of the arts community, as you are saying, it will be done. It will be interesting to find out when that is done, when the economic analysis is completed.

The answer in the government’s response is:

The Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate ... has already started work on an audit of the economic impact of the arts sector on the ACT economy.

Perhaps when the minister speaks she might tell us what that audit will encompass, who is conducting that audit and when she expects to receive the audit. When we get that audit done, hopefully as a consequence of that audit, we will get a proper strategy for the arts in the ACT.

It is very clear around the world that cities that are moving ahead have vibrant arts communities. A book was recently published by Phaidon Press called *Art Cities of the Future: 21st Century Avant-Gardes*. Canberra does not rate a mention. Places like Bogota and Singapore are included, but there is not a single Australian city in that book. That is a shame, because when you read that book you see that much of the sort of work that is being done that makes these cities leading edge is being done around Australia, and indeed is being done in large measure in the ACT.

The motion calls on the Minister for the Arts to:

- (a) continue to support the development of arts and cultural activity in the ACT
- ...

We should start by seeing the audit and then seeing the action plan that will spring from that. The motion calls for the minister to:

- (b) continue to advocate on behalf of ACT artists with the Australia Council and the Meeting of Cultural Ministers ...

Good luck to you. You should do that; that is part of your job. I am not sure why the minister has to be encouraged by the Assembly in that way. If you did not understand that as your job, there is something wrong.

And the motion calls on the minister to:

- (c) report to the Assembly later this year on the outcomes of the Meeting of Cultural Ministers.”.

We always look forward to the travel reports of ministers in this place. They are often far and few between. In fact, members have much more stringent conditions put on their travel, or used to have stringent conditions as part of their travel, including travel reports. We will look forward to the report of how Alice Springs was in October at the meeting of the cultural ministers from the minister when she returns. That said, there is just the small amendment which I now move:

Omit all words after paragraph (h), substitute:

“(i) Federal, State and Territory Arts Ministers will meet at the Meeting of Cultural Ministers in Alice Springs in October; and

(2) calls on the Minister for the Arts to:

- (a) continue to support the development of arts and cultural activity in the ACT;
- (b) continue to advocate on behalf of ACT artists with the Australia Council and the Meeting of Cultural Ministers; and
- (c) report to the Assembly later this year on the outcomes of the Meeting of Cultural Ministers.”.

Unless we can put some evidence that the Australia Council is somehow biased against the ACT into the discussion, it is a part of the motion that should not be there. I would be interested in how you judge a competitive arts process that somebody always gets an agreed percentage. Surely it is based on the offering; surely it is based on the strength of the submission. I will listen with interest when Ms Berry closes as to how she has come to that conclusion.

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) (5.46): I thank Ms Berry for bringing on this matter and I thank Mr Smyth for his consistent grace and politeness when he stands to talk to motions in this place.

The ACT is populated by people of all ages who love the arts. They choose to watch, attend and participate at one of the highest rates in Australia. Whilst we are fortunate to be the home of so many wonderful national cultural institutions, let us not take for granted our own local arts organisations which play a significant role in engaging with our community and drawing people into the arts.

Last year more than 300,000 people attended an arts activity offered by one of our government supported key arts organisations. Some of those 300,000 are happy to remain in the audience and others are continuing their interest as a hobby, while others will be inspired to pursue a full-time career in the arts. Warehouse Circus is just one of our key arts organisations providing a range of activities to meet all levels of interest. As part of the Circus for Life Festival last year, the Warehouse Circus presented *Turn the Page* at the Belconnen Community Theatre. This show brought together five troupes, a total of 65 performers, to weave the story of what libraries might be like if the books come to life. For many performers it was their first time on stage and it was an incredible experience for all involved—audiences and performers alike.

Warehouse Circus has supported many local artists to make the leap to professional performance. One of the graduates has now been accepted into the National Institute of Circus Arts, where he will train full time at an elite level. He credits Warehouse Circus for developing not only his skills but also his passion and love for circus.

I would also like to acknowledge Warehouse Circus's support for the Women with Disabilities ACT's Strong Women, Circus Sisters Troupe. Many of us may have seen the documentary about this project, which followed 15 young women with disabilities as they learned a range of circus skills over a period of six months, which came to an end with a public performance. A photographic exhibition has also been held down at the Tuggeranong Arts Centre.

I am pleased to note that the ACT government supported the Circus Sisters Troupe's rehearsals and performance through a grant from the Office for Women. The project received other support from the Canberra community, including the Woden School, Anglicare's Shaw Possibilities program, Hands Across Canberra and the Snow Foundation, so I think that shows what a connected and supportive community we have here.

Our arts organisations are not just connecting with the local community; they are working collaboratively with national and international artists and organisations. A key initiative of our government is our artists-in-residence policy. It has the support of an Arts Residencies ACT program and is designed to grow the vision of Canberra as a sought-after destination for artists. This program has allowed our local arts organisations, like Craft ACT, to raise their international profile and create new partnerships.

Organisations such as Craft ACT play an important role in supporting artists to develop their business skills, thereby increasing the economic contribution made by the arts. As part of our centenary celebrations last year, Craft ACT successfully tendered to administer the Legacy of Good Design competition, which resulted in the official set of uniquely designed objects for the centenary. These products were sold through the Craft ACT shop, which recorded more than \$135,000 in sales and a total revenue of \$260,000 to artists and the sector over the life of the project. The artists and designers also gained high-profile exposure throughout the year and gained significant skills and business development, and attracted new opportunities that further enhanced their professional practice.

One of the legacies of our centenary year was a greater understanding of our diverse arts culture. The government, through responsive arts policy and funding programs, will continue to advocate and support our local artists and arts organisations. The Australia Council for the Arts recently announced a new funding model to make it easier for artists and arts organisations to apply for funding. This represents new and exciting opportunities for our local artists to apply for this funding.

Madam Speaker, the ACT is under represented in per capita funding from the Australia Council compared to other states—I think Mr Smyth just looks at a jurisdictional cost. That also includes, though, the funding that goes to our national institutions. We dearly value our national institutions here, but I think it provides an unrepresentative view of the funding that is invested through the council into the ACT and it does not reflect the true value of their funding investment into our local artists. Key arts organisations or prominent artists around town would actually say that I should continue to advocate for more support from the arts council.

They have made a change to a peer review panel. There used to be restrictions: if you were on a panel you could not apply for particular funding grants. They have made that change and there is certainly a call out—and I have put the call out to the arts community here—to really encourage our local practitioners to be involved in the panel because it will not only improve their own skills and development about how grants and how systems like this work but also infiltrate more deeply into the Australia Council's recognition of ACT arts practice.

Recently we met with the Australia Council to discuss funding. The meeting also presented a platform to promote the quality and diversity of local arts activities being created in the ACT and for us to be recognised for our contribution. As this motion indicates, I will be taking this position to the cultural ministers in October because, when I raised it in a face-to-face meeting with the arts council, they did not refute it. They did not say that it is a nonsense argument. Indeed, they encouraged me to stand firm and to continue to raise this, to make sure that our ACT arts practitioners are supported, get proper feedback in grants applications, are supported to develop stronger grant applications should that be a problem, and are encouraged to go onto the peer review. They recognise that, if you took the national institutions out of the funding for ACT, perhaps there is a case to say that there is inequity in our funding here.

So, Mr Smyth, I think that says we will not be supporting your amendment, but I do not think you are particularly surprised by that. Mr Smyth, you stand here many a day and put a case with absolutely nothing behind it but an empty paper bag, so I think I will just leave that be.

Let us talk about some of the programs and activities that we support—our arts organisations. There is project funding, funding for key arts organisations, program organisation funding, out-of-rounds funding, start-up grants, ACT book of the year, ACT poetry prize, arts residency, residents in schools, and of course we have the Fringe Festival that will come back with such flurry and activity in the multicultural festival in February next year.

I thank the key arts organisations that we have. There was a comment about ArtSound. That is a peer assessment panel. The peer assessment panel determined the change in that, so that is not a decision of mine and not a decision of a bureaucrat; it is a peer assessment process.

In closing, it has just been announced—news just in—that a Canberra-based filmmaker has just won the Toronto International Film Festival's Short Cuts International award—a global showcase of short films. This chap is Sotiris Dounoukos, who was raised in the ACT and was a 2011 creative arts fellow. Whilst this film is set in France, he is a Canberran and he will be promoting Canberra and ACT arts practice, I have no doubt, as he moves through his career in the years to come.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (5.55): Each of us here today can attest to the fact that the ACT community loves to come out for arts and culture.

The arts can be a difficult thing to define, but if I can defer to Pablo Picasso for a moment who once said, “The purpose of art is to wash the dust of daily life off your soul.” I think it is a wonderful description of what art means. It will mean something different to each person because I think that is what art by its very nature is.

The somewhat infamous one and only *Skywhale* certainly blew the dust off many a soul during its flights over Canberra. For some people it was not a happy blowing off of the dust. Others found it quite enthralling. I think that one example perhaps best encapsulates what the arts means to our community. It is a different thing for each person. We certainly see that in the diversity of artistic activity here in the ACT. I have often said to people that one of the great joys of becoming an MLA is that you get invited to many things in the community that you perhaps would never otherwise get to go to. In the arts space I have probably gone—

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MR RATTENBURY: The soccer last night I would have gone to anyway probably, but certainly in the arts space you do end up going to some things that you might not have thought to go to or perhaps would not have been aware of. As MLAs, we get an opportunity to see some of the tremendous things that are happening in our city. Probably they are not all to our personal taste but, nonetheless, the arts are very much a glue in this city, just as sport is. These community activities really do bring us together in tremendous ways.

Ms Berry’s motion does a fine job of quantifying Canberra’s participation in the arts and cultural events. Anyone who has been to the Multicultural Festival in Civic would accept that 100 per cent of young people have attended a cultural event in the last 12 months. In fact, I suspect almost every single territorian was at the last festival, based on the crowds in Civic. I know the Canberra Liberals took a great interest in the Fringe Festival at that very same event, again demonstrating the different perspectives that people have on art.

Over many years in Canberra I have seen plays and heard bands and enjoyed poets and gazed at masterpieces throughout the city. There are some very unique local productions as well. For anyone who has not yet been to see the variety show *In Canberra Tonight*, there are only two shows left before Chris and Meg hang up their spurs to pursue other projects. I would very much recommend you get along to check out something that is so quintessentially Canberran. The last couple of shows are said to be staged at some of the national institutions around the parliamentary triangle and seem to be perfect examples of how Canberra art culture can blend a marble foyer with a brass knuckle brass band.

Like many Australians, I queued up to visit the *Masterpieces from Paris* exhibition at the National Gallery some years ago. It was a fantastic exhibition. I fully support ACT government involvement in top shelf projects such as that. I was particularly pleased to hear Minister Barr’s recent announcement that the major exhibition this summer will be a James Turrell retrospective again at the National Gallery. For those members who have visited the existing Turrell *Skyspace* at the NGA, they will no doubt share my anticipation of the coming show.

I was also pleased to see in May that the Minister for the Arts released the master plan for the Kingston arts precinct. This is an important step in the development of a key arts hub and will better integrate influential arts organisations like the glassworks and Megalo with all the new cultural venues like the bus depot markets and the Fitters Workshop.

I note that a development application for minor upgrades to the Fitters Workshop was submitted recently and I look forward to seeing how the Kingston arts precinct—

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

MR RATTENBURY: As I was saying, I look forward to seeing how the development application for upgrades to the Fitters Workshop progresses and how the Kingston arts precinct continues to develop over time. I think that is going to become a really strong focal point in our city for the arts community. Being so well located, containing some of those historic buildings and with the new development in the Kingston Foreshore area and various eating and drinking outlets coming on stream down there, I think that area will really go ahead in the coming years.

I am interested in the debate that has sprung up in the discussion this evening about funding from the Australia Council of the Arts. I did note in Ms Berry's motion at (1)(i) that the Australia Council of the Arts currently does not fund the ACT at a fair level compared to other jurisdictions. So I went and checked the ACA's most recent annual report and found there was perhaps some truth to this statement.

The annual report indicates that for the ACT, which contains 1.6 per cent of Australia's population, we only receive 0.7 per cent of the ACA's national arts funding. That is less than half of what the numbers suggest we should realistically enjoy. During the last financial year that funding was in the order of \$1.3 million, and that was as a proportion of the ACA's total funding in that period of \$174.8 million. By my rough calculations, a fairer share would be in the order of \$2.8 million per annum. I certainly support Minister Burch in her efforts to continue to convince the Australia Council of the merits of the arts scene in the ACT.

The whole vote tonight is going to turn on that single point and I look forward to the likely outcome of that discussion. As I say, on the research we have done there does appear, on the face of it, to be a less than fair share for the ACT than we might expect. I was just chatting on the side with Mr Smyth about how one might actually analyse those figures. I think we all might want to have a further look at it.

I will simply conclude my remarks this evening by saying, having made those other comments, that there is no doubt that the arts and culture scene in the ACT is a tremendous scene. It is a diverse scene. I think it will continue to go from strength to strength. I just think about all the different venues and facilities across Canberra and the things I have seen—from the Tuggeranong Arts Centre last year, where there was an exhibition of artworks from prisoners at the AMC, to sessions at the Belconnen

Arts Centre, where artists that I know had exhibitions and all their friends and family turned out at a local venue to support them, through to things like the Strathnairn art gallery, Megalo studios, M16 in Griffith—all of those places—and many others. I almost hesitate to start naming any because I am bound to leave some tremendous ones out. I will stop there in the danger of going any further with a list and forgetting things. But simply in just trying to cover the short list, one can think of all those tremendous venues and the tremendous things we have seen at them.

I thank those artists, their supporters and the people behind the scenes for the things they do and the joy that they have brought to our city. I look forward to continuing to celebrate the arts in its many forms with them over coming years.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (6.03): I thank everyone in the Assembly today for their contributions to this motion. Mr Smyth commented on the Belconnen Arts Centre. One of the great things about the Belconnen Arts Centre is that it is not sitting around and waiting for something to happen from the ACT government. It is actually working really hard to go out into the community and bring the community in to be part of the art space. The same is the case with Strathnairn arts gallery, which Mr Rattenbury mentioned, and the work that they are doing to bring people in.

One of the stories that I heard recently from Strathnairn came from some of the work has been done by the Riverview Group for their development out in west Belconnen. They have surveyed people about Strathnairn, asking people what think about Strathnairn and art generally. The people in west Belconnen thought it was a little bit not them, a little bit posh. And so Strathnairn have gone, “Okay, we’re going to open up our art space and try and get the community in so that they understand that art is not just for one group of people, that it’s actually part of our community.” So they have been building their cafe, which is now open from Thursday to Saturday. That brings people to the cafe and also gives them an opportunity to experience the fantastic art that is happening out at the Strathnairn gallery.

I am particularly fond of the legal graffiti art sites around the ACT. I think they are fantastic initiatives by the ACT government. I am also particularly interested in the ACT arts in schools program in 2014, which also brings in a fantastic local artist, George Rose, who has been doing some work out at the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre. George’s goal for the teens was to experience the creation of a street art piece for perception through the implementation, whilst also showing the value of art and the possibilities that it can offer.

I really love that kids who might be using graffiti art as a way to express themselves can learn greater ways to implement that in their lives and tell their stories, but also be given spaces across the ACT where they can do that legally and tell their stories for everyone to enjoy. Not everybody enjoys graffiti art, but it is something that I am quite passionate about. I would like to see legal graffiti art spaces expanded across the ACT community.

Mr Rattenbury also mentioned *In Canberra Tonight*. I did leave the comfort of west Belconnen one evening in winter to experience the *In Canberra Tonight* event. It definitely was a “not in Kansas anymore” moment, but it was entertaining nonetheless.

I could see that the *In Canberra Tonight* community were thoroughly enjoying themselves. It is something I might have to go and have another look at, I think, to appreciate it more.

The art space really does need to be opened up more to the community. That is why this motion calls on the minister to continue to support the development of arts and cultural activity in the ACT—finding better ways to engage people who would not normally be touched by art in the ACT and giving them chances to experience art in ways that they may not have ever had before. It has certainly been the case for me since coming into this place. I know that the minister will work hard to continue to advocate on behalf of ACT artists with the Australia Council and at the meeting of cultural ministers. I look forward to her report to the Assembly later this year on the outcomes of that meeting with cultural ministers.

We will not be supporting the proposed amendment by Mr Smyth, and I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 7

Noes 8

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
Mr Rattenbury

Question so resolved in the negative.

Motion agreed to.

Tourism—visitor numbers

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (6.12): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes the:

- (a) June 2014 quarterly results of the International Visitor Survey, which showed that although:
 - (i) national visitor numbers are up eight percent, ACT numbers underperformed with a two percent increase;
 - (ii) national visitor nights are up one percent, ACT visitor nights are down 12 percent; and

- (iii) national total trip expenditure is up seven percent, ACT trip expenditure is down six percent; and
- (b) March 2014 results of the National Visitor Survey, which showed that although:
 - (i) national overnight trips were up four percent, ACT overnight trips were down three percent;
 - (ii) national visitor nights were up one percent, ACT visitor nights were down 17 percent; and
 - (iii) national expenditure was up four percent, ACT expenditure was down eight percent; and
- (2) calls on the Government to detail to the Assembly why tourism in the ACT has declined, particularly off the back of the Centenary year, by the last sitting day in October 2014.

I have spoken to Mr Barr and Mr Rattenbury. We will endeavour to knock this over before we go home, and maybe we can get some adjournment speaking time.

Recently Tourism Australia released some statistics that show that, in comparison to the national average, in many cases tourism in the ACT has gone backwards, whereas in the rest of the country it has gone forward. Against national travel, to the June 2014 quarter, overnight trips grew nationally by five per cent; yet in the ACT they dropped by two per cent. Visitor nights grew by three per cent nationally but for the ACT they dropped by 16 per cent. Expenditure grew by four per cent nationally but dropped by 11 per cent in the ACT.

Indeed, the same case is mirrored in the international visitor figures in the Tourism Australia survey. Overnight trips nationally grew by eight per cent, whereas in the ACT they only grew by two per cent. Visitor nights nationally grew by one per cent, whereas in the ACT they declined by 12 per cent. Expenditure nationally grew by seven per cent from international visitors but declined by six per cent in the ACT.

One could say this might be a malaise or a bit of a hangover from the centenary year, but when one compares the two previous quarters as well one sees in most cases a decline. Figures for international visitors at the end of the March quarter in 2014 show that nationally overnight trips have gone up by six per cent but have only gone up by three per cent in the ACT. Visitor nights had gone up by one per cent nationally but declined by 10 per cent in the ACT. Expenditure by international visitors had grown by six per cent nationally but dropped by eight per cent in the ACT.

For December 2013, at the end of the centenary year, overnight trips nationally by international visitors had grown by six per cent but had grown, to their credit, by 12 per cent in the ACT. Visitor nights had grown by four per cent nationally but had declined by one per cent in the ACT. Expenditure by international visitors had grown by six per cent nationally but had declined by nine per cent here. So it is not all roses.

The same is seen in travel taken by Australians. If you go back another two quarters—and I can go back more if people want—to March 2014, in that quarter, overnight trips by Australians had grown nationally by four per cent yet had declined by three per cent in the ACT. Visitor nights had grown by one per cent nationally but had declined by 17 per cent in the ACT. Expenditure had grown by four per cent nationally but had declined by eight per cent in the ACT.

Again, if you go to the December quarter, overnight trips had gone up nationally by two per cent but by five per cent in the ACT. Well done, a bit of a buzz there from the centenary. Visitor nights nationally were zero per cent but visitor nights even in the centenary year had dropped domestically by five per cent. But the saving grace is that the expenditure in that quarter nationally had gone up by three per cent but had gone up by 13 per cent to December 2013 through traffic by Australians.

What we want to make through this motion is the case that there is still much more to be done for tourism in the ACT. As I said before the centenary year started, we needed to make sure that we had in place measures to see what the effect was. I had hoped that we were prepared to cash in on all of the expenditure in the centenary year but the earlier results would indicate that that is not the case.

When the figures came out in August the Australian government, through Tourism Research Australia, listed visitor perceptions of the ACT. I will quickly go through the executive summary because it is quite insightful. It is particularly interesting, given that we have just had a debate on the arts, that art and culture, of course, is one of the drivers. There are four pillars in perception gaps of the ACT, four key tourism experience pillars. We have got food and wine, art and culture, family fun and outdoor adventure. This research was conducted in three phases throughout April and May 2014.

In the leisure market the people who were surveyed, prior to being given stimulus material, were asked what they thought about Canberra. Then there was their impression afterwards. The impression of Canberra by repeat leisure visitors was:

Widely recognised for its significance as the ... capital, although appeal varied

There were a range iconic attractions but there was a strong perception that the attractions were simply focused on education. There was a mixed impression of the city itself. There were comments from some:

Sprawling layout can result in an empty feeling, but wide open spaces/lack of traffic were appealing

Doesn't always translate to a desired 'holiday' feel

A 'been there, done that' destination.

The view of Canberra by those who had never visited for leisure was that yes, they knew we had national attractions but they were sometimes dull. The iconic attractions were prominent, they were valued for their national experience and the experiential learning for the whole family. We were seen as sombre:

Politics, government and a sombre, respectful feeling.

But the thing that worries me is that people were often saying:

Offer doesn't entice anyone, seasonal climate not valued

perception of limited activities

lacking excitement for some.

And we have a reputation for being an expensive place to travel, which deters spontaneous leisure trips.

Inside the four pillars, under art and culture the summary is:

Arts and culture was rated the strongest of the four pillars and has the most potential as a driver of visitation.

However, nationally we were ranked fourth. Melbourne was first, Hobart was second, Sydney was third and Canberra was fourth. I think we see in the Hobart numbers, the effect of MONA, a recently opened private art gallery. It is quite confronting, some would say, but it has really changed, particularly the long weekend and the weekend travel to Hobart where people are going specifically to see MONA. It is that value of having something unique, having something with a different appeal, that is very important.

The summary included things like:

While Canberra was perceived to deliver quite strongly on 'arts', the perception of Canberra 'culture' was not as strong.

Culture was considered as a more immersive concept, rather than one delivered by structured attractions.

Being a newer, planned city, Canberra was generally perceived to be lacking on this component.

Under food and wine—and we all value our food and wine in the city and the region—Canberra's food and wine offering is currently lacking the credibility to compete with other food and wine regions across Australia which is, I think, a pretty unfair summary. But that is the perception out there and that is something we are going to have to work on. The survey found:

While there was some appeal for Canberra's offer, it was not considered unique or compelling enough to drive visitation. This was evidenced by the lowest rank in competitive testing and the relatively low ranking among recent visitors.

Tasmania and Melbourne were more appealing. In the ranking it was Tasmania first, Melbourne and surrounds, Adelaide and surrounds, and we were beaten by Orange-Mudgee and then Canberra and surrounds came fifth.

Regarding the summary:

The perception of Canberra as a food and wine destination is still lacking. Some recent visitors to Canberra had positive experiences but the feeling was that local knowledge was required to find the best (often suburban) venues. The perception remains of a quiet place, lacking vibrancy, energy and nightlife.

And one could hark back to Mr Coe's motion earlier today about improving City Walk and Garema Place—vibrancy, energy and nightlife.

The third pillar was family fun, and unfortunately the summary is:

There is relatively narrow appeal for family experiences in Canberra.

Again, I would question that, but this is how people saw us. Again we ranked fifth. It is hard to compete with the Gold Coast for family fun, but I guess it is about putting the offering together. Gold Coast came first, tropical north Queensland came second, Sydney third, Melbourne fourth and Canberra fifth. The final paragraph in the summary is:

In general, however, awareness of Canberra's family experiences was low among those who have not visited. Canberra's family experiences rate markedly higher for those who have previously visited, suggesting if people know more about what's on offer they may be more likely to visit. Furthermore, satisfaction was generally high with families who did visit, though a visit was likely to be viewed as a 'one-off' trip.

Again, one of the particular requirements is that you have got to go to Questacon. We need to get past the notion that the only family thing to do in Canberra is Questacon.

On outdoor and adventure, we see ourselves as, the old adage, the bush capital. We certainly see ourselves as a city very close to its environment. Yet again, on outdoor and adventure we ranked fifth. Tropical north Queensland was first, Tasmania second, Great Ocean Road third, Sydney and surrounds fourth, Canberra and surrounds came fifth. The summary was:

Outdoor and adventure has the least potential for Canberra. Canberra ranked lowest overall, with Tropical North Queensland and Tasmania the dominant destinations in this competitive set.

Canberra was more competitive with the Great Ocean Road and Sydney and surrounds among recent visitors to the ACT:

For many, outdoor adventure usually only forms a small part of a well-rounded holiday experience. However, Canberra was not perceived as a competitor for genuine 'adventure' experiences, particularly among younger age groups.

So there is clearly some work to be done there as well.

Then the report goes on to look at some of the barriers to Canberra visitation:

Aspiration and access pose the most significant barriers to Canberra demand.

In terms of aspiration, while some consumers were simply not interested in the destination, many had other destinations higher on their list. Alternatively, they may have been before and don't feel the need to return. This implies a lack of unique and compelling experiences to drive repeat visitation.

For those consumers more interested in visiting Canberra, many were deterred by the high cost of flights. This has an impact on those considering Canberra as a short break destination, as other destinations are more competitive in terms of cost.

Just three of the comments were:

It doesn't match the excitement and energy of Melbourne and its laneways.

I have NT and Queensland to tick off before considering going to Canberra again.

If airlines like Jetstar and Tiger offered cheap flights I'd be more interested.

Perhaps that is part of the discussion, not just the Canberra international airport getting international flights, but certainly it would seem from the survey done by Tourism Research Australia that cheaper flights would make Canberra a more desirable destination.

The conclusion of the report goes to experience development:

Canberra was ranked below key competitors across each of the four experience pillars after respondents viewed stimulus on each destination. Therefore, further experience development is required.

To maximise current demand, it says:

No single pillar currently appeals to be compelling enough as a marketing focus. Broad positioning (rather than specific product focus) may be the most appealing with the current product offer.

Integration of seasonal events (acting as triggers) is likely to be appealing.

But it has a final line:

At a more basic level, it seems that a lack of knowledge of the best tourist experiences, and how to access them, could be addressed through a creative map of the region. The map should highlight attractions that appeal to holiday visitors.

It is interesting that the final piece in the Tourism Research Australia report does talk about low-cost air access, and it finishes with:

Canberra is not currently serviced by a low cost airline. When combined with relatively moderate holiday appeal, this becomes a major barrier—especially for short breaks.

The introduction of a low cost carrier is likely to provide more trial and repeat visits.

As well as focusing on international flights, perhaps there is some food for thought in this issue.

Tourism is very important to the ACT. We have got in place a large number of significant icons—and I think we use them well—but from the visitor perceptions report from a body such as Tourism Research Australia, there is clearly much more to be done.

The work of Simon Anholt, who is recognised as the father of place branding, talks about having strategy, having substance and having significant action. I have had conversations with Mr Anholt via email. He has actually been to Canberra, and he said to me that he came, I think it was, in 2012, to meet with then minister Simon Crean. When he told all his friends he was going to Australia, they said, “What, a day in Canberra and six days in Sydney?” He said, “No, I am doing five days in Canberra and two days in Sydney.” They all said, “You’re mad.” He said, “The problem for you guys is people do not know you are there. I loved it.”

This is a guy who travels the world. He ranks cities. He ranks countries. He talks about identity. He talks about brand. And he said we had so much to offer in this place but we really had to get the branding right, we had to get the offer right and we had to get the strategy right to make it happen, because he felt there was enormous potential. That is my paraphrase of his words. But in his book, *Places*, he does talk about the need to have in place strategy, to be a place of substance so that you do matter in the scene and that you do have significant action so that people know you are implementing your strategy and people know that you do have substance.

I have just seen that the minister has dropped in an amendment, which I will have a look at while he is speaking, but we do need to see the reason for the decline, particularly off the back of the centenary year, and it would be good to have a report from the government by the last sitting day in October.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Housing and Minister for Tourism and Events) (6.27): I thank Mr Smyth for the annual tourism debate 2014 being brought on today. I move the amendment circulated in my name:

Omit all words after “notes the”, substitute:

“(a) June 2014 results of the International Visitor Survey, which showed that:

- (i) national visitor numbers are up eight percent, while the ACT recorded a two percent increase;

- (ii) national visitor nights are up one percent, ACT visitor nights are down 12 percent; and
 - (iii) national total trip expenditure is up seven percent, ACT trip expenditure is down six percent;
- (b) March 2014 results of the National Visitor Survey, which showed that:
 - (i) national overnight trips were up four percent, ACT overnight trips were down three percent;
 - (ii) national visitor nights were up one percent, ACT visitor nights were down 17 percent; and
 - (iii) national expenditure was up four percent, ACT expenditure was down eight percent;
- (c) results of the International and National Visitor Surveys reflect a spike in visitor activity during the Centenary year which resulted in higher rates of growth in 2013 than in previous years. While growth in some visitor indicators has declined in 2014, when considered in context over a number of years, there continues to be substantial growth in visitor numbers and visitor expenditure in the ACT;
- (d) International Visitor Survey results included a number of clearly positive results such as an eight percent increase in holiday visitor numbers and a seven percent increase in the number of people visiting friends and relatives, demonstrating growth in the important leisure sector. Similar results can be seen in the National Visitor Survey with an 8.6 percent increase in holiday visitor numbers; and
- (e) ACT will host in 2015:
 - (i) fixtures in the Asian Cup and Cricket World Cup, the Southern Hemisphere's two biggest sporting events;
 - (ii) the extended James Turrell exhibition at the National Gallery of Australia, as the ACT Government, through Visit Canberra, continues to work closely with the national cultural institutions to bring crowds to Canberra for blockbuster exhibitions; and
 - (iii) local and international visitors coming to the Australian War Memorial which was recently rated as Australia's top landmark attraction, as part of the centenary of ANZAC;
- (2) notes that the ACT Government continues to engage innovative techniques to meet the targets of the *Tourism 2020* strategy, including the next phase of the award-winning *Human Brochure* campaign with the *101 Local Humans* campaign; and
- (3) notes that Commonwealth Government cuts to public service travel and domestic tourism marketing through Tourism Australia have had a direct negative impact on the number of overnight visitors to the ACT.”.

I have sought to provide a broader view of the IVS and NVS data, reflecting the reality of the success of the centenary year and also acknowledging that to date 2014 is in fact tracking better than years prior to the centenary. We saw a build-up in activity in the centenary year and we have seen a maintenance of tourism numbers at levels well above what we have seen, going back to events as far back as the Sydney Olympics. When Australia hosted the biggest event in the world there was a spin-off for the ACT, as there was for all tourism in Australia in the year 2000.

2013 saw the best tourism result this city has seen since the Sydney Olympics. Yes, 2014 has seen some decline off that number, but I am not surprised at all by that given how strong the 2013 numbers were.

That said, we are continuing to focus on our tourism 2020 strategy, which provides a clear framework of programs and activities to help grow the value of the ACT's overnight visitor expenditure to \$2.5 billion by 2020. It is currently at \$1.8 billion and supports around 17,000 jobs. In the time that I have been tourism minister that value has increased from about \$1.3 billion to \$1.8 billion, and the number of jobs in this sector has gone up from about 12,000 to 17,000. So we have seen considerable growth in the time I have been minister, and I certainly look forward to the continuation of that under the 2020 strategy.

It provides a clear vision for tourism for the territory and establishes a measurable target for all those who are part of the visitor economy. It aligns with the national 2020 tourism framework, which aims to double overnight visitor expenditure from \$70 billion nationally to \$140 billion in 2020.

Over the next six years some of the areas of focus that will help realise the ACT's tourism potential include: transport initiatives, including securing direct international flight services, but also low-cost services; investment in destination marketing activities that drive visitation both domestically and internationally; growing the digital capability of the industry; developing new experiences for visitors, to complement investment in new products; and creating the right business environment by encouraging investment. It is incredibly pleasing to see the level of national and international investor interest in this city in recent times. We have been busy reducing regulatory burdens and addressing labour and skills shortages in the sector.

To accommodate the expected increase in visitors at a 75 per cent occupancy rate, we will need 930 new hotel rooms to meet the 2020 target. I can advise the Assembly that we are already on track to achieve this target. The Canberra hotel accommodation development pipeline is strong, with an estimated 750 new rooms to be available by the end of 2015.

The territory government's commitment to achieve the 2020 goal is progressing into 2015 and beyond. In particular, programs delivered through the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate will support continued growth of the visitor economy. The 2014-15 territory budget provides a direct allocation of \$12.141 million to Visit Canberra to support the objectives of the 2020 tourism strategy. In particular, \$600,000 has been committed to support the cooperative airline stimulus fund.

There is no doubt that the \$480 million investment in Canberra Airport and the supporting infrastructure there has delivered a fitting gateway for our city, and certainly provides a solid platform for future economic growth—including the capacity to support direct international flights. The cooperative airline stimulus fund will support our ongoing efforts in partnership with Canberra Airport to secure new flights for our city, both international and domestic. As I have said I think on a dozen occasions in this place in the last 12 months, low-cost carriers are certainly part of that approach. Funding will also support both international and domestic cooperative aviation marketing campaigns, which will stimulate demand on existing routes and further grow the value of domestic and international visitation.

The territory government, through Visit Canberra, has contributed \$100,000 to participate in Tourism Australia's \$10 million global campaign—Restaurant Australia—alongside all states and territories. Visit Canberra is working with Tourism Australia, five local Restaurant Australia ambassadors and the local food and wine industry to raise awareness about our region's unique food and wine offering within our priority markets, including Singapore, New Zealand, South-East Asia and China. Investment in the campaign is an important step in increasing collaboration with Tourism Australia ahead of cooperative marketing activity that will occur in support of direct international air services.

It is disappointing that there is no longer a domestic focus to Tourism Australia's activities. That is regrettable. It is a disappointment that, following the change of government, any domestic focus has been removed from Tourism Australia, given that 70 per cent of national tourism is domestic. In the ACT's context, it is even higher because we do not have direct international flights at this time. However, we continue to work positively with Tourism Australia in the areas that they are allowed to operate in, and that is internationally at this point in time, and we are seeing good results from our cooperative marketing.

The latest figures from the national visitor survey and international visitor survey have been released by Tourism Research Australia. These figures relate to the year ending June 2014 and they cover key visitor segments, including holiday travel, business travel and travel to visit friends and relatives.

In terms of domestic overnight visitation to the territory during this period, the key findings were that we received over two million domestic overnight visitors. This was down a little from the previous year, which included obviously the big elements of the centenary year, but over two million domestic overnight visitors is well in advance of what we had been receiving in previous years through this century; indeed in the nineties and eighties we never got anywhere near that.

There were 5.21 million domestic visitor nights. The holiday sector performed strongly, with visitor numbers up nine per cent and visitor nights up six per cent. What we saw particularly in the centenary year was a very strong push from Canberrans to invite their friends and relatives to the city, which was fantastic and boosted the tourism numbers, but the legacy from the centenary year is that the numbers of those who visit independently, who are not coming to see friends and relatives, have continued to grow in 2014, and that is encouraging.

In terms of international visitation during this period, we received nearly 181,000 international visitors, which was up two per cent on the previous year. There were 4.2 million international visitor nights in the ACT. The visitor numbers in the leisure sector were again strong, with holiday visitors up eight per cent, and those visiting friends and relatives up seven per cent. International visitor expenditure in the territory totalled \$353 million.

It is important to note that the territory's domestic and international results for visitors, visitor nights and expenditure in the 2013-14 financial year compare very favourably with results from previous years. Of course the visitor levels in 2012-13 were simply outstanding, with domestic and international figures that were unmatched for a decade. For 2012-13 our growth in domestic overnight and international visitor levels significantly exceeded the national trend. As such, a direct comparison between 2012-13, a magnificent year, and the latest figures does not provide an accurate reflection of our long-term tourism performance.

The 2012-13 figures were heavily influenced, as you would expect, by the centenary. Certainly the centenary year provided proof of the value of investing in events in particular, and major events played a key role in our outstanding visitor numbers and the economic outcomes for the region in those figures. Ongoing investment from the public and private sector is critical to continuing to drive strong visitor figures and to provide new and compelling reasons to visit the territory.

Visit Canberra and the ACT government are actively supporting this effort through our special event fund. Since it opened in 2011 \$2.54 million has been allocated to support major events. Seven blockbuster exhibitions have attracted more than 910,000 attendees and delivered \$222 million in economic return to the territory. I will repeat that: a \$2.54 million investment in our event fund has delivered \$222 million in economic return to the territory. The latest blockbuster exhibition to receive funding under this fund is the James Turrell retrospective, which will run for an extended season from December to June 2015.

Pleasingly also, 2015, and particularly the first half, will see Canberra play host to two of the biggest sporting events in the world—the Asian Cup football tournament in January and the Cricket World Cup in February and March. We are hosting seven matches as part of the Asian Cup, including a quarter final, and three Cricket World Cup matches. When you look at the summer of cricket, with the Big Bash final, the one day international between Australia and South Africa and the Prime Minister's XI, it is the biggest summer of cricket this city has ever seen. It has been made possible by the infrastructure legacy of the centenary year, particularly the lights at Manuka Oval. Once again I will place on record my thanks to Prime Minister Gillard for her support of that initiative and the funding that the commonwealth government provided in our centenary year for that important infrastructure legacy.

Our involvement in these sorts of global events provides a platform from which to raise the profile of the territory. Our status as a major events destination is enhanced when we successfully host these events, as we did so well in 2013.

It should also be noted that 2015 will provide a significant opportunity for Canberra to play a central role in the centenary of Anzac commemorations. The Canberra and region tourism industry are well placed to leverage these significant tourism opportunities.

Specific programs like the second phase of the Australian tourism award winning human brochure campaign and cooperative industry and media partnerships are some of the activities that we will be undertaking to stimulate demand from interstate and international markets.

Domestic marketing innovation is another critical plank of our 2020 framework. The visiting friends and relatives market, which is very important to us, is being stimulated through the 101 local humans campaign currently being delivered by Visit Canberra. This builds on the success that was duly recognised by the national tourism industry through the winning of an Australian tourism award for marketing by the human brochure campaign.

Later this year 101 local humans will invite their interstate friends and relatives to experience the best that our city has to offer, with their experiences being highlighted through social media. Importantly, this campaign has been supported by more than 60 industry partners. One of the other success stories of recent times has been the level of buy-in from the local tourism industry into the 2020 strategy and into the specific campaigns that we are running. Achieving our 2020 goals will only be possible with the coordinated commitment and investment from peak industry bodies, tourism businesses and the territory government—and of course would be helped greatly if the federal government would be a little more supportive of tourism in this region.

Unfortunately, the federal government has walked away from support of the domestic tourism industry by cutting all domestic tourism marketing through Tourism Australia. It is also disappointing that there is not a direct minister with tourism in his portfolio title. Minister Robb does a good job as trade and investment minister, but you always get the feeling that without a direct tourism minister the industry is being put just a little bit behind other areas within that portfolio.

It is understandable. It is a massive workload, being the trade minister; I acknowledge that. It would be great if we had a dedicated tourism minister at the national level. That is disappointing, but we work cooperatively with Minister Robb, and I enjoy a productive relationship with him. We will continue to focus on tourism. It is important for this economy and it is important for this community. (*Time expired.*)

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (6.42): I intend to keep my remarks fairly brief tonight because I know members want to get to the adjournment debate as well. It has been a good discussion this evening. I think the intent of Mr Smyth's motion is to highlight the figures in the preceding 12 months. I will be supporting Mr Barr's amendment tonight, because I think paragraph (2) of Mr Smyth's motion actually seeks the explanation. A lot of that commentary is contained in Mr Barr's amendment, or at least his perspective on what it is, and in the remarks that he has just made. So I think it is appropriate to support that amendment tonight, which I believe addresses the questions that Mr Smyth has raised.

We all know that tourism is a really important sector for the ACT. It has been well spoken of this evening. I think that challenges remain for us across a whole range of areas. I could speak about the whole accommodation spectrum, even the low-cost accommodation, which I know we have discussed before in this place, and the necessity for that.

Certainly stepping into the role as the Minister for Sport and Recreation, I am very keen for that portfolio to continue to drive tourism in Canberra. I am particularly supportive of high participation in sporting and recreation events that come to the city, particularly over the summer period when parliament is in recess and many of our hotels and those in the hospitality sector really struggle for business. It is a great time of year to host events in the ACT.

It is just one area of particular interest to me. But right across the sector, we must continue to strive to boost our tourism industry so that we can not only bring those economic benefits to our city, but also, as the national capital, share that national capital with our fellow Australians and with international visitors. It is not just about our own interests here; it is about our responsibilities as that national city to make sure that the rest of the country comes in and enjoys this wonderful city.

So with those few brief remarks, I will be supporting Mr Barr's amendment this evening.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (6.44): The minister opened with the statement that he was not surprised. That is the whole point. We knew that we had a big year. Last year in the centenary something like \$30 million was spent on programs. There was question that I was asking even in 2012 that in many ways was answered in December 2012, when the minister had set up a task force to look at what would happen post centenary. But that is the whole point: what was the follow up? What was the preparation for the post centenary year. The answer, I think, is perhaps lacking. Yes, there are some events coming, but there are always some events. I acknowledge that it will be a big year for cricket, so the cricket buffs will be very pleased. Yes, the lights are welcome.

I might, as a sidebar, suggest that we all say thank you to Neale Guthrie, who has just retired from Territory Venues and Events. I think we will all miss you, Neale.

But that is the point. The minister, at the end of his speech said "not matched for a decade". Again, that is the point. The previous high-water mark was about 2003. We had had 2000 with the Olympics in Sydney, 2001, 2002 and 2003 were all quite strong, but there is a decline after 2003 and it is not until we get back to those highs, until 2013.

Again, that is the point. Will we only have a high-water mark every 10 years or can we actually take seriously what tourism research has said and start addressing some of the issues? Really, this is only the summary document; I assume that the minister has access to the full document and that he will read it and look at how we can capitalise on some of the work that has been done independently for us. There are many

suggestions in there about how we compete, but when, on one issue, we are behind Orange and Mudgee, you really do question why that is so. How can it be that Orange and Mudgee will beat us? The answer may well be that they have been in the food and wine area for some time, and that is true. But given what we have got in the other attractions that we have got, and the amenity that we have got, it is kind of hard to believe that we are that far behind, that we rank behind Orange and Mudgee—as much as I like a good visit to Mount Canobolas and some of the wineries up around Mudgee, which are very good.

The purpose of the motion in one way is to prompt the government, and we got the standard response from the minister to rattle off a list of things. But if you read what he has put in his motion, a lot of that does not address what is in this summary of visitor perceptions of the ACT from Tourism Research Australia. They highlight a lot of things about perception, they highlight things about packaging and they highlight access to low-cost fares. They say that people were simply not interested in the destination and had other destinations higher on their list.

So it is about changing that perception, still, of Canberra, that we are not hip and homespun, that we are not a cultural place that you would go to, that people still doubt the quality offering in food and wine and that people still doubt that we truly are a family destination at the other end of the spectrum. I do not see answers to that in what the minister has said in his amendment. But it is not unexpected that we get an amendment like this from this minister.

Madam Speaker, tourism in the ACT has enormous potential. I think it is sad, for instance, that the government has now put a new convention centre on the backburner, notwithstanding the fact that David Marshall potentially drove off the road and that such an announcement would cause him distress. I am sure it makes us all very upset. But the minister said we have 60 organisations helping us to do this.

Well, there is another list of 54 organisations that would like to see the convention centre go ahead. It is a shame, particularly in that essential piece of business tourism infrastructure, that the government puts something like capital metro before that. One of my great fears—I know it is a great fear in the industry—is what we saw with the construction of the Gungahlin Drive extension. It sucked the life out of the major capital works budget but, in doing so, it also sucked the life out of all the minor things that needed to be done. In particular, one of the great concerns within the industry is that some of the smaller things that have been happening will disappear because the government will need to ensure that capital metro gets the funding.

It is interesting. I think that the upside of it is that all three parties agree that tourism is a very good thing for the ACT and that there is lots of potential. We certainly, I believe, do disagree on the way forward from here, but we will wait with interest to see what happens between now and 2016.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Adjournment

Motion (by **Mr Barr**) proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Education—awards

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) (6.50): I do not often do an adjournment debate but there is a lot of interest in it. I rise tonight to pay tribute to the many teachers, school leaders and support staff who were recently recognised at the ACT public education excellence awards. The public education excellence awards were introduced in 2010 to recognise and celebrate effort and outstanding achievement in public education in the ACT. With a record number of 123 nominations over nine categories, it is evident that there are many educators throughout the ACT that deserve to be recognised and congratulated. I would like to congratulate the winners and put their names on record.

The primary teacher of the year was Robyn Hammond from Hughes Primary School. The secondary teacher of the year was Nor Idris from Lyneham High School. The outstanding school leadership award went to Sue Norton of Fraser Primary School. The teaching/leadership in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education went to Lynn Leon from Kaleen Primary School. The new educator of the year was Matthew Eyles from Calwell High School. The early childhood teacher of the year was Michele Foley. The education support award went to Debbie Carne of Harrison school. The school hero was Brian Johns of Hughes Primary School. The family and community partnership award deservedly went to Charnwood-Dunlop school. Congratulations to all the recipients and the nominees again for being great educators and supporters of our public education system here.

I just want to recognise quickly that these notes were provided to me by Briannah Jeffries who is doing an internship in my office. I think she is really enjoying seeing firsthand the machinations of the ACT Assembly.

Mr George Lemon

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (6.52): I rise this evening to recognise an individual who belongs to an important group of people in our community, namely volunteers, and, more specifically, volunteers within the sporting and charitable works communities. The individual I am referring to is Mr George Lemon. George has made a significant contribution to the Canberra and Queanbeyan sporting communities over the past 22 years. Indeed, his contributions also extend over international areas of charitable works as well, especially in countries like East Timor, the Philippines and South Korea.

I first met George Lemon in the early 1990s when he was secretary of the Queanbeyan City Soccer Club. He was heavily involved in assisting with the administrative areas of the club as well as helping the Queanbeyan Macedonian community. By 1997 he was vice-president of the Capital City Suns which has proud Macedonian connections and he was so immersed in the community that many of us thought that George Lemon himself was of Macedonian origin. While he pointed out that he was not, it highlighted his passion for the many people of various backgrounds that he helped over the years, which is still his trademark today, 22 years later.

I became president of Soccer Canberra in 1996 and our paths crossed frequently, as George seemed to be everywhere. Not only was he the Queanbeyan City Soccer Club delegate on the Queanbeyan Sports Advisory Committee, as well as on Soccer Canberra's Senior Assembly of Clubs, he also became a member of the influential Soccer Canberra Senior League Management Committee. George Lemon became Mr Soccer in Queanbeyan and his legacy of work as club administrator with three local clubs, Queanbeyan City, Capital City Suns and Monaro Football Club, earned him great respect in Queanbeyan and Canberra. This led to George becoming a vital part of administration of Soccer Canberra and he served for a period as general manager of the Canberra Cosmos.

During this period George was also instrumental in providing some much-valued support for the community of East Timor. As a fledgling nation they had many areas of need and he became aware of the youth of East Timor needing sporting equipment. Through Soccer Canberra, George Lemon organised a collection that resulted in around 42 boxes of soccer boots, balls, shirts and assorted equipment being dispatched to East Timor. He also played a major part in the Soccer Canberra initiative the Kanga Cup, the international and local youth tournament that by 2002 had achieved a record number of around 201 international and local teams that competed.

George also became heavily involved in Gawad Kalinga, a Philippines charity that sought to improve the dire circumstances of the many homeless. And through his growing network of supporters in Australia, George has raised over the years a very significant amount—I believe, hundreds of thousands of dollars—that has helped build villages that have provided homes and dignity to many people in need.

There are many other areas where George Lemon has contributed over the years. He was a volunteer in Canberra during the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. He has been a strong supporter of Coralie Wood and her CAT awards that do such a great job in supporting and recognising the acting and singing talents of many individuals and groups in Canberra and the region.

After 22 years of involvement and continuous service in football George Lemon has decided to hang up his proverbial football boots and I am sure that I echo the thoughts of many in the football community. We wish him well in hopefully temporary retirement. But he certainly deserves a break after the many years of valuable contribution that he has made. To George Lemon, thank you for your valued contribution to the sporting community and best wishes in all the other important areas of community involvement through Gawad Kalinga that I understand you will still continue.

Tuggeranong United Football Club

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) (6.55): I rise this evening to express my thanks and appreciation to the Tuggeranong United Football Club. Along with over 5,000 others I had the pleasure of attending last night's game against A-League club Melbourne Victory in the FFA Cup round of 16. I was joined by Minister Burch and also, I understand, by Mr Rattenbury. I saw Mr Smyth at the game as well.

I would particularly like to congratulate the Tuggeranong team coach, Steve Forshaw. He prepared a team of wonderful battlers who, in spite of the 6-0 defeat against a team of full-time professionals, played with great spirit and determination for the entire 90 minutes of the game. It was good to see former Tuggies junior player Carl Valeri playing for Melbourne Victory and being given plenty of vocal support from his father, former footballer and coach Walter Valeri, and the rest of the Valeri family, including all the beautiful grandchildren.

I believe last night's attendance of 5,150 at Viking Park was the largest-ever attendance for an event at the venue. For a relatively small football club Tuggeranong United staged last night's game exceptionally well. Hosting an event for a number of people takes some considerable planning and coordination. I would like to thank the club president, Mr Jon Thiele, the committee members and the team of enthusiastic club volunteers for a job very well done. I think the post-match comments of Kevin Muscat, the Melbourne Victory coach, about the Tuggeranong players summed it up well when he said, "That was the biggest game of their careers and the way they conducted themselves was fantastic."

The Tuggeranong valley can be proud of its football team. I congratulate all those involved in staging such a wonderful match last night and I hope that it will not be too long before Canberra soccer fans have the opportunity of cheering on their own A-League club.

Tuggeranong Hawks Football Club

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (6.58): I rise tonight to acknowledge the recent success of the Tuggeranong Hawks Football Club women's team. On Sunday, 14 September I was very pleased to watch the Tuggeranong Hawks women's team, known as the "Hawkettes", win their grand final by defeating the Riverina Lions by 41 to 26. I note also that this marked back-to-back premierships for the women's team.

I would like to congratulate all the players who are part of the Tuggeranong Hawks women's team this year. The playing roster included Allison Redman, Amy Currie, Angela Ballerini, Angela Winter, Angie Rodway, Annie Ghiradello, Ayla Hennessy, Bernadette Carroll, Eugenie Hickey, Hannah Gray, Jacklyn Bryant, Jess Lang, Karen Hill, Kate Davoren, Katelyn Navarro, Katherine Mcfadyen, Kathryn Ghirardello, Katie King, Katie Stokes, Kellie Brooks, Kerry Matthews, Kristen Langhorn, Melissa Naughton, Miranda Rooke, Natasha Monger, Rachael Berry, Rachel Colbert, Rachel Short, Rebecca Mitchell, Rebekah Currie, Rona Rich, Roni Botterill, Sarah O'Hehir, Sherrie Syrek, Stephanie Boxall, Tayah Mott, Tia Stevens and Wendy Bennett.

Well done also to the coaches, manager and others who made up the support squad, including Bas McElhinney. I also wish to take a moment to acknowledge Pat McLindin, patron and long-time volunteer and supporter of the Tuggeranong Hawks, who was recently named Volunteer of the Year at the AFL Canberra awards in recognition of her work. Pat has been involved with the club for over 40 years. Her tireless work, enthusiasm and involvement in the club have been appreciated by all those in the club and the broader community. I congratulate Pat McLindin on her award and again offer congratulations to all the players, coaches and officials at the Tuggeranong Hawks in all grades on their season, including club president Annette Ellis.

Finally, I thank Dion Jones, a year 10 student from Canberra high who has been in my office this week on work experience, where his tasks have included preparing this adjournment speech and the one I gave last night. Thank you, Dion, and best wishes for your future.

Spence Children's Cottage

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (7.00 pm): On Saturday I had the pleasure of attending the 40th anniversary of the Spence Children's Cottage. My children did their early learning at Spence, and it was a pleasure to celebrate this milestone in their significant history. Spence Children's Cottage has a lot of history and I wanted to share its story today.

Back when the cottage was founded, child care was on the agenda of the government at the time, the Labor government led by Gough Whitlam, who was in office from 1972 to 1975. Many women were keen to enact the childcare policy and program at that time. Submissions from the Women's Electoral Lobby and the women's liberation council, to name a few, were offered up. The preschool model did not meet the needs of working mothers which were identified in the Fry report. It outlined the value of professional, trained people to care for younger children. Different models were discussed. A group of dedicated people set out to create a place where working mothers could leave their children. Part of Whitlam's vision was to establish similar community-based centres all around Canberra, similar to what had been established in Spence and Narrabundah.

The first meeting was held on 13 May 1974. An interim committee was set up involving 12 residents, Women's Electoral Lobby members and health centre staff members. A name was decided upon and it was decided what the centre operations would look like. A government house in the suburbs was the place designated to become the facility. A permanent committee was formed, made up of members who shared a common interest and need within the local area of Spence, Melba, Flynn and Evatt.

So began Spence Children's Cottage. The centre was costed, staffed and fitted out. The initial aim and objective were to provide a small, community-based, not-for-profit childcare service which combined the advantages of home-based family day care and the professional guidance, equipment and facilities of institutional day care.

While the original aim and objective were the thought of the day, the notion still flows very much in the life of the cottage many years on. Subsidies and grants helped establish the centre and helped make up some of the up-start costs. The fees paid were critical in the management of the day-to-day running costs. Committees and interested parties have come and gone. A number of influential people have touched the lives of many children and families. The building blocks that began in 1974 have stood the test of time.

The cottage building and grounds have undergone a few aesthetic changes over the years. The first major change was an extension to the large playroom. This began in November 1991 and required a move to the Spence preschool demountable. The cottage celebrated a grand opening on 4 April 1997. Roberta McRae, a Speaker of the ACT Legislative Assembly, was on hand to officiate at that event.

The cottage may have changes within its walls and yards, but you can still find it at Dalglish Close. I would like to thank Spence Children's Cottage and all of its staff for 40 years of hard work. I look forward to celebrating many more birthdays for our excellent community centres. I would like to acknowledge the current early childhood educators, Di Terrance, Michelle Fernandez, Francine Horne, Dawn Ashton, Fui Fong Lee, Indika Wijesekera, Raj Kumari, Morsheda Mannan and Tara Peters. I also acknowledge the staff that came along and celebrated on the day: Kathlene Menezes, Kylie Edmonds, Louise Bennett-Draper, Sarah Melonis, Evelyn Golding and Judy Jones.

Dementia

MR COE (Ginninderra) (7.04): I rise this evening to speak about the wonderful work of Alzheimer's Australia ACT, the peak body representing the interests of people affected by dementia in the ACT. Alzheimer's ACT was founded in 1997 by a group of professionals and volunteers from the community and aged care sectors. A public forum for carers of people with dementia helped the group to understand what kind of support was needed. At the beginning, voluntary donations were the only funding the group received.

The organisation has grown to 22 professional staff and 20 volunteers. Alzheimer's ACT has a vision "for a society committed to the prevention of dementia, while valuing and supporting people living with dementia". The board of Alzheimer's ACT is the president, Michael Pedler; vice-president, Greg Fraser; treasurer, Trevor Wheeler; secretary, Jeff Lamb; director, John Fely; director, Gayle Sweaney; and CEO and public officer, Jane Allen. I commend Jane and her staff and volunteers for all the wonderful work they do here in Canberra.

Alzheimer's ACT provides services and support to people with dementia, their families and carers. Their support includes respite services, social sport groups, counselling, seminars and a mobile respite response team. As a person who has had family with dementia, I very much value the work that Alzheimer's Australia ACT undertake and I know that their work is very much needed.

There are more than 332,000 Australians living with dementia, and this is expected to increase to 400,000 in less than 10 years. Dementia is a term that is described as symptoms of a large group of illnesses which cause a progressive decline in a person's functioning. It is a broad term used to describe a loss of memory, intellect, rationality, social skills and physical functioning. Dementia is most common after the age of 65, but there are over 24,000 people in Australia who have young onset dementia, including some people as young as 30. It has been estimated that 1.2 million people in Australia are involved in caring for a person with dementia. There is currently no cure for dementia, and there is a significant shortage of carers for people with dementia.

This Sunday, Alzheimer's ACT is holding its second Memory Walk & Jog. The aim of the Memory Walk & Jog is to raise funds and awareness for dementia. The event will involve a five-kilometre walk and a five-kilometre run, starting at 9 am in Lennox Gardens. Some 250 people took part in last year's walk, and they raised over \$5,000. This year they would like to at least double that. The funds raised will help provide services and education for people with dementia, carers and health professionals, and members of the aged care and disability sector. Members may well see or become aware of this walk through the promotion of Alzheimer's ACT shoelaces, which are being handed out to boost awareness of the event.

I would like to congratulate all those involved with Alzheimer's ACT on their excellent work. I encourage members to take part in the Memory Walk & Jog on Sunday. For more information about dementia and the work of Alzheimer's Australia ACT, I recommend you visit their website at www.act.fightdementia.org.au.

Lions clubs

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (7.07): Tonight I pay tribute to the Lions clubs of Canberra, quiet achievers of the Canberra community, living up to their motto "We serve". They do this through a wide range of projects to make our communities better. I recently had a fascinating visit to the Lions' youth haven Westwood lodge with a guided tour by Lions, Bruce May, Bob Crawshaw, Bill Dunn and, from the Canberra Belconnen Lions Club covering my electorate, Beverly von Stein. Westwood lodge off Kambah Pool Road is a working farm with a herd of red Angus cattle, an aquaponics facility and horses on agistment.

The youth haven lodge sleeps over 50 visitors downstairs, with catering facilities on the ground floor. It has separate rooms upstairs for teachers and drivers. It gives visiting school groups, junior choirs and sports teams et cetera touring Canberra a chance to sample the rural life in the beautiful setting of the Tuggeranong valley, with the Brindabellas looming in the west. The lodge is a joint initiative of the various Canberra and Queanbeyan Lions clubs. Deputy Chief Minister Andrew Barr opened it in May and the lodge already has solid bookings for the rest of the year.

The youth haven has a history going back over 25 years to when Sel Westwood suggested to the ACT government that the Lions organisation could use the abandoned farm to work with youth. Westwood lodge is the latest addition to the property that also hosts a range of services helping at-risk kids. It is just one initiative of Canberra Lions clubs.

Businessman, Melvin Jones, began Lions Clubs International in Chicago in 1917 as a community service mission. Helping the blind and visually impaired became a special mission after an address to the 1925 Lions Clubs International Convention by Helen Keller. Today Lions Clubs International is the world's largest service club organisation with over 1.35 million members around the world.

The first club here was the Canberra City Lions Club formed in 1958, a year after the Queanbeyan Lions Club. Now there are nine Lions clubs across Canberra and Queanbeyan, with the Gungahlin Club, in 2003, the most recent, joining Brindabella, Canberra Valley, Kambah, Lake Tuggeranong, Woden and Belconnen.

The Belconnen Lions Club was formed in 1970, the 672nd Lions club in Australia. Back then it met at Western Districts Rugby Club but now meets at Belconnen Soccer Club, Hawker. An estimate is that the Belconnen Lions Club has raised and donated over half a million dollars to causes, but that is besides the value of members' time and the benefit of their community service.

Just some of the club's activities include supporting the recent ANU Science Week, the Hall markets fundraising for Hartley Lifecare, youth programs including the youth haven Westwood lodge and the youth exchange, sail training for youth, the vocational exchange for the handicapped, organising Christmas parties in conjunction with the Down Syndrome Association and Pegasus, helping the hearing dogs program, the sharing the vision campaign including the recycling of spectacles, supporting the save sight and public health care foundations, supporting the Lions' peace poster competition, running the breakfasts at the balloon festival, helping with the *Canberra Times* fun run, supporting the Belconnen Mall Christmas parade and the ADFA oratory competition. However, there are many more activities of the Belconnen and Canberra Lions clubs that enrich the lives of Canberrans and benefit people around the world through Lions Clubs International programs. Think of that great work next time you see the Lions' badge and say thanks.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 7.11 pm