



Debates

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Tuesday, 23 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.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 23

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

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 23, dated 22 September 2014, together with the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MR DOSZPOT: Scrutiny report 23 contains the committee's comments on 13 pieces of subordinate legislation, four government responses and government amendments to the Heritage Legislation Amendment Bill 2013. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

***Getting home safely* report—implementation update Ministerial statement**

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) (10.02), by leave: I rise to present the third report on the progress of implementing the recommendations of the *Getting home safely* report. As members will recall, the report was the outcome of an inquiry commissioned by the government in 2012 into the compliance with work health and safety requirements by the ACT's construction industry. The report made 28 recommendations. The government accepted all recommendations and also committed to presenting to the Assembly six-monthly progress reports on its implementation.

The Safe Work Australia report, *Work-related traumatic injury fatalities, Australia 2013*, identifies the construction industry as the number three industry for worker fatalities in Australia, behind the agriculture, forestry and fishing industries, and the transport, postal and warehousing industries.

The report highlights that there were 19 recorded fatalities in the construction industry in Australia during last year. Whilst this figure marks the lowest number of fatalities in 11 years, it is still a tragic figure. The impact on families, friends, colleagues and the general community cannot be understated. The deaths that we experienced in the ACT prior to the *Getting home safely* report are still being felt. We should never lose

sight of this. We should never lose sight of our responsibility to do whatever we can to ensure the safety of all workers in the territory.

We need to continue to press the message that everyone in the construction industry has a responsibility to ensure their own safety and the safety of those around them. They have a responsibility to look after their mates. I am hopeful that the most recent Safe Work Australia figures mark recognition of the risks by those in the industry and identify a concerted effort by all to say, "No more!"

I am pleased to announce that for the third successive period since the release of the *Getting home safely* report there have been no fatalities in the ACT construction industry. While these results are to be applauded, we must be cautious of complacency, and I reiterate my and the government's commitment to delivering the recommendations of the report. Our focus continues to be on seeking improved health and safety outcomes for ACT workers.

I do note that the incidence rate for serious injury in the construction sector remains high, at 31.5 injuries per 1,000 employees in the ACT. However, without the commitment and effort on behalf of all parties, including the government, industry and employee bodies, principal contractors, site supervisors and workers generally, it is impossible to change the culture of this industry and to reduce the incidence of serious injury.

I would like at this time to recognise the commitment and contribution of the Master Builders Association, the Housing Industry Association and the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union and their affiliates in supporting the work of the government through groups such as the Work Safety Council and the Construction Safety Advisory Committee to implement improvements in this sector.

I would also like to recognise the commitment and contribution of the education and training sector and particularly their awareness and responsibility for identifying the training needs for the construction industry and for their support in mandating asbestos awareness training in the territory. Without the contribution and commitment of all of these participants it is not possible to formulate change, and I thank them for their support.

Since Minister Corbell's second update on progress towards delivering the recommendations of the report in March of this year, I can advise the Assembly that the government has demonstrated that it has a critical role to play in improving health and safety outcomes for all workers in the ACT. The government is leading change to protect the health and safety of our workers and to ensure that each of those workers return safely home to their loved ones at the end of a day's work.

Also in the period since the last update, the government has strengthened its own procurement and contract management practices by adopting an active certification model and whole-of-government guidelines for managing work health and safety in construction projects. Active certification is the process through which the performance of construction contractors who have been commissioned to undertake work on behalf of the territory will be audited and their health and safety performance

measured. Where a contractor's health and safety performance is found to be lacking, this will affect the ability of that contractor to work for the territory.

The government has also established an exemplar contract management system for use by its project managers who are commissioning construction projects on behalf of the territory. The whole-of-government guidelines will be rolled out across the service in the last quarter of 2014 and will be the benchmark for the management of construction projects commissioned by the government.

I would like to raise the issue of the importance of design in construction. Design is a critical factor in not only ensuring that a structure is safe and suitable for its end use and those who will be undertaking the ongoing maintenance of the structure, but that it is also designed and constructed in such a way as to ensure the safety of those workers undertaking construction.

In late 2013 the Environment and Planning Directorate opened discussion with the construction sector and sought input to improve the accountability for construction design and inspection practitioners, including for engineers. The directorate is engaged in the progress of this review and has held public consultation forums and sought submissions from the industry earlier this year. The directorate will undertake further targeted consultation with technical and professional groups and with the other Australian regulators later in 2014.

The directorate will consider the findings and outcomes of this review and use them to recommend to me provisions to strengthen designer practices in the ACT. The findings will also inform the broader review of the Building Act 2004.

As I have previously identified, the construction industry is number three for workplace fatalities in the country. Commitment by the industry to using the safest design, safest construction methods, safe equipment and support practices is critical to addressing risk for this industry and for its workers.

Construction worksites can change on a daily, if not hourly, basis. New and changing technologies, working at height, mobile and mechanised plant, hazardous substances, multiple contractors and a transient workforce can all impact on risk and the health and safety of construction workers.

The *Getting home safely* report recognises that a worker's skill to identify hazards and risks is critical to help minimise those risks and that formal construction qualifications and trade skills, on-the-job training and the continued enhancement of these skills are particularly important.

In March of this year the ACT Work Safety Commissioner facilitated an industry forum to discuss and identify educational challenges and training priorities for the industry. The outcomes of this forum will be used to inform the training priorities for the industry into the future. The government is committed to leveraging support through the use of national initiatives. We are consulting with Safe Work Australia with respect to the review of the construction induction card training.

I would also at this stage like to point to the interventions by this government, and in particular by the ACT Work Safety Commissioner and the asbestos task force, to ensure the safety of construction workers who may be exposed to asbestos while at work. I commend the Chief Minister and my predecessor, Minister Corbell, for their initiatives to address this issue, including the mandating of asbestos awareness training for all workers in the ACT who may be exposed to asbestos while at work. Raising awareness through its workers can only minimise the risk to those in the industry.

I have recently asked the ACT Work Safety Commissioner to take responsibility for the asbestos awareness course, including the licensing of registered training organisations to deliver the course. I have asked the commissioner to make a formal announcement of this new arrangement as soon as the administrative arrangements have been finalised.

As members will be aware, Chief Magistrate Lorraine Walker was appointed as the ACT's first industrial magistrate to oversee legal proceedings which relate to work health and safety. I can report that two cases have now been referred, including charges against a company director where a worker was electrocuted while unloading his truck, and against a New South Wales maintenance engineering company for its part in the failure of a concrete placing boom, resulting in a fatality on the Kingston foreshore. It is indeed tragic that these events have occurred and I hope that greater focus afforded by the industrial magistrates court will strengthen the commitment and diligence of industry to eliminate risk from ACT workplaces.

I am pleased to say that I and the government remain committed to and focused on eliminating health and safety risk from ACT workplaces and to leading initiatives and improvements for the health and safety of all ACT workers. I present the following paper:

Getting Home Safely: Inquiry into compliance with work health and safety requirements in the ACT's construction industry—Implementation update—Ministerial statement, 23 September 2014.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Crimes Amendment Bill 2014

Debate resumed from 7 August 2014, on motion by **Mr Corbell**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.13): The opposition will be supporting the Crimes Amendment Bill 2014. This bill came into being as a result

of the Supreme Court's consideration of the report of the board of inquiry review of the conviction of David Harold Eastman in the matter of the murder of Police Assistant Commissioner Colin Winchester in 1989.

An element of the Crimes Act 1900 appeared to limit the court's ability to take and consider submissions in relation to the board of inquiry report. In the end, the court decided it could take submissions and, therefore, that the proceedings would be judicial in nature. In essence, this bill picks up on the court's interpretation and seeks simply to clarify that the Supreme Court can receive submissions in considering an inquiry report and that its proceedings are judicial.

In doing so, the bill does two things. Firstly, it repeals section 431, headed "Nature of Supreme Court proceedings", of the Crimes Act 1900 and makes the repeal effective from the date the Attorney-General presented the bill to the Assembly on 7 August this year. Secondly, the bill carries transitional provisions, in effect giving retrospectivity to the Supreme Court's approach in the matter of its consideration of the Eastman inquiry report.

Madam Speaker, I invited comment from a range of stakeholders. Of those, the ACT law society said they had no issues with the bill, and the ACT bar association said they had no comments to offer. In considering the bill, my advisers did raise two questions with the attorney's office, and I thank the Attorney-General for providing answers. The first was whether similar issues have arisen in other jurisdictions. The response was that the issue this bill seeks to address is unique to the ACT because other jurisdictions have their own processes for inquiries into convictions.

The second question was whether, by making the proceedings judicial in nature, further grounds for appeal are opened up. The response was that, by the Supreme Court's ruling on the issue, the proceedings were judicial in nature already and that any appeal considerations would follow the usual processes. This bill makes simple but important amendments to the act. I will say nothing further other than to reiterate the opposition's support.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (10.15): This bill clarifies an issue in the Crimes Act relating to inquiries into convictions which are governed by part 20 of the act. Minister Corbell explained the inquiry process thoroughly in his introductory speech. As we all know, an inquiry was recently held into the conviction of Mr David Eastman. Following the presentation of the report of the Eastman inquiry, there was some uncertainty about the Supreme Court's ability to receive submissions in considering an inquiry report and whether the Supreme Court proceedings on such a matter are judicial proceedings. This is because the act, at section 431, says:

- (1) In considering whether to make an order under this part about a report, the Supreme Court—
 - (a) may have regard only to matters stated in the report, or to documents or things given to the registrar with the report; and
 - (b) must not hear submissions from anyone.
- (2) The consideration of whether to make an order under this part is not a judicial proceeding.

In the Eastman inquiry matter, the Supreme Court interpreted this section as only applying to the question of whether a report should be published. Importantly, it did not apply to any other Supreme Court function in relation to an inquiry.

The bill makes an amendment to clarify the act and supports the interpretation of the Supreme Court. It will repeal section 431, which is not necessary for the inquiry process. As Minister Corbell pointed out in his tabling speech, the provision was drafted in the spirit of limiting the possibilities for endless litigation, but the Supreme Court's recent decision in the Eastman inquiry means that this is of limited effect.

The amendment in the bill resolves any confusion and prevents future arguments which might frustrate the court's independent consideration of the Eastman report and future inquiry reports. The amendment supports the interpretation already made by the Supreme Court and clarifies the process. I am happy to support the bill today.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (10.17), in reply: I thank members for their support of this bill today. The amendments in the bill are designed to address a specific technical issue with the operation of section 431 of the Crimes Act. While this issue was identified in the course of the Eastman inquiry, the amendment needs to be made for the benefit of the inquiry process more generally. Specifically, the bill repeals section 431 to clarify the judicial nature of the Supreme Court when it considers a report of an inquiry. It also ensures that there are no unnecessary limitations on the court's ability to consider matters, take evidence and hear submissions on the report.

Problems with the operation of section 431 were identified, as members have mentioned, in the recent inquiry into Mr David Eastman's conviction for the murder of Assistant Commissioner Colin Winchester. Acting Justice Martin's inquiry report into Mr Eastman's conviction was the first report delivered for consideration under the Crimes Act provisions.

During proceedings on the inquiry's report, the Supreme Court considered the effect of section 431, whether it applied to some provisions of the Crimes Act and not others, and questions of procedural fairness. As it is currently drafted, section 431 provides that a proceeding to which that section applies is not a judicial proceeding, and that the Supreme Court must not hear submissions in certain circumstances.

During its consideration of the Eastman inquiry report, the court found that section 431 applied only to the question of whether a report should be published. It did not apply to any other Supreme Court function in relation to an inquiry. In particular, it did not apply to the Supreme Court's function of deciding whether to quash a conviction. Accordingly, the court considered that it could receive submissions in considering its decision in response to the Eastman inquiry report. It also concluded that its proceedings are judicial in character.

In light of the Supreme Court's decision in the Eastman inquiry, the repeal of section 431 is necessary to bring the meaning of the statute as expressed on its face into line

with the court's interpretation of its meaning. This will avoid confusion and make future arguments about the operation of the statute less likely. The amendments in the bill apply from the time of introduction of the bill, making it clear that the repeal of section 431 applies to any future court consideration of the Eastman inquiry report.

In closing, I want to make it clear that these amendments do not alter the powers of an inquiry or the rights of those involved in an inquiry. The amendments make minor adjustments to bring the legislation into line with how it has since been interpreted by the Supreme Court. It will remove any doubt created by the inconsistency between the words of the statute on their face and how they have been interpreted, and maintain the independence of the court when it considers a report of an inquiry. It is in the interests of justice that these minor changes are made. The bill demonstrates the government's commitment to ensuring an independent and clear inquiry process. I thank members for their support of this straightforward and reasonable amendment.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Planning and Development (Bilateral Agreement) Amendment Bill 2014

Debate resumed from 14 August 2014, on motion by **Mr Gentleman**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (10.22): Madam Speaker, the opposition will be supporting the adjournment of this bill in the in-principle stage today. This bill, we hope, will make changes to the environmental approval process, speed up approvals and ensure that developments are not unnecessarily delayed by having to go through two approval processes.

Although we support the bill in principle, I would like to express our disappointment in part of the process. This bill was supposed to be debated last week but was delayed due to its complexity and to allow for further consultation. It was then listed for debate on Thursday this week in the government's draft program. The opposition was advised late yesterday that the bill would instead be debated today. We understand that changes sometimes have to be made to the program, but bringing the debate forward removed the option of circulating amendments. I wonder if that was, in fact, the government's intention.

This bill will allow the ACT to sign up to the commonwealth's one-stop shop for environmental approvals. The Australian government is delivering a one-stop shop for environmental approvals by accrediting state and territory environmental planning systems under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. This

will create a single environmental assessment and approval process for nationally protected matters.

The commonwealth has introduced legislation which amends the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act to facilitate the one-stop shop policy and the operation of the bilateral agreements. The bill we are considering today is the ACT's part of that agreement.

Under the proposed one-stop shop, proposals that are likely to impact on matters of national environmental significance under the federal act will be considered by the territory. The proponent will not need to go through a separate approval process with the commonwealth. This should speed up the process of developments by maintaining a high environmental standard. The Canberra Liberals are pleased to see steps to speed up this approvals process. Long delays in approving developments are bad for everyone. Proponents, the community, interested parties and the government are all disadvantaged when approvals get caught up in green tape.

The one-stop shop model does not remove the ability for the federal minister to have a say in the approval process. Proposed developments that are likely to have significant adverse environmental impacts on matters of national environmental significance and are being decided by either the planning authority or the minister must be referred to the commonwealth minister for comment. Neither the planning authority nor the minister can make a decision contrary to the commonwealth minister's advice.

The bill also introduces conservator concurrence to provide assurance about the acceptability, relevance and effectiveness of offset conditions for protected matters. The planning authority will not be allowed to make a decision that is inconsistent with the conservator's advice about protected matters. The minister may act contrary to the conservator's advice, but only if the decision is consistent with the ACT offsets policy and provides substantial public benefit. The bill also establishes criteria to guide the scope of the conservator's advice.

The opposition is also pleased that the government finally has a published offsets policy and offsets policy guidelines. The policy and guidelines are a prerequisite for establishing the one-stop shop and address the commonwealth standards for accreditation. The fact that the ACT now has an official policy and guidelines means that it can be accredited to provide assessments under the one-stop shop.

As explained in the explanatory statement:

Offsets are a tool that can be used during the environmental impact assessment process and help to provide a form of environmental compensation for unavoidable residual significant adverse environmental impacts on protected matters. Offsets are a last resort to address these impacts and can only be proposed after all reasonable avoidance and mitigation measures have been exhaustively considered.

Provisions for offset conditions are included in the bill, including cases where offset management plans may be required. During the preparation of the plan, mandatory consultation with the conservator and the land custodian or lessee must take place.

The bill requires the planning authority to keep an electronic public record of all offsets in the territory. It should also be noted that offsets should never be used to justify development that would otherwise not be appropriate.

In conclusion, the opposition will be supporting the adjournment of this bill in the in-principle stage. As I have frequently said in this place, planning systems should encourage innovation rather than stifling development. However, there are many questions with this bill today that need to be addressed; Ms Lawder, I believe, will be speaking further to this shortly.

I hope that the amendments included in this bill and the commonwealth government one-stop shop policy remove some of the hurdles that are currently in place in the system and do so in a reasonable way. It is important that the approvals process is thorough, but it should not be so onerous that it delays projects unnecessarily. As I said, the opposition supports the adjournment of this bill.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (10.27): This bill is a key part of the implementation of the federal one-stop shop for Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act environmental approvals in the ACT. The Greens, both locally and nationally, are opposed to the move towards a one-stop shop for approvals in principle.

This process was started under the Rudd Labor government and has been continued with great vigour by the Abbott government, which seems intent on watering down the role of the commonwealth under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, the EPBC Act. It is certainly not the best piece of environmental legislation, but it does deliver a minimum level of national environmental protection for our biodiversity, and we cannot afford for it to go backwards. Members may not know it, but I was involved way back in the 1990s when John Howard and Robert Hill, as the then environment minister, sought to push this through the federal parliament. I stated my strong opposition to the EPBC Act at that time because I felt that it was not moving it forward from an environmental protection point of view. Further efforts to water this legislation down and to move away from a federal role in environmental protection simply reinforce the misgivings that we had on this issue in the late 1990s.

We need the federal government to continue to apply their bigger picture perspective to environmental approvals, noting that states do not always have the broader interests at the centre of their decision-making. Often state and territory governments are actually the developer, or have an interest in seeing a development go ahead, and are not best placed to be the decision-maker when it comes to protecting nationally significant environments, habitats and species.

For example, without the EPBC Act the Stanhope Labor government would have likely proceeded with building the road over the Molonglo River in the new Molonglo development, through an area that was endangered species habitat in the Molonglo development. This was an important habitat area for the pink-tailed worm-lizard; at the time, we were told that there was no option but to build the bridge in that place. Fortunately, the matter was required to go to the commonwealth government for their

approval, and in that process the commonwealth government said it was not acceptable to impact that habitat in that way and that the road needed to be moved. It turned out that the road could be moved. A new alignment was found and the damage was significantly reduced through simply that act of commonwealth intervention.

That highlights the importance, particularly in the ACT, where so often the local government is the proponent, of having a level of oversight from somebody who does not have a direct interest in the project.

The ACT Greens do not want to see a situation where that oversight may not have been available. As a result of the parliamentary agreement, the ACT will be the only jurisdiction to defy the Abbott government's attempt to remove the commonwealth from its obligation to oversee proposals that may affect matters of national environmental significance.

The assessment aspect of this has already been in place in the ACT for a number of years, and we just finalised our second assessment bilateral agreement in June this year. The assessment agreement is somewhat like a mutual recognition agreement, which first aligns the needs of the environmental matters to be assessed, and then allows an environmental impact statement, or a strategic environmental assessment that has been written to meet the ACT's planning and environment assessment systems, to also meet the needs of the federal environmental assessment system. This makes sense. An environmental assessment report is the same. There is no need to duplicate that assessment process, and I do support that part of the process whereby information that has been prepared can be used for the different steps in the environmental assessment. That is quite appropriate.

However, it is the approvals bilateral agreement for matters of national environmental significance that we are discussing today. This is the proposal to allow an environmental approval made by a state jurisdiction to also be ticked off as a federal environmental approval. This is not a simple process, as it requires the state processes to encompass the federal environmental approval requirements, and for that state process to be accredited by the federal environment department.

Gaining a national perspective on environmental values was a long and hard-fought battle, probably most notably through the commonwealth's first national environmental inquiry into sandmining on Fraser Island in the mid-1970s; and, perhaps even better known, the fight in 1983 to save the Franklin River from being dammed, culminating in a High Court challenge from the federal government, who won the right for the federal government to overrule a state government on environmental protection matters, particularly in relation to wilderness and world heritage of national value—and of course, in that case, of international significance.

These were key turning points that demonstrated to all Australians that state governments could not always be trusted on the environment and that some places needed national protection. It was recognition of the fact that some areas were so significant, both nationally and internationally, that local interests, the pressure from local developers and the pressure from donors to local or state governments meant

that we needed to have oversight so that those things that were beyond a matter of local opinion or local interests could be protected.

Since this time, substantial gains have been made across the country to protect many other areas of national environmental significance. However, there are still many environmental battles underway and ahead of us, such as protecting precious places like the Great Barrier Reef from the effects of dredging for coal ports, protecting our state forests from native forest logging, or providing protection from clearing for coalmining or the impacts of coal seam gas projects, be they in relation to land use for agriculture or the impacts on water across areas like the Murray-Darling Basin.

However, sadly, there is a national agenda at work here, to implement a one-stop shop for national environmental issues.

As I said earlier, this idea was dreamt up by the previous federal Labor government, to streamline assessments and approvals of national environmental matters. By the time we were in the election period leading up to the last federal election, the ALP had fortunately backtracked on their proposal, recognising the importance of federal intervention for national environmental matters. However, by that stage, the Abbott government, being led on environment policy by Greg Hunt, picked up where the Labor government had left off and continued to roll out this policy around the country—with the support, of course, of people like Campbell Newman and people like those in the New South Wales and Western Australian state governments who are hell-bent on ensuring that mining interests can continue with their business unencumbered and uninterrupted, building coal ports near the Great Barrier Reef, and matters like that, and doing it as quickly as possible, with minimal consideration of the national or international consequences.

Hand in hand with abdicating responsibility, the federal government is in the process of cost-shifting environmental responsibilities and essentially turning our national environmental approvals process into a very expensive fee-for-service type arrangement. Cost recovery was introduced by the commonwealth on 1 July this year, creating exorbitant financial penalties for the ACT as a regular proponent for each referral unless we introduce a bilateral approvals agreement with the federal government. Therefore, the ACT Greens do feel that we need to support this agreement and supporting legislation today—with the proviso, as I have mentioned, that we will implement a model that retains a key role for the federal government in approvals.

This abdication of responsibility is being accompanied by the Abbott government's slashing of federal public service positions and undermining of the very capability of our federal environment department.

On the specifics of our ACT agreements, and given the importance of a national perspective on environmental matters, the ACT Greens moved to ensure that the commonwealth maintains an ongoing approvals role for the federal government in environment protection matters, through including it as an item in the parliamentary agreement that we signed with the Labor Party in 2012. We believe this legislation before us today ensures that the government will deliver on this item.

The ACT approvals bilateral agreement is different from that of the other states and territories as a direct result of this Greens-Labor parliamentary agreement item, requiring the continued role of the federal government in looking at each and every approval. While the Abbott government is abdicating responsibility in all other states for protecting habitats and species that have long been held as having national value, we are not going to let that happen here in the ACT. The ACT bilateral agreement means that they cannot just hand over that responsibility and walk away.

As a result of meeting this parliamentary agreement commitment, the ACT will be unique in maintaining some of the architecture of commonwealth involvement in environmental decision-making. The ACT bilateral agreement establishes an arrangement whereby both the ACT and the federal governments will continue to oversee each and every proposal with likely significant adverse environmental impacts. No other state or territory has done this. This is very different from other states in Australia, which are letting the federal government hand back decision-making powers wholesale to the states, and allowing them to approve projects that might impact on nationally significant environments or species.

The draft ACT bilateral approvals agreement between the ACT and the federal government was released for consultation until 12 September. The draft bilateral agreement is a federal disallowable instrument and it now needs to go through both houses of federal parliament before it can commence. This legislation before us today also establishes a planning and development process which aligns with the bilateral agreement.

In conjunction with a continued strong role for the federal government in EPBC processes, the ACT Greens believe that it is important to have a strong and independent role for the Conservator of Flora and Fauna in planning and development decisions and a good accompanying offsets policy which goes hand in hand with this bill today. In general, the Greens also believe that it is extremely important to have a strong role for the conservator in the Nature Conservation Act, and we will be discussing that matter on another day in another bill.

In terms of how this bill specifically works, as it currently stands, when a proposal is likely to have a significant adverse impact on a matter of national environmental significance, a proposal must be given to the federal government to make a decision. This bill instead changes the workload to allow the ACT government to do the approvals work and then to send the approval decision to the commonwealth minister for advice. Every single proposal that involves a significant adverse environmental impact on a matter of national environmental significance must be referred to the commonwealth. The commonwealth minister has the final say on any approval, can veto a proposal, and cannot be overridden by the ACT planning authority or the ACT minister.

If a proposal is put forward with matters of national environmental significance, the Conservator of Flora and Fauna must give advice, including on the matters of national environmental significance offset proposal. ACTPLA assesses and approves the development application using the advice of the conservator. The advice of the

conservator cannot be overridden by ACTPLA on matters of national environmental significance.

The minister may override ACTPLA. In these cases of call-in, where the environment minister is the decision-maker, the minister may make a decision that is inconsistent with the conservator's advice. However, the decision must still be consistent with the offsets policy and the approval must provide a substantial public benefit. This decision must also be referred to the commonwealth minister who can choose to make the decision instead of the ACT. For any proposal, the ACT may still pull out of any approval role and hand the full approval and decision to the commonwealth. Decisions may be made that have a condition applied to an approval, and this is enshrined in the legislation.

Let me turn now to the question of offsets. In conjunction with the bill, the ACT has also released a biodiversity offsets policy for the territory. This was a federal requirement for the development of the bilateral arrangement between the ACT and the commonwealth and it is crucial that the ACT offsets policy is practical and is also of a high standard. In principle, I would like to note that the Greens have problems and concerns with the general concept of offsets, as the system generally results in net biodiversity loss. An ACT offsets policy has been promised for many years, and until now the ACT has been relying on the federal policy. Unfortunately, this has largely meant poor ACT government process, poor public consultation and poor biodiversity outcomes.

I think the example of Justice Robert Hope park illustrates some of the shortcomings we have seen in recent years. Some of the key issues have been a lack of coordination across ACT government, uncertainty within government, issues of whether there has in fact been additionality and all of those problems undermining community confidence in the process and leading to the community being in a situation where they felt that the job has not been done properly or, as we saw with Justice Robert Hope park, where they felt that significant community effort had been undermined. They felt that there had not been clear recognition of the considerable work that had been done on that site through voluntary effort.

The development of this bilateral agreement has forced the ACT government to finalise an ACT biodiversity offsets policy, as it must be in place before the bilateral agreement can commence. I believe that the offsets policy and framework that this legislation delivers is a significant improvement on what we have had to date. I have worked with the government to ensure that our legislation also establishes clear requirements for regular review of the policy, and public and stakeholder input into the many steps to develop an offsets management plan.

The offsets policy and the offsets guidelines which went out for consultation earlier this year will be statutory instruments and will commence when notified after this bill commences. The policy and the guidelines then need to be reviewed every five years by the planning authority and the conservator, and the revised version is then put out for public consultation for six weeks. These processes are outlined in the bill before us today. The minister may also make minor amendments to the offsets policy in the course of the five-year period when considered appropriate, without consultation. The

bill also stipulates that the government must keep a public offsets register that outlines the details of each offset in place in the ACT.

As the Greens have fundamental problems with the overall concept of biodiversity offsets, I am pleased that they can be used only as a last resort, only after the hierarchy of avoidance and mitigation has first been applied, and they cannot be used to justify poor development proposals. The offsets policy and guidelines make this very clear, and the offsets calculator helps proponents to calculate at an early stage whether their proposal and offset are even viable options.

I have further comments to make about the specifics of the offsets policy but, mindful of time, I simply seek to make some observations about where this bill is up to. I think that many members and certainly community organisations feel that this process is being rushed. The commonwealth, in its hasty desire to offload responsibility for matters of national environmental significance, has put a very strict time line in place. For the ACT to avoid those punishing financial penalties that might come, we have to meet that time line in order to fulfil those requirements and avoid the heavy financial burden that would come.

Again, on that basis I have agreed with my government colleagues to support this process moving through in the timely manner that it is. However, it has left key community organisations unsettled. Even in the last few days our parliamentary colleagues have not really had the time to contemplate amendments—I understood that the Liberal Party were considering some. We have not been able to do that because of this commonwealth timetable.

We cannot underestimate the importance of these issues because these are matters of national environmental significance that go to both this country's and the planet's long-term health. We have seen in this case the draft offsets go out for public consultation without the offsets calculator being available. The calculator is the part that allows people to see how well the scheme works. It has since been made available but it is not in a software format that allows people to easily use or understand it. I think these are unfortunate shortcomings that undermine community confidence. There has been considerable work done on this but, because people cannot see it, they do have concerns.

We have also got the Nature Conservation Bill, and there are significant areas there that I think are attached to this legislation where we need to look at how that legislation fills in some of the gaps and works in partnership with this legislation. We will be debating that legislation in the coming weeks and I will certainly be having further comment at that time.

In conclusion, I simply want to reinforce the Greens' deep reservation with the commonwealth's desire to abdicate responsibility and to vacate the field when it comes to decision-making on matters of national environmental significance. Let us not lose sight of the fact that the EPBC Act itself limits commonwealth involvement to some very specific areas. The matters of national environmental significance are spelt out in that act. In my view they do not cover the areas in which the commonwealth should be involved. They do not allow commonwealth responsibility

in areas like climate change or water, matters that should have been inserted into the legislation in the first place. To then see the commonwealth further step away from that is a cause of great concern.

But what I can say is that here in the ACT we have taken a very different approach to the other states. We have maintained the architecture that will ensure an ongoing federal government role, an ability for the federal government to veto poor decisions and to have that matter of that perspective of national and international significance. On that basis the Greens will vote for this legislation today.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (10.48): There are various different offset schemes already being widely used across Australia, including here in the ACT. In the ACT most proposals arise to mitigate the impacts of ongoing urban development and expansion on ecological values rather than mining or other resource-based industries, as we see is the case in most other jurisdictions. The ACT biodiversity offsets framework delivers an improvement on how offsets have been delivered in the past. Increased transparency given to the public by including the offsets register is a positive thing, but I do have some concerns regarding how the offsets framework will apply practically.

The planning and development bill as it stands currently does not include a public submission period for public or stakeholder input into the draft offset management plans, and we had been hopeful that perhaps debate on the bill would be adjourned today to give us the opportunity to present an amendment on Thursday. However, it does not appear that that is going to be the case; so we will be supporting the bill today.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (10.49): I am pleased to speak in support of the Planning and Development Bilateral Agreement Amendment Bill, which will amend the Planning and Development Act 2007. The bill will enable the ACT to enter into a one-stop shop for environmental approvals with the commonwealth government, which aims to reduce regulatory burden for development while maintaining high environmental standards. The bill will also improve existing processes under the Planning and Development Act and provide for greater public transparency and more robust decision-making for environmental assessments and approvals in the ACT.

Under a one-stop shop, the ACT will consider projects that are likely to have significant impacts on matters of national environmental significance as defined by the commonwealth's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. This will streamline the process for proponents, who will only have to go through one process with a single point of contact. As was outlined by my colleague Mr Gentleman, this arrangement will remove duplication and lead to time and cost savings for proponents.

In support of the introduction of this bill, I would like to highlight some of the important features of it which will support a one-stop shop for environmental approvals. One of the major benefits of this bill is that it will introduce the concept of

an offset into the legislation and provide legislative force for an environmental offsets policy. This will be the first time offsets have been recognised in ACT law, and will ensure that a one-stop-shop arrangement is backed by a strong offsets framework specific to the ACT. These amendments also address an important prerequisite for the one-stop shop, with the commonwealth requiring an offsets policy to enter into the new arrangements.

Madam Speaker, offsets are an important part of the environmental approvals process and are designed to compensate for the impacts of development on the environment. It is important to note that offsets are only to be considered after all avoidance and mitigation measures have been taken into consideration. That is, they are a last resort and cannot be used to make otherwise unacceptable projects acceptable. This is emphasised in the offsets policy and supported by this legislation.

The offsets policy and guidelines were developed following extensive public consultation in June and July this year. Twenty public submissions were received, and all submissions were considered in finalising the policy. For example, following a high level of concern raised during the public consultation process, the offsets policy does not allow offsets to be created in existing reserves unless the reserve was created on or after 16 July 2000. This is also consistent with the commonwealth's offsets policy, which is adopted under the bill.

The offsets policy, which will be a legal instrument, provides proponents with information on what is an acceptable offset. The policy will also support decision-making by the Planning and Land Authority and the minister. I note that the administration of the offsets policy under part 6A.2 of this bill will be the responsibility of the minister who is responsible for administering the Nature Conservation Act 1980. This achieves an alignment of functions with other responsibilities under the Nature Conservation Act.

The amendments in this bill set out clear processes for decision-making around offsets or commonwealth protected matters in the ACT. Where previously the commonwealth could impose offsets in the ACT, under a one-stop shop the ACT will have control over offsets and will ensure that these are developed in appropriate areas, in close consultation with the community.

This bill allows for the imposition of offset conditions, including conditions requiring offset management plans. This will reduce uncertainty about what an offset condition may include and provides an additional regulatory tool to address impacts on protected matters.

The bill recognises that an offset condition may require an offset management plan to be prepared and implemented, and specifies consultation requirements for the preparation of any such plan. A proponent must consult with the Conservator of Flora and Fauna and the relevant custodian or lessee when preparing a draft offset management plan. This ensures all relevant entities are involved in delivering offsets to a high standard. In particular, it ensures the proposed offset manager is involved in developing the offset management plan.

The ACT has the advantage of expert knowledge of its local environment and can best manage the delivery of offsets in close consultation with the community. The land custodian, lessee and conservator will all play roles in formulating and implementing offset arrangements that are suited to the land, the matter being protected and its context. This will also ensure that offsets are delivered and complied with.

The bill also provides for methods of calculating offsets to ensure consistency in offset outcomes across the ACT. In accordance with this bill, the offsets policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it is as effective as possible, taking into consideration the views of the community. Any revised offsets policy or draft offsets policy guidelines will be subject to a public consultation process. This ensures transparency and community involvement in determining and managing offsets in the ACT.

I would like to emphasise two other major benefits of this bill. Firstly, this bill will ensure the commonwealth retains an ongoing approvals role for projects relating to commonwealth protected matters. This provides reassurance to the community that commonwealth matters will be afforded the same level of protection under the one-stop-shop arrangements.

New provisions introduced in this bill require any proposed decision, where it is likely that a development will have a significant adverse environmental impact on a matter of national environmental significance, to be referred to the commonwealth environment minister for advice. Any final decision made by the Planning and Land Authority or the minister must be consistent with the commonwealth minister's advice. This provision also stipulates that if the commonwealth minister does not provide advice in the 10-day working period specified then the decision-maker may approve the application, and this avoids any unnecessary time delay.

These provisions allow the commonwealth minister to maintain an ongoing role in the development of projects involving matters of national environmental significance. Importantly, these provisions are also consistent with the parliamentary agreement requiring the commonwealth to retain an ongoing approvals role in environmental protection for matters of national environmental significance.

Secondly, in emphasising the benefits of this bill, the amendments strengthen the role of the Conservator of Flora and Fauna by providing the conservator with a key role in the assessment and approval of projects that are likely to have significant adverse environmental impacts on matters of national environmental significance. The bill requires all such projects to be referred to the conservator for advice.

When making a decision, the Planning and Land Authority cannot make a decision that is inconsistent with the conservator's advice. If, however, the minister exercises call-in powers, the minister can make a decision that is inconsistent with the conservator's advice, as long as the decision is still consistent with the offsets policy and provides substantial public benefits. As has been emphasised by my colleague Minister Gentleman, this important conservator concurrence feature will ensure independent advice on matters of national environmental significance and will provide assurance to the public about the appropriateness of approval conditions.

The amendments in this bill not only support implementation of a one-stop shop but also make beneficial changes to existing processes. In regards to the one-stop shop, the bill will enable the territory to meet its commitment to be ready to enter a one-stop shop for environmental approvals by the end of this calendar year. The amendments proposed in the bill provide legislative force for environmental offsets policy and guidelines. This is a first for the ACT. This will ensure that the one-stop shop is supported by a strong environmental offsets framework to support decision making.

The bill will also ensure that the commonwealth retains an ongoing role in development approvals, meeting commitments under the parliamentary agreement, and it strengthens the Conservator of Flora and Fauna's role in the assessment and approval process. The amendments proposed in the bill will enable the ACT to effectively implement a one-stop-shop arrangement, ensuring reduced regulatory burden on development while maintaining strong environmental outcomes. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

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) (11.00), in reply: I thank members for their contributions today. The Planning and Development (Bilateral Agreement) Amendment Bill 2014 has been prepared in support of a one-stop shop for environmental approvals which is currently being negotiated with the commonwealth government. As we have heard, the intention of this bill is to help give effect to a one-stop shop, ensuring it can operate effectively and providing strong certainty to stakeholders that environmental matters will be protected.

This bill will ensure that the commonwealth retains an ongoing approvals role for projects that relate to matters of national environmental significance, meeting commitments under the parliamentary agreement; strengthen the role of the Conservator of Flora and Fauna; and provide a legislative force for an environmental offsets policy. These key elements of the bill will ensure that high environmental standards are maintained while simplifying the environmental assessment and approval process in the territory and resulting in faster approvals.

I would like to emphasise that the ACT already has a strong and efficient planning system which aligns closely with the commonwealth system. This will ensure a seamless transition to the new arrangements.

This bill endeavours to finetune and strengthen the ACT system and provide additional assurance to the community that commonwealth and ACT environment matters will be protected under a one-stop shop. It will also ensure that the ACT can be more efficient in meeting commonwealth standards. For example, we will have an offsets policy built into our legislative framework. Given the ACT already protects commonwealth matters, the incorporation of commonwealth matters as a trigger will not result in substantial changes to ACT process.

On the offsets policy, I noted Mr Rattenbury's concern about the offsets calculator. I am happy to advise that we are working on a more user-friendly offsets calculator and

also that this amendment bill requires that the offsets policy will be reviewed every five years.

A one-stop shop has many benefits. The current environmental impact assessment regime, under which proponents have to go through both a commonwealth and ACT approval process, is duplicative, complex and resource intensive for business, government and community.

Under a one-stop shop, developers will only have one environmental approval process that covers commonwealth and ACT matters, which is delivered by the territory in consultation with business and the community. This will reduce regulatory burden and promote economic development in the ACT. There will be significant cost savings for business and the government by removing the commonwealth assessment and approval process, particularly as the commonwealth is introducing cost recovery arrangements.

Under cost recovery, fees will apply to assessments and approvals processed by the commonwealth under the EPBC Act. Estimates of cost recovery fees include a fee for a referral in the order of \$9,000 and a fee for an environmental impact statement estimated in the order of \$40,000 to \$90,000.

As well as substantial cost savings, a one-stop shop will result in time savings, cutting between three months and two years from the approval process. In addition to the economic benefits, a one-stop shop will meet the planning requirements of the territory and maintain high environmental standards.

The bill will ensure that development proponents adequately address impacts on matters of national environmental significance, as required by a one-stop shop. These include some of our most vulnerable species and communities such as box-gum woodland, striped legless lizard and golden sun moth. The ACT has the advantage of drawing on local expert ecological advice and resources when making approval decisions, which are not necessarily available to the commonwealth under current processes.

This bill will improve transparency, community consultation and access to information by introducing requirements to publish an electronic record of all offsets in the ACT and requiring public consultation on any revised offsets policy and offset guidelines, as well as applications for an exemption from preparing an environmental impact statement.

In summary, the bill will mean that the ACT government can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the environmental assessment and approval process in the ACT for proponents, the community and the environment. Delivery of the one-stop shop also aligns with the ACT government's reform agenda to reduce red tape and streamline regulation.

The Assembly should be aware that the ACT and commonwealth governments signed a memorandum of understanding in December 2013 agreeing to have a one-stop shop

in place in 2014. However, delays in the passage of the commonwealth legislation will delay the commencement of a one-stop shop until 2015.

To facilitate a one-stop shop both governments are amending legislation. The commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Bilateral Agreement Implementation) Bill 2014 was introduced on 14 May and amends the EPBC Act to provide for a more effective administrative framework for approval bilateral agreements.

The commonwealth bill was scheduled for debate in the first week of September. However, it was not voted on in the Senate as expected. Debate and voting on the bill have been delayed and, as a consequence, the accreditation of ACT processes cannot commence on the 25th of this month as proposed, meaning that a one-stop shop cannot commence until early next year. This is because the commonwealth accreditation of ACT legislation involves a 15-day disallowance period in the commonwealth parliament, which cannot be finalised in 2014 because of their sitting calendar.

The ACT has worked hard to meet its commitment to achieve a one-stop shop this year and is ready to sign an approval bilateral agreement once this bill is passed. The delay in commonwealth accreditation to 2015 does not prohibit the parties from signing an agreement this year, once ACT and commonwealth legislation is passed.

I intend to delay the commencement of this bill until the commonwealth amendments are passed. However, this bill provides a number of reforms to ACT processes that are beneficial in their own right. If passing of the commonwealth's bill is further delayed, I propose to commence stand-alone provisions of this bill that improve the ACT's current processes.

I would like to provide some detail about the changes that will be introduced by the bill, as I have already outlined. Firstly, the bill gives legislative force to an offsets policy and guidelines. This is a first for the ACT and will provide a clear regulatory framework for decision-making in relation to environmental offsets.

Offsets are intended to provide "environmental compensation" for unavoidable significant impacts on protected matters. Offsets are part of an avoid, mitigate, offset hierarchy that is utilised in planning frameworks across Australia and the world. In undertaking development, impacts should in the first place be avoided, then mitigated, with offsets only considered as a last resort.

An offsets policy is a mandatory requirement for establishing a one-stop shop. The commonwealth has standards for accreditation of environmental approvals that require an acceptable offsets policy to be in place before the Planning and Development Act can be accredited under the one-stop shop.

As well as providing legislative force for an offsets policy and guidelines, this bill also allows for the imposition of offset conditions, including conditions requiring offset management plans. This bill specifies requirements for the preparation of any offset management plan, ensuring that relevant parties are involved in this process.

The next key element of the bill is a requirement for the advice of the commonwealth environment minister to be taken into account under a one-stop shop where a proposed development is likely to have a significant impact on a matter of national environmental significance. A decision cannot be inconsistent with this advice. This is in line with the most recent parliamentary agreement which requires an ongoing approvals role for the commonwealth. Specifically, the agreement requires “support for an ongoing approvals role for the federal government in environmental protection on matters of national environmental significance under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999”.

The bill will ensure that the environmental approvals process is streamlined under the one-stop shop, but importantly that it still takes into account advice from the commonwealth minister responsible for matters of national environmental significance as an additional environmental safeguard.

In a similar way, projects must also be referred to the Conservator of Flora and Fauna for advice under the bill. This recognises the central role of the Conservator of Flora and Fauna in the operation of the one-stop shop. A decision made by the Planning and Land Authority must not be inconsistent with advice provided by the conservator in that case. The minister, however, can make a decision that is not consistent with the conservator’s advice, but only where the decision is consistent with the offsets policy and provides a substantial public benefit.

This feature is known as “conservator concurrence” and will ensure that there is independent and impartial advice on impacts to matters of national environmental significance. Conservator concurrence will also provide assurance about the acceptability, relevance and effectiveness of approval conditions. Criteria will be established to guide the scope of any advice provided by the conservator.

The conservator will also be able to include conditions on any environmental significance opinion that is granted under the existing Planning and Development Act. These conditions will be a mandatory consideration for merit track development applications under the act.

The conditions must also be included in any subsequent development application approval. This strengthens the role of the conservator and ensures that relevant environmental considerations are captured throughout the development application process. The conservator will also play a role in the development of offsets policy guidelines, as well as reviewing the offsets policy.

Finally, the bill also proposes a number of amendments that will result in greater community involvement in the environmental assessment process and easier access to information on environmental assessments and approvals. For example, the bill requires the Planning and Land Authority to keep an electronic public record of all offsets in the ACT. This will ensure that the public and decision-makers can access up-to-date information on environmental offsets in the ACT.

The bill also requires public consultation on an application for exemption under section 211 of the act, which means that a proponent does not have to prepare an

environmental impact statement. This will ensure that there is adequate community engagement when the ACT is considering whether or not to require an environmental impact statement.

In summary, the bill will allow for streamlining the environmental assessment and approval process under the Planning and Development Act, whilst providing strong environmental safeguards. The bill allows for: offset conditions to be imposed on development approval and flexibility in the approach to offsets; an offsets policy, which is a first for the ACT and will provide a clear regulatory framework for decisions on offsets; environmental significance opinions to be strengthened; conservator concurrence and advice from the commonwealth environment minister on proposals that are likely to have a significant impact on commonwealth matters; and greater transparency and more public consultation on environmental assessments under the Planning and Development Act.

In closing, I would like to reiterate that passing this bill will enable the ACT to enter a one-stop shop for environmental approvals for developments in the ACT. The bill will ensure that a one-stop shop can operate effectively and provide certainty to stakeholders.

The bill provides for clear and transparent decision-making processes and meets our commitments under the parliamentary agreement. It will ensure ongoing protection for commonwealth matters of national environmental significance. I believe this bill improves the existing assessment and approval processes under the Planning and Development Act, which carefully balances the ongoing need to minimise the environmental impact of developments.

I will provide a little bit of commentary on Ms Lawder's input earlier in the day. I thank her for her comments. The government did agree to adjourn the in-principle debate, should the opposition wish to move those amendments, and deal with it on Thursday, but those have not come forward at this time. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 11.15 am to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Planning—city to the lake project

MR HANSON: My question is to the Treasurer. He has been wanting one for a while; I would not want to disappoint! Treasurer, on budget day you issued a media release entitled "Transformative Infrastructure" which stated:

The government will fund a number of key initiatives to revitalise the city centre through projects such as the City Plan, City to the Lake and the Australia Forum. The government's implementation of these priority projects will be a key driver of economic growth and change in the city centre.

These initiatives have now been deferred for a number of years while funding for light rail has been retained. What economic analysis has the government done comparing the relative benefits of capital metro with city to the lake and the Australia forum?

MR BARR: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. It was an excellent press release. The Leader of the Opposition has indeed highlighted some very important elements of the government's agenda. I would like to take the opportunity to reassure the Leader of the Opposition that all of the work that was funded in this year's budget towards those important infrastructure priorities that he has highlighted is continuing and will continue throughout this fiscal year.

The government will make further decisions in relation to future appropriations for those projects in due course, in subsequent budgets. We will also continue to seek investment from the private sector, in partnership with the private sector, to deliver that infrastructure. The timetable for the delivery of that infrastructure will of course be impacted by the outcomes of negotiations with the commonwealth on Mr Fluffy asbestos remediation and the cost of that. That has to impact upon the timetable for infrastructure. I would, however, note that even with the most ambitious of timetables for the projects that the Leader of the Opposition has outlined, particularly the Australia forum, we were looking into the next decade anyway.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Treasurer, what impact will the deferment of these former high-priority projects have on economic growth?

MR BARR: None, because the government will instead be investing the money in another form of economic stimulus. So if we are engaged in a significant rebuild of more than a thousand houses that will have a significant impact upon the construction sector in the territory.

I think it is worth putting into perspective the scale of this challenge insomuch as the bushfires from more than 10 years ago impacted on a little over 500 homes, I understand. This is more than a thousand. It is a significant challenge. It is an unforeseen expense the full extent of which is yet to be determined. I think it was only prudent for the government to identify that, if the cost of this particular asbestos clean-up is significantly more than we are anticipating, it is going to have to have an impact on other infrastructure priorities, but it will not impact on economic activity because the money will still be being invested. In this instance, if it is a significant clean-up of a thousand properties and the construction of new properties which would ultimately come from such a process, that is a significant boost to the construction sector in the territory in and of itself.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, will you now table the modelling which shows that fixing Mr Fluffy homes will have the same economic impact as the discontinued projects?

MR BARR: That modelling is, of course, based on an infrastructure spend in the economy. If you are spending the same amount in the same types of economic activity, then it is going to have a similar effect.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Treasurer, could you tell us more about the impact of the Mr Fluffy clean-up on ACT small businesses?

MR BARR: Out of a tragedy like this there will be some opportunity for local industry to assist the government and, indeed, those households to recover, to construct new homes and to ensure that we are, as a community, able to assist those who find themselves in this most difficult of circumstances. I have no doubt that the local construction industry will play an important role, and it has been very pleasing to see the level of engagement already from organisations like the HIA, the MBA and the Real Estate Institute and others who, I am sure, will work closely with government and with households to ensure that we manage this particular challenge appropriately.

Whilst I do not think anyone in those sectors was seeking an economic stimulus of this kind, there will be a significant level of construction activity associated with this particular clean-up process. It is not an economic stimulus that people would seek but it is one that will clearly be there in the coming years.

ACT Ambulance Service—enterprise bargaining

MR SMYTH: My question is to the minister for emergency services. Minister, the new EBA for the ACT Ambulance Service was due to commence in July last year. Can you please update the Assembly on the progress of the EBA?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Smyth for his question. The EBA is close to finalisation, and I understand that the process has the support of the union representing ambulance officers as we proceed through the finalisation of the EBA.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, what has the government offered our paramedics?

MR CORBELL: Negotiations with the TWU commenced in relation to the EBA in October last year. They are now complete. Agreement has been reached in principle, with the drafting currently being finalised, and that final draft will then be reviewed by the parties prior to the commencement of the consideration period and a ballot by staff.

In terms of the offer, the government has offered a range of different opportunities. The current EBA has a nominal expiry date of 30 June. The new agreement pay rises are: for year 1, a single \$2,900 flat increase in salary or a two per cent increase in salary rates, whichever is the greater, effective from 1 July 2013; for year 2, two 1½ per cent increases in salary rates, payable from the first pay period on or after 1 July 2014 and 1 April 2015; for year 3, two 1½ per cent increases in salary rates, payable from the first pay period on or after 1 October 2015 and 1 April 2016; and for year 4, two 1½ per cent increases in salary rates, payable from the first pay period on or after 1 October 2016 and 1 April 2017.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, could you tell the Assembly if the proposed EBA contains the offer of days off to conduct voluntary work, as currently is available to public servants in the ACT?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Porter for the supplementary. It is the case that the government does support and facilitate, through our enterprise bargaining agreements generally, opportunities for staff to engage in volunteer work. We consider this to be a very important part of engaging staff in the broader work of the community and engagement with the community.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, have you taken your eye off the ball here, given that you did not know it was resolved?

MR CORBELL: As I indicated to Ms Lawder earlier, I was aware that the EBA was close to finalisation, and that is exactly the case. I think that we should be very pleased with the pay offer that our ambulance paramedics are receiving. They have very strong support from the union. I maintain close engagement with the union that represents ambulance officers. I met with them as recently as last week.

ACT Ambulance Service—management culture

MRS JONES: My question is to the minister for emergency services. Minister, after taking a year to initiate the inquiry into the “toxic management culture” within the ACT Ambulance Service, the inquiry was to report by the end of August this year. Minister, have you received a report?

MR CORBELL: No, I have not.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, when will such a report be received?

MR CORBELL: I have received an update from the reviewers on the progress of the report and they have indicated to me that they wish to undertake some further work

prior to presenting the report to the directorate and to me. I anticipate at this stage that the report will be completed based on the reviewers' advice by the end of this calendar year.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, have you received an interim report? If so, will you make it public, and what is the cost of this extended work?

MR CORBELL: No, I have not received an interim report. And in relation to the cost, I will take the question on notice.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

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

MR CORBELL: It would help if the opposition's supplementary questions actually related to the previous answer rather than relying on their set-piece rhetoric.

Transport—light rail

DR BOURKE: My question is to the Minister for Planning. Minister, could you please outline what current planning work is underway in preparation for stage 1 of light rail in Canberra?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Dr Bourke for his question. Investment in public transport is vitally important for governments all around the world to be able to respond to the challenges facing cities today, including increasing traffic congestion, greenhouse gas emissions, declining air quality, urban sprawl, social exclusion and ageing infrastructure. Transport for Canberra, the government's transport policy, responds to these issues and identifies the need for government to invest in rapid transit, including light rail.

The delivery of capital metro light rail and its first stage between Gungahlin and the city will be an important city building project with long-term city-wide benefits for Canberra in terms of job creation, densification, economic development, greenhouse gas emissions reductions, reducing road congestion and providing an attractive alternative to cars.

Consultation has recently been underway for capital metro, seeking the community's feedback on its early design. Of course, I note that Minister Corbell, as the minister responsible for capital metro, met with more than 300 local, national and international representatives at an industry briefing on 15 September. That highlights the interest from these groups in working on this project, and the confidence that the industry has in the ACT government to deliver it.

In order to facilitate the ACT's first light rail proposal from Gungahlin to Civic and to establish a clear assessment path for future light rail proposals in the ACT, some detailed planning work needs to be undertaken and is, of course, well underway.

A draft variation to the territory plan—DV327—has been prepared to facilitate the light rail project. DV327 introduces definitions to the territory plan that relate to a light rail network as well as the infrastructure components associated with it.

The draft variation also proposes to rezone parcels of land on a number of blocks to accommodate the proposed light rail depot and light rail associated roadworks. The draft variation, along with the planning report, is on public consultation at the moment. The consultation period will close on 15 October this year.

The Planning and Land Authority is also preparing a scoping document for an environmental impact statement for capital metro stage 1. The scoping document is being prepared at the request of the Capital Metro Agency. A scoping document guides the preparation of an EIS and includes specific matters which are required to be addressed.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, how do these two approvals processes assist in ensuring that planning for light rail for our city remains on track?

MR GENTLEMAN: The draft variation process is aimed to establish a clear path for the light rail proposal to be lodged and assessed against the territory plan. As this is the first light rail project there is need to introduce light rail to the territory plan to clarify that this is one kind of public transport facility and is permitted in the zones, allowing for public transport facility development.

While the process does not improve the specific details of the light rail proposal it, importantly, puts in place the planning requirements and zoning to accommodate the light rail associated infrastructure. One example of the changes being made to the territory plan includes adding light rail and its definition as a subcategory in the definition of public transport facility and amending the definition of road to include light rail and tracks and ensuring municipal depots are redefined to also include vehicles and light rail vehicles.

The commencement of the environmental impact statement is also important to ensure the progress of the capital metro project. The EIS is a document prepared to detail the expected environmental impacts of a development. The document also responds to any potential adverse impacts of the development on the environment and states “any commitments made to avoid, mitigate or satisfactorily control and manage these impacts”.

Once the EIS scoping document is finalised and given to the proponent, which is expected to be in mid October, the proponent is then required to prepare the draft EIS. The EIS process allows for the identification and consideration of the potential impacts of the proposal before major commitments or decisions are made. By considering the potential impacts of the proposal earlier, it will prevent any issues during the assessment stage later.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, what engagement with stakeholders in the community is underway or planned on both the EIS and the territory plan variation?

MR GENTLEMAN: DV327 was prepared in consultation with government agencies. Public consultation started on 29 August this year and it will conclude on 15 October. Advertisements were placed in the *Canberra Times* on 29 August and 6 September, and details of the draft variation have also been made available to the public via the Environment and Planning Directorate's website, social media such as Twitter and Facebook, and the ACT government time to talk website.

In addition to this, letters have been sent to the neighbours of the blocks subject to the variation to inform them that the draft variation is being publicly notified. A hard copy of the draft variation and its planning report are available for view by the public in EPD's shopfront. Once it is submitted, the Planning and Land Authority is required to make the draft EIS available for public examination and comment for 20 working days.

The draft EIS will be available on the EPD website and the ACT government's time to talk website, as well as advertisements being placed in the *Canberra Times* in that period. The proponent is required to address any submissions made on the draft EIS and submit a revised EIS for consideration. The proponent may choose to undertake additional community engagement during the preparation of the draft EIS.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, what future planning work will need to be undertaken to ensure the government is able to meet its commitment to build a light rail network across the city?

MR GENTLEMAN: Once a draft variation has been approved and the EIS has been completed, development applications can be lodged for proposed light rail developments. Construction can then commence only after relevant development applications have been approved. Future stages of capital metro beyond the Gungahlin to city component may require separate EISs. This is due to the potential for site-specific impacts that differ from stage 1.

A light rail master plan is being developed by the EPD in collaboration with capital metro and other ACT directorates. The master plan will set out the ACT government's vision for the public transport network based on rapid transit corridors identified in transport for Canberra and will investigate options for light rail routes across Canberra. The network will be designed to work with an integrated bus system to deliver the overall future public transport service requirements identified in transport for Canberra.

The master plan will be an integrated land use and transport plan and will aim to link residential development with areas of employment, retail and entertainment through

Canberra. The work will continue to ensure that the town centres are connected to and through the city. In this way, Tuggeranong is connected through to Gungahlin and Belconnen, for example. Extensions to capital metro stage 1 may include Russell, Canberra Airport, the parliamentary triangle, Kingston, Woden, Erindale, Tuggeranong, Belconnen, Kippax, Lanyon, Weston Creek and Molonglo. These potential light rail corridors were identified in transport for Canberra 2012. The master plan will provide recommended staging for a full light rail network over time, identifying corridors where bus rapid transport can help grow public transport demand to improve the case for light rail in the future.

Sport—Woden oval redevelopment

MR WALL: My question is for the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Minister, my question is in relation to the upgrade of the Woden oval. In May of this year, in answer to a question on when the works would be finished, the then minister for sport, Mr Barr, said:

The works are scheduled for completion in July of 2014. They are well underway. Pending major issues, such as if it rained continuously for six months which might delay the completion of the works, the advice I have is that they are scheduled for completion in July of 2014.

Minister, it is now September. We have not had six months of rain but the work is not complete. What has caused the delay, when is completion now expected and has there been any variation to the cost of this project?

MR RATTENBURY: I thank Mr Wall for the question. The synthetic track surface was scheduled to be completed, as he touched on. Unfortunately there has been some delay. This is as a result of the fact that the synthetic track installation requires a temperature of at least eight degrees Celsius for a minimum—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members!

MR RATTENBURY: The synthetic track installation process requires a temperature of at least eight degrees for a minimum period of 24 hours. Proceeding with the installation in temperatures below the recommended specifications would in fact void the warranty.

Basically, we got to a situation where the work could not be done over the winter period because of that temperature requirement. Whilst weather delays have been unfortunate, the project savings from the “Where will we play?” funding appropriation are supporting the construction of a new photo-finish—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! Mr Hanson, I cannot hear Mr Rattenbury. Come to order.

MR RATTENBURY: Couldn't be bothered.

MADAM SPEAKER: I do not think "couldn't be bothered" is part of the standing orders. A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: A pathetic attitude from the minister there. Minister, what advice have you or your directorate provided to the little athletics community who use the Woden facility as to where they can train in the upcoming summer season?

MR RATTENBURY: Sport and recreation services have been communicating closely with the little athletics federation and also with Capital Football, because they of course have an interest in usage of the soccer pitch that is being constructed in the middle of the athletics track. They have been advising them of the timetable and have been clear about when little athletics and ACT athletics will be able to host meets on the track. Certainly when I spoke with the head of Athletics ACT just this week about matters regarding the track, he was quite upbeat about the prospect of hosting a number of competitions in the ACT in the coming year.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, what guarantees can you provide to the Woden soccer club, who also train at this field, that they will not again be disadvantaged for the 2015 season as they were for the entire year this year, despite assurances to the contrary, and how much has the delay added to the cost of this facility?

MR RATTENBURY: As I sought to indicate in my earlier answer before I was shouted down by the members who clearly did not want the information, the works are scheduled to be completed in late 2014. So on that basis they will have no impact on the 2015 soccer season. The pitch will be available to both the Woden club and potentially for other matches, given the quality of lighting at the facility.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, can you give us the date when the Woden facility will be completed and open for training and competition for both little athletics and football?

MR RATTENBURY: The additional works are scheduled to be completed in late 2014 and be ready for use in early 2015.

Education—school chaplaincy program

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the minister for education. Minister, on the ABC Radio *PM* program interview last Thursday week, you advised that you would be responding to Minister Pyne's invitation to participate in the school chaplaincy program. Madam Speaker, we ask the minister: did she respond to Minister Pyne, and what was the response?

MS BURCH: I thank Mr Doszpot for his question. It is on public record that I have responded to the commonwealth on the offer for the chaplaincy program. I have said that I am interested, but I have also proposed that that include chaplains and secular welfare workers. Included in the letter back to Senator Scott Ryan, who was the relevant responsible federal member, I included letters of support for my position from the independent schools association and the Catholic Education Office. They support my view that here in the ACT I firmly believe that schools should have choice, and that is what all three sectors of the education framework here in the ACT support.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, what information have you provided to schools that currently have a school chaplain, and what choice do they have in the matter?

MS BURCH: The advice I have provided to schools has been very clear—that is, I think we have a very strong case here, supported by the independent schools and supported by the Catholic schools, that schools should have the final choice. If they choose a chaplain, so be it; if they choose a secular support worker then so be it.

Last week I met with Di Priest, who is the organising agency for most of the chaplains in Canberra. She too supports that position. Everyone I speak to that is involved in this program thinks that our argument is solid and firm. The proposition I have put to the commonwealth is that, yes, we have an interest in this, but it is based on a school's choice. I firmly believe that with all of us putting the same proposition I do not know how the commonwealth can refuse us.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, will schools be able to access the commonwealth funding through your directorate to engage a chaplain? Yes or no?

MS BURCH: If there is any change to the existing arrangements, and given that we have every school sector agreeing to us, it rests with the commonwealth to say that they will indeed be responsible for dismissing over 20 secular workers in the ACT.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, why is it important for schools to have a choice between chaplains and secular welfare workers?

MS BURCH: I thank Ms Berry for her interest in this. I firmly believe that the schools leadership and the schools definitely know the best fit for their school. And that is why this should be based on schools' choice. Some schools value the appointment of chaplains and the work that those individuals do in their schools. Many other schools value the successful work of secular support workers within our schools.

If we have the government schools, the independent schools, the Catholic schools and the chaplain employing agency all saying the same thing then I think it is absolutely incumbent on me to put that argument to the commonwealth to make sure that the Catholics and the independents who currently employ secular workers—the bulk of the secular workers actually sit within the Catholic and independent schools—should be afforded their choice to continue what they want.

Arts—funding

MS BERRY: My question is to the Minister for the Arts. Minister, could you update the Assembly on the ACT government's funding to the arts and cultural life of the territory through the ACT arts fund?

MS BURCH: I thank Ms Berry for her interest in the arts. The ACT arts fund is one of the main ways that the ACT government provides direct support to the arts. Through the fund we provide more than \$5 million to support the artistic aspirations of our community. The fund supports high-quality work across a broad range of art forms and practices, including funds for key arts organisations and the ACT book of the year.

There are 20 key arts organisations that support circus, dance, literature, music, theatre, visual arts and community cultural development and access. There are eight program organisations that support film, music, visual arts and a festival focusing on young and emerging artists.

Out-of-round funding supports 10 to 15 artists per year to undertake important national or international professional development. From time to time, the fund also supports a range of important government initiatives, including the Asialink international arts residency program, the Arts Law Centre of Australia for legal support to ACT artists, and the Fringe Festival.

In addition, the project fund supports more than 40 applications each year and is highly regarded by the community as our local artists seek to pursue their artistic aspirations. It supports ACT artists, groups and organisations to undertake one-off arts activities that enhance their professional development and provide opportunities for members of the community to participate in the arts.

Today I was pleased to announce the latest round of project fund recipients. This ensures that the ACT community has access to a broad range of arts activities and facilities across Canberra. This is done through the work of staff across the ACT's arts organisations and facilities who support independent artists to present strong proposals and pursue innovative and exciting projects. It is also done with the support of the ACT arts community, who volunteer to take part in peer assessment panels to provide independent expert advice on applications to the arts fund.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, could you tell the Assembly about project funding from the ACT arts fund, and in particular how this funding will help Canberra artists to develop their skills and abilities?

MS BURCH: As I said the project funding supports the development of the arts through excellence, innovation and community engagement, which are the three key planks of the ACT arts policy framework. Today I have announced a record 49 successful applications for \$720,000 in project funding for 2015. We have been able to increase the number of projects being funded, up from the 42 supported this year.

These projects include supporting Canberra's only glam-folk duo, Sparrow-Folk, to take their *Burb Birds* show to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival next year. I had the pleasure of watching these two talented women perform just a short while ago. They became something of an international sensation earlier this year when their YouTube clip for their song *Ruin your day* went viral, receiving more than 800,000 hits. Attending the Edinburgh Fringe Festival presents Sparrow-Folk with an important opportunity to perform to large international audiences, see the work of other acclaimed international cabaret artists and forge industry contacts worldwide.

Other projects funded include support for an ACT delegation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers to attend the 2015 First Nations Australia Writers Workshop, funding to indie pop band Wallflower to record and press an original EP, assisting Rip Publishing to produce a youth-based experimental multimedia publication, and support for the Canberra City Band to establish a junior concert band.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, could you update the Assembly on the successes of previous recipients of ACT arts funded grants.

MS BURCH: I thank Dr Bourke for his question. There are many, indeed, success stories as a result of our arts funding. This is highly anticipated around support for a great many arts activities and makes an immense impact on the artists' careers and the development of the arts.

Local visual artist actor-director and puppet maker Joy McDonald received 2013 project funding of \$34,000 to bring to the stage *The Very Sad Fish Lady*, a puppet show for all ages. Set in postwar Greece, it was a wonderful story based on Canberra's history of migration. For Ms McDonald, the project was the realisation of a personal, family and universal story which began as a storyboard, grew into a book and, with the funding assistance, grew into a fully realised script that was brought to life at the Street Theatre. An exhibition of the process was also showcased, at Craft ACT.

Local writer Jack Heath received \$9,000 to edit his young adult fiction manuscript. The result was *Replica*, a carefully crafted manuscript with an authentic Canberran setting and, most importantly for a writer, a publishing contract. In researching and editing the book, Mr Heath said he learned not only narrative techniques but more

about Canberra, the Defence Force and robotics, themes which were integral to his novel. Published earlier this year by Oxford University Press in the United Kingdom, his novel is promoting Canberra and Canberra writing to international audiences.

These are just two examples that only touch on the many hundreds of arts activities and artists' careers that have been supported over the years through artsACT and our arts funds.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, in an earlier answer you mentioned the arts policy framework. The framework has principles and a foundation but no strategy or targets. When will the government establish a strategy and targets for the arts community in the ACT?

MS BURCH: I thank Mr Smyth for his question. The arts framework provides guidance to the ACT arts directorate about the activities and functions that it performs and indeed guides the various funding opportunities that we put out to key arts organisations and arts practice across Canberra.

Government—office accommodation

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, in July 2014 the government started a register of interest process for an ACT government office block in Civic. In September you announced that the government would be deferring a number of projects, including the city to lake project. Chief Minister, will you still proceed with the register of interest process for government accommodation?

MS GALLAGHER: This is a matter that the Minister for Economic Development is managing but the answer—I presume it will be the same—is yes.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Chief Minister, do you consider the government office block a higher priority than the Australia forum or the city to the lake project?

MS GALLAGHER: I think driving efficiencies across government accommodation is of enormous benefit to the budget and to the broader ACT community, who expect prudent use of taxpayers' funds. We have thousands of public servants. We need to ensure that they are in appropriate accommodation and we intend to do that. It is not necessarily a matter of choice. We are currently paying accommodation costs for public servants. We are going through a process now to update and co-locate, as we have done, in Gungahlin. It is actually a function of running a public service to ensure that we have public servants accommodated appropriately and that that is done in the most efficient and effective way.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, why has this project stayed as a priority when other capital works projects have been indefinitely deferred?

MS GALLAGHER: No project has been indefinitely deferred, and I challenge any one of you to go and find a statement which indicates that. What we have flagged with the ACT community is the fact that we have an unforeseen—

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! It is not a place for conversation. The Chief Minister is answering a question.

MS GALLAGHER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We have an unforeseen priority that requires us to readjust our thinking around the timing of particular infrastructure projects—nothing more than that, nothing less—and it is an entirely reasonable position.

As to accommodating our workforce, this is something we do currently. It is a cost that the budget wears currently, and we are going through this process of the EOI and the subsequent process to finalise, short-list and go through the next stage to ensure that our accommodation costs, which are currently worn by the budget, are incurred in future years in the most efficient and effective way for ACT public servants to deliver a service to the community in accommodation that is appropriate to support the work they do.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Chief Minister, what date will the stadium and city to the lake be built if they have not been indefinitely deferred?

MS GALLAGHER: Those decisions will be taken in due course.

Transport—light rail

MR COE: My question is to the Minister for Capital Metro. Minister, the government recently released detailed design drawings for the proposed light rail route. Can the minister confirm that cars, buses and trucks will not be able to turn right from Lysaght Street in Mitchell onto Flemington Road when light rail is operational?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Coe for the question. It is the case that a number of intersections will be subject to modification along the light rail route. I will have to check the detail in relation to Lysaght Street, so I will take that question on notice and provide an answer to the member.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, what changes will need to be made to Northbourne Avenue so that cars can still access the Yowani Country Club and Southwell Park in both directions once light rail is operational?

MR CORBELL: It is the case that in relation to access to the Yowani Country Club there will need to be modification to their entrance off Northbourne Avenue. It is proposed that that be achieved through the establishment of a new intersection at the existing intersection of Swindon Street and Northbourne Avenue. That will enable access both into and out of the Yowani Country Club through a signalised intersection. Those changes have been subject to a level of public disclosure already and consultation with the communities, and that will be ongoing as we progress the project.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, how many sets of new traffic lights will be installed so the light rail can operate?

MR CORBELL: The project involves the relocation of some existing intersections, such as the one I have just mentioned, as well as the creation of new controlled intersections. In terms of the net gain, I would have to seek some advice from capital metro, so I will take that particular aspect on notice.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, what impact on private vehicle travel times do you anticipate these new traffic lights will have?

MR CORBELL: The analysis that the government has undertaken to date is that investing in light rail will actually maintain or reduce—a further diminution of—travel times along Northbourne Avenue compared to the business-as-usual base case. What we know is that the business-as-usual base case for travel along Northbourne Avenue, if there is no public transit intervention, will see travel times increase to approximately 55 minutes for the journey from Gungahlin to the city in the morning peak. So that is the base case that we are seeking to address. Without intervention, Canberrans will see a significant increase in their travel time along this corridor during the morning peak to approximately 55 minutes by the year 2030. That is an unacceptable level of increasing congestion and that is why the government is making the strategic investment in better public transport along the corridor. Better public transport along the corridor, as I have said in this place previously, does not just benefit public transit users—

Mrs Jones interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Jones, that is not helpful.

MR CORBELL: but it benefits the private motorist as well. It benefits everyone who uses that part of the transport network. The really important point that those opposite fail to grasp when it comes to this project is that everybody wins when there is better investment in public transport. The people who use public transport get a better journey. The people who use their cars get a better journey compared to doing nothing

and sticking with the status quo, because the status quo means a travel time of 55 minutes by the year 2030.

Energy—wind

MS PORTER: My question is to the Minister for the Environment. Minister, a few months ago you told the Assembly about the wind auction that was running at the time. Could you please give us an update on how it is progressing?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Porter for the question. Back in April the government advised that it was commencing the process for a reverse auction to allocate feed-in tariff price support for 200 megawatts of wind energy for the ACT as part of its overall objective to achieve a 90 per cent renewable energy target by 2020. The auction closed at 4 pm on Wednesday, 3 September, and the government has been very pleased by the level of interest and the number of applications through that process. The government has received 18 proposals from 15 proponents. In total, that is more than 1,000 megawatts of renewable energy generation being bid into an auction that will provide feed-in tariff support for 200 megawatts worth of projects.

So this is a very encouraging outcome for the territory. What it means is that we see very strong competition and very strong interest from the private sector in developing wind energy projects for the ACT's energy supply. We know that wind is the most cost-effective of all of the renewable energy generation currently operating in the Australian electricity market, and therefore the government's strong focus on achieving a large amount of renewable energy generation from wind energy.

We anticipate concluding this process in the coming months and we are looking forward to seeing some great results for our city and for our region. We are focused not just on achieving low-cost renewables and large-scale generation; we are also focused on ensuring there are good economic outcomes and there are good social outcomes for our community.

So as part of that, through the auction process, we have specific criteria against which we will assess these proposals. That includes a weighting of 20 per cent being given to local community engagement and a further weighting of 20 per cent being given to the economic development benefits to the territory. Forty per cent just focused on those criteria. It really does emphasise the commitment this government is making to ensuring that we get jobs, investment and economic activity from these projects, good community engagement through the development of these projects as well as low-cost renewable energy for the ACT community.

We are very encouraged by the results to date and we expect that this will build on the very successful results we are now seeing from the territory's latest greenhouse gas inventory report, an inventory report which has confirmed that our greenhouse gas emissions are falling, according to the last audited year. They are down by 2½ per cent on the year before, and at the same time renewable energy use is up from 14 per cent to nearly 17 per cent, and that is without the large-scale renewable projects that this government has invested in kicking in in terms of greenhouse gas abatement.

So we can expect further reductions in future years. These are great outcomes for our city as we make the transition to a low-carbon future. Certainly, what we are seeing from those results and from this wind auction process is a coming together of a range of factors that are helping us to meet our targets for a more sustainable Canberra.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, could you explain further how this development of wind power will benefit Canberrans?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Porter for the supplementary. There are two key ways in which we will see benefits for Canberrans. The first is through economic development opportunity. The second, of course, is the environmental benefit in terms of lowering the carbon intensity of our electricity supply sector.

When it comes to the economic benefit, we know from assessments that have been done nationally that renewable energy projects create jobs. Wind farms typically employ one person for every four megawatts during operation, and many more during construction. Capital expenditure is around a million dollars per megawatt of generation constructed. So we expect to see immediate benefits in terms of jobs.

But we also expect to see longer term benefits for our community. As I said in my answer earlier, the government is very focused on making sure that these proponents demonstrate not just how they are going to build low-cost, large-scale renewable energy but how they are going to invest in our city? How are they going to invest, for example, in supporting research? With some of the great advanced research that we see at the ANU and the CSIRO, how are they going to, for example, support that. How are they going to support the local economy longer term by basing some of their operations or corporate functions here? How are they going to support local contractors and local businesses?

The second benefit, of course, is through low-cost renewable energy abatement. We know that these schemes are going to deliver significant abatement. When you look at 200 megawatts of wind energy, meeting the equivalent of one in two Canberrans' electricity needs per annum, that is a significant step towards achieving abatement in greenhouse gas emissions for our city. (*Time expired.*)

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, why have you invested so much in solar power, given that you were trumpeting that wind power is much cheaper than solar?

MR CORBELL: The government takes a balanced portfolio view to the shifts in renewable energy, and over 300 of the 490 megawatts that the government has allocated for large-scale renewable energy generation is proposed to go towards wind energy generation. But the government also made commitments in 2008 to support the development of large-scale solar, as did those opposite. Let us not forget their policy in 2008 to support a large-scale solar farm here in the ACT as well. It is in their policy documents from that election.

Before they get on their high horse about that, they should remember what they themselves promised in 2008. Remember that? I will just show it to you again. I know you do not like to remember it, but I keep a copy handy. Of course we should remember that there was their commitment to deliver solar Canberra—remember that:

Our vision is to establish a renewable energy centre of excellence—the ACT Renewable Energy Park—

With? Wait for it:

with a large scale solar plant at its heart.

So let us not forget what the Liberals proposed back in 2008. There it is, 10 October 2008.

We made a commitment, as government in 2008, to deliver large-scale solar. We have done that and we are investing in wind, we are investing in solar with storage, we are investing in community solar as we make that transition to a low-carbon future.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, can you tell us more about the environmental benefits from developing wind farms?

MR CORBELL: Right around the world conversations are happening about the importance of making a transition to a low-carbon future. Right now, right around the world, that is happening. The focus is on the environmental benefits and, of course, the social and economic benefits of doing so. There is a meeting right now in New York of leaders from over 60 nations around the world. Unfortunately, our Prime Minister is not going, but of course we should not be surprised.

The benefits of investing in wind energy generation for our city environmentally are significant. There are 65,000 Canberra homes—one in two Canberra homes—that can meet their greenhouse gas emissions through large-scale wind energy generation. This is a very important step forward.

Today, what we have heard from other places around the country confirms the ACT's approach. South Australia have just confirmed that they want to get 50 per cent of their electricity needs from wind generation over the next six to seven years. That is a really significant development by another large jurisdiction in Australia. It confirms the trend nationally and globally towards making a shift to a low-carbon future.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR CORBELL: Those opposite can continue to laugh and joke about it, but there are billion-dollar industries emerging around the world in these technologies, and why should we not be part of it? (*Time expired.*)

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

Supplementary answers to questions without notice

ACT Ambulance Service—management culture Emergency Services Agency—fire and rescue service

MR CORBELL: Earlier in question time today, Mr Smyth asked me what was the cost of the review into the culture of the ACT Ambulance Service. I am advised that the current contracted figure is \$25,000. However, that is subject to review because the reviewers have asked for additional time to complete their review and that may come at a further additional cost.

Last week in question time, Ms Lawder and Mr Smyth both asked me questions about whether there had been requests for interstate assistance for the Sydney Building fire, and whether the ESA commissioner had given any directions in relation to firefighting activities at that fire. In response to Ms Lawder's question, I can advise that the ESA commissioner was contacted by the New South Wales fire and rescue commissioner, asking if additional aerial firefighting appliance resources were required to assist with the Sydney Building fire on 17 February 2014.

The commissioner appropriately asked the senior fire officer on the scene, the incident controller at the Sydney Building fire, if such resources were required as both the chief officer and deputy chief officer, ACT Fire & Rescue were both interstate on that day. The senior officer on the scene advised at the time that it was not required, and the commissioner accepted this advice. The commissioner advised the New South Wales fire and rescue commissioner accordingly.

In response to Mr Smyth's question, the ESA commissioner did not direct the Sydney fire officer on site at the Sydney Building fire.

Construction industry—drug and alcohol testing

MR GENTLEMAN: Last Thursday I took questions from Mr Wall and Mr Smyth regarding alcohol testing on ACT building and construction sites, and I wish to answer their questions. In response to the first question I took on notice, the *Getting home safely* report does not refer to drug or alcohol testing in the construction industry. Random drug and alcohol testing is allowed on worksites in the ACT.

In regard to Mr Smyth's question that I took on notice, WorkSafe ACT does not routinely receive or maintain drug or alcohol testing records from employers. That would be the responsibility of the persons conducting the relevant business or undertaking. WorkSafe may seek to obtain records of drug and alcohol testing from employers under certain circumstances; for instance, in the course of investigating a workplace incident.

Paper

Madam Speaker presented the following paper:

Electoral Act, pursuant to subsection 10A(2)—ACT Electoral Commission
Report to the ACT Legislative Assembly—Proposed changes to the *Electoral*

Act 1992: Response to the Voting Matters report and further campaign finance reform issues: 2014, dated 19 September 2014.

Executive contracts Papers and statement by minister

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

Pursuant to sections 31A and 79 of the Public Sector Management Act 1994, copies of contracts in accordance with the list circulated.

Long-term contracts:

Anne Glover, dated 5 September 2014.

Richard Baumgart, dated 8 and 10 September 2014.

Tony Carmichael, dated 9 September 2014.

Short-term contracts:

Conrad Barr, dated 4 and 5 September 2014.

David Collett, dated 1 and 4 September 2014.

David Matthews, dated 2 and 3 September 2014.

David Peffer, dated 4 September 2014.

Julie Field, dated 5 September 2014.

Karen Greenland, dated 5 September 2014.

Kate Starick, dated 3 September 2014.

Melanie Saballa, dated 11 September 2014.

Stephen Edwards, dated 5 September 2014.

Contract variations:

Andrew Parkinson, dated 3 and 4 September 2014.

Carolyn Grayson, dated 8 September 2014.

Karl Alderson, dated 4 and 11 September 2014.

Somasunderam Jeyendren, dated 3 and 4 September 2014.

Sushila Sharma, dated 9 and 10 September 2014.

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

Leave granted.

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

Paper

Mr Corbell presented the following paper:

ACT Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020—Road Safety Report Card 2013, dated September 2014—Compiled by Legislation, Policy and Programs Branch, Justice and Community Safety Directorate.

Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act 2010— report Paper and statement by minister

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act, pursuant to subsection 12(4)—Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission—Report 6—ACT Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report 2011-12—Final Report, dated September 2014.

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

Leave granted.

MR CORBELL: I am pleased to table the *ACT Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report 2011-2012*. The Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act 2010 establishes greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for the ACT and provides for monitoring and reporting in relation to the targets. Section 12 of the act requires an independent entity to prepare a report about the ACT's greenhouse gas emissions and the targets mentioned in the act for each financial year.

The Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission was contracted by the government to prepare greenhouse gas inventories for the ACT. This report I am tabling today will be the fourth prepared by the commission under this arrangement. In accordance with the act, the ICRC has submitted the *ACT Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report 2010-2011* within three months from the end of the 2013-14 financial year.

The aim of the greenhouse gas inventory is to provide policymakers with an understanding of both the aggregate amount of greenhouse gas emissions and the “greenhouse intensity”—that is, the amount of emissions per capita—so that performance towards the target can be tracked over time.

This inventory is particularly important, as it shows that greenhouse gas emissions in the territory have dropped for the first time since the 2007-08 reporting period. Total greenhouse gas emissions from the territory in 2011-12 are 4,352 kilotonnes, including land sector emissions. This is a reduction of 2.4 per cent from the previous

inventory in 2010-11 and below the 2009-10 emissions of 4,399 kilotonnes. This is a very pleasing report for our community.

I am also pleased to be able to announce that greenhouse gas emissions per person have also continued to decline. The legislative target is for per capita emissions to peak by June 2013. While we do not have the results for this period yet, the trends from this and previous inventories show that per person emissions in the territory actually peaked in 2005-06 and the overall trend line is continuing to decrease. The level of ACT per person emissions in 2011-12 was 11.6 tonnes per person, a reduction of nearly five per cent on the previous reporting period. This is less than half the estimated national per person emissions of around 25 tonnes. This inventory also records that consumption of renewable energy in the territory has increased from 14.2 per cent in 2011 to 16.9 per cent in 2012. This shows that Canberrans want renewable energy generation as a viable alternative to fossil fuel power.

As the Assembly will be aware, in late 2013 the Assembly determined a new renewable energy target of 90 per cent of consumption by 2020. This replaced the 2011 electricity renewable energy target of 15 per cent by 2012 and 25 per cent by 2020. While these targets are superseded, this inventory shows that we met the 15 per cent target for 2012.

Madam Assistant Speaker, overall, this inventory shows that Canberrans understand the importance of climate change mitigation and are supportive of the government's policies and actions, despite the lack of national level leadership. All Canberrans should take pride in the trends evident in this inventory and be inspired to continue the good work we are seeing to date in reducing our city's greenhouse gas emissions.

The government's strategy and action plan to address climate change, action plan 2, was adopted in 2012 to commence in 2013. The inventory I present to the Assembly today will form the baseline for implementation assessment of the actions in AP2. Importantly, it can inform the first review of this important whole-of-government strategy in 2014 and the government's response in 2015. As we progress towards 2020, the government anticipates that AP2 actions, the 90 per cent renewable energy target and other important programs such as the energy efficiency improvement scheme, none of which were in place when this latest inventory report period concluded, will lead to further emissions reductions.

As Canberrans, we should be proud of what we have been able to achieve in reducing greenhouse gas emissions to date. I look forward to being able to present further inventories that continue this downward trend.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission for their work in preparing this latest *ACT Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report*, and I commend the paper to the Assembly.

Papers

Mr Corbell presented the following papers:

ACT Strategic Bushfire Management Plan 2014-2019, prepared in accordance with the Emergencies Act 2004.

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

ACT Teacher Quality Institute Act and Financial Management Act—

ACT Teacher Quality Institute Board Appointment 2014 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-240 (LR, 4 September 2014).

ACT Teacher Quality Institute Board Appointment 2014 (No 5)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-241 (LR, 4 September 2014).

ACT Teacher Quality Institute Board Appointment 2014 (No 6)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-242 (LR, 4 September 2014).

Gaming Machine Act—Gaming Machine Amendment Regulation 2014 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2014-22 (LR, 8 September 2014).

Legal Profession Act—Legal Profession (Barristers) Rules 2014—Subordinate Law SL2014-21 (LR, 4 September 2014).

Public Place Names Act—Public Place Names (Moncrieff) Determination 2014 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-244 (LR, 11 September 2014).

Victims of Crime Act—Victims of Crime (Victims Advisory Board) Appointment 2014 (No 7)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-243 (LR, 11 September 2014).

Health—priorities

Discussion of matter of public importance

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Ms Lawder): Madam Speaker has received letters from Ms Berry, Dr Bourke, Mr Hanson, Mrs Jones, Ms Lawder, Ms Porter, Mr Smyth and Mr Wall proposing that matters of public importance be submitted to the Assembly. In accordance with standing order 79, Madam Speaker has determined that the matter proposed by Mr Smyth be submitted to the Assembly, namely:

The importance of Government getting its healthcare priorities right for ACT residents.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (3:38): It is important to get your priorities right, particularly when delivering health care and particularly here in the ACT. When we look at the hospital sector of health care, you have to ask: what is the most serious cause of reduced patient safety in public hospitals and what causes waiting times in emergency departments and elective surgery to blow out? According to the AMA report card from 2013:

Hospital overcrowding is the most serious cause of reduced patient safety in public hospitals and the cause of waiting times in emergency departments and for elective surgery.

Unless governments improve public hospital capacity, patient access to hospital care will not improve and patient safety will be put further at risk.

A rule of 85 per cent average bed occupancy rate should apply in every hospital.

What did the *Medical Journal of Australia* say, Madam Assistant Speaker? It said:

The Australian Medical Association ... and the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine consider bed-occupancy rates above 85% to have a negative impact on the safe and efficient operation of a hospital.

That is from the AMA report card and the journal from 2013.

What is actually going on in ACT hospitals today? We know exactly what is going on in ACT hospitals today, because the head of the emergency department told us that patient numbers at Canberra Hospital were unsafe. This has been said by the emergency department head, Dr Hall. He said it on ABC radio on 1 September 2014. It is worth reading exactly what the doctor said, because, unless we confront what is going on, we will not have an adequate solution; we will not get the priorities right for getting health care in the ACT working as it should. The story from the ABC goes like this:

A senior staff member at the Canberra Hospital has spoken out, saying current patient numbers are “unsafe” and “unsustainable”.

The Australian Medical Association recommends that hospitals run at an 85 per cent bed occupancy rate for efficient and safe practice.

But according to Canberra Hospital data, the facility has averaged about a 95 per cent capacity so far this year.

That is to the shame of the health minister and the shame of this government, who are always proud to be measured on their inputs. They will tell us how much they have spent, but they very rarely tell us what the outcome of that spending was. The article goes on to say:

But the hospital’s emergency department clinical director Dr Michael Hall said he sees dangers in running such high occupancy rates.

“Ninety-five per cent is unsafe ... once you reach above 90 the hospital is under stress, once you reach above 95 the hospital is seriously under stress,” he said.

This city has its major tertiary hospital under serious stress from the person who knows it best, the individual who runs the emergency department. The article goes on to say:

Dr Hall said when that happened, the pressure was felt back in the emergency department, in terms of waiting times to be seen and to get to a bed.

“So people will be cared for in a less than satisfactory environment,” he said ...

“So it increases time in hospital, it increases costs, it increases complications and in fact it increases mortality.”

This is the system that health minister Katy Gallagher has delivered to the people of the ACT. The longest serving health minister in the country has the worst record in the country. She blithely states that she spends more but refuses to acknowledge that the people of the ACT get less because this government has got its healthcare priorities wrong.

It is with great respect that I acknowledge the staff who work in this system—a system that lets them down, a system that does not allow them to do what they studied long and hard for and constantly review their skills, a system designed by this minister, with wrong priorities, that is not only letting the patients of the ACT down but letting the staff down and putting the staff under increasing and unacceptable pressure. Ultimately it is the staff at the front line who care so much and who give so much who will feel this—after the patients, who will feel it the most.

What did the ED clinical director say? He said that tough decisions are needed. The article continued:

In light of the enormous strain on the hospital, Dr Hall has urged the ACT Government to make tough political decisions and cut elective care.

He said that the importance of the government getting its healthcare priorities right for ACT residents is that we will actually get better outcomes in that people will get seen faster, there will be fewer complications, their health will improve much more quickly and we will have, by the doctor's own words, less mortality. The article also said:

He said the hospital could also be more efficient by ensuring more of its services operated on a 24-hour, 7-days-a-week model, with more services offered out of hours, maximising the unused capacity of the hospital's resources.

“If you have 10 full operating theatres in daytime hours you have two choices,” he said.

“You either build two new operating theatres or you use operating theatres for extended hours as a sense of efficiency.”

These are the issues that we face.

Canberra Hospital's deputy director Ian Thompson said that they had looked at the AMA's 85 per cent target for occupancy and it was based on a best practice model for efficient flow of patients through the hospital. Surely, if our priorities are right, we would be working towards delivering a best practice model for efficient flow of patients through the hospital. The article said:

Mr Thompson said officials have been examining the hospital data and were considering more research to better understand what was driving such high patient numbers.

The government did offer some relief if a patient was on the way, with 27 extra beds opening during the week of the interview. The article said:

Dr Hall agreed it would help to ease the pressure, but only for a year or so.

He said any long-term improvement would require a shift in priorities ...

There is the confirmation that the government has got its healthcare priorities wrong: you have got the head of the ED saying that we need a shift in priorities and we need a shift in philosophy. The article continued:

“If we don’t change anything we will simply see this cycle of brief improvements and then falling back again and people deserve better,” he said.

He is absolutely right. People do deserve better. The staff deserve better in terms of a workplace that allows them to do what they want to do, which is to help improve people’s health and their outcomes. The patients deserve better in that they should be seen more quickly; they should have fewer complications; there should be less mortality. And we know that families, who are often anxious at these times, deserve better as well. That is a key example of a government that has its priorities wrong. When you have the head of the emergency department asking for a shift in those priorities, it is about time this government listened.

You only have to look at the litany of health mismanagement. It is a sad, long history of not getting it right, of repeating the mistakes, of constantly saying, “Yes, if we spend more money things will improve.” In reality, the inputs measure is not an effective measure in this case. We absolutely know, from the terrible report from the Auditor-General on gastroenterology and the delivery of those services, that money was not the issue: it was the systems that this minister had set up, the systems this minister is responsible for, the priorities that this government got wrong.

We only need to look at the years of lost opportunities, either treading water or going backwards. We have seen poor performance. We have seen the long waits. We know that we have got the highest cost hospitals in the country, because an article in the *Canberra Times* on 15 September was headlined “Canberra’s public hospitals are Australia’s most expensive”.

Again, this is what happens when Labor runs a health system. We throw money at it; we constantly throw money at it. We have one single measure: “We have spent more money than anybody else.” But when you go to the measures that matter for people, outcomes and timeliness, this government fails. We know we have got the highest cost. We know we have got an unsafe working environment for the staff. Mr Hanson has spoken constantly about the pressure that is on staff. In the data doctoring scandal we know that the individual responsible felt under enormous pressure to give a political solution for a minister who was under pressure to achieve more. We know, from the motion last week, courtesy of Mrs Jones, of the physical harm that comes from an unsafe work environment for staff when they are threatened.

You only need to look at the capital works fiasco that has been the management of health. There was the new hospital tower. It was like the hospital tower hokey-pokey: it was on, it was off; it was on, it was off; it was outsourced, it was in-sourced.

Eventually it disappeared; it has disappeared from sight. We know the pressure that has put the planners under. We know that pots of money were spent—more in this input model: “Yes, we spent money”—but we are not getting the outcomes. We know that in the case of the new hospital tower a number of local firms had made up consortia with overseas organisations. One group was the preferred tenderer, who did not get the job because again the government changed its decisions.

We have seen years of rollovers and delays in capital infrastructure. You only need to look at two projects that have been on the books longer than probably half the members in this place have been in attendance in this place—the bush healing farm, and what seems to be a permanent delay with the secure mental health unit. When projects were delivered they were late, the scope had changed or the costs had blown out. We had it lauded that we had a centenary hospital for women and children, but initially it did not have any extra beds. All it was was a shuffling of wards in the hospital to bring them together for an opening for the minister. We had to go back and put in extra capacity because they got it wrong, as they do so often. It will be interesting to see the report when the secure mental health facility is finally delivered and opened—what was the start date, what was the original costing, what was the opening date and what was the final costing.

It will be the same for the bush healing farm. The consultation there was appalling. It is not where the Indigenous people wanted the bush healing farm. They had Hobson’s choice: take it or leave it. Now we know that there is enormous cost in cleaning up the site. Who knows when it will open? You can read the budget documents to see the date being pushed out year after year, but if you can believe it I am not sure when it will be delivered.

If we go back some time, it is about keeping promises. All our promises were on the table, except for the Calvary hospital sale, which ended up in a complete debacle. It was an absolute debacle delivered by the hands of the health minister.

The data doctoring scandal in 2012 showed us the sort of culture that now pervades the system: to make things work for their political masters instead of making things work for the patients, which should be the objective of any health system, we saw one official data doctoring. We know that investigations are still not complete; we have still not found out whether it was done by one person or not. She fessed up and said she did not do it all. Who were the others who did this, and why? When you have got that sort of attitude, it is impossible for things to get better.

There is an ongoing crisis in our health system. You could summarise it by saying there are overcrowded, unsafe hospitals due to beds being virtually full, indeed at unsafe levels. You have got ongoing and new capital work delays and rollovers. You have got ongoing delays in the delivery of the mental health facility, which puts pressure on the existing facility. You have got the failure to deliver the new tower block, which again has put pressure back into the system as well as undue pressure and costs on local business. We have bulk-billing at the lowest rates in the nation, yet we have a local doctor who wants to build a bulk-billing facility in Tuggeranong and the government will not help. After years of delay and paperwork, they say, “We will cut the red tape.” But here is a doctor who wants to build a bulk-billing facility and

gets no assistance or very little assistance from this government. Hence we have got the cost per visit the most expensive in the nation.

The ACT has a poor record in hospital-acquired infections. Again, as Dr Hall said, when you have got overcrowded hospitals, you get lesser health care. The obvious example of that is acquired infections. What about the emergency department? It is not because of the staff; the staff do a great job. I have been there when my little fellow was small. Many of us here have had kids, I am sure, who have gone down to the hospital at the appropriate time and found that a staffer comes out and apologises because your child has been crying for some hours because they cannot see a doctor. We all knew it was croup, but you could not get in; you could not get in until it was your turn. Then the staff come to you and apologise, saying, “We are really sorry; as soon as we get a doctor clear we will get them onto you and the other babies that are crying in the waiting room.” Then you know something is wrong. The ED has the worst waiting time target in the country. For patients departing within four hours the figure is 54 per cent, one of the worst rates in the country. That is not something to be proud of.

That is what happens when a government has got wrong priorities in health care. That is what is happening in our hospital system currently, because this government cannot get it right and this minister cannot get it right. It is time for the healthcare priorities to—*(Time expired.)*

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Health, Minister for Higher Education and Minister for Regional Development) (3.53): I welcome the opportunity to talk about the health system. The speech we have just heard from Mr Smyth indicates exactly why he is not the shadow health spokesperson. It was a speech that clearly showed his ignorance of the broader portfolio and was embarrassing in the sense that he linked a whole range of unrelated, unsubstantiated facts together to paint a picture which is not true of the quality of our health system here in Canberra. As a community leader in this place, to stand in here and generate a campaign that paints the picture of the ACT health system which is not what the ACT health system delivers is irresponsible. It is absolutely irresponsible for a community leader to say what you just said, Mr Smyth.

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: You take no responsibility for it. You think you can just come in here and use the words “crisis”, “unsafe”, and all the rest of it, and then put that together with bulk-billing and infection rates. To try and link all of that is just irresponsible. And it goes exactly to the issue of staff. You cannot paint that picture. They said, “Oh, it’s nothing to do with the staff. It’s all to do with Katy Gallagher.”

Mr Hanson interjecting—

Mr Rattenbury: On a point of order, Madam Assistant Speaker, Mr Smyth was heard in silence. Ms Gallagher has been hectored almost since she stood up.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Ms Lawder): Thank you, Mr Rattenbury. The level of noise is a bit too high. I would like to listen to Ms Gallagher.

MS GALLAGHER: Thank you. Let us go back through the history of beds, which gets forgotten, particularly by Mr Smyth, who was in government at the time. In 2001, when we came to office, the ACT did not even reach the national average of beds per population, because beds had been closed and beds had been reduced. We came to office and there were 670 acute beds in the system in 2002. There are now 1,048, a 56 per cent increase in bed availability in this jurisdiction. I would say it took about seven or eight years to get back to the point of where we should be, which is where we are now, with 2.5 beds per 1,000 population, which is right on the national average. And that has been with us opening the maximum number of beds that we could staff in any given year. In every single year we have increased bed numbers to deal with the legacy that we were left by the last conservative government, which shut beds—

Mr Smyth: No, we didn't.

MS GALLAGHER: You did shut beds. I have tabled the documents in this place that clearly show that under the last administration beds were shut in the ACT health system, to do with the Canberra Hospital closure. The amalgamation, or the expansion, at Canberra Hospital and Calvary went nowhere to compensate for the beds that were lost with the closing of the third hospital.

In terms of where those beds have gone and where the new beds will go, this is an area that continues to require a lot of focus from government, and indeed from the broader health system. There will be further bed expansions at Calvary hospital, including intensive care beds. There will be extra psycho-geriatric beds, extra beds in the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children, extra inpatient beds at Canberra Hospital, an additional six ICU beds at Canberra Hospital, eight medi-hotel beds at Canberra Hospital and additional mental health unit beds at Canberra Hospital. Also, the building of the secure mental health facility will provide an additional 15 beds. That facility will undergo demolition and early works towards the end of this year, with construction proper to start in the first quarter of next year.

The issue there, I think, is going to be one of workforce. We do not have a workforce that provides the care for a secure mental health facility in an inpatient setting. It is going to require a lot of work to go in and actually secure a workforce for that facility. We can build the facility—that will be straightforward—but the actual staffing of it is going to be a real challenge when that comes online. There has been an enormous amount of work to establish the healthcare priorities during my term as health minister and, prior to my term, through Minister Corbell.

Talk about health systems in crisis. When we came to office we found that we had nurses on strike from their attack on the Industrial Relations Commission. That is not something that we have seen in our years in government. We had a severely under-resourced health system, a severely under-resourced level of service that we have been building up each year. More people had to travel to Sydney and seek treatment because the Liberal government, when they were in power, simply did not prioritise

the expansion of services. They were about reducing hospital services, and that is what we came in for.

It was the biggest issue at the time. We came in and we started fixing it. It has taken years, and it will take years. It is ongoing work that is required to fully equip a health system. I imagine it is work that is never finished. I cannot see an end date because of the change that is required in terms of the use of new technologies that are coming in and changing the way services are delivered. There are changes as soon as the different medicines and treatments that are available are listed on the PBS. A whole new treatment regime requires a different response.

The health system will continue to undergo massive change over the next few years. Part of our challenge is how we continue to deliver services in a frantic 24-hour, seven days a week service system that never closes, ever. There is no down time. There is no time that you can do particular building works or prioritise different infrastructure. We are building, essentially, a brand new hospital on the site of the busiest hospital in the region. And do not estimate the challenges that that presents.

At the same time we are trying to reconfigure the community health system so that anything that can be provided in the community is being provided in the community. We are opening up new services to deal with some of those issues, like low bulk-billing rates and affordability and access to health care. That is all being dealt with under the plan that I have rolled out as health minister.

We see the incredible popularity of the nurse-led walk-in centres that have opened in the community. We know that affordability and access is an issue and we have responded. We have responded in a way that some may argue is not in our jurisdiction in terms of the delivery of primary health care, but we have responded because we have seen the community's need and we have wanted to address it and ensure that everyone has access to high quality, free health care. And that is being delivered through programs like the nurse-led walk-in centre.

The focus is always on the Canberra Hospital, as opposed to the broader hospital system in Canberra, of which there are four. There is also the work that goes on in population health, in ensuring that the community is kept safe from really significant outbreaks of illness, whether it be food poisoning, influenza or gastroenteritis, as well as the work that is done on our pools to make sure the public pools are clean and safe for swimming. You name it and the health system is there, able to respond and responding 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It is because of the effort that we have put into the health system and it is because of the thousands of dedicated staff that turn up to work and work in the hardest circumstances of all. Then they hear the feedback from political leaders that tell them they are delivering the worst outcomes and the worst care in the country.

And that is not right. Go to the MyHospitals website and have a look. It is simply incorrect to say that people wait in Canberra hospitals longer than anywhere else in the country. It is not true, and you should stop repeating that false allegation in this place. When you look at peer-based hospitals, Canberra Hospital is right on peer average. Go and have a look at similar types of hospitals in other jurisdictions in

larger cities. You will see they are not performing as well as Canberra Hospital is, or Calvary is, on timeliness. Do you know why? Because they are busy, major metropolitan hospitals seeing hundreds of thousands of people requiring complex treatment, and usually they are a referral centre for a region which has a whole new layer of patient load placed on it. We have every reason to be proud of our health system. It is under pressure. The planning work is being done and it is a priority for this government.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (4.03): I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak about this today. It has been an interesting debate so far. I thought we might hear from Mr Smyth about some of the priorities of the Liberal Party but, in fact, we heard a long list of his complaints. I would have been interested to see what the alternative vision of the hospital system was—or the health system, in fact—but we were not to be enlightened in that regard today.

In terms of the Greens' views on health and what health means to us, I am certainly keen to talk about that today. ACT Health is a massive portfolio, but what is bigger is the word "health" itself. If you actually look at the World Health Organisation's definition of "health", it describes it as "a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity".

When you look at that kind of definition, how does the government exactly quantify that and quantify its priorities based on that all-encompassing notion? Is it the growing and concerning incidences of obesity and all the health complications that are being presented as a result of poor lifestyle choices and increasingly sedentary lives? Is it the alarmingly high presentations of mental health and the growing complexity of vulnerable people's needs?

Is it the many preventable illnesses, such as sexually transmitted diseases and blood-borne viruses, the most treatable conditions such as diabetes or asthma, the wide-ranging complexities of the ageing population or the dental care that many financially vulnerable Canberrans simply cannot afford? These are not purely rhetorical questions. These are the very real concerns the world over that governments need to prioritise in terms of both expenditure and policy directions in response to the very many issues that arise in our community in terms of public health.

Governments demonstrate their efforts in addressing these competing needs through many different responses—health promotion activities, prevention programs, targeted early intervention approaches, mainstream and generalist healthcare agencies, inpatient and outpatient hospital care and, of course, emergency medicine departments and ambulance services. That gives us an army of policy officers, doctors, nurses and other allied health professionals out there in the community every day working hard to address our community's health needs in a way that most of us, thankfully, will never see or understand.

It is not just the health of those that are called patients, clients or consumers that government needs to consider. Of course, we need to take into account the health of health staff and other employees, as we discussed in this place last week. It is not just

that army of people that I was speaking of that has responsibility for our societal health status.

If we take the WHO definition into full account, we need to have healthy prisons in order to ensure that our detainees are coming back into the community in a state to resume a normal, law-abiding life. We need a role for our schools in providing healthy food choices and increased physical education goals. Of course, we need to take account of things like more age-friendly and heart-friendly cities being built into the very design of our suburbs.

The MPI before us talks about the need to get these priorities right, but how do we judge that? I believe that the best indicator is the health of our community overall. On a range of indicators, frankly, Canberra is doing pretty well. Yet we know that health and, in particular, the hospital system are struggling to cope with the demands.

On a purely financial analysis of the government's prioritisation of health, there are a few details that might be worth adding to the debate. Just today, in fact, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare released a report on health expenditure in Australia. Expenditure on health in Australia was estimated to be \$147.4 billion in 2012-13, 1.5 per cent higher than in 2011-12. Yet interestingly, disappointingly, this represents the lowest growth since the mid-1980s. In 2012-13 governments provided \$100.8 billion, or 68.3 per cent of total health expenditure. Whilst that sounds like a lot, government funding of health expenditure actually fell in real terms for the first time in over 10 years by 0.9 per cent, largely as a result of a decline in Australian government funding—so federal government funding—of 2.4 per cent.

The federal government could well do with a reminder of the importance of getting its healthcare priorities right, with the last budget slashing funding, raising fees, marginalising the aged and further compounding the vulnerability of those who are already vulnerable, who are already struggling to access vital health services that they need at a very basic level.

The senseless and counterintuitive Medicare levy is just one particularly onerous and burdensome health policy from a government that simply cannot seem to understand the real world lived experience of people in our community who need that basic support. Ongoing cuts to state and territory health budgets from the federal government have a particularly big impact on a small jurisdiction such as ours, particularly given the regional responsibilities that we have.

From an ACT Greens' perspective, we believe in that old adage that prevention is better than the cure. We know that dollar-for-dollar investment in early intervention and prevention programs leads to reduced expenditure in the long term, and so does every health policy branch and researcher. We have seen this clearly illustrated in the harm reduction policy that provides needles and syringes to injecting drug users. For every \$1 invested in NSPs, more than \$4 was returned additional to the investment in healthcare cost savings in the short term over 10 years, and even greater returns are expected over longer term horizons. This is not a matter of conjecture; it is a matter of fact. I am sure we will have a chance to talk about this particular approach to chronic disease tomorrow.

In closing, I believe it is a matter of public importance that the government gets its healthcare priorities right. It is a complex area. It has many overlaps with other social policies, but it is proven that up-front expenditure saves us money and saves the health of our community in the long term. The ACT Greens would like to see more investment in early intervention and prevention programs, both locally and federally.

Of course, this is a significant challenge, given that we already have pressure on our acute systems. So that will be a struggle. But we need to make sure that we continue to prioritise those early interventions. Given the growth we have seen in health expenditure in recent years, we cannot always keep growing at that rate. We see the indicators of chronic disease out there. We know that we need to make these investments now so that, in years to come, budgets and future taxpayers can afford to have a high quality health system that is not overburdened by what are preventable conditions.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (4.11): Firstly I would like to thank Mr Smyth for bringing this matter before the Assembly today, and I would like to reiterate the opposition's priority towards health. There are many priorities that we face in the ACT, and there would be many priorities that we would face in government. Let me make it very clear that there would be no higher priority than the health of the citizens of the ACT and delivering on providing the best health system in Australia.

Turning to priorities, let me read a recent email that was sent from a constituent on 18 September to the Chief Minister:

Dear Ms Gallagher

With reference to the article in the Canberra Times (date 18/9/2014) regarding the current state of the Canberra ... Hospital compounded with my own recent experiences at both Canberra and Calvary Hospitals. How in the name of good fiscal management can you waste taxpayers money on a project which is only 12kms long and will only benefit a small minority of the Canberra populous when the infrastructure and maintenance regimes of our hospitals are in such poor state.

Thank God the excellent staff of these two institutions are so dedicated and committed to provide the best health care they can in somewhat trying circumstances.

Get your priorities right and please stop pandering to the Greens or you and your lack lustre government may not be in power next election.

Yours in disgust ...

I will leave out the name of that constituent. Certainly, that represents the view of many Canberrans that I speak to on a regular basis. When I am out in the community there are people scratching their heads and saying to me, "Why is it that I wait so long in the emergency department? Why is it that the state of our hospital system is one where you've got senior clinicians worried that it is unsafe because it is so full, when

this government is pursuing an agenda on their pet projects, their agendas, and is not in accord with our priorities?”

Certainly, light rail comes up time and time again. As Mr Smyth outlined, we have a health bureaucracy, a health system, which is failing to deliver on some of the most important outputs, in terms of bed occupancy, ED waiting times and actually building the infrastructure. And this government is going full steam ahead on spending well over \$800 million on a light rail project.

It is not just about that; there is the solar project. If only this government paid as much attention to health, and if only these ministers paid as much attention to health as they did to their solar projects and to their wind farms, indeed we would have the best health system in Australia.

We know that this government is driven by wanting to be the most green, the most progressive—meaning left wing—jurisdiction in Australia, because it has told us that. It means that instead of having a focus on health, on education, on the priorities that matter to Canberra, what we get in this place—and we just heard it from Mr Rattenbury—is a drive to push syringes into the prison. I know that Mr Wall will have more to say about that, and the safety issues that that imposes on staff. There is the push for euthanasia, the massive increase in people’s rates, trying to get everybody out of their cars, *Skywhale* and all the public art, the banning of soft drinks, their planning regime, solar being imposed on the people at Uriarra, Mr Rattenbury and his banning of pig farms, the hen cages, the Nazi strippers that we saw from Ms Joy Burch’s latest folly with the Fringe Festival—

Dr Bourke: Madam Assistant Speaker—

MR HANSON: Can you stop the clock?

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Ms Lawder): Do you have a point of order, Dr Bourke?

Dr Bourke: Yes, I have a point of order, Madam Assistant Speaker. Mr Hanson is just being—

MR HANSON: Can we stop the clock, please?

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Stop the clock.

Dr Bourke: It is on the question of relevance.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Yes. Stop the clock.

Dr Bourke: The matter of public importance—

Mr Smyth: Madam Speaker, there is a request that the clock be stopped.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you.

Dr Bourke: It is on the question of relevance. I believe Mr Hanson is being entirely irrelevant to the matter of public importance at this point.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR HANSON: On the point of order, Madam Assistant Speaker, what we are talking about here is the government's priorities. Indeed in the speeches we have heard from I think all members so far there was talk about the priorities and where health sits in the balance of priorities for the government. I am simply explaining that health should be a priority and pointing out areas where this government is following issues which, in my view, and certainly in the view of many of my constituents, should not be a priority and are not a priority in comparison to health.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Hanson. Start the clock again. The matter of public importance is actually about getting healthcare priorities right. I am happy to allow you a little leeway but I presume you will be getting to the healthcare priorities very shortly.

MR HANSON: Thank you, Madam Assistant Speaker; certainly. In doing so I will refer to the editorial in last Friday's *Canberra Times*. It is interesting because in some ways the *Canberra Times* staff get to sit back and watch the debate and watch this town. I do not think they are inclined necessarily to be supportive of one side of politics necessarily over another. Certainly I would not suggest that they have a tendency to support our side of the house. That editorial said:

Like a heart-attack victim who can no longer pretend his or her discomfort is caused by indigestion, Canberra Hospital administrators have this week had to contemplate the reality that patient pressure can be disregarded no longer, and that urgent corrective action is required.

It continues:

As far back as 2009, concerns were being expressed about the ACT public hospital system's approach to full capacity, and for the government and health policymakers to have let matters slide until Canberra's main hospital was bulging at the seams suggests, at the very least, inattention to detail ... The Territory is, after all, a relatively prosperous jurisdiction with no requirement to provide healthcare to remote or distant communities. It has no difficulty attracting and keeping doctors and clinicians. It even has a medical school adding to the Territory's medical stocks. Yet, on bed numbers and other performance indicators such as emergency response times and surgery waiting lists, the Territory is a noted laggard.

So it is not just me saying it. It is not just the dozens of constituents that I talk to. It is people who sit back and have a good knowledge of this town. They look at the balance of priorities and at the performance of this health system, and what they note is that in comparison to other jurisdictions we are laggards.

Sadly, the people of the ACT are paying for this, and they are paying for it in numerous ways. They are paying for it from their hip pockets. We know that Canberra has the most expensive hospitals. Even when we compare like with like, we have the most expensive hospitals in Australia, and by a margin—25 per cent. Across just about all of the performance measures, we are paying more.

On this side we do not object to paying a lot of money—as we should; we are here to deliver good services for the people of Canberra—to pay for good health care. But when 25 per cent of that is wasted, when 25 per cent of that could be rolled into health care, the result is that people are getting inadequate treatment. That is why we have a hospital system which has run to full capacity, 95 per cent, and where you have, as Mr Smyth pointed out, senior clinicians saying, “Our hospital is so overcrowded it is dangerous.” And the AMA say that. I quote from the AMA:

Hospital overcrowding is the most serious cause of reduced patient safety in public hospitals ...

Ms Gallagher puts her hand up and says, “Not my problem, not my fault. Blame it all on the Liberals. We’ve only been in government for 13 years; it’s all the Liberals’ fault.” Let me cite some statistics that I have before me in terms of where the hospital system was back when this mob took over. Let me turn to emergency departments. We know about the real problem we have in our emergency departments right here and right now. Back in 2000, 97 per cent of urgent patients were seen on time. Hopefully Dr Bourke will get up and tell us what it is now. I will tell you that it is nowhere near that, Madam Assistant Speaker.

It is the same for elective surgery waiting times—40 days for median waiting times. That blew out to 75 days under this health minister. We have seen the figure for waiting times in the emergency department—I will give Dr Bourke a bit of a hint—get down to as low as 50 per cent, when it was 97 per cent.

The Chief Minister has the audacity to come in here and say, “It’s the Liberals’ fault.” When you go back and look at the outputs, the statistics and the success that the previous Liberal government had in actually delivering for the people of the ACT, what you saw was that people waited for far less time than they do now to get into hospital beds and to get important treatment. As we know from Dr Hall, that matters. As we know from peer reviewed articles in the *Medical Journal of Australia*, that matters.

What I would say from our side of the house—and I could go on at length, but I think Mr Smyth covered a number of the issues extremely well—is that health must be a priority. It must be the number one priority. It is not a matter of spinning the dollars that go in. It is about turning those dollars into results for the people of Canberra, because there is no greater responsibility for a government than delivering good health care to the people of the ACT. (*Time expired.*)

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (4.22): I want to talk about what this government has been doing in health in my electorate in Belconnen. Firstly I will talk about some of

the capital projects in the 2014-15 budget, and particularly the University of Canberra public hospital—a public hospital that is going to provide subacute health services as part of the ACT public hospital network. It is going to provide overnight inpatient accommodation for mental health rehabilitation and general rehabilitation patients. In addition to those overnight beds, the hospital is going to include day places for mental health rehabilitation and aged-care patients. It will include allied health services such as physiotherapy, speech pathology and psychological therapies. There will be a range of community and outpatient services which will include falls injury prevention, memory assessment, continence services, and driver and vocational rehabilitation services.

Discussion concluded.

Adjournment

Motion (by **Ms Burch**) proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Indian Independence Day

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (4.23): Tonight I pay tribute to diverse Indian Australian communities of Canberra, the great nation of India and the Indian national day celebrations I attended recently.

India gained its independence from nearly a century of British rule on 15 August 1947. The same day in Canberra, at India House, Indian High Commissioner Sir Raghunath Paranjpye first unfurled independent India's tricolour flag. In the presence of over 300 guests he said, "May this flag ever fly on a peaceful and prosperous India. May it promote peace, order and unity all over the world."

Sixty-seven years later, Canberra's Indian community continues to commemorate Indian Independence Day. This year the India Australia Association of Canberra, with the support of the High Commission of India and the Federation of Indian Associations of ACT organised the event for the Canberra community. Despite the rain and cold, over 350 of us celebrated Indian Independence Day. This special celebration was one of the first large-scale events involving the collaboration of the entire Indian community in Canberra.

Folk dances and songs reflected the richness and variety of Indian culture, with performances from the India Australia Association of Canberra, the Bengali Association, Gujarati Samaj, the Malayalee Association, the Orissa Association, the Telugu Association, the Sikh Association, the Canberra Multi-Cultural Artists Association and Bollywood Dimensions.

This promotion of community unity echoed the sentiments expressed in the much-anticipated first Independence Day address of India's newly elected, 15th Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. In an hour-long speech he addressed the nation without notes, and spoke of the importance of unity both within government and as a society.

He said, “Should it not be the motto of one and a quarter billion countrymen that every step in life should be in the country’s interests?” Prime Minister Modi spoke of age-old communal tensions dividing India, describing them as the poison of caste-ism, communalism, regionalism, and discrimination on social and economic grounds.

While it has many social problems, India is the world’s largest democracy. It enjoys a stable democratic system, even as ruling parties change; significant civil liberties; an independent judiciary; and a fairly free press. Prime Minister Modi attributed the strength of India’s democracy and constitution for making possible his rise from a poor family in a small town. He said that a top economic priority is tackling inflated food prices and wastage from poor storage, with 40 per cent of fresh fruit and vegetables and 20 million tonnes of wheat ruined each year. He also wants to relax foreign investment to allow up to 49 per cent foreign ownership in Indian firms without requiring time-consuming government approvals.

In Canberra we are lucky to be able to share and experience some of the incredibly rich variety of cultures from India, thanks to the generosity of the communities that have settled and grown here. They have brought special skills here and filled many roles in our community, especially in the health, IT, government and community services sectors. Despite the remarkable cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity within India, the nations of India and Australia have much common ground and a shared history, a common system of government, a shared region and ocean, and cricket.

I thank the Indian community in Canberra for sharing the 67th Indian Independence Day celebrations and its message of community harmony, and for contributing to the dynamic cultural diversity of our city.

Focus ACT

MR WALL (Brindabella) (4.27): Madam Assistant Speaker, I rise to acknowledge in this place the great and critical work that is done by Focus ACT. Focus is a non-profit, non-government organisation that is committed to ensuring that individuals with intellectual disabilities are able to get involved and be part of the inclusive and caring community that we have here in Canberra and that is available to all citizens.

Working with individuals, families, guardians and advocates here in the ACT, Focus is able to help those who are intellectually disabled to choose the lifestyle they want to lead and take control of their daily lives. It comes down to the Focus philosophy, that anyone is capable of achieving a fulfilling lifestyle. Through providing services such as life-skills training, personal and domestic support and mentoring, such is possible.

In acknowledging the organisation, I would like to pay tribute to the people behind the operation whose work enhances the lives of those that they work with and is most definitely worthy of praise.

First I would like to start by recognising the management and support team. It is headed up by the Chief Executive, Tina Siver, with Torrien Lau, Michelle Dale, Megan Chappell, Annie Drage, Denise Marshall, Camille Smith, Margaret Severs,

Jude McKarem, Lynne Mulcahy. Support is provided by over 40 casual staff, who continually work to provide better lifestyles for the intellectually disabled. Additionally, the board consisting of Wilhelm Harnisch, Scott Harris, Damien Power, Dominic Staun, Margaret Verick and John Wilson also warrant acknowledgement for providing services and expertise to such a fantastic organisation.

I look forward to further engagement with Focus ACT, and I encourage members to learn more about this organisation and others within our community that go above and beyond to enrich the lives of people with a disability.

St John Ambulance

MR COE (Ginninderra) (4.28): I rise this afternoon to talk about the wonderful work that St John Ambulance does in the ACT. As many members would be aware, St John Ambulance provides emergency first aid and first-aid training through a group of dedicated volunteers. Starting in England in the 19th century, the organisation is modelled on the Knights of St John, who would offer healthcare and shelter to pilgrims and crusaders during medieval times. As with many things British, the organisation came to Australia, and in 1883 St John Ambulance Australia was born. The organisation has since spread around Australia, and we are lucky enough to have an office of St John Ambulance based here in Canberra.

Last year, volunteers from St John ACT attended over 300 events and, in doing so, donated over 1,400 hours of their time to providing emergency first-aid services right across the ACT. The majority of this time was donated at community and sporting events, with the National Folk Festival receiving the greatest donation, of 504 volunteer hours.

St John Ambulance also last year ran “project survival”, an education and awareness program. This program allows volunteers to enter detox and refuge centres to teach Canberra’s most vulnerable some lifesaving skills. This program is highly beneficial because not only will these people be likely to require first-aid skills, but they are less likely to have the opportunity to obtain them.

Crucially, St John Ambulance provides first-aid training to schoolchildren, equipping them with essential first-aid skills which might one day save a life. Last year was St John Ambulance’s best year to date, with 5,781 schoolchildren taught first aid in ACT schools. This educational program is absolutely free to students and the school, and was last year recognised when it won the national resilient Australia award.

On top of all this, St John Ambulance runs first-aid training and refresher courses. This month alone, St John Ambulance will run 14 one-day first-aid training courses.

I would like to acknowledge and congratulate all those involved in St John Ambulance in the ACT, including the past chair, Colonel (Retd) John Quantrill; the current chair, Jane Brooks; and the CEO, Mr Chris Ward. Thank you also to all the volunteers who work tirelessly and efficiently for this cause. Whenever Canberrans celebrate by going to the footy, a community event, a concert or a school fundraiser, a St John Ambulance volunteer will probably be there to keep Canberrans safe.

I commend St John Ambulance to the Assembly and acknowledge the work they do in our region. For further information, including how to book a first-aid training course, I invite all members to visit their website at www.stjohnact.com.au.

Volunteering Australia Focus ACT

MS PORTER (Ginninderra) (4.31): I am happy to be able to recognise an important and influential woman in tonight's adjournment; that is, Margaret Bell AM, who was the former CEO of then Volunteering New South Wales, former president of Volunteering Australia and former president of IAVE, the International Association for Volunteer Effort. As members would be aware, I recently attended the 23rd IAVE world conference on volunteering, in Queensland. This was an important conference dealing with the importance of volunteer effort in today's society and highlighting the many challenges in the 21st century. I hope to speak more about this tomorrow during private members' business.

However, tonight I would like to congratulate Margaret, who was awarded life membership of IAVE during the conference. This is well deserved, in recognition of a woman who was the first patron of Volunteering Australia, has a long history of championing volunteering, and has made extraordinary contributions to the sector, both nationally and internationally. I will continue to read from the web commendation that is available on a site called "Australia's Volunteer Champion":

Margaret's professional career includes:

- Director Participatory Research Institute of Asia
- International Consultant Commonwealth Foundation UK
- Founding Director of CIVICUS, World Alliance for Citizen Participation; and
- Member of the CIVICUS Corporate Engagement Task Force worldwide in partnership with Prince of Wales Business Forum, World Bank and United Nations Development Forum
- Immediate Past President IAVE, International Association for Volunteer Effort 1996-2003
- World President of IAVE 1988-1996
- IAVE envoy to the United Nations 1996-2002
- Founding Director of the Australian Council for Volunteering 1994-1997
- President/CEO of Volunteering Australia 1997-1998
- Executive Director of Volunteering NSW 1984-1997

- Member of the inaugural Prime Ministers Round Table on Business/Community Partnerships Founding President/CEO Chain Reaction Foundation
- Director International Board of Advice Corporate and Social Responsibility Deakin University

Margaret was made a member of the Order of Australia in 1991 and has been honoured by the United Nations in being declared a world leader on volunteering and community development.

And now she has been made a life member of IAVE. Congratulations to Margaret.

In closing, I would just like to recognise, along with Mr Wall, the organisation Focus, for which I am one of the ambassadors. I would recognise the fine leadership of Tina and all her staff, and of course its hardworking board.

National iAwards Tuggeranong United Football Club

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (4.34): Today I would like to recognise a local Canberran who was nominated for and won an award at the prestigious National iAwards held in Melbourne on 29 August this year. These awards recognise companies at the forefront of technology and innovation as well as recognising and honouring top professionals across the ICT industry. In their 20th anniversary year the iAwards most importantly acknowledged the achievements of Australian innovators and the skill and drive that make Australia unique.

To use their own words, the key goal of the iAwards is to discover, recognise and reward the ICT innovations that have the potential to, or are already having a positive impact on, the community—at home, in the office and on a global scale. The iAwards also recognise the achievements made and value added by ICT professionals, CIOs and innovators. These awards are judged by industry for industry, with host partners notably including the Australian Computer Society—ACS—the Australian Information Industry Association—AIIA—and the Pearcey Foundation, and strongly advocate the importance of recognising the innovation and productivity which ICT delivers across all facets of Australian life.

I congratulate all who won an award at this year's event. However, I would like to make particular mention of our local Canberran, the winner of the pioneer domain CSIRO Benson Entrepreneur of the Year award, John De Margheriti, founder, chairman and CEO of the Academy of Interactive Entertainment. For those who are unaware of Mr De Margheriti's prowess in the IT industry, he has had a long and successful career working within the gaming development sector. Mr De Margheriti founded Micro Forte in 1985 and has harnessed his entrepreneurial skills to create and develop several other organisations over the years, most notably BigWorld Pty Ltd, an online game company which he went on to sell in 2012.

Seeing a gap in the market for training and development, Mr De Margheriti founded the Academy of Interactive Entertainment in 1996 to establish a specialised training institution which would educate and extend artists, programmers and developers interested in working within the creative digital industry. Mr De Margheriti's nomination and win at the iAwards this year highlights his passion for the gaming industry and in particular his entrepreneurial skills which have not only provided him with success but created an industry which educates and develops the careers of those wanting to work in the creative digital space. I congratulate him on this prestigious award.

I would also like to speak in support of the Tuggeranong United soccer club. Tuggeranong United's Westfield FFA Cup journey began by winning the 2013 ACT Federation Cup, which gave them the opportunity to represent the ACT region in the inaugural FFA Cup competition. Their first match was an away match against South Hobart, the undisputed champions of Tasmania. A very close match that finished one-all was decided by a penalty shootout. The match was streamed live on the internet and watched by over 200 fans on the big screen at the major sponsor's club, the Burns Club.

The draw for the round of 16 resulted in Tuggeranong drawing one of Australia's biggest teams, A-League side Melbourne Victory, at home in Canberra. Viking Park in Wanniasa was already selected as the preferred venue in order to keep the match in the Tuggeranong district. Tuggeranong United Football Club's regular Kambah ground and Tuggeranong enclosed oval were both deemed unsuitable for this level of football match.

The match was held on Tuesday, 16 September and the turnout was an outstanding 5,150 spectators, one of the largest attendances of the nationwide competition so far. The match was broadcast live across Australia and the world on Fox Sports and watched by many expats as far away as London and India. Despite a brave fight, Tuggeranong United were defeated 6-0 by the superior team on the night, but were able to demonstrate the battler spirit that Tuggeranong United are renowned for, as well as capturing the imagination of the Canberra sporting public.

Coach Steve Forshaw and the players led by captain Tim Stewart are to be especially congratulated on the FFA Cup run and on their professional promotion of the ACT region to Australia. The coach's support team of Russ Gibbs, Peter Reid, Craig Wisdom, technical director Jimmy Bland and program coordinator Craig Toole all contributed to an impressive campaign. Anthony Corder, the board member with responsibility for communication and sponsorship, was always on hand with information, and looking at gaining more support for the club. Tuggeranong United president Jon Thiele led the huge workload by example and promoted the club and the region at every opportunity.

Local businesses stepped up to support the campaign, as well as the club's existing major sponsors—the Burns Club, Priority One Mortgages, Peter Blackshaw Tuggeranong, Trussme building supplies, Storage King Kambah, Kingston Physiotherapy, Canberra Clothing Accessories, and The Good Guys Tuggeranong.

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Legislative Assembly for the ACT

Also providing support were Capital Football, Football Federation Australia, Ticketek and the Vikings Group. I commend and recommend their efforts to other clubs. Well done, Tuggeranong United.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 4.39 pm.