



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

EIGHTH ASSEMBLY

21 OCTOBER 2014

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Tuesday, 21 October 2014

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MADAM SPEAKER (Mrs Dunne) took the chair at 10 am, made a formal recognition that the Assembly was meeting on the lands of the traditional custodians, and asked members to stand in silence and pray or reflect on their responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

Petitions

Ministerial responses

The Clerk: The following responses to petitions have been lodged by ministers:

By **Mr Corbell**, Minister for the Environment, dated 13 October 2014, in response to a petition lodged by Ms Lawder on 16 September 2014 concerning energy supply to the ACT.

By **Mr Gentleman**, Acting Minister for the Environment, dated 15 October 2014, in response to a petition lodged by Ms Lawder on 16 September concerning wind turbines.

The terms of the responses will be recorded in *Hansard*.

Energy—wind supply—petition No 15-14

The response read as follows:

Thank you for your letter of 16 September 2014 about Petition No. 15-14 lodged by Ms Lawder MLA on behalf of two Australian Capital Territory residents and 108 New South Wales residents.

I understand the petition relates to the ACT Large-scale Wind Auction, presently underway. The closing date for the submission of proposals in the Auction was 3 September 2014. Those proposals deemed eligible and suitable for full assessment are subject to a value for money evaluation. This evaluation is comprised of an assessment of proponent responses to four evaluation criteria, together with the feed-in tariff price nominated by proponents for their respective proposals.

The four evaluation criteria and their respective score weightings are as follows:

1. Risks to timely project completion - 50%
2. Local community engagement - 20%
3. ACT economic development benefits - 20%
4. Reliance on Treasury Financial Guarantee - 10%

The ACT Government is aware of the at times contentious nature of large scale wind farm developments in Australia. This was taken into account in the design of the Wind Auction process and resulted, in part, in the above local community engagement criterion being included.

Since the announcement of the Wind Auction there has been significant comment, both in the media and via correspondence, in relation to opposition to, and support for, wind farms in the broader ACT region. In this context it is important to note that the Wind Auction provides for proposals that may relate to potential wind farms that are located anywhere in the geographic area connected to the National Electricity Market. This includes all jurisdictions in Australia, excluding Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

It is also noted that proponents are required to satisfy community consultation obligations in preparing a development application applicable to the relative jurisdiction where the prospective wind farm is to be located. This process is outside the control of the ACT Government, unless the proposed wind farm is to be located within the ACT.

The assessment process is overseen by an independent expert Advisory Panel, which will make recommendations to me in due course as to what is considered to be the best value for money proposals. I am not able to predict the outcome of the Advisory Panel's assessment, however I have the utmost confidence in its ability to critically analyse all aspects of proponent responses, including how those responses may align with public comment regarding community consultation. I too shall be mindful of these matters in my consideration of the Advisory Panel's recommendations to me.

Energy—wind farms—petition No 16-14

The response read as follows:

Thank you for your letter to Mr Simon Corbell MLA, Minister for the Environment, of 16 September 2014 about Petition No. 16-14 lodged by Ms Lawder MLA on behalf of 86 Australian Capital Territory residents and 556 New South Wales residents. In Minister Corbell's absence on official business, I am responding on his behalf.

I understand the petition relates to the ACT Large-scale Wind Auction, presently underway. The closing date for the submission of proposals in the Auction was 3 September 2014. Those proposals deemed eligible and suitable for full assessment are subject to a value for money evaluation. This evaluation is comprised of an assessment of proponent responses to four evaluation criteria, together with the feed-in tariff price nominated by proponents for their respective proposals.

The four evaluation criteria and their respective score weightings are as follows:

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2. Local community engagement - 20%
3. ACT economic development benefits - 20%
4. Reliance on Treasury Financial Guarantee - 10%

The ACT Government is aware of the at times contentious nature of large-scale wind farm developments in Australia. This was taken into account in the design of the Wind Auction process and resulted, in part, in the above local community engagement criterion being included.

Since the announcement of the Wind Auction there has been significant comment, both in the media and via correspondence, in relation to opposition to, and support for, wind farms in the broader ACT region. In this context it is important to note that the Wind Auction provides for proposals that may relate to potential wind farms that are located anywhere in the geographic area connected to the National Electricity Market. This includes all jurisdictions in Australia, excluding Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

It is also noted that proponents are required to satisfy zoning and proximity requirements and community consultation obligations in preparing a development application applicable to the relative jurisdiction where the prospective wind farm is to be located. This process is a matter for those jurisdictions and is outside the control of the ACT Government, unless the proposed wind farm is to be located within the ACT.

While the Wind Auction allows for a potential wind farm in the ACT, such a proposal is not expected, as the ACT is not considered to offer sufficient wind resources for a large-scale wind farm. A significant proportion of the ACT also falls within Namadgi National Park and this is also understood to be a factor in the Territory being unlikely to be considered a suitable site by proponents.

The ACT has already clearly demonstrated that it is prepared to use ‘its own backyard’ as a location for large-scale renewable energy generation, as evidenced by the Solar Auction process and the approved so far of the two solar farms in the Territory, the Community Solar initiative presently under way and the energy-from-waste and next generation solar initiatives which Minister Corbell also announced earlier this year.

In regard to the possible health impacts of wind farms, the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) commissioned an independent systematic review of the existing scientific literature to examine the possible impacts of wind farms on human health, including audible and inaudible noise. The review considered a wide range of evidence, comprising both peer reviewed and non-peer reviewed (‘grey’) literature. To ensure all emerging research has been captured, in September 2012 the NHMRC conducted a call for submissions of evidence for consideration in the independent evidence review. The independent evidence review on the health effects of wind farms commissioned by the NHMRC is now available on its website:

([http://consultations.nhmrc.gov.au/public_consultations/wind farms](http://consultations.nhmrc.gov.au/public_consultations/wind_farms)).

In summary, the systematic review indicated that there was no consistent evidence of direct health impacts.

Wind turbines were found to be associated with annoyance for some people. However, with the exception of annoyance, sleep quality or sleep disturbance and quality of life—the latter possibly related to health—there was no consistent association between adverse health effects and noise from wind turbines.

The assessment process is overseen by an independent expert Advisory Panel, which will make recommendations to Minister Corbell in due course as to what is considered to be the best value for money proposals. The ACT Government is not able to predict the outcome of the Advisory Panel’s assessment, however we have the utmost confidence in its ability to critically analyse all aspects of

proponent responses, including how those responses may align with public comment regarding community consultation. Minister Corbell too shall be mindful of these matters in his consideration of the Advisory Panel's recommendations to him.

Dr William Shija **Statement of condolence**

MADAM SPEAKER: I wish to advise members of the recent death of Dr William Shija, the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. As Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association over eight years, Dr Shija devoted himself to the continued professional development of parliamentarians and the development of parliaments within the sphere of the commonwealth.

As a mark of respect to the memory of Dr Shija, I ask all members to rise in their places.

Members standing in their places—

MADAM SPEAKER: I thank members.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee **Scrutiny report 24**

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

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 24, dated 14 October 2014, together with the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MR DOSZPOT: Scrutiny report 24 contains the committee's comments on 10 bills, eight pieces of subordinate legislation and proposed government amendments to the Red Tape Reduction Legislation Amendment Bill 2104. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee **Statement by chair**

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo): Pursuant to standing order 246A I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety relating to statutory appointments in accordance with continuing resolution 5A.

Between 1 January and 30 June 2014 the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety considered 17 proposed statutory appointments, for which the

committee made no further recommendations. In three instances the committee requested further information. In accordance with standing order 5A I now table a schedule of statutory appointments considered during this reporting period. I present the following paper:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—Schedule of Statutory Appointments—8th Assembly—Period 1 January to 30 June 2014.

Leave of absence

Motion (by **Ms Burch**) agreed to:

That leave of absence be granted to Mr Corbell for this sitting week as he is attending a global greenhouse conference.

Disability—early intervention programs **Statement by minister**

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Racing and Gaming, Minister for Women and Minister for the Arts) (10.05), by leave: On 4 June this year the Assembly resolved, among other things, that I as Minister for Disability should report to the Assembly in the first sitting week of term 4 2014 with an update of the readiness for the early intervention non-government service providers to commence in the 2015 school year. I would like to provide a brief update on the progress that has been made to date.

In April the ACT government made the decision to transition early intervention programs delivered by the Education and Training Directorate to the community sector. Doing so would support the intent of the national disability insurance scheme, giving families more choice and control and providing space for community providers to set up or to expand their services.

To inform the transition of services, the government asked KPMG to conduct market soundings and undertake interviews with families. During June and July KPMG facilitated early intervention and therapy forums with approximately 200 attendees. KPMG interviewed 31 providers and five peak body organisations and also carried out 14 family focus groups with 64 participants and produced reports on best practice in early intervention and advice to government on transitioning services.

KPMG found significant interest from the market in providing early intervention services here in the ACT. On 13 September the government held an early intervention and therapy services expo, offering families an opportunity to talk to a range of service providers in one place. More than 1,000 people attended the expo and around 50 organisations were represented.

To ensure services will be ready to go in 2015 and to meet the commitment that no-one currently receiving services will be left behind, the National Disability Insurance Agency carried out a tender for early intervention services in the ACT during

September of this year. Through the tender we will be able to provide families with certainty of the new services and offer financial security to providers while allowing them time to adjust to the new model.

During this process more than 40 organisations attended an industry briefing, which shows the level of enthusiasm within the sector. The Australian government's National Disability Insurance Agency is finalising this tender process, and this is expected to be completed within the week. As soon as is possible I will inform the Assembly of the results of that tender process.

The Education and Training Directorate has provided and will continue to provide families with regular updates about the transition of early intervention services to community providers. The directorate will support children currently attending early intervention programs to transition to the new services either through the NDIS or through ACT government mainstream services.

This is significant and complex reform that we are undertaking, and, while it will be of great benefit to people with disability in the ACT, I recognise that there will be concern and uncertainty along the way. But, as the *Canberra Times* wrote in its editorial of 9 October, uncertainty must be confronted and sorted and not used as an excuse for delay. I agree, and that is what the government is doing.

I know we will have organisations that are ready and willing to deliver high quality services from 2015 and that families will be able to have confidence in those services.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (10.09): To put it in simple terms, the minister's statement this morning is largely inadequate. This ministerial statement is in response to a motion I moved earlier this year on behalf of the opposition calling on the government to maintain early intervention services until such time as there was sufficient depth in the ACT market to meet the needs of Canberra families that rely on these services. The amendment the minister moved herself was that in the first sitting week of term 4 2014—which is this week—she will provide the Assembly with an update on the readiness of early intervention government and non-government service providers to commence in the 2015 school year as a result of the motion moved in the Assembly on 4 June, as I mentioned earlier.

The minister spoke about a report KPMG have done and how many people they have spoken to. She spoke about a forum or an expo that was held where more than 1,000 people attended and 50 organisations. I and representatives from my office were there and, yes, 50 organisations were present but only a handful of them were actually looking at providing early intervention services; the vast majority of them were advocacy organisations and providers of hardware such as wheelchairs. The 300-plus families that rely on these early intervention services and that are waiting for the statement from the minister today to finally be enlightened as to what opportunities might exist for their children next year have been left wanting.

Just this morning I had an email from a constituent who is currently trying to navigate the planning sessions with the NDIA to find out what similar package of assistance and support will be available for her daughter so they can access early intervention services next year. This constituent recently had a response from the minister advising that there will be a further forum or expo on 17 November. The email says:

I had our planning session with the NDIA for—
our daughter—

yesterday. They also didn't know much about the 17th November and like us parents, do not know of any early intervention program's. Still very concerning! So will be interesting to see what amount of funding—

our daughter—

will get and how they are going to allocate costings. I wonder if they will put some aside for a program.

On the other side, we have parents who are still concerned. The petition I presented in this place articulated that concern with in excess of 2,000 Canberra residents identifying this as an area they are concerned about and that they are looking for the government to reconsider their decision.

Just recently I was contacted by a service provider that is currently looking at expanding into the ACT. I think that these moves should be supported and encouraged at every turn, but the difficulties that they are facing seem to make it prohibitive for them to set up here. Again, I will read from this organisation's email:

I have also asked on a few occasions for someone to contact me about a possibility to use a location/office space in Canberra that will become vacant with services ceasing so we can streamline our services better and provide social skills groups, centre based therapy but no one has returned my calls or responded to our requests. We are supposed to operate in January under the NDIS and this deadline is fast approaching and we have received very little or no support so far. We have parents concerned and coming to us with questions that we often cannot answer. We are in the business of helping people and I love nothing more than seeing children thrive with the support and intervention they deserve but this process is not being made easy and we feel like we are swimming upstream with little support and I know that our program manager, who only works three days, feels the enormous pressure on her shoulders as parents are asking questions that she cannot answer.

These are just two examples—one from a parent and one from a service provider—showing that there is still a lot of work to be done and that challenges remain. The minister's statement this morning, as I said earlier, is simply inadequate and does not go to addressing her amendment that she moved in June stating that she would provide an update on the readiness of early intervention and non-government service providers available to commence here in the 2015 school year. We will be considering our options as an opposition but, plain and simple, this is unacceptable.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Older persons assembly

Statement by minister

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) (10.14), by leave: It gives me great pleasure to provide members of the Assembly with a statement of the outcomes of the second ACT older persons assembly, which was held here in the chamber on Wednesday, 1 October. I will also provide an outline of future directions and the next steps in our way forward to develop Canberra as the age-friendly capital of our nation.

It was good to see Madam Deputy Speaker chairing the day and Ms Lawder and Mr Doszpot also attending the older persons assembly, and I know many members caught up with the older persons assembly members during the break.

An age-friendly capital describes a city that is constantly evolving and is being shaped and refined to become an environment that will provide older persons with an exceptional quality of life where freedom of access, personal security, social harmony and the right to feel valued and respected are woven into the social fabric of our community.

In a planning context an age-friendly city incorporates design features and recreational facilities that encourage older people to remain physically and socially active, to maintain a healthy lifestyle, be socially engaged and to explore opportunities that will provide new life experiences as they age.

The 56 delegates who participated in the ACT's second older persons assembly also performed a special role in representing and speaking for and in support of many thousands of older Canberrans. As the Minister for Ageing and on behalf of the ACT government, I thank them for their collective efforts, for their participation in the consultation forums for the planning of the older persons assembly and for their contribution to the passionate and spirited debates at the assembly.

The debates centred upon three fundamental resolutions, and I will take this opportunity to provide the Assembly with a brief summary of each resolution, which incorporate amendments by our delegates during the debates.

The older persons assembly first resolution encompassed a broad paintbrush of current and future needs, considerations and identified actions within the theme of developing vital infrastructure for an age-friendly city. This resolution embraced a diverse but related range of recommendations including: the development of safe and accessible infrastructure for older Canberrans, including well-lit footpaths, underpasses and road crossings; installing appropriate signage and constructing appropriate paths to separate pedestrians and cyclists on shared pathways; imposing and regulating speed limits for cyclists and skateboard riders using shared pathways with older pedestrians; enhancing ACTION bus shelters with adequate seating and weather protection to address the needs of older Canberrans, particularly in proximity to shopping and community facilities; further development and enhancement of

community gardens for older Canberrans, particularly for vegetable and fruit growing; and enhancing ease of accessibility for older Canberrans at indoor facilities, swimming pools and outdoor recreation areas.

A number of ACT government directorates including Territory and Municipal Services, Justice and Community Safety, Health and the Environment and Planning directorates have already implemented or are considering many of these recommendations, with Territory and Municipal Services currently in the process of developing two age-friendly pilot suburbs that will enable us to develop and test concepts and ideas to implement the pilot across all ACT suburbs in the future.

Transport for an age-friendly city was the second resolution that was debated by our delegates with much discussion and amendment centred around the development of affordable and sustainable public and community sector transport options in our city, including: development of regular, efficient, affordable and easily accessible systems; to provide off-peak community bus services that would service local communities; and a further expansion and development of a minibus transport system to provide older Canberrans with adequate connection to bus interchanges.

My colleague the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services addressed our delegates and provided information on recent initiatives by ACTION to provide a range of cost-effective and practical initiatives and solutions to address the immediate transportation needs of older Canberrans, including the introduction of a flexible bus service that will operate across four zones within the Canberra residential region.

The third resolution of the older persons assembly that was debated embraced the subject of connecting an age-friendly city. Delegates raised a number of recommendations and subsequent amendments which embraced options to assist older Canberrans, including greater awareness and understanding of information technology services and infrastructure, establishing and enhancing communication systems and strategies that ensure older Canberrans have access to relevant and pertinent information which can assist them in their needs and aspirations, and the development of greater linkages between younger and older Canberrans to promote intergenerational skills and knowledge transfer to keep older people connected and to educate and inform younger Canberrans.

The ACT government, including the Education and Training Directorate and the ACT Office for Ageing in the Community Services Directorate have made considerable progress in implementing initiatives that address these recommendations and concerns. The ACT government, through the guidance and resources of the ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing and relevant ACT government directorates, are working proactively and in partnership with the ACT seniors community.

This week we celebrate ACT Grandparents Week from 20 to 26 October, which is another indicator of the ACT government's commitment to celebrating the many ways in which our seniors remain active and socially engaged. It was good to see our new parent, Alistair Coe, join us yesterday for that launch. Grandparents Week is a partnership between the four seniors club—the Tuggeranong 55 Plus Club, Woden Seniors, Belconnen seniors club and Canberra Seniors Centre—as well as the Hellenic

Club, the migrant and refugee settlement service and the ACT government. I encourage members of the Assembly to visit one of our participating seniors clubs and support their important celebration.

The ACT government has a proud tradition that we do not simply talk the talk with our citizens; we are out walking the walk in the context of developing Canberra as an age-friendly capital of Australia. We will not rest upon our laurels. We have successfully delivered the second older persons assembly and a nationally focused conference on age-friendly cities and communities, and we continue to deliver a diverse range of programs and initiatives that continue to improve and enhance the lives of our valued older Canberrans.

The ACT government's response to the recommendations of the second older persons assembly will guide us in our endeavours to support positive ageing and the further development of an age-friendly city where older Canberrans are respected, valued, supported to actively participate in their community and enjoy an exceptional quality of life.

I intend to make a formal statement to the Assembly later this year informing members of the outcomes and the actions that have emanated from the second older persons assembly. These outcomes and actions will contribute to the development of a refresh of our strategic plan for positive ageing, a document that has served the ACT community in the context of positive ageing policy and programs for the past five years.

By listening, exploring new and innovative ideas and concepts, engaging with older Canberrans and by working collaboratively with our community partners and with the ACT government directorates, we will move forward on our journey with renewed purpose, optimism, and a fresh approach to continue our significant efforts to make Canberra a truly great age-friendly city of the world and to complement its recent ranking by the OECD as the best city in the world in which to live. I present the following paper:

Second ACT Older Persons Assembly—Future Directions: A Fresh Approach—
Outcomes—Statement by leave.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (10.24): I thank Mr Gentleman for his statement on the outcomes from the second ACT older persons assembly. I also attended the assembly on Wednesday, 1 October 2014 and appreciated the opportunity to observe the conversations that took place in and around the Assembly on that day. Whilst the older persons assembly is a great opportunity for the ageing community to provide insights and feedback into their needs and priorities, and to provide a connected and inclusive ageing community into the future, there are however some issues around implementation that need to be reviewed.

The conversations that took place on the day of the Assembly and the motions that were brought forward were at times confusing for individuals to follow, and limited debate and conversation on the real issues that attendees wanted to discuss. So rather than just giving lip service, action needs to be undertaken to ensure the ongoing success of these assemblies.

These are meant as constructive thoughts on Mr Gentleman's observations on the outcomes. I do appreciate the value of the assembly. The issues that were brought forward were motions that nobody had a chance to debate there. I do appreciate that it is difficult to have all of the action required taking place on that day. I am simply raising this as an issue, and I hope Mr Gentleman will take it on board and work with the department to see whether there can be an opportunity for further debate with the people who are members of that assembly.

The older persons assembly's first resolution provided a recommendation on "the development of safe and accessible infrastructure for older Canberrans, including well-lit footpaths, underpasses and road crossings, installing appropriate signage and constructing appropriate paths to separate pedestrians and cyclists on shared pathways".

The government should note that in May of this year I moved a motion in the Assembly in relation to maintenance in our older suburbs which affected quite significantly the older constituents that I have spoken to. The motion noted that "this makes access for many residents, especially older Canberrans, difficult and dangerous and is preventing many from using walking as an exercise to keep fit and agile". This motion was rejected, and in fact amended by the government, with Mr Rattenbury commenting:

What Mr Doszpot may not know is that there is an extensive inspection program for paths based on the greatest risk areas having the highest priority. I think he would agree that this is a sensible approach to managing a community asset rather than, for example, deciding where upgrades should occur based on particular Assembly motions that may come up from time to time.

For Mr Gentleman's benefit, and for Mr Rattenbury's benefit, I would like to highlight that I do agree with sensible plans when they are in place, but unfortunately there has to be some prioritisation so that the issues that are affecting people at the time are addressed on a more urgent basis. I thought the motion that we raised was one that should have been accepted, having regard to its input into ensuring that elderly people's issues are considered on a timely basis.

Let us hope that the government takes heed this time and listens to what the community and some of our most vulnerable constituents are asking for. Like the individuals that attended, and the ageing community as a whole, I look on with interest to see these recommendations implemented in a timely and efficient manner.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Corrective Services, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for Sport and Recreation) (10.28): I would like to thank Mr Gentleman for the update on the older persons assembly. It was a very interesting day.

I was able to attend one of the sessions that particularly focused on transport issues, and I found the discussion very interesting.

Going to some of Mr Doszpot's comments as well, it was really interesting to see the evolution of the older persons assembly. Of course, this is the second one that has taken place now, after Ms Bresnan moved a motion during the last Assembly to establish the older persons assembly, and then we agreed through the parliamentary agreement to continue it in this term.

There were to be two, but in consultation with the older members of the community, we amended the format slightly so that there was a conference last year about age-friendly cities, which many local residents attended, as well as a range of people from interstate. I think that really added to the depth of the conversation.

I listened with interest to Mr Doszpot's comments about the format. It is an interesting question because this format was an evolution of what happened last time. There was feedback last time that it should be done differently. By the sound of it, there are probably still some views that further evolution is required, and that is naturally the case as these events start to take shape. It was quite different from last time. I know last time a range of people found it a bit frustrating that they went off into individual groups and that, whilst they got to say more, they felt there was not a plenary feel about it. I think the format will undoubtedly continue to evolve.

As I said, the discussion about transport was very interesting. Certainly, I was pleased to talk to members of the older persons assembly about the new flexible transport system which was launched in September through ACTION. I think talking about it on that day worked well, because the number of bookings has gone up by quite a bit. I think the word is starting to get out there through the community that this is a very valuable service for older Canberrans and those who have difficulty getting around by themselves.

I will comment briefly on the issue of footpaths. Without re-prosecuting last year's debate, the issue is that there are footpath problems right across the city. TAMS is currently, every day, out there organising inspections, repairs or in fact replacement of complete sections. With respect to the comments I made last year, which Mr Doszpot brought up, he had asked for a particular emphasis on the inner parts of Canberra. The observations I made at the time were that, across the city, there were sections of footpaths that needed to be replaced and I was reluctant to agree to a motion which at that time said that we should focus on the inner south when in fact there were bits of work that needed to be done right across the city.

My observation was that, because older people live right across the city, in particular, and the discussion was about the needs of older people in that instance, we needed to replace them as required, as notified to the government when there was a particular issue, rather than particularly focusing on an area. So we will need to have that underlying and ongoing maintenance program and the capability to respond when particular issues arise, which is something that does happen.

I know that the older persons assembly canvassed a range of issues. I appreciate the update that Minister Gentleman has given today because, for all of us—particularly for ministers but for all of us in the Assembly—the issues affecting older Canberrans cut right across a range of issues in the various portfolios that ministers hold, as well as across all of the interests that I know members in the Assembly have.

I think it is beneficial for all of us to be given an update on the proceedings of the day. For those members that were not able to attend, or were not able to attend all of it, it is probably worth having a look a look at some of the transcripts from the day. There were some very diverse views, and that was interesting in itself. I do not think we should see older people as a homogeneous group. There were some feisty discussions—that would perhaps be the way to put it—and people put different, contradictory or alternative views. It is important also that we do not think of them as simply having one view because they are over 65. That is something worth keeping in mind as well.

I certainly look forward to working with Minister Gentleman to implement some of the outcomes from the day and to the continual discussion that the government will no doubt have with our older residents.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

ACT women's economic and financial progress 2014

Statement by minister

Debate resumed from 18 March 2014, on motion by **Ms Burch**:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

MRS JONES (Molonglo) (10.33): I am pleased to rise today to resume the debate on the ACT women's economic and financial progress statement that the minister made in a previous sitting week. Too often when women embark on our work life, trusting that the system that society has put together will work for us, we need to ask ourselves: where do we want to end up and what are we aiming for? We need to take stock of where we are at now and assess what needs to be done to achieve our goals.

The nine to five working model was designed for men and it stubbornly has trouble adapting to women's lives. The nine to five workday was a constraint of the original workday of the industrial revolution when advancing economies abandoned the family farm in droves and moved into the cities. However, it was probably a product of the maximum time a man could spend away from home and still keep a family together.

In the workplace, attitudes towards pregnancy, parental leave and family responsibilities need to evolve a lot further for the purpose of women achieving financial security. We can clearly see the evidence of this in the report *Pregnancy and return to work* released this year by the national Sex Discrimination Commissioner, which I have spoken about at length in previous speeches in this place. The report

showed that one in two mothers reported experiencing discrimination in the workplace at some stage during their pregnancy, which caused 22 per cent of those mothers to give up on the workplace altogether.

We need to address and rethink some of the norms around work for women and parents in general, and those adults with caring responsibilities, in a way that will improve women's financial independence and set them up for their retirement.

It is possible to become financially secure through other forms of hard work, based on advice and knowing where to find it. Some women, for example, invest in property. While this takes a great deal of perseverance and detailed research, it is not impossible. Once the first deposit is saved or borrowed, the property is bought and a tenant moves in, a woman can be on the path to financial success and over time, hopefully, accrue a reasonable sum of money. Property for women is not talked about enough; it should be discussed more by women, as should work which pays well per hour and can be undertaken from home, such as accounting or bookkeeping.

In the debate around women's financial security, we absolutely must improve the workplace and how women fare in the nine to five work model. We should also talk about alternative options which for some women will be even better, will be more financially beneficial and may fit in better with their other life goals.

In the meantime we have a number of structural issues which we have to keep tackling. Upon retirement women very often leave work at a disadvantage compared to men. Women suffer financial loss while out of the workplace raising children and have less superannuation savings on retirement. As well, there is the financial impact of divorce when it occurs and the huge toll that takes on women and their economic strength and independence.

The ABS figures show us that 30 per cent of women aged 55 to 64 in Australia still have no superannuation, while the figure is just under 20 per cent for men in the same age bracket. A study undertaken in 2010 by the Australian Institute of Superannuation Trustees shows that for those who do have superannuation, the average balance for men aged 58 to 62 was \$210,000, while for women of the same age the figure was only \$95,000. Women are still being disadvantaged.

According to research conducted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, the ANU and the University of Queensland, those women aged 55 to 64 who have faced divorce have assets of \$335,000 on average compared to their married counterparts, who had in excess of \$1 million in assets between the couple, making the woman's share worth around \$500,000. We need to discuss the financial impact of separation and divorce more with younger women, so that they will be more aware of the benefits and losses they will experience in such a situation. Forewarned is forearmed, as they say.

Typically, women take time out of the workforce or in part-time work while having children. One of the significant impacts of such time out is not only loss of income but, as I mentioned, loss of superannuation. I have often thought that it would be wise to acknowledge this issue by allowing couples to combine their superannuation.

However, family law does already allow for the distribution of superannuation between couples if the couple separates or divorces. This does not really address the long-term concerns regarding women's income and superannuation capacity but it may be something worth doing. This is part of the Prime Minister's plan for a paid parental leave scheme which, although it has been much maligned by political forces, has women's ability to earn unbroken income and maintain a career at its heart.

Women live longer but are less well off overall in retirement. I think we have a responsibility as an egalitarian society to adjust the structure of the workforce over time to recognise the innate difference between men and women and the very many more tasks which women often squeeze into one lifetime. When women have children they are working full time on our future as a city and as a nation. When they work also in paid employment, they are working also on our present as well as looking after their own financial security into the future. However, that requires women to be working at around 150 per cent at least for a period of time. We do need policies which basically favour women's financial independence over the long term, because we all benefit from that.

Prevention of poverty in old age is far better than the piecemeal patch job governments try to do via various benefits retrospectively once we have a problem to deal with. I find the debate over the paid parental leave scheme somewhat ridiculous when short-sighted men and women choose to talk down a scheme which would quite significantly change the structural problems women have in staying connected to the workforce, assist families to maintain and pay down mortgages, promote breastfeeding—which is no easy task—and keep women strong while they are having their children.

We will all benefit from the children and from having fewer women poor in their older years as a result. But too many political players are choosing to attack the policy for its supposed generosity. I will tell you what is generous. It is mums who get up all night to feed and raise the next generation, not the politicians whose wives did it all and who are now scoffing at Abbott's plan to make a proper change for women's career and income benefits.

I was pleased to have the chance to drop in and see the Office for Women across at the Theo Notaras centre yesterday and to speak to Veronica and her team about the very hard work they are doing in the wash-up after the closure of the women's information referral centre. I commend the work and their commitment to women, and in particular what they are doing to get those more vulnerable more connected with the workforce. They are case managing through the return-to-work grants the education and practical needs women have to re-enter the workforce after a period of absence. I really commend the government on this particular area of investment into women in our community.

Bec and her ever-vivacious volunteer assistant Kaye over at the Office for Women work tirelessly to see women fulfil their work aspirations. One person they are assisting to get back into work is a mum with seven kids and I think 11 years out of paid employment. Women such as this have many skills and have certainly been working. One could never claim that a mum of seven does not work.

The skills that mothers develop in the work they undertake at home are the very same skill set required to be a CEO. The family “board of directors”, as I call them, has to be appeased and managed up, including grandparents, coaches, husbands, teachers et cetera. KPIs have to be set and met, income has to be managed and at times topped up, food supply has to be maintained, volunteer and paid help have to be sourced and actively managed, and so on. This skill set is worth \$120,000 in the jobs market. I hope more women who undertake the role of family CEO become recognised over time for the very professional work they undertake in the family environment.

In conclusion, I applaud the minister for raising this important topic again for discussion. There is so much more work to do in the area and there are the beginnings of some positive work being done in the Office for Women. However, I think those opposite should use their powers of persuasion to get Mr Shorten and co to think twice before labelling the biggest structural improvement for women’s work lives in a generation, paid parental leave, as something that only benefits a few women at the top end when that is a manifest untruth. I will do my best to remind those on the hill on my team to support what is such a mature improvement for women today, who in the mainstream of society have to work to keep enough cash flow to raise a family.

I also implore all to think about the women around you working double time, as the CEO of a household and maintaining paid employment. Encourage these women; they are taking more than responsibility for our today and our and their tomorrow. Women’s financial security, to borrow a line, is everybody’s responsibility.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (10.42): On 13 October 2014, at a seminar hosted by the Domestic Violence Prevention Council, the ACT government launched a package of financial resources to support some of the most marginalised women in our community. The Women’s Centre for Health Matters, in partnership with the Care Financial Counselling Service, developed a number of financial resources for specific cohorts of women called “Women’s money matters”. Four specific financial resources were developed and funded, under the ACT women’s grants program, for women leaving domestic violence in the ACT, women leaving prison in the ACT, older women in the ACT and recently arrived migrant women and female refugees.

As we know, women have very different financial needs from men and are more likely to require financial support or advice at different stages of their life or at different times in relationship changes. Financial security is an important aspect of health and wellbeing for women in our community, and access to good information is crucial in maintaining independence and facilitating choice. Whilst many financial security issues exist for all women, such as lower superannuation, lower retirement savings and lower income levels, often as a result of working part time, there are some specific issues relevant to women in the groups that I have mentioned.

Many women who experience financial abuse often do not recognise it as a form of family violence. This may happen after they have left the relationship. They may make several attempts to leave a violent domestic relationship or they may be forced to return to that relationship for financial and economic reasons.

Financial abuse occurs when money and assets are used by a person to exercise power and control over their partner. This type of abuse can take many different forms—for example, something as simple as controlling all the household finances, monitoring spending or perhaps demanding to see all the receipts for every single purchase. For some women, financial abuse is not about being able to work or study, things that would create financial independence; it can be when a woman is restricted or prevented from using the family car or it may be that the partner keeps all their financial affairs a secret. The partner might not allow a woman to spend money on herself or their children, while spending on themselves, taking out loans or running up debts in their partner's name; might refuse to contribute to household expenses or child care; or might put the woman's name on all of the utility bills.

Financial support and knowledge are frequently the difference between violence and safety for many women. Once they have left, separating their finances and financial obligations from their abusive partners is an important aspect to starting up a new life. Understanding who we talk to, how to safely plan for leaving, what needs to be considered and what support options are available all contribute to helping support women to leave violent domestic relationships.

That is what the “Women's money matters” financial resource for women leaving violence is about. It provides women and their friends, family members or the services who are supporting them with local, accessible and reliable information to guide them with their specific needs and to help improve their financial knowledge and access to support in the ACT.

This resource guide includes information about who to talk to about money before, during and after leaving violence—whether to access legal advice to protect their finances; what to do about managing money and using banking services; how to separate finances; what additional financial support might be available, such as Centrelink support payments or victims of crime financial assistance; and what types of emergency or crisis support can be accessed, such as the Domestic Violence Crisis Service or other emergency support.

It also provides information about exploring housing options, such as whether to leave home or whether to stay, how to manage the mortgage or negotiate new repayment plans, or whether to continue in a rental property, and what might be required to do this. It discusses how to deal with debts and how to create a plan to enable debt recovery. It also goes on to provide information about paying utility bills, where to access low-cost food assistance and low-cost health services, phone support, and ways to reduce chemist or pharmacy costs and an unexpected medical cost. It provides information about creating a budget, tips to stay on budget, and ways to reduce household bills such as utility bills and grocery shopping—tips that I think many of us could benefit from.

The specific resource for women within and exiting prison covers many of the same aspects that I have already discussed. However, it also focuses on specific issues for this relatively small but significantly marginalised group of women. Because of the regimented environment of a prison, when women are released, they can feel

disoriented and disempowered. Many women leave prison with fewer resources than they had before, and some women leave with no money, significant debts and a poor understanding of what help they can receive. Navigating finances and handling economic hardship are just one task amongst many daunting demands and requirements of life on the outside. They face pressures in managing their money and their financial situation and may lack confidence in managing their finances.

The specific “women’s money matters for older women” resource exists because women tend to live longer and the resources they have accumulated need to last for a longer period. We know that most single older women will be poorer than men their age. They are often less able to maintain home ownership or compete in the private rental market. Life events such as the death of a spouse, divorce and separation, a bad health episode or acquiring a disability are more likely to have a different financial impact on older single women than on men. They are likely to have spent less time in paid employment and therefore have accumulated less superannuation than men because they have earned less over their working lives, due to lower wages, a reliance on part-time work or intermittent work combined with caring responsibilities for children or older relatives.

Finally, for migrants or refugee women, as with women leaving domestic violence, women leaving prison or older women, navigating finances can be very overwhelming. There are the everyday challenges to survive in our community, to put a roof over their heads, to secure their next meal and to ensure education for their children—the essentials most of us take for granted. For many migrant or refugee women, their economic security is strongly tied to their partner’s income. They face pressures in managing their money and their financial situation, and they lack confidence in managing their finances, which is something that is completely foreign to them. The resource for migrant or refugee women focuses on specific issues for this significantly marginalised group of women, who may also be dealing with overcoming traumatic experiences from adverse circumstances in their country of origin. Managing cost-of-living expenses can be a challenging task for women who are experiencing financial challenges.

I am pleased that the “Women’s money matters” financial resources will provide ACT women with financial information to ensure their own, and often their families’, economic security. Empowering women with the necessary knowledge and confidence to achieve financial independence is fundamental in addressing disadvantage and contributing to social inclusion.

Ms BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Racing and Gaming, Minister for Women and Minister for the Arts) (10.52), in reply: I would like to thank Mrs Jones and Ms Berry for their contributions to this debate this morning.

Over the past three years, and as Minister for Women, I have provided a statement on ACT women’s economic and financial progress to the Assembly. As I said when I presented the most recent report, economic security and financial independence are fundamental to a person’s ability to participate in and contribute to our community.

We know that in the ACT women's workforce participation rates are higher than the national average, with 67 per cent of ACT women participating in the labour force in September of this year compared to a national average of 59 per cent. However, they still fall below that of ACT males, at 74 per cent, and have dropped from 70 per cent in 2012. While this is a strong indicator of ACT women's economic security and financial independence, we know that this is not true for all ACT women, particularly marginalised groups of women and those who have experienced violence.

The gender pay gap is another strong indicator of how women continue to be disadvantaged financially in our society. ABS data shows that the average Australian man working full time in May of this year earned \$356 more than the average full-time working woman. The average weekly ordinary time earnings of women working full time were \$1,292 per week; men earned an average weekly wage of \$1,642 per week. Between November of last year and May of this year, men's earnings increased by an average of \$68 per week while women's increased only by \$46.

Overall, women continue to earn significantly less than men, which has a significant impact on their financial security over their lifetimes. As Mrs Jones has pointed out in her comments, some of these are lifestyle choices about staying home with families, but many are circumstances that women experience through domestic violence, separation and divorce. I welcomed Mrs Jones's comments in recognising that there are many families out there where it is critical for women to support the family income and to have multiple roles. I find it refreshing. It made me think about earlier comments that you made, Madam Speaker, when you said:

... often women have somewhat of a luxury about whether they are in the workforce or not—a luxury that often does not accrue in the same way to men ... And it is often the case, especially in a town like Canberra where perhaps people are not quite so dependent upon a second income, that women, especially in their middle years ... are more inclined to move in and out of the workforce as it suits them ...

The reality of many women in Canberra is that your words do not reflect the reality in which they live.

Here in the ACT, we continue to have a relatively low gender pay gap. Consistent with May 2013 figures, Western Australia had the widest, at 24 per cent, and ACT had the lowest, at nine per cent.

Another way we support women of all ages is that we offer grants, training, mentoring and support for women who want to embark on a career but lack the means to do so. We also provide funding for projects that support specific groups of marginalised women.

The ACT women's return to work grants program is one of several initiatives that continue to assist women on their path to financial empowerment. Mrs Jones made recognition of that, and I want to thank the coordinator for the efforts they put into that. It is a very successful program, now in its sixth year. It was introduced by the then minister for women, our Chief Minister, Minister Gallagher. The fact that it has

lasted six years is testament to the foresight and also the impact that these grants have on women in the ACT. A small grant of \$1,000 can be accessed by women on a low income who have had caring responsibilities. At 24 September, 41 return to work grants had been approved this year. We know that after years of caring it can be difficult to re-enter the workforce. Even in the early years of being a carer for their own children and others, women who want to work may find that they are unable to afford child care or that it is impossible to juggle working with picking up children from school and everything else that being a carer entails. The return to work program will be running career information sessions each Thursday for four weeks, commencing at the end of this month at the Theo Notaras centre. The sessions will assist participants to build their self-confidence and explore work options.

Another initiative that supports women on their path to economic security is the ACT women's microcredit program "Brilliant ideas". Since its establishment in 2010, brilliant ideas has supported hundreds of women on low incomes to either establish or further develop an existing business through no-interest loans, mentorships, peer support and other educational programs. The initial investment made by the government is now self-sustaining.

Recently I launched "Women's money matters". Ms Berry recognised the value of this resource. "Women's money matters" was produced by the Women's Centre for Health Matters and a not-for-profit financial counselling service, Care Inc, using a government women's grant of \$24,000. One target group for this program is women experiencing violence. It provides women and their friends or family members with local, accessible and reliable information to help guide them with their specific needs, improve their financial knowledge and access support here in the ACT.

For women experiencing domestic violence, financial security goes to the heart of not only their freedom from abuse but also their recovery and their capacity to regain control over their lives. Consultations will soon occur seeking input into development of the second implementation plan for the ACT prevention of violence against women and children strategy for 2011-17.

All of the initiatives and policies I have just outlined go to the heart of this government's agenda for gender equity as contained in the *ACT women's plan 2010-2015*, which was launched four years ago. A progress report on the plan was released last year. The report goes to the details of activities that were undertaken across government directorates that support safety, participation and equality for ACT women and girls.

Last year I released *A picture of women in the ACT 2013*. This publication provides decision-makers in government, business and the community sector with important information on women in the ACT and informs the debate about gender disparities in the ACT. The availability of sex-disaggregated data is an important tool for building an understanding of the different needs of men and women. The data in this publication provides an enhanced picture of the ACT's progress towards equality and participation for women and girls. Throughout the year I will release key current statistical information on ACT girls via periodic fact sheets, and in 2017 I will release

a full update of *A picture of women in the ACT*. The first fact sheet will be available on 25 November, White Ribbon Day.

In the time left, I want to make recognition of the young women's enrichment grants. Twelve young Canberra women received Audrey Fagan young women's enrichment grants. These grants range from \$250 to \$2,000 and were designed to help young women follow their dreams and assist them to develop their skills in their chosen career path. The successful applicants this year were Holly Ross, for performing arts; Kirsten Busby, for music; Chelsey Hamilton, in sport; Alexia Hamilton, in sport; Ruby Whalan, for humanitarianism; Monisha Dhawan, for science; Georgina Holt, for film; Inez Kozak, for architecture; Belinda Smith, for music; Anthea Duve, for music; Nathalie Cerritelli, for drama; and Kelsey Drabsch, for photography. Congratulations to them.

As I said in the report, we as a community must stand together to do all we can to make sure that women and girls are equal partners in all aspects of our community. No matter where they live or work, we must treat them with regard and respect.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Statute Law Amendment Bill 2014 (No 2)

Debate resumed from 25 September 2014, on motion by **Mr Corbell**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (11.01): The opposition will be supporting this second Statute Law Amendment Bill for 2014 or so-called SLAB. Typically, the substantive elements of SLABs are contained in four schedules. Schedule 1 makes minor, non-controversial amendments initiated by government agencies, and this bill amends two acts.

The Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act 1997 is amended to remove the geographical restriction from the definition of health service provider as being in the ACT. This will allow better sharing of a patient's information and better service to the patient if members of a treating team are outside the ACT.

Two amendments are made to the Lifetime Care and Support (Catastrophic Injuries) Act 2014. The first provides that, where a motor vehicle accident involves a vehicle with compulsory third-party insurance in another jurisdiction, the operation of the act will apply. The second simply gives the Lifetime Care Support Scheme Commissioner, rather than the director-general, the power to approve forms used in the scheme.

Schedule 2 makes minor, non-controversial amendments to the Legislation Act 2001 initiated by the Parliamentary Counsel's Office, and this bill makes two amendments. First, it replaces narrative with a table for working out periods of time but does not change the method. Second, it simplifies the definition of a calendar month and how a month is calculated when it does not fall naturally within a calendar month.

Schedule 3 carries a range of minor, technical amendments that are initiated by the Parliamentary Counsel's Office which are non-controversial. They involve correction of minor errors, updating language, improving syntax, minor consequential amendments and other minor changes. This bill amends 12 acts and one regulation.

SLABs also often include a schedule 4, to make routine repeals. However, no legislation is repealed in this bill. These amendments demonstrate the Parliamentary Counsel's Office's commitment to keeping the ACT's statute book up to date, relevant, modern and accessible. It is no accident that the ACT's statute book, in many ways, sets the benchmark for the rest of Australia. I commend the PCO for their good work and their service to this place, to the legal profession, including the judiciary, and to the people of the ACT.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (11.04): The Statute Law Amendment Bill makes non-controversial, minor and technical amendments to ACT acts and regulations. In this bill, they occur in three categories. The first is the category of minor amendments. As an example, the bill changes the definition of health service provider in the Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act 1997 to ensure it is not restricted to entities providing a health service in the ACT. This is to facilitate information sharing between members of a treating team when a health service provider is outside the territory.

The second category is amendments to the Legislation Act which are suggested by the Parliamentary Counsel's Office. As an example, the bill makes minor amendments to make it easier to work out periods of time referred to in acts or statutory instruments.

The third category is generally technical amendments such as correcting minor drafting errors and omitting redundant provisions. All the amendments in the bill are minor or technical and non-controversial, and I am pleased to support the bill today.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Health, Minister for Higher Education and Minister for Regional Development) (11.05): This bill carries on the technical amendment program that continues to develop a simpler, more coherent and accessible statute book for the territory through minor legislation changes. It is an efficient and proven mechanism to take care of non-controversial and minor technical amendments to a range of territory legislation, while conserving resources that would otherwise be needed if the amendments were dealt with individually. Each individual amendment is minor, but when viewed collectively they are a significant contribution to improving the operation of affected legislation and the statute book more generally.

The Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act is amended in schedule 1 by omitting the words "in the ACT" from the dictionary definition of health service provider. This is a beneficial amendment that will allow ACT health service providers to share vital health information and records about a patient with those members of the patient's treating team who are located outside the ACT. Sharing of such information without unnecessary legislative obstacles will assist in generally improving health services provided to consumers.

Schedule 1 of the bill also amends the Lifetime Care and Support (Catastrophic Injuries) Act by inserting a new paragraph to make it clear that the term “CTP cover under the CTP Act” extends to a motor vehicle involved in a motor accident if the vehicle is covered by a compulsory third-party insurance policy in force under the law of another jurisdiction. This clarification is consistent with the New South Wales Motor Accidents (Lifetime Care and Support) Act, which the ACT act is intended to mirror and on which minimum benchmarks agreed for the national injury insurance scheme for motor accidents have been modelled.

Section 98 of the Lifetime Care and Support (Catastrophic Injuries) Act is also amended to give the power to approve forms to the Lifetime Care and Support Commission instead of the director-general. This change is appropriate, as most forms required under the act relate to the commissioner’s functions.

Schedule 2 of the bill amends section 151 of the Legislation Act to present the rules for working out periods of time generally in an act or statutory instrument in table form. This is consistent with the approach in section 36 of the commonwealth’s Acts Interpretation Act 1901. This will also make it easier for legislation users to work out periods of time under ACT legislation. The amendment does not change the existing policy on working out periods of time.

For further clarity, the dictionary in part 1 is amended by remaking the definitions of calendar month and month and omitting the definition of named month. The definition of calendar month is being simplified in accordance with current plain language drafting style. The revised definitions of calendar month and month will be consistent with the definitions of those terms in the commonwealth Acts Interpretation Act and are more consistent with how they are generally understood. As a consequence of revising the definitions of calendar month and month, the definition of named month is no longer needed.

Finally, schedule 3 contains technical amendments of legislation that include correcting minor errors, updating language, improving syntax and omitting redundant provisions. In particular, amendments are made to the Electoral Act 1992 and the Government Procurement Act 2001 as a consequence of the amendments to the Legislation Act included in schedule 2. Amendments in schedules 2 and 3 are initiated by the Parliamentary Counsel’s Office.

I would like to thank members for their continuing support for the technical amendments program and for their contribution to the debate this morning. The technical amendments program is another example of the territory leading the way and striving for the best, in this case a modern, high quality, up-to-date, easily accessible statute book.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Planning, Building and Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 (No 2)

Debate resumed from 25 September 2014, on motion by **Mr Gentleman**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (11.10): I will be supporting this bill today. This is the seventh omnibus planning and building amendment bill and it makes minor policy and technical amendments to the Building Act, the Building (General) Regulation 2008, the Planning and Development Act 2007 and the Planning and Development Regulation 2008. I would like to touch on a few of the key features of the legislation and just make a few brief remarks.

Firstly, I refer to the bit of the bill that amends the development approval made by the minister under call-in powers. This bill will allow the minister to amend a development proposal that was decided by the minister using the call-in powers, as there is currently no provision under the Planning and Development Act to make minor amendments to DAs that have been determined by being called in.

This bill rectifies an existing anomaly whereby only DAs approved by ACTPLA have the capacity to be amended. For DAs the minister has called in, there is no power for even minor amendments to be made, which can on occasion be problematic. For example, in the case of the Royalla solar farm, I understand that the proponent wanted to revise the list of plant species from that which was submitted under the DA. As the DA was approved by the minister rather than ACTPLA, they were not able to do this for technical reasons.

This bill brings decisions made by the minister in line with those made by ACTPLA. It allows the minister to amend or refuse to amend a DA or to delegate the decision-making authority to ACTPLA. The criteria for assessing the proposal to amend are the same as those currently in the act.

To be clear, a decision made under the call-in power is not subject to ACAT review and, consistent with this, the amendments allowed under this bill will also not be subject to merit review. As members know, I have clearly stated my concern about the application of the call-in and its application to the right to review and have proposed legislative changes to address this. However, in this instance I do not believe that the absence of review rights is problematic.

It is consistent that minor amendments should be subject to the same conditions as the original development. It would not make sense, for example, to allow challenges to small changes, such as to the position of windows, fencing materials or plant species, when the development itself is not able to be challenged. The amendments before us today are minor only, and the requirement remains that the DA as amended must be substantially the same as that which has already been approved.

I would like to note that this bill does not make any changes to circumstances under which call-ins can be made. As members again know, I currently have a separate executive member's bill before the Assembly that proposes inserting a new condition under which these powers can be used, including that call-ins can only be made for developments where proponents have undertaken pre-DA consultation. But that is a matter for another day and, as I say, I think today's amendment is a quite simple and specific one that makes sense in the context in which it seeks to operate.

Just turning to a few other matters, the bill makes amendment to the notification requirements in section 138AB(5), which applies to situations in which the proponents can apply for an environmental significance opinion. At the moment the relevant advising agency must inform the applicant. The bill streamlines the process by making ACTPLA the notifying agency so that there is a single point of contact. The bill also amends section 242(1) to extend the time from five to 10 days after the end of the quarter that ACTPLA must notify the minister of the number of single-dwelling house lease grants by direct sale in that quarter.

Finally, this bill also makes changes to the Building Act and regulation to strengthen the documentation requirements for certifiers of developments that are DA exempt. This follows the recommendations of a May 2014 Auditor-General report which highlighted the lack of documentation in some circumstances, specifically those which are DA exempt.

In conducting a building approval, the certifier must be satisfied that site work either complies with the development application and approval or that no DA is required. If there is no paperwork, such as an exemption assessment notice or a development approval, then the certifier must demonstrate that the works are indeed exempt. This bill introduces the requirement of a site work notice or checklist, which certifiers must complete to demonstrate that the appropriate matters have been taken into consideration in making this assessment.

All other changes proposed in the bill are technical and, having made these few brief remarks, as I said, the Greens will be supporting this bill today.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (11.15): The opposition will be supporting the Planning, Building and Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 (No 2). This is the second omnibus planning bill this year and contains four minor policy changes as well as technical and editorial changes to planning and building legislation. I thank Mr Rattenbury for taking the call just then.

The first policy change is an amendment to the Planning and Development Act which will permit the minister to amend a development approval that was originally decided by the minister using the call-in powers. Current legislation allows amendments to DAs that have been approved by ACTPLA but not DAs that have been approved through a ministerial call-in. Minor amendments to a DA are quite common. Such amendments may include changing the location of a door or a wall. Whilst in an ideal world the original DA would be correct and no amendments would be required, it is

not unreasonable to allow amendments to be made so that the finished building is more practical and useable and a better result all round.

Under the provisions in the bill, the minister may amend DAs or delegate the decision to ACTPLA. This means that DAs approved through ministerial call-in are treated in the same way as all other DAs and do not result in impractical or poor outcomes to the built form. It is illogical that an approved development cannot be altered if the proponent finds problem with the original application. The amendment in this bill is a sensible change. However, this is not an opposition endorsement of the government's use of call-in powers. That is, of course, a debate for another time.

The second policy change relates to the notification requirements for an environmental significance opinion. Under the provisions in the bill the applicant will be notified of the decision by ACTPLA rather than the relevant agency. This ensures consistency and certainty for proponents and is a logical change to the planning process.

The third policy change is an extension to the time for ACTPLA to report on the number of single-dwelling houses granted by direct sale during the quarter. Under the current legislation, the deadline is just five working days. However, this has been extended to 10 working days, which is a more reasonable and achievable time frame.

The final policy change in this bill is an amendment to the Building Act and the Building (General) Regulation to strengthen the documentation requirements for DA-exempt developments. Under the current legislation, a certifier may determine that a development does not require a DA without providing any justification for that opinion. This means that it is near impossible to audit decisions because there is no supporting documentation.

Members will be aware of the Auditor-General's report into single-dwelling development assessments, which was prepared partly in response to a situation where a certifier found that a DA was not required but after further investigation it was discovered that the decision was incorrect. Requiring certifiers to keep more detailed records to justify their decision about a DA exemption may create an additional burden, particularly for smaller certifiers. However, larger certifiers already keep such records and we hope that those certifiers who do not already keep detailed records will be able to handle the additional reporting without too much inconvenience.

Transparency around development approvals, and particularly exemptions, is of course very important. The ability for genuine audits to be carried out should outweigh the time costs of the additional reporting. However, the opposition will be watching the implementation of this change carefully to make sure it is, in fact, having the intended consequences and is not too much of a burden on the industry. The last thing we want to see is an unnecessary increase in red tape for no actual improvement in the quality and timeliness of construction. The government has not yet decided the exact form the documentation requirements will take. However, we hope that the requirements will be thorough without being too onerous. The remaining provisions in the bill make minor amendments to other provisions in the planning and building space and are non-controversial.

In conclusion, the opposition are pleased to support this bill today. It makes sensible changes to planning and building legislation which we hope will be good for the construction industry and all those who operate in and around it. We too 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) (11.19), in reply: I am pleased to support the Planning, Building and Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 (No 2) and I thank members for their contribution today and their support for this bill. This is the seventh bill, and the second bill for 2014, to be created under the government's omnibus planning, building and environment legislation amendment process. I think I can say with some certainty that it is now a well-regarded, established process for minor policy and technical amendments of the planning, building and environment legislation in the territory and ensures such legislation is kept up to date and accurate in the most efficient way.

This bill was presented to the Assembly on 25 September this year. It proposes, as we have heard, editorial, technical, consequential and minor policy amendments to the Building Act 2004, the Building (General) Regulation 2008, the Planning and Development Act 2007 and the Planning and Development Regulation 2008.

The bill also responds to issues identified by the Environment and Planning Directorate, parliamentary counsel and the Auditor-General. The bill includes four minor policy amendments and, as you have heard, it amends the Building Act to require building certifiers to prepare a notice when issuing building approval for exempt development that explains why a development is considered to be exempt. And the bill amends the Planning and Development Act to allow the minister to make changes to a development approval decided under the call-in power. The bill also amends the notification requirements for an environmental significance opinion and notice of direct sale requirements in the Planning and Development Act.

I would now like to talk about the proposed minor policy amendments. The proposed Building Act amendments are being made to strengthen documentation requirements related to assessments by certifiers under the Building Act as to whether relevant development is exempt from the need to obtain development approval under the Planning and Development Act.

The proposed amendments will address concerns of the Auditor-General relating to the lack of documentation provided by certifiers when assessing the DA-exempt status of proposed site works. These concerns are set out in the performance audit report of the Auditor-General on single-dwelling development assessments of May 2014. In the report the Auditor-General suggested that a lack of documentation in some instances made it difficult to assess whether an accurate DA exemption assessment had been made by the certifier and recommended that a minimum level of documentation, such as a checklist, should be submitted by certifiers.

By way of background, under sections 29, 30 and 30A of the Building Act, a building certifier can only issue a building approval if satisfied on reasonable grounds that the proposals reflected in the building plans are lawful and meet relevant requirements under the act. There are a number of requirements related to this but a key one is that building approval only be issued if the proposal involves development that either has development approval under the Planning and Development Act or is exempt from requiring development approval under the Planning and Development Regulation. If there is no development approval, the certifier must assess whether the proposal is exempt from requiring development approval before issuing the building approval under the Building Act. Development that is exempt from requiring development approval is often referred to as DA exempt and I will use this terminology in my following comments.

The proposed amendments to the Building Act contained in this bill will strengthen and clarify documentation requirements relating to this assessment by the certifier that the site work involved in the application for building approval is DA exempt. The proposed amendments achieve this, in part, by the insertion of new section 28(1A) in clause 5 and new section 29(1)(g) in clause 8 of the bill.

New section 28(1A) requires the certifier to issue a new document called a site work notice in connection with the site work that is DA exempt. The site work notice must set out the basis on which the certifier concluded that the relevant site work is DA exempt.

The proposed amendments to the building regulation in this bill also provide guidance about what is to be included in the site work notice. In particular, new section 9A of the Building (General) Regulation 2008 requires the site work notice to identify those provisions of the Planning and Development Regulation 2008 and the territory plan codes that the certifier relied on in finding that the proposal was DA exempt. The new site work notice will not be required in all cases. In some cases the DA-exempt status of the proposal may have already been affirmed by a different, separate process under the Planning and Development Act.

Under section 138D of the Planning and Development Act a proponent may apply to a works assessor or building surveyor for a notice confirming whether the relevant development is DA exempt. This is an optional process. The act refers to such a notice as an exemption assessment D notice. If such a notice is issued and the notice affirms that the proposal is DA exempt, then there is no need for the certifier to repeat this assessment under the Building Act. The bill will not require a site work notice in this instance. A similar approach is taken by the bill if the Planning and Land Authority makes a declaration in relation to the proposal under section 1.100A or 1.100AB of schedule 1 of the Planning and Development Regulation to the effect that the proposed single dwelling is exempt: there is no requirement for the certifier to repeat this assessment under the Building Act.

I would also like to note at this point that the bill amends the Planning and Development Regulation to ensure that the content requirements for exemption D notices are consistent with the content requirements for the site work notice. The

requirements in connection with these different notices are set out in new section 29(1)(g) in clause 8 of the bill. In effect, new section 29(1)(g) will require the DA-exempt status of the relevant site work to be affirmed by a development approval, an exemption assessment D notice, an exemption declaration under the Planning and Development Regulation or, if the work is not covered by any of these—then and only then—by the proposed new site work notice issued by the certifier.

This new documentation requirement applies to an assessment process which the certifier is already required to undergo under section 29(1)(g) of the act. Best practice would require a level of documentation underpinning this assessment already. In this sense, the notice does not add red tape but makes clear the documentation requirements for this existing assessment process. The proposed amendments to the Building Act and regulation clarify a process already being carried out by certifiers during the building approval process and address concerns expressed by the Auditor-General about a lack of documentation on the decision-making process.

I would now like to turn to the three minor policy amendments to the Planning and Development Act. Firstly, the bill makes certain amendments in connection with the amendment of development approvals that were originally approved by the minister through the call in-power under division 7.3.5 of the Planning and Development Act. As the act currently stands there is no ability to make minor mechanical amendments to a development approval that was originally granted by the minister through the exercise of the call-in power.

This position is in contrast to development approvals that were originally granted through the standard process; that is, granted by the Planning and Land Authority. Under section 197 of the Planning and Development Act an application can be made to amend a DA that was decided by the Planning and Land Authority. There is then presently no specific power under the act to amend a DA that was originally decided by the minister under the call-in power. The bill amends the Planning and Development Act to allow the minister to amend the DA.

The criteria for assessment of an application for amendment by the minister are to be the same as the criteria for applications to amend DAs decided by the Planning and Land Authority. The minister must consider the application as if the development originally approved had been completed and the application was an application for approval of a development proposal to change the completed development to give effect to the amendment. The minister must refuse to amend if the amendment results in a change in the assessment track or would be in breach of a court-imposed condition. The minister must also refuse to amend DAs unless satisfied that the amended approval will be substantially the same as the originally approved development.

I would like to make it clear to the Assembly that this does not open the door for significant changes to the original DA. The amendment merely allows for minor, non-substantive adjustment of a DA if this is required as a matter of practical necessity. Any changes can only be made within the clearly defined limits that I have referred to.

I should also note that the bill provides for the minister to request the Planning and Land Authority to prepare a report to assist with consideration of the application. The minister may, in deciding to amend or refuse to amend a DA, consider the report prepared by the Planning and Land Authority. I would also like to note that the minister may delegate the decision to amend or refuse to amend the DA to the Planning and Land Authority under section 254A of the Legislation Act. I would also like to make it clear that under the Planning and Development Act the minister's decision on a DA under call-in power is not reviewable by ACAT. This is consistent with the nature of the decision which is made at ministerial level, taking into account the wider public interest and the fact that the minister is accountable for his decision to the Assembly and, of course, the electorate.

The bill will also amend the notification requirements for an environmental significance opinion under the Planning and Development Act. The environmental significance opinion process applies to certain developments that are ordinarily subject to the impact track for development assessment. If the proponent wants the development assessed in the less onerous merit track on the grounds that it is not likely to have significant adverse environmental impact, they can apply to the relevant agency for an environmental significance opinion or ESO.

If the relevant agency rejects the application it must notify the applicant and the Planning and Land Authority in writing. The Planning and Land Authority presently processes applications for an ESO and an opinion is frequently given by the Conservator of Flora and Fauna. The bill amends the notification requirement to achieve administrative efficiency. Rather than the relevant agency notifying the applicant, the agency will notify the Planning and Land Authority. The Planning and Land Authority will then notify the applicant. This is a more efficient process, given that the Planning and Land Authority has general oversight of the assessment process and has its own well-established procedures to notify applicants and other interested parties.

This new process keeps the Planning and Land Authority informed of the status of the application of an ESO. There is no change to the applicant's position from the applicant's point of view. The applicant is simply notified by the Planning and Land Authority rather than the relevant agency.

The bill also amends notice of direct sale requirements in the Planning and Development Act. Section 242(1) of the Planning and Development Act provides that within five working days after the end of the calendar quarter the Planning and Land Authority must give the minister a notice about the number of leases granted by direct sale during that quarter. The bill amends this section to extend this time period from five to 10 working days.

This change has been made to provide the Planning and Land Authority with additional time to produce the notice and associated documents and to ensure the minister receives the notice. This amendment ensures that the authority continues to meet statutory time frames.

In addition to the minor policy item that I have referred to, there are also a number of editorial and technical amendments being made by the bill. Various typographical errors in the Planning and Development Act are being corrected, for instance, in clauses 11, 12 and 25. Various editorial amendments are being made in clause 27, clause 29 and clauses 33 to 35. For instance, section 395(1)(a) is being amended to remove the words “knowledge of” as they are superfluous.

This bill proposes amendments that are non-controversial and make good practical sense. The amendments deliver minor policy, technical and editorial changes, as an omnibus bill should. The bill demonstrates this government’s commitment to effective and responsible use of the omnibus bill process. I note that in the past members of the community have expressed appreciation at being able to access one bill to monitor the minor changes that are happening to legislation in the planning, building and environmental sphere.

The bill also helps the Assembly to monitor, of course, the effectiveness of the territory laws, and a single bill ensures that changes to those laws are accessible to all Canberrans. 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.

Workers Compensation (Cross-border Workers) Amendment Bill 2014

Debate resumed from 25 September 2014, on motion by **Mr Gentleman**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (11.35): Madam Assistant Speaker, legislation that means only one workers comp policy per business is an excellent idea.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (11.35): I cannot possibly match Mr Smyth’s succinctness, but I will make a few brief remarks.

I am happy to support the Workers Compensation (Cross-border Workers) Amendment Bill on behalf of the ACT Greens. The bill makes a minor change to the Workers Compensation Act to define a clear method for determining a worker’s state of connection in instances where the person is undertaking cross-border work. The state of connection is used for determining where an employer has to insure an employee, the idea being that they only have to do so in one jurisdiction.

The change aligns the test that will be used in the ACT with an agreed national policy position. This will ensure that this test is applied in the ACT consistently with other jurisdictions in Australia. The change is supported by stakeholders, including the Insurance Council of Australia, which is the representative body of the general insurance industry in Australia; the workers compensation insurers, and there are seven in the ACT approved under the Workers Compensation Act to provide private sector workers compensation insurance; and the ACT Work Safety Council, which includes representation from employer groups and employee groups and also representatives from WorkSafe ACT and the Insurance Council of Australia.

To conclude, and I think Mr Smyth has summed it up very well, this simplifies matters for businesses and makes the task of insuring cross-border workers clear and simple for employers. On that basis, I am very happy to support the bill.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (11.37): The Workers Compensation (Cross-border Workers) Amendment Bill 2014 is an important amendment that will assist both territory workers and employers. It is a very good idea.

As I have previously said in the Assembly, workplace safety is the backbone of any progressive set of workplace laws. For more than 10 years now, our government has been committed to workplace safety. Our government established the industrial magistrates court and supported a greater focus on safety in all our workplaces through the “speak up about safety” campaign.

This bill provides clear information to employers, insurers, insurance brokers and the courts to ensure consistent application of cross-border rules and that workers in the ACT are covered by appropriate workers compensation insurance.

The government has been concerned that the inconsistent application of connection rules may result in workers not being covered by workers compensation policy for all injuries, increased claims on uninsured worker providers such as the ACT default insurance fund, increased disputation and legal costs, and financial penalties for employers if they are found to be uninsured.

The amendments will reduce costs for ACT employers who have previously taken out multiple workers compensation insurance policies for a worker who works in more than one jurisdiction. In the past employers have done this, to ensure that their workers have appropriate workers compensation coverage, due to continuing uncertainty in interpretation by the courts, insurers and insurance brokers of the existing nationally agreed guidance material.

The amendments provide practical examples to determine a worker’s state of connection by applying three tests: where the worker usually works, where a worker is usually based, and the location of the employer’s principal place of business in Australia. The amendments give clear direction that where a worker usually works in more than one jurisdiction and the state of connection cannot be decided, the other test must be considered.

It is important that all ACT workers have appropriate workers compensation insurance coverage. The national approach now being adopted into legislation by the ACT will ensure that there is a clearer direction for other states and territory employers, and issuers of insurance policies, to determine where a worker must be insured.

Each and every one of us has a responsibility to make worker safety a number one priority, especially as members of the Legislative Assembly. This bill is just one way we can do this. It is also an example of this government making it easier for employers to do business in the ACT whilst ensuring better support for workers if they are hurt as a result of doing their job.

These changes aim to reduce the number of claims where a worker was thought to usually work, or usually be based, in another jurisdiction and it was later found that the state connection is the ACT. The costs of these claims, and often their determination by the courts, are funded by all ACT businesses and met by the default insurance fund. Therefore the impact of these amendments will have a financial benefit for ACT employers.

The toll of workplace injuries on workers and their families is huge enough. This bill will ensure a more consistent application of our cross-border rules and that workers in the ACT are covered by appropriate workers compensation insurance. This bill demonstrates the government's commitment to reducing regulatory costs for ACT businesses and at the same time ensures that all ACT employers have the appropriate workers compensation insurance for their workers. 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) (11.41), in reply: I thank members for their comments and support today and I thank Mr Smyth for his compressed response.

The Workers Compensation (Cross-border Workers) Amendment Bill 2014 amends provisions in the Workers Compensation Act 1951 which cover workers who perform duties in more than one state or territory, known as cross-border workers. It recognises how common it is for Canberra workers to cross in and out of the ACT for work.

The government is introducing this reform to provide greater certainty for these workers, their employers and decision-makers in the workers compensation system. The amendments provide clearer direction to assist employers, workers, insurers, insurance brokers and the courts to determine the state or territory in which the worker must be insured for the purposes of workers compensation, also known as the worker's state or territory of connection.

The bill also addresses another problem for the territory. The ACT default insurance fund must meet the cost of compensation to an injured worker if the ACT is found to

be their state of connection but the relevant employer does not have an ACT workers compensation insurance policy. Claims made on the default insurance fund are paid for by a levy on all ACT businesses.

By clarifying whether an employer should be maintaining a workers compensation policy for cross-border workers, these amendments should reduce the overall number of uninsured employers and workers and thereby reduce the negative impact on other ACT employers. It is likely to reduce the number of matters that become subject to dispute as well.

The ACT, along with all other jurisdictions, has worked over many years, through the Heads of Workers Compensation Authorities, to develop a national approach to define the overall method to be used when determining a worker's state or territory of connection. A national approach was originally agreed in 2003 and introduced into legislation across Australia. Harmonised guidance material was developed in 2010 to improve the application of the national approach.

The ACT adopted this national harmonised cross-border guidance material as the Workers Compensation (Cross-border Workers) Approved Protocol 2012. However, concerns were raised by key territory stakeholders that the protocol did not provide the certainty required for decision making on claims by injured workers. Some elements of the nationally agreed state of connection rules have been interpreted differently by insurers, regulators and courts in New South Wales and the ACT. More certainty will be provided by incorporating these elements into the legislation.

The legislation currently imposes three main tests, to be considered sequentially, when determining a cross-border worker's state of connection. They are:

1. where a worker *usually works*
2. where a worker is *usually based*, or
3. the location of the employer's *principal place of business in Australia*.

The amendments made by this bill will strengthen the existing provisions by providing examples of where a worker usually works and expanding the provisions used to determine where a worker is usually based. The amendment will now specify that, in deciding whether a worker is usually based in a territory or state, regard must be had to matters including if the employer provides a place from which the worker is expected to operate; if a place is stated in the worker's contract of employment with the employer; the place from which the worker routinely receives day-to-day instructions from the employer; the place the worker attends to collect material for the purposes of their employment; and the place the worker reports for administrative, human resource and other issues related to the worker's employment.

By requiring decision-makers to consider the broader context of a cross-border worker's employment, the amendments will remedy a situation that has developed where, in finding out that a worker works in more than one state or territory, decision-makers are concluding that there is no state or territory in which the worker usually

works or is usually based. Decision-makers are, instead, defaulting straight to the third option: the employer's principal place of business.

Much of the case law in cross-border workers compensation was developed around long-distance bus or truck drivers and the particular historical difficulties experienced by them when injured interstate. In the case of long-distance truck or bus drivers, the employer's principal place of business was often the easiest or only way to determine a single state of connection for an injured worker.

However, the application of a legal precedent based on the situation of long-distance drivers to other workers has led to some perverse outcomes. Some courts and other decision-makers do not consider other information that may establish that a worker usually works or is usually based in a particular state if they ever work in more than one state. This has undermined the intention behind the use of the word "usually" in the legislation and does not take into account the other relevant circumstances of the worker's employment. It results in unnecessary delays to the resolution of the worker's claim and undermines employers who do the right thing and insure their ACT-based workers in the ACT.

Injured workers who work mainly in the ACT or who are generally based in the ACT but occasionally travel interstate and whose employers have, in good faith, insured them in the ACT have been faced with rejection of their claims. They have been told that they should claim in some other state in Australia based on the employer's principal place of business even though neither they nor the work may have ever been based in that other state.

The current situation also undermines government efforts to ensure that businesses operating in the ACT hold workers compensation insurance and discourage sham contracting. By requiring decision-makers to consider other central elements of employment arrangements for cross-border workers, elements which have been taken into account in other forums in which the worker's status is being determined, the bill before you also gives clearer direction to employers, insurers and others when they decide where a worker usually works or is usually based when taking out workers compensation insurance policies.

Because so many people cross into and out of the ACT for work, and the majority of these cross-border workers will have a close connection with New South Wales, consistency with the New South Wales approach was a key consideration in the development of these amendments.

In addition, the government worked closely with the Insurance Council of Australia, individual insurers and the Work Safety Council during the development of these amendments. All have been supportive and welcomed the greater certainty which will be provided by the updated approach.

In summary, these changes to the Workers Compensation Act 1951 will enable employers to readily determine the state in which to obtain insurance and thus eliminate the need for workers to obtain compensation coverage in more than one state or territory, provide certainty for workers about their workers compensation

entitlements, reduce disputes, and ensure that each worker is connected to one state or territory for insurance purposes. These amendments are another example of this government's commitment to reducing regulatory costs for ACT employers while maintaining the best possible workers compensation scheme for both workers and employers.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

TEDxCanberra

Statements by members

MR SMYTH (Brindabella), by leave: On 9 October this year, I, along with Ms Porter and Mr Rattenbury, took part in the ACT Assembly's inaugural "pollie for a day adventure" organised as part of the TEDx adventures. This event was held in collaboration with TEDxCanberra. I would like to take the opportunity to thank Neal Baudinette, Joanne McAlister and Fiona Matz in the governance and communications office for making this event possible in the Assembly.

I would also like to take the opportunity to acknowledge Ms Porter for not only hosting an adventure participant in her office but also making time in her busy schedule to be the Acting Speaker during the delivery of the speeches that were written. A note of thanks also to the Youth Coalition for their support of this adventure, which allowed me the opportunity to host Sarah Jewell and Rebecca Cuzzillo in my office, and also to meet the other participants, Tom Berry and Hannah Watts.

Although events like this are meant to give the public a chance to see what it is like to be a politician, it was also a good opportunity for me to learn from these younger people and hear about their vision for our city. I will borrow from Ms Jewell's speech on the day:

For the vibrancy of our political system, we need to ensure that all groups are heard and able to bring their unique experience and perspectives to the table.

I can share Ms Cuzzillo's vision for "a Canberra that is sustainable, vibrant and prosperous for all Canberrans". As such it is only fitting to table their speeches in the Assembly.

Adventures are an exciting addition to the TEDxCanberra line-up of events for this year. They were started by TEDxBeaconStreet in the US about four years ago, and are the brainchild of John Werner at the prestigious MIT Media Lab.

From discussions with TEDxCanberra, they have wanted to run their own series of adventures since 2012, and this year, with the right team in place, it finally happened. With this in mind, I would like to first commend the adventures manager, Merlin Kong, and his team of William Glenwright and Nitin Naidu for their hard work in making Canberra the first city in Australia to host a TEDx adventures program.

I would also like to thank the following TEDxCanberra members who made adventures possible this year: Stephen Collins, the creative catalyst; Kelli Monck, the executive producer; Nathanael Coyne; Kristin Boag; Jessica Miller; Nikki Coleman; Roslyn Walker; Sharen Scott; and Lisa Walsch. With that I seek leave to table and have included in the *Hansard* the two speeches from the participants who were in my office, Rebecca Cuzzillo and Sarah Jewell.

Leave granted.

MR SMYTH: I present the following paper:

TEDxCanberra—Pollie for a Day Adventure—Maiden speech—Sarah Jewell.

[See schedule 1 at page 3402.]

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Corrective Services, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for Sport and Recreation), by leave: Similar to Mr Smyth, and as he mentioned, I was able to host one of the participants as well, a young lady called Hannah Watts, who spent a morning in my office and prepared a speech, which she also presented later in the morning.

It was terrific to have Hannah in my office, although I must confess I had a very busy morning and I did not really get a chance to chat to her. But I did go to TEDx the next day, where I had a conversation with her. I think she certainly appreciated the experience of being able to come to the Assembly.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Stephen Collins, the organiser of TEDxCanberra, and all of the crew who were involved, and it was a very large crew that put the event together. It was an excellent day at the TEDx follow-up. I found it a very inspiring and thought-provoking event. A range of speakers across the day touched on an extraordinary diversity of topics and really got the audience thinking about a range of things. Katy Barfield's essential question was, "Where are the wonky carrots?"—questioning the very idea that all the food we see in our supermarkets is perhaps near to perfect and that a large amount of food goes to waste as a result of that.

Christine Charles, the rocket scientist who works at the ANU, spoke to us about space travel and the work that is being done out of ANU to make that possible. Shane Horsburgh talked about redefining masculinity, what it means to be a man in this modern world and perhaps some of the preconceptions of what it should be, coming

from his background in the police force in particular, and going through a personal journey.

For those of us in the audience who were a little bit older, Deane Hutton and Rob Morrison talked about curiosity. If those names ring any bells, they were from *The Curiosity Show*. Certainly, for me, having grown up with that show, it was a wonderful opportunity to hear them speak and inspire us. Perhaps the bravest presentation of the day was from Khadija Gbla, who spoke about female genital mutilation from a very personal perspective.

Touching on a few of those speakers gives us a sense of how broad and extraordinary the TEDx event was. I know that Hannah, when I got a chance to speak to her during the course of the day, found it a very fascinating day as well.

I was also inspired by the fact that the organising team had a goal of zero waste for the day. Their intent was that there would be nothing that was not recyclable arising from the event. Whilst I do not know how they went, just from observing the practice of the day, I am pretty sure they got pretty damn close to achieving, if they did not achieve, their goal. I congratulate them on setting such high aspirations.

Having made those few brief remarks, I want to come back to Hannah's speech. I thought she wrote a very good speech. I do not think I disagreed with a word of it. I particularly liked her line about needing to be a city of activism, not "slacktivism", and putting the call out there for people to get involved in things. I know activism has had a controversial history in this place in recent times, but I think that Hannah's remarks were well made in the sense of essentially calling on citizens to be involved and to get out there and be active on issues that they think are important. I took that as a key message from her speech, and I congratulate her on that sentiment. I now table the speech that she presented that day. I present the following paper:

TEDxCanberra—Pollie for a Day Adventure—Inaugural speech—
Hannah Watts.

[See schedule 1 at page 3403.]

MS PORTER (Ginninderra), by leave: I too would like to make some brief remarks about the TEDx program. On 9 October, as others have said, I had great pleasure in chairing the inaugural TEDx session here in the Assembly. As part of the program, members were also asked to host participants in their offices to assist with the participants constructing their maiden speeches. My office hosted a young man by the name of Tom Berry. As you have heard, other participants were hosted in Mr Smyth's and Mr Rattenbury's offices.

I would also like to add my thanks to all the people in TEDx for this initiative, and also all of those in this place who assisted in any way—particularly the communications office, who supported the students and the whole process during the day.

Tom Berry said in his speech that his interest and studies in politics started as a small child. He said that it was watching question time at a very young age which shaped his keen interest which continues to this day. It reminds me very much of growing up

in a political household myself. That was also the case for my husband, who said that his first-ever essay that he can remember at school was at the age of eight, when he wrote an essay about the New South Wales parliament. So it is good if you can start early, I think.

Tom moved from Melbourne to Canberra only recently, and he continues to follow question time by attending the House of Representatives, in his words “multiple times” to listen to question time. His maiden speech captured his passion for international relations, Asian languages, Pacific and Asian studies and diplomacy.

I think members will find that Tom’s speech and the other speeches that members have tabled today are very considered and insightful. It gives me great confidence in the future of our body politic to have these young people following us. I think that politics is in good hands if it is in the hands of these young people.

I believe the program gives young people a wonderful opportunity to experience some of the parliamentary processes of their ACT parliament and democracy at work. I believe the program, or something of this nature, should continue, as it complements other opportunities given to high school students in this place. It offers a developmental and experiential program for tertiary students. I would really commend them to this place, and request that this program be supported in the future.

I was very pleased to be involved, and wish Tom and all the young people all the best for their future. I also seek leave to table Tom Berry’s speech and ask that it be incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

MS PORTER: I present the following paper:

TEDxCanberra—Pollie for a Day Adventure—Inaugural speech—Tom Berry.

[See schedule 1 at page 3404.]

Sitting suspended from 12.00 to 2.30 pm.

Ministerial arrangements

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Health, Minister for Higher Education and Minister for Regional Development): I inform the Assembly that during Mr Corbell’s absence this week from the Assembly I will be taking questions for the Attorney-General’s portfolio, including Police and Emergency Services, and Minister Gentleman will be taking questions relating to the environment part of EPD and capital metro.

Questions without notice

Health—ebola

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Health. On 15 October the World Health Organisation released the tragic update of a total of 8,997 confirmed and

suspected cases in the current outbreak of the ebola virus disease, or EVD. So far there have been 4,493 deaths. Of further concern, there have now been cases in the United States of America and a case of patient to nurse transmission in Spain. The Australian federal Department of Health has confirmed that there are still no cases of EVD in Australia and has reassured that the risk of an outbreak in Australia is very low. Minister, what is the government's strategy to manage a case of EVD in Canberra?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question and for the advice that he was to ask a question about ebola today and the ebola planning that is in place for the ACT community. This was a matter I was intending to update the Assembly on this week. It is important that I outline to the ACT community, and indeed to the ACT Assembly, the work that is underway across the ACT government and also reassure the ACT community that whilst the risks of a case here are very low and transmission of a case here even lower, the appropriate steps are being taken to prepare for that situation should it occur.

By way of background, this was a matter that was raised at COAG on 10 October and first ministers discussed arrangements that exist across Australia in relation to this. I am aware that on the same day health ministers also had a detailed discussion on it, although I could not be present there as I was at COAG. In addition, and prior to 10 October, the ACT cabinet was briefed as part of our security and emergency management committee meeting of cabinet by the Acting Chief Health Officer in relation to the likeliness of a case being here, the likeliness of an outbreak occurring here, and indeed the plans that would be implemented should a case emerge in the ACT. The Chief Health Officer obviously is the lead senior ACT public servant with responsibility for this and he, of course, represents the ACT on the Communicable Diseases Network of Australia.

Today, in addition to all of that, a senior officer group, or SENSOG, meeting was held across government to specifically discuss the whole-of-government planning and implications of the current ebola situation. Briefings at that meeting were provided by the Chief Health Officer, the chief officer of the Ambulance Service and other directorate senior executive representatives. The ACT Chief Health Officer again advised the meeting of the current low risk to the ACT, but the committee also noted that the ACT epidemic infectious disease plan is currently in place, although it has not been activated, and there was agreement that further work be done between ACT Health, ACT Ambulance Service and the Canberra airport as information is updated on the world situation, and indeed the information that is being shared across Australia, and that that meeting will reconvene within the next two weeks to discuss continued preparedness.

In addition to this there are operational plans that are in place in ACT Health for a range of different scenarios and for the ACT Ambulance Service should someone arrive. Different categories have been identified for particular situations—people returning from a country but who are not symptomatic, people returning from a country who may have some symptoms, and a handful of people returning from a known country where ebola is present with severe symptoms, and that creates a differential response based on that.

In addition, there is detailed planning and stocking of the particular equipment required, because each of those different categories requires a different level of protective equipment, including not just PPE but in some cases special breathing equipment as well, and including an isolation pod should that be required. All of that planning is either in place or currently underway.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, thanks for the information. Further, can you advise of any training that has been conducted and the status of any supplies of equipment such as PPE, decontamination equipment and, indeed, ebola treatment medicines that we have in stock?

MS GALLAGHER: In terms of the training that is underway, I would start by saying that, when I have spoken with officials around this, there is acknowledgement that staff are trained in the management of infectious diseases as a rule of thumb. Yes, certainly ebola and some of the possibilities for transmission require further education and awareness, but as a general rule health professionals are highly trained in terms of management of infectious diseases. The work that is underway in terms of the operational plan—and there was an exercise scenario held at the Canberra Hospital last week to test some of those arrangements—either is being done or, if areas of gaps were identified, is being addressed through appropriate training and education.

In the case of stocking of PPE and other equipment that is required, there are good stores of that equipment required at this point in time, although, as I said, there is some planning underway, particularly around isolating a patient who perhaps might need to travel from, say, the Canberra Airport to the hospital and how to transport them safely. That is also underway.

In terms of medication, this is an area where this is being dealt with, obviously, nationally, in terms of access to appropriate medications through the chief health officers network.

I am very confident that if a case presented to the ACT and needed to be treated here, all the necessary planning, medications and PPE are in place, as is a specially identified room within the Canberra Hospital for treatment purposes.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, what safeguards are in place for our medical professionals in the event of a case of ebola in Canberra?

MS GALLAGHER: This goes, I think, to the previous question in terms of education and awareness and the provision of appropriate equipment. All of that is being done and, in fact, health professionals are designing those responses. It is being consulted on at the operational level. It is then being tested. Work has been done across the Ambulance Service and the health service to make sure that those arrangements are in place. Again, it is an area where we acknowledge that staff, although highly trained,

will want to make sure that everything that could be done by the employer is being done, and that is why their involvement in operationalising these plans is so important.

In closing, I would acknowledge and send our heartfelt concern and support to those countries that are dealing with this epidemic. It is heartbreaking to see it on the news and to understand the access to services and treatment and care that would be provided here but that are not able to be provided in these countries. I think it again reminds us of what a good city we live in and that we are prepared for this should the very low risk of a person presenting with this horrible disease in Canberra. I believe we are well prepared but we are not sitting down and pretending that we cannot do more, and that is why this leadership group that met today will meet again and continue to refine and make sure our processes are as good as they can be. I am very happy to update the Assembly and, indeed, offer any member of the Assembly a further briefing should that be of interest.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, with the Canberra Hospital currently operating at close to 100 per cent capacity, what is the additional risk to managing any number of cases of ebola on site, or are there plans for another location?

MS GALLAGHER: Canberra Hospital would be the location for a person either suspected of having a case of ebola or being treated for ebola. That is where the level of care that is required will be able to be provided. I should say that hospital occupancy fluctuates day by day, as I have said a number of times in this house. So it is not normal for the hospital to be at 100 per cent. In fact it is a very rare occasion when it is, and if it is, it is only usually for a very short period of time. There is a location that has been identified as the appropriate place within the wards for the treatment and care of a person either suspected of having or being treated for ebola. I am very satisfied that should this situation occur, that person's admission would be facilitated very smoothly and very quickly.

Transport—light rail

MR COE: My question is for the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, are you committed to your promise to develop light rail in Canberra?

MS GALLAGHER: Yes.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Chief Minister, why then were you reluctant to fully commit to light rail on radio this morning?

MS GALLAGHER: I was not, but the final decision for finalising an agreement to proceed with light rail should properly rest until the bids are in. And that was the point I was making. I think we have been very clear from the word go about the process that is to be undertaken. It is a very professional process, it is a very transparent process, it

will be even more transparent at the end of next week when the business case is released.

But as members opposite know, there is a process. We have had an industry briefing. It will go to an EOI process. After that point there will be a short list of bidders. It will go through another process and then it will come back for agreement by the ACT cabinet. That is the process that is in place for any PPP. It is the one that we are undertaking for this one, and it does not in any way show any lack of support for the project.

Indeed, we think the opportunities for future-proofing this city by providing it with a modern public transport system that is worthy of the national capital and that supports other infrastructure investments in transport like roads, like buses, like cycleways, like pedestrian paths, like bike and ride, like park and ride—with all of those different components that none of you heard about because you are all shouting at me; so I know I am getting under your skin—when all of that is put together, this is the way forward for the nation's capital: a modern transport system that moves people around the city, that allows the city to grow in a sustainable and liveable way.

We look forward to continuing to champion this project while those opposite put their head in the sand and hope that nothing ever changes, that nothing in this city ever changes. God forbid that something might change in this city, that something might show the continuing building of the nation's capital. (*Time expired.*)

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

Opposition members interjecting—

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

MR SMYTH: Chief Minister, does the government have an exit strategy for light rail?

MS GALLAGHER: The government continues to focus on the implementation of a commitment we took to the people of the ACT at the 2012 election—that is, to get this project to the final PPP-ready stage. That is what we said we would do and that is what we are doing. That is what we are doing, and when you read the business case you will see the strong arguments for this project.

We look forward to delivering on the commitment we made to the people of the ACT and, as I said, continuing to grow and develop this nation's capital into the great city that it can become. We acknowledge that it already is a great city, but our best years, as I have said a number of times, are before us.

We have an optimistic approach to the growth of this city. We look at evidence, we look at reason, we look at opportunities and we look at the continued development of major and important parts of this city. You opposite continue to live in the past. Those days are over. The community will be well served in the future by a very modern

transport system to enable them to get around this city easily as the community grows into a much bigger city than we are today.

We look forward to the continuing debate with you all on this. Perhaps one day in times in the future we will even have converts on the Liberal side—we already know we have got some secret supporters, but some other converts to this great city-building project.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Chief Minister, will tracks be laid for light rail in Canberra in 2016 as promised?

MS GALLAGHER: Indeed I sought an assurance on this from the director of the project team this week. In fact I specifically asked a question about whether the project was continuing to track on the timetable that we had committed to and that has been outlined before, and the advice back to the government is that we remain on track for that timetable as has been outlined previously, which is for the project to commence in the 2016 calendar year.

Health—bush healing farm

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, in 2007 the ACT government committed funding towards the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre, also known as the bush healing farm, which has since run over budget, been scaled back in size and been delayed for over six years. How much in total has been spent on the project to date, minister, and when do you expect the centre to commence operation?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Mr Wall for his interest in the project. This project has taken longer than we had hoped to get ready and to get to this stage, but I am very pleased, and I know that those supporters of the Ngunnawal bush healing farm who have been advocating for a service like this are very happy, to see that the project has been provided with the certainty it needs to get the building underway.

In terms of the building work, I understand the tenders for the head contractor are scheduled to be invited in November 2014. I believe it is about a two-year maximum construction time. So we are hoping that it will be operational in 2016—late 2015, 2016. In terms of the money that has been spent to date, there has been money, and I will update the Assembly on that. That has largely related to the purchase of the land and also the decontamination that has occurred on that site in relation to the sheep dip and other contaminants. So there has been money spent to date. I will check, Mr Wall, on that and provide an update to the Assembly.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, will the facility meet the current demand and expectations of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, given that this project is almost seven years late?

MS GALLAGHER: I would start by saying that there are already funded services supported by the ACT government—some delivered through ACT Health, but also through Winnunga Nimmityjah—to support people who have an alcohol or drug addiction problem. In terms of access to services, those services are there. What this seeks to do is to provide a particular type of service, which is a live-in rehabilitation centre which is specific to and respectful of Indigenous culture and spiritual connectedness with the land. I am very confident that this will fill a gap that we have not been able to meet before.

At this stage, getting it operational remains the priority. We have not offered this service before. There are not many of these services available in this region—indeed, in New South Wales. This will be an opportunity to provide extra resources and extra capacity and I think will be very much welcomed by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community—and indeed the drug and alcohol community, who have sought this type of service for some time.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Chief Minister, was the minister instructed or advised to call in the bush healing farm DA?

MS GALLAGHER: As Mr Smyth knows, the call-in power is a power that rests entirely with the Minister for Planning, but I did write to the Minister for Planning, asking that he consider it for a call-in, as is appropriate. I sought advice on that as well and I was informed that there was nothing inappropriate about writing a letter saying would he consider it.

For the information of members, the first DA actually ended up—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Coe!

MS GALLAGHER: The first DA was in ACAT for well over a year, and that actually dealt with the issue of substance, which was whether or not a facility of this type should be built on this land. It was important to go through the full process, which it did. Indeed, ACAT members headed out to the site for hearing on that location before they determined this.

The second DA, which is the DA that the Minister for Planning called in to provide the certainty that was needed on this project, related to the siting of the facility, not whether or not the facility could be and should be located there, which was the more substantive issue that had raised controversy within the community, particularly with the local landholders. That went through the full ACAT process, including lengthy appeals, and, I think, was resolved very transparently and openly in public hearings.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, what are the particular features of this land that make it so suitable for this facility?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Ms Porter for the question. This land was deemed suitable after a lot of consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Prior to any decision being taken about the land there were discussions held with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. There were visits to the site for those individuals to consider whether it was appropriate for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bush healing farm. The response back was very strong that this was an area of land with spiritual connectiveness and importance to the local traditional owners and that it had all of the required features, including access to water, that were important for traditional healing to occur. It was with that in mind that the government settled on this block.

The first question from the opposition was about the delays to this project. One of the things that the call-in allowed to happen on the second and less controversial DA was to provide that certainty. I had watched this project for a long time and had seen some of the lengthy delays through the planning process. I had listened to the Indigenous elected body, who specifically raised this with me as being of continuing concern, as to what could be done to ensure that we could get on and build as soon as possible.

I think the Assembly's view, and it has been for some time, is that this is an important part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and improving health care. This facility provides a new service option that we have not had before, and now we have the certainty to get on and build it.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! Ms Porter has the floor, not the Chief Minister, whose time has expired, nor Mr Hanson.

Education—national curriculum

MS PORTER: My question is to the Minister for Education and Training. Minister, can you update the Assembly on the implementation of a national curriculum in the ACT? In particular, what components of the curriculum have been implemented and what advantages does the national curriculum have for jurisdictions like the ACT?

MS BURCH: I thank Ms Porter for her question. The ACT government is indeed committed to the implementation of the Australian curriculum in all ACT schools. The Australian curriculum gives every young Australian a relevant, rigorous, balanced and robust curriculum, irrespective of where they live, their circumstances or the school they attend.

In 2011 the ACT government began its implementation of the Australian curriculum in all public, independent and Catholic schools. Importantly, teachers from government and non-government schools have participated as writers and reviewers of the curriculum documentation, have trialled and provided feedback on learning

area materials, participated in the development of assessment tasks, have created work samples for national consideration and have also assisted in quality assuring of work samples.

We established the ACT Australian curriculum task force to ensure we have a cross-sectoral approach and strong community engagement in the implementation of the Australian curriculum across all ACT schools. The ACT has been a lead jurisdiction in the roll-out of the curriculum. In 2011 we introduced the Australian curriculum for maths, science, history and English to its schools. Arts and geography are coming next year. In 2013 all ACT K to 10 schools were required to assess and report student progress using the common nationally agreed achievement standards in these subjects. The importance of this milestone cannot be underestimated. For the first time here in the ACT there is a set of common standards for assessing and reporting student progress across all education systems.

Parents can now have confidence that regardless of whether they are in Gungahlin, Garran or Gordon their children are being taught and assessed to the same high standard. Seventeen ACT senior secondary colleges are currently trialling courses in these same four learning areas. Full implementation of these is scheduled for 2016.

The Australian curriculum provides a significant number of benefits to the ACT. As a community with a highly mobile population, having national consistency ensures that transitions between schools is much simpler. This reassures parents that their children are not disadvantaged by a move from one jurisdiction or school to another. The online nature of the curriculum and development of a national database of teaching resources provide significant benefit to the ACT, with parents and teachers experiencing new levels of access to the curriculum, nationally developed programs and resources.

The ACT already has the highest levels of educational achievement of Australian states and territories. The Australian curriculum places us in the best position to further improve our results for students and to continue to lead the nation.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, what is the ACT government's response to the commonwealth's recent review of the national curriculum?

MS BURCH: I am not sure that it is wise to change curriculum every time we change a government, and I hope that is not where we are proceeding. I believe that it is important that we let the Australian curriculum be implemented and bedded down before we look at making wholesale change. That said, there is much in the commonwealth's report that is sensible and, indeed, unremarkable, and I imagine that we will have little difficulty in supporting those elements when we come to consider the report at the ministerial council meeting in December.

The government will take its time to consider the report. It is extensive, and I do appreciate the early release. In doing this, I will seek advice from the ACT Australian

curriculum task force to ensure that all sectors of the ACT school system get a chance to have their say.

All children and young people are entitled to high quality education through a balanced and robust curriculum, regardless of where they live, their circumstances or the school they attend. The Australian curriculum has been developed wisely, with intelligence and rigour and by experts in education, with the best interests of the young people in mind.

Teachers, parents and professional associations from the ACT have actively engaged in the public consultation process across those curriculum areas and as we develop our response to this review we will ensure that these groups remain just as engaged as they have to date so that all have a chance to be part of a strong curriculum that serves our students well.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, how will you work with parents, teachers and different school sectors to ensure the continued confidence in the quality of the curriculum in ACT schools?

MS BURCH: I thank Ms Berry for her interest in the national curriculum. I have mentioned the ACT Australian curriculum task force. This task force provides a cohesive and indeed a comprehensive approach to the implementation of the Australian curriculum across all our sectors of schooling in the ACT. It includes representation from key parent organisations as well.

The task force provides the government, parents, teachers, principals and the community with key information about the Australian curriculum, including its purpose, content and structure and its role in ensuring that the ACT continues to have a high quality curriculum that is delivered by highly skilled and knowledgeable professionals.

The ACT Australian curriculum task force also works with ACARA to promote a range of opportunities for parents to understand more about the Australian curriculum. This includes the publication of parent-friendly information about the Australian curriculum on the ACARA website. The ACT government also has recently partnered with the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth to continue to strengthen the already high levels of parental engagement across our schools.

It is my firm belief that engaging parents and carers in their child's learning is fundamental to the integrity and the effectiveness of our curriculum and maintains parent and teacher confidence that our schools are meeting the needs of our children through the delivery of a world-class education system.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, what consultation will you undertake with Canberra's Indigenous community to develop a government response to the commonwealth review's view on Indigenous cross-curriculum perspectives?

MS BURCH: I thank Dr Bourke for his interest. The task force has very strong cross-community participation on its panel. We also recognise the role of the Indigenous elected body as the key organisation that represents the needs of our local Indigenous community. We will ensure that we talk with those and other community organisations that have an interest in education. Regardless of what school or what year you are in, every child deserves the best outcome that this government can provide through our education system.

Housing—public

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Housing. Minister, a *Canberra Times* article of 16 August detailed that more than 600 public housing properties sat empty for at least 30 days in the last financial year and more than 100 properties sat vacant for more than 100 days. Minister, the article stated that one reason for properties being held vacant for more than 30 days was because they are being held for people transferring from hospital or the Alexander Maconochie Centre. Minister, is it correct that public housing properties are left empty for people being transferred out of the AMC? If so, how many homes in the last financial year were held for this purpose?

MR BARR: Yes, and I will take the second part of the question on notice.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, how does Housing ACT determine who has priority for the vacant public housing so that the people on the priority waiting list can get access to public housing in a timely manner?

MR BARR: There is an established process assessing applicants against their income, amongst other factors. Those on the waiting list are categorised according to need. It is highly possible that someone leaving the Alexander Maconochie Centre may in fact be of the highest need of all.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, what are other reasons for public housing properties not being turned around within the target of 28 days?

MR BARR: Extensive maintenance works can sometimes stretch beyond 28 days.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, how many public housing properties were relet within the target of 28 days in the last financial year?

MR BARR: I would refer the member to the annual report of Housing ACT.

Roads—resurfacing

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services. Minister, the 2013-14 annual report for the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate shows that the resurfacing program failed to meet annual targets yet again. The report shows that only 1.8 per cent of municipal roads and 3.2 per cent of territory roads were resurfaced, compared to targets of four and five per cent respectively. The resurfacing program has recommenced for this year and once again opposition members have started to receive complaints from constituents who are concerned about the poor quality of work involving chip seal. Amongst other complaints, constituents have concerns about chip seal being used on steep streets and causing damage to vehicles. Minister, how is it that TAMS has failed to meet its targets for yet another year and that there are still complaints about the poor quality of the work?

MR RATTENBURY: Chip seal is used as part of the ACT road resurfacing program because it is a cost-effective measure that provides protection for the road surface. The purpose of chip sealing is to provide a seal so that water does not get into the roads, and it is water seeping into the road surface that results in the damage that leads to potholes and degradation of the road surface.

I know that members of the community do have concerns about chip seal. As I think I have said in this place before, there is a significant cost differential between the use of chip seal and asphaltting. It is a significant price differential, and in order to ensure that the budget that Roads ACT does have to do resurfacing goes as far as possible, chip sealing is used. It is used in jurisdictions across Australia because it is considered to be a cost-effective and effective way of dealing with road maintenance.

As members know, however, due to community feedback, there have been some changes. Chip seal is no longer being used in shopping centre car parks as a result of a policy change that I worked on with Roads ACT to deliver in the last year, because of the very significant feedback and the obvious difficulties it presents in shopping centre car parks.

In other areas we do at times have defect issues with the use of chip seal, but those are covered by warranty. With respect to where there is a problem, one example that members will probably know about is at the top of the hill at the Federal Highway, as you go out of the city. Examples like that are covered by the warranty and any repairs that do not meet standards are repaired at the cost of the contractor.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, is the use of chip seal appropriate on streets with a steep gradient or low traffic volume?

MR RATTENBURY: Chip seal is used in places that are suitable, and that is based on a technical analysis. Asphalt is used in some areas where there is particularly high usage or there are other technical reasons for doing so. Chip seal is used in those

places where it is considered appropriate. That is done on a case-by-base analysis. If there are particular examples, I am happy to take up the question for members; otherwise, it is hard to give a general answer except to say that Roads obviously makes an assessment of the appropriate places for appropriate treatments.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, how will the government ensure that the targets for the coming year are met and the territory's roads do not continue to deteriorate?

MR RATTENBURY: Territory and Municipal Services will use the budget available to get as much work done as possible on the ACT's road network.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, when was the last time that the ACT government met the municipal and territory roads resurfacing target?

MR RATTENBURY: I will take that question on notice.

OECD livable cities report

DR BOURKE: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, two weeks ago an OECD regional wellbeing report declared Canberra the most livable city in the world when compared to 362 other regions amongst 34 member nations. According to the report, why did Canberra achieve this incredible title, and how does this report's finding align with the ACT government's priorities and future agenda?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Dr Bourke for the question. I am sure all members in the Assembly would have been pleased with the findings in this OECD report, which declared Canberra the most livable city in the world when it was compared to 362 other regions amongst the 34 member nations. Canberra scores were consistently outstanding in a number of different areas: access to services, our civic engagement, education, jobs, the environment, income and health. In safety, the ACT was rated 10 out of 10, putting it in first place across Australia—and also in housing, with a score of 8½ out of 10. This is independent analysis. It is very comprehensive. I think that for all of us who live in this city it is very hard to disagree with.

The findings also align very well with the priorities of this government, which are about creating economic opportunity and providing world-class services and world-class infrastructure, but also a community that cares for and looks after those who are less fortunate, the disadvantaged and those who are unwell—and of course a place which encourages and promotes a place of strong community and shared spirit.

For me, as a person who has been born in this city and lived in this city all my life, I was very proud of the findings in this report. It is something that this Assembly should be rightly proud of and should celebrate.

Again, in terms of those priority areas that we have put forward, that we are working on, whether it be our large infrastructure projects, our provision of services across health and education or, indeed, looking to solve problems which have landed on our doorstep in relation to Mr Fluffy, Canberra is a very livable city. But where there are challenges, we do join together, work out solutions to the problem and look to provide each other with a hand when it is needed.

This is a report that I think we should be proud of. It has certainly elicited a bit of attention from around the country and the usual commentary that comes with Canberra having any positive news. But I think that for those of us who live here, who move around the city, who use services from time to time, we can all be very proud of the way that this city has grown and developed and the high level of service provision that is provided, particularly through the ACT government services, the non-government organisations that support that work, and of course the business community, who help us to grow the local economy.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Chief Minister, what feedback have you had following the release of these findings from the OECD?

MS GALLAGHER: The report has attracted both national and international attention. For us, whilst the news contained in this report, once we had read the report, was not that surprising, I think, for visitors and foreign dignitaries I have met, including on my recent trip overseas, their level of awareness and understanding of some of the strengths of Canberra has certainly been strengthened through the publication and coverage of this report. There is, obviously, the usual bashing that goes on about the nation's capital, although I think that is changing over time.

But for me, one of the best moments that have happened since this report was at the boundless playground. Really this again symbolises in a very physical way some of the strengths that have been highlighted in this report. There we were, opening a fantastic new playground for our children and any child, regardless of their abilities, is able to use that playground. It is a playground that has been built with the generosity of private donations and, where that has not met the budget, some support from the ACT government. So it is inclusive, it has been helped by the community. The business community have chipped in with donations of time, skill, labour to get it done. Then, there was a big celebration at the opening and a moment of spontaneous applause when I mentioned the fact that we live in the world's most liveable city.

The Canberra pride that has come out of this report is also something that we should acknowledge, something that we should be proud of and something that we should continue to build upon.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Chief Minister, did the OECD source their own data for this report or did the ACT government provide information?

MS GALLAGHER: Certainly I do not think the ACT government provided the information for this report. My understanding is that it came from a range of different datasets, but I will follow that up for you.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Chief Minister, how will the OECD report assist in promoting a positive image of Canberra and future opportunities in the city?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Ms Porter for the question. The work and the findings of this report feed immediately into the work of many people who promote our city, both in some of the formal campaigns we are running and through the everyday advocacy of people in that conversation, in social media and elsewhere.

It adds weight to the campaigns that are underway. I refer in particular to brand Canberra, or brand CBR. It is a valuable marketing tool for this innovative campaign which is already rolling out across different media platforms. With respect to visit Canberra, it is an enormous incentive for use by our local tourism sector. Obviously there are benefits for StudyCanberra. The report is a recognition of the access to services and the quality of education at all levels in the city and I think it will be a drawcard that our universities use when they are looking to attract students to come, particularly international students.

I also think it is a very strong tool for the business development strategy—for the business sector, for industry groups to work together with us to foster the outcomes that we want to see through that strategy to promote growth and jobs.

We will continue to use not just this report but other reports and the work that is already underway to promote Canberra as a great city with endless opportunity. This is something that we are very keen to do. I think it fits very well with the budget priorities we have outlined and some of the key projects, whether it be capital metro, city to the lake or new hospital infrastructure. All of that can be assisted and supported by the findings in this report.

Education—teaching hours

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the minister for education. Minister, in response to a question in May this year about the ACT AEU survey showing high levels of dissatisfaction amongst ACT teachers due to long work hours, you dismissed the results, suggesting their timing as being nothing more than coinciding with a wage negotiation process. You suggested ACT teachers have amongst the lowest class teaching times.

In today's *Canberra Times* there are the results of a survey conducted by the Australian Council for Education Research which shows that ACT teachers have the second longest working weeks among states and territories. Minister, why do ACT teachers work an average of 50.2 hours a week?

MS BURCH: I thank Mr Doszpot for his question. The survey that Mr Doszpot is referring to has, I think, for ACT results put non-government and government school teachers in the same category. They do show an above national average. That is a self-reported survey by teachers from government schools, independent schools and Catholic schools.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, how many hours do ACT public school teachers work on average, not just face-to-face teaching hours?

MS BURCH: I do not have that detail in front of me, but, as I have stated before, ACT teachers in public schools have the lowest face-to-face teaching hours compared to any of their counterparts in other states and territories. There certainly is an interest, and it has been raised by teachers, in reducing the level of admin and extra work that may be put upon them over different programs and policy areas over time. I think that their face-to-face teaching hours are fine and reasonable at the moment, but certainly we would look, through the directorate, at any way to reduce any admin workload attached to different areas of their work, and that is what the directorate will do with the teaching staff.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, why do you believe that teacher workload in the ACT is on par with other states, given the indication that the survey points to?

MS BURCH: I think you need to separate that the survey today for ACT put government and non-government teachers in the same survey results. As I have said, the face-to-face teaching hours for the ACT are the lowest. That is not the only work that teachers do; they do other bits and pieces that they refer to in this survey as school-related activity. I do not know what the definition for school-related activity is, but the survey results were for all teachers.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, why do you believe that a 50-hour week is a reasonable workload for teachers in the ACT?

MS BURCH: I have never said that it was, and I think he is putting words in my mouth.

ACT public service—front-line staff

MR SMYTH: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, the recently released state of the service report 2014 shows that the ACT public service grew by more than 530 people last year, or by three per cent. There was an actual drop in the number of front-line staff, including fire brigade officers, bus operators and legal support staff. There was no growth in the number of ambulance officers or disability

officers. There was only a one per cent increase in the number of teachers. However, last year there was a massive eight per cent increase in the number of executives. Their salaries averaged \$187,500 per annum. The ACT executive workforce has increased by 20 per cent in the past five years while the public service has only increased by 15 per cent. Chief Minister, why have the number of ACT executives increased by 20 per cent over the last five years?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Mr Smyth for the question. The ACT government service has grown. It has grown modestly with the implementation of the government's key priority areas of focus. I think the vast majority of additional staff has been in the area of education and in health, where we have consciously taken decisions to grow that side of the workforce.

In relation to the executive level, they are a much smaller component of the overall workforce of the ACT government. The vast majority of ACT public servants are not executives. So where there are increases in executive employment I think you see a larger percentage growth but the numbers are actually much more reasonable. Again, governments do need senior staff to implement government programs. I think there is nothing unreasonable about ensuring that you get high-quality, well-remunerated people across the board in the ACT public service. But this is something that the budget cabinet watches closely. Where there are extra staff being added, that is part of our consideration in supporting particular areas of growth and priority.

I am satisfied that every staff member that has got a job in the ACT public service is in a job that is needed to be performed. There will be other areas of business where we see changes and fluctuations in staff numbers. That is entirely reasonable. In terms of ambulance staff, there have been very big increases in ambulance officers in the years preceding this report.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, has the government got its priorities wrong when it disproportionately increases the number of high-paid executive jobs at the expense of front-line staff?

MS GALLAGHER: I note again that you have not cited the growth in health staff as part of the areas that you have nominated in your question, and certainly the area of largest growth has been in nursing and midwifery professional officers who are also quite often front-line service deliverers and health assistants. But I am also not going to demonise people who do very important work for the ACT public service and who may not be considered front-line workers. Again, this is something we watch closely. But there are a range of duties to be performed across the ACT government. Whether it be front line, back line, middle line, there are reasons for people's employment and for different classifications of employment.

Again, it is a cheap shot. It is the way to get a quick headline but the reality is that we are very professionally served by a dedicated workforce, a very dedicated workforce, and again the standard of care, the access to services that the ACT community have is something that comes up time and again with me as a member of this place and is

something that we should be thankful for. But it does not come without employing good people to do those important jobs.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Chief Minister, how does the movement of public service staff numbers compare to other jurisdictions?

MS GALLAGHER: I think when you look at the rise of the conservatives in state governments you see massive job losses, then in subsequent years employing people again. In those state governments which have sought the same approach that the federal government is now inflicting particularly across Canberra, you will see significant job reductions. One of our commitments at the last election was not to sack thousands of staff but to provide a stabilising influence, where we could, to maintain overall employment numbers and to grow our areas of priority. That is exactly what you are seeing now.

To some extent, as we can see our unemployment rate rise a little, there are many families across the ACT who are very thankful for the approach that the ACT government has taken, because the big player in town certainly is not doing that. I think it is important that we as the local government who live and breathe this city ensure that, with modest growth in key priority areas, we remain a good and stable employer in this town.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Chief Minister, has the need to provide front-line staff been compromised by the redirection of funds to employ expensive high-paid executives to plan for light rail?

MS GALLAGHER: We are employing people to plan for light rail, and we are employing good people to plan for light rail. It is important that this city-building project is actually resourced appropriately to deliver a good outcome for the Canberra community. We all know that you over there would like to see this project fail, and we know that you are campaigning on that, but we are going to deliver a very professional project with all the detailed work that needs to underpin good decision-making. That requires staff—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: There will be a range of decisions that are ongoing, Mr Hanson. It shows again your ignorance of this project. You can sit here and scoff and laugh. There will be a range of decisions that are taken throughout the life of this project and it is incredibly important that the ACT cabinet is provided with good, professional, high-level, quality advice. That is what we are getting from the Capital Metro Agency. I acknowledge Emma Thomas's leadership of that agency and the work that has been achieved in her year serving the ACT community.

I will also say that the other key priority areas for government, which attract vast amounts of money, and deservedly so, go to the education directorate, go to child protection and go to health. They are the areas that we have prioritised time and time again, and they continue to receive the vast majority of the ACT community's money that is collected in order to deliver high quality services.

That will never change. Yes, we are going to spend more money on public transport—good quality public transport. But at the same time we will continue to provide the best healthcare system and the best education system, and we will look after those children that require extra support across this city. That is exactly what we have done, and it is what we will continue to do. It is what we said we would do in the 2012 election. (*Time expired.*)

Floriade—attendance

MS BERRY: My question is to the minister for tourism. Minister, could you please advise the Assembly on the performance of this year's Floriade?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Berry for the question. I am pleased to be able to advise that Floriade 2014 was a huge success. The 30-day festival attracted 481,854 visits—many people, of course, attending on multiple occasions over the 30 days. I am advised this is the biggest crowd for the event since the introduction of turnstiles in 1999. It represents a near 7½ per cent increase on last year's attendance, with nearly 10,000 more visits than the previous highest attendance of 471,979 in 2010. The excellent weather during the month certainly contributed to those attendance figures, but we are very pleased with the quality of the program and the support of sponsors and charity partners.

I would like to highlight a couple of elements of Floriade 2014 that were very successful. Floriade's first-ever dogs day out raised more than \$4,000 for the RSPCA. Also, Floriade's other charity partner, the Independent Property Group Foundation, through the "my cubby house rocks" project, were able to raise more than \$45,000 for two very worthy causes—boundless Canberra, which the Chief Minister mentioned earlier, and the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children.

There will be an evaluation of Floriade and Floriade NightFest undertaken by Repucom. The final results will be made public. Just to give members a sense of the ballpark, though, the expectation, given last year's event contributed just under \$40 million in direct expenditure into the territory economy, is that we are anticipating similar-level figures for 2014.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, how is the ACT government continuing to deliver such outstanding growth in attendance?

MR BARR: One of the key features is that the event remains free. The only time that Floriade attendance has taken a significant dive in its history was when the Liberal

Party introduced entry fees for the event. That was an outstandingly popular decision, was it not?

Ms Berry: Was it your idea, Brendan?

MR BARR: It probably was Mr Smyth's idea.

This year we focused on four themed weeks, each one offering something new and different each week. This has encouraged repeat visitation. We have also continued to invest in NightFest, ensuring that additional resources are provided to Mandylights, the company that produces the lighting and colour effects for NightFest.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, how has Floriade demonstrated the best of Canberra to a broad audience?

MR BARR: An innovation this year was the establishment of the destination CBR marquee, which explored Canberra's local treasures and had a host of participative demonstrations, workshops and children's activities partnered around our key tourism themes—arts and culture, food and wine, family fun, and outdoor and adventure. It was very pleasing to see the partnership there between brand Canberra and the National Capital Attractions Association.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, what role has free wi-fi played in the success of this year's Floriade event?

MR BARR: There were 12,827 unique user connections, 48,601 unique sessions, average data usage of 41.49 megabytes, 1.4 million people saw Floriade-related posts on Facebook, and the Floriade Facebook fan base grew from 12,000 likes at the beginning of the event to 40,000 by the end. It is more likes than the entire Liberal opposition.

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

Papers

MADAM SPEAKER: I present the following papers:

Standing order 191—Amendments to:

Heritage Legislation Amendment Bill 2013, dated 2 October 2014.

Major Events Bill 2014, dated 2 October 2014.

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory—Office of the
Legislative Assembly—Annual Report 2013-2014—Addendum.

The annual report was tabled in the Assembly on 25 September 2014. I apologise to members for the gap in the annual report.

Executive contracts Papers and statement by minister

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

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

Long-term contracts:

Alison Playford, dated 17 September 2014.

Geoffrey Rutledge, dated 15 and 17 September 2014.

Peter Murray, dated 1 October 2014.

Russell Noud, dated 3 July and 17 September 2014.

Tracey Rose Mooney, dated 18 and 25 September 2014.

Short-term contracts:

Andrew McIntosh, dated 15 and 17 September 2014.

David James, dated 25 and 30 September 2014.

Jamie Driscoll, dated 28 and 30 September 2014.

Contract variations:

Maureen Sheehan, dated 28 September and 3 October 2014.

Virginia Hayward, dated 22 and 25 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 section 31A and section 79 of the Public Sector Management Act, which require the tabling of all director-general and executive contracts and contract variations. Today I present five long-term contracts, three short-term contracts and two contract variations. The details of the contracts will be circulated to members.

Papers

Mr Barr presented the following paper:

Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act, pursuant to section 13—Annual Report 2013-2014—Exhibition Park Corporation—Corrigendum, dated 28 August 2014.

Ms Gallagher, on behalf of **Mr Corbell**, presented the following paper:

Civil Law (Wrongs) Act, pursuant to section 205—General reporting requirements of insurers.

Ms Gallagher presented the following papers:

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Emergencies Act—Emergencies (Strategic Bushfire Management Plan for the ACT) 2014 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-251 (LR, 25 September 2014).

Energy Efficiency (Cost of Living) Improvement Act—Energy Efficiency (Cost of Living) Improvement (Priority Household Target) Determination 2014 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-248 (LR, 18 September 2014).

Health Act—Health (Local Hospital Network Council—Deputy Chair) Appointment 2014 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-249 (LR, 22 September 2014).

Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act—Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Amendment Regulation 2014 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2014-23 (LR, 25 September 2014).

Public Place Names Act—Public Place Names (Bonner) Amendment Determination 2014 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-250 (LR, 25 September 2014).

University of Canberra Act—

University of Canberra Council Appointment 2014 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-246 (LR, 18 September 2014).

University of Canberra Council Appointment 2014 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-247 (LR, 18 September 2014).

Mr Gentleman presented the following paper:

Planning and Development Act, pursuant to subsection 242(2)—Schedule—Leases granted for the period 1 July to 30 September 2014.

Planning and Development Act 2007—call-in powers
Paper and statement by minister

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): For the information of members I present the following paper:

Pursuant to subsection 161(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2007, a statement in relation to call-in powers concerning Development Application No 201221878—Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm, together with a Notice of Decision.

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

Leave granted.

MR GENTLEMAN: On 28 May 2014 Mr Simon Corbell MLA, the former Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development, directed, under section 158 of the Planning and Development Act, that the planning and land authority refer to him development application No 201221878 as amended by the development application No 201221878C. As the recently appointed Minister for Planning, responsibility for this matter now falls within my portfolio.

The development application sought approval for the construction of the Ngunnawal bush healing farm on a rural property in the Tidbinbilla valley known as Miowera. It will consist of several new buildings, including a communal building, administration and training building, two resident pods, each with four bedrooms, soft and hard landscape features, recreational and cultural elements and rural farming enterprises such as an orchard and animal pens. The Ngunnawal bush healing farm will fulfil a long-overdue need in our community. It is to be established as a place away from the temptations of the city where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can try to recover from the many personal challenges that arise from using drugs and alcohol.

It will not be a place for medical treatment or to detoxify; rather, it will be a place free of drugs and alcohol, with a strong focus on Aboriginal spirituality and cultural principles through recreational pursuits. It will continue with a strong focus, of course, on agriculture.

On 30 September, in my capacity as the Minister for Planning, I decided to consider the development application, and on 8 October this year I approved the application with conditions, using my ministerial call-in powers under section 162 of the Planning and Development Act 2007. In deciding to approve the application, I gave careful consideration to the issues I was required to consider under sections 119 and 120 of the Planning and Development Act.

I also gave careful consideration to the requirements that needed to be met under the territory plan in order for the Ngunnawal bush healing farm to be approved, including the proposed use of the farm as a group or organised camp as defined in the territory plan, advice from the National Capital Authority and from many territory government entities that were consulted in relation to the proposal. These included the Environment Protection Authority, the ACT Heritage Council, the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate, ACTEW and ActewAGL, electricity, gas and water, the Emergency Services Agency and the Conservator of Flora and Fauna. In every case the development with the conditions was supported by those entities.

I also gave consideration to the many representations received by the ACT Planning and Land Authority during the two periods of public notification which occurred firstly in June 2012 for the development application and secondly in March 2013 for the amended application. The authority received 52 representations, mostly from other rural landholders in the Tidbinbilla valley. Most of them expressed their objection to this development.

Having read and carefully considered all of those objections, I am satisfied that, with the conditions I have imposed as part of my approval for the development, it should

go ahead. While I note that some objections have not been addressed to the satisfaction of those making them, I did not consider that they warranted refusal of the development application for what will be a valuable facility.

The conditions I have imposed on the approval for this development include a track and bridge over Paddys River that gives access to block 241. It must be certified by a suitably qualified person as able to support emergency services vehicles up to 28 tonnes. An emergency and evacuation plan must be submitted to and endorsed by the ACT Emergency Services Agency prior to my approval of the development taking effect. Detailed flood modelling must be conducted to determine the one-in-100-year flood level of Paddys River within the vicinity of block 241 Paddys River.

The Planning and Development Act provides for specific criteria to be considered in relation to the exercise of the call-in power. I have used the ministerial call-in powers in this instance because I consider the application is ultimately a proposal that will provide substantial public benefit to the territory and, for the first time in our city, enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to participate in a rehabilitation process that understands their unique spiritual, physical, cultural, social, emotional and economic needs at this facility. Importantly, this development will provide support to some of the most valuable members of our community and use of the call-in powers in this instance will enable the long-overdue construction of this development to begin.

Section 161(2) of the Planning and Development Act specifies that if I decide an application as minister, I must table a statement in the Legislative Assembly not later than three sitting days after the day of the decision. As required and for the benefit of members, I have tabled the statement which provides a description of the development, details of the land on which the development is proposed to take place and the name of the applicant, details of my decision on the application and the reasons for the decision.

Planning and Development Act 2007—variation No 319 to the territory plan

Paper and statement by minister

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): For the information of members I present the following paper:

Planning and Development Act, pursuant to subsection 79(1)—Approval of Variation No. 319 to the Territory Plan—Zone and overlay changes to public land in the Gungahlin District as a result of the Gungahlin Strategic Assessment Biodiversity Plan—Throsby, Jacka, Horse Park North, Taylor and Kinlyside, dated 13 October 2014, together with background papers, a copy of the summaries and reports, and a copy of any direction or report required.

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

Leave granted.

MR GENTLEMAN: Draft variation 319 to the territory plan proposes to change zone and overlay provisions at Kinlyside, Taylor, Horse Park North, Jacka and Throsby as a result of the Gungahlin strategic assessment biodiversity plan. It is to formally add all of Kinlyside and part of Throsby to the ACT's nature reserve estate and rezone Horse Park North and part of Taylor and Jacka to the hills, ridges and buffer zone. Draft variation 319 was released for public comment during July and August 2014 and attracted two public submissions.

The main issues in this variation related to bushfire management requirements, including sites in Belconnen. A report on consultation was prepared by the planning and land authority, responding to the issues raised in the submissions.

Under section 73 of the Planning and Development Act I have chosen to exercise my discretion and not refer the draft variation to the planning and environment committee as I believe this draft variation formalises the outcomes from the approved Gungahlin strategic assessment biodiversity plan and provides ongoing protections to these identified areas with high ecological values. I now table the approved variation to the territory plan 319.

Active transport initiatives

Discussion of matter of public importance

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Ms Lawder): Madam Speaker has received letters from Ms Berry, Dr Bourke, Mr Coe, Mr Doszpot, 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 Ms Berry be submitted to the Assembly, namely:

The importance of active transport initiatives for Canberrans.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (3.45): As highlighted within successive *State of Australian cities* reports by the commonwealth Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, the ACT has one of the highest participation rates in active travel amongst the major Australian cities. The city we live in has beautiful vistas, a great path network and relatively flat topography, so it is no wonder Canberra has one of the highest participation rates. This demonstrates the potential for Canberra to lead the nation in active travel, and the ACT government wants our city to be a place where people live active lifestyles every day.

Between 2011 and 2013, overall weekly cycling participation grew from 21.9 per cent to 24.5 per cent, the highest of any state or territory and well above the national average of 16.6 per cent. Data on walking is not available between census years and will be measured through the next ABS census in 2016.

Active travel has multiple benefits for individuals and the environment, and delivers on key ACT government policies, including transport for Canberra, the ACT planning strategy, the ACT climate change strategy and towards zero growth, including the

healthy weight action plan. The implementation of cycling and walking projects is the foundation of the ACT government's objective of increasing the number of people engaged in active travel.

Active travel is the most basic form of travel, relying on human power. Although primarily walking and cycling, it can also include using a wheelchair or other personal mobility device, pushing a pram or wheeling luggage, or riding a bicycle, e-bike, pedelec, scooter, skateboard, tricycle or even rollerblades. Active travel is increasingly recognised as a key feature of the world's best cities. Exercise from a walk to the shops or to catch a bus, the social benefits from meeting people on the streets and the economic benefits from active travel have been demonstrated in other Australian cities.

The ACT government aims to deliver cycling and walking infrastructure that is safe, well lit and signposted, offering direct and convenient routes for destinations and being integrated with public transport.

Active travel is important. It is important because the more people we have walking, cycling and taking public transport, the more we can significantly reduce the demand for expensive road infrastructure and help manage traffic congestion. Walking, cycling and other forms of active transport are an easy way to increase daily physical activity and social exchange. Active travel is a healthy and rewarding form of outdoor recreation. It aids in the prevention of lifestyle-related conditions such as depression, obesity, diabetes and heart disease. It improves general fitness and health and extends our life expectancy and our expectation of a long, active and enjoyable life.

Walking, cycling and other active modes are low cost, are environmentally friendly and have minimal demand on natural or economic resources. These activities consume no fossil fuels, take up a minimum of space and impose little impact on other users. The more we take trips by walking and cycling, the more we reduce our environmental footprint.

How does active travel fit in the ACT strategic policy setting? In 2012 the ACT government released transport for Canberra 2012-31, which is the foundation for transport planning in the ACT over the next 20 years. The active travel targets set in transport for Canberra aim, by 2026, to increase the mode share of work trips by cycling and walking to seven per cent each. This is up from 4.7 per cent walking and 2.7 per cent cycling in 2011. An interim target for 2016 has been set at six per cent for cycling and 6.5 per cent for walking.

The ACT government is a signatory to Walk21, the International Charter for Walking, which commits to reducing the physical, social and institutional barriers that limit walking activity as well as working with others to help create a culture where people choose to walk.

Active travel also supports ACT government health, recreation and active living goals, including the active 2020 goal to increase participation in active recreation activities at all levels and the healthy weight action plan towards zero growth in the increase of overweight and obesity in the ACT.

The ACT prides itself on being the healthiest place in Australia, with longer life expectancies, lower rates of major illness and more active and healthy lifestyles than other jurisdictions. Nevertheless, like many wealthy urban populations around the world, our collective health is threatened by dramatic increases in overweight and obesity. This concern is highlighted in such stark trends as 25 per cent of children in the ACT being overweight or obese and 63.6 per cent of adults being overweight or obese, a rise from 22.9 per cent in 1995. There is a risk of premature cardiovascular disease, stroke, diabetes, arthritis and a host of other conditions which can cost years of healthy life.

While individuals must make the daily choices around their health and wellbeing, governments can assist in supporting healthy decision making by making healthier options more available and making the healthy choice the easiest choice.

The healthy weight initiative forms the core of the ACT government's approach to combating the rising rates of overweight and obesity in the ACT. It is a coordinated whole-of-government initiative that works across multiple directorates and non-government organisations. It builds on the many programs and initiatives already in place within the ACT.

The healthy weight initiative is guided by the towards zero growth healthy weight action plan, which the Chief Minister launched on 14 October 2013. The action plan sets the bold target of zero growth in the rates of overweight and obesity within the ACT. On 3 June 2014 the government announced \$3.6 million over four years for the healthy weight initiative commencing in 2014-15. The action plan sets out a range of actions under six themes. The six focus areas are clustered around food, environment, schools, workplaces, urban planning, social inclusion and evaluation. Implementation groups have been established to manage implementation in each clustered focus.

As recognised in the healthy weight action plan, there is growing recognition that the built environment influences levels of physical activity, whether for transport or recreation. The healthy weight action plan outlines actions aimed at ensuring that overweight and obesity levels in the ACT stay at current levels or decrease.

The ACT government, through the Environment and Planning Directorate and the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate, is undertaking a number of activities to implement active travel initiatives as outlined in the transport for Canberra plan.

The highlights of these initiatives include the city to cycle loop. The 3.2 kilometre long Civic cycle loop provides a high quality path for bicycle riders travelling in the city centre of Canberra. The path also separates bicycle riders from both congested pedestrian footpaths and motor vehicle traffic. Once complete, the loop will connect Marcus Clarke Street, Rudd Street, Bunda Street and Allara Street in the city centre. Some \$6 million of funding has been committed for the design and construction over a four-year period.

The loop is being delivered in four stages. The first stages were opened in March 2013 at Marcus Clarke Street and Rudd Street. Design for the Bunda Street and Allara

Street stages is underway, and completion is due by 2015. The Bunda Street section will be a share-way for bicycles, pedestrians and motor vehicles.

Another initiative is measuring walkability to Canberra's bus stops. In 2013 the ACT government completed a mapping project to measure the walking distance and travel time to every Canberra bus stop to inform prioritisation of bus routes and connections.

Let me go to the age-friendly neighbourhoods initiative. In TAMS, Roads ACT has been allocated up to \$500,000 over the next few years to implement the age-friendly suburbs project on a pilot basis to demonstrate how targeted investment in infrastructure could support physical activity and wellbeing for an ageing Canberra population.

Investing in Canberra's walking and cycling paths is another fantastic highlight. In 2013-14 over \$4.5 million of new walking and cycling programs and infrastructure was delivered by TAMS within the Environment and Planning Directorate. This constitutes around \$11.75 per person in the ACT. Projects include feasibility studies such as the Molonglo to city cycleway, with \$900,000; forward design of walking and cycling projects such as the Civic cycle loop, \$773,000; construction of cycle facilities such as the Yamba Drive shared path and the Civic cycle loop, \$1,750,000; and upgrades to existing walking and cycling infrastructure as part of capital upgrade programs, \$1,100,000.

Let me turn to end-of-trip facilities. Providing adequate facilities at destinations such as workplaces and tertiary education institutions also influences people's likelihood of riding, jogging or walking. Recognising that quality end-of-trip facilities will help to encourage more ACT public service staff to walk and cycle to work, the ACT government has engaged Pedal Power to assess end-of-trip facilities such as bicycle parking, showers, lockers and change rooms at selected ACT public service buildings. The assessment will include a staff survey and a building facilities assessment conducted by qualified Pedal Power assessors. Pedal Power will develop a report for each site, outlining key aspects of the building's end-of-trip facilities, and provide recommendations on where improvements can be made.

Another highlight is the bike-and-ride facilities. The attraction of cycling to public transport instead of driving is being further enhanced through the government's investment in facilities aimed at making bike and ride a convenient choice for users. The government has allocated more than \$4 million over four years from 2010-11 to expand the network of park-and-ride and bike-and-ride facilities, with a focus on the existing rapid and frequent bus services. This has included the construction of bike cages at important hubs and locations, including facilities at the Belconnen community station, Flemington Road at Harrison, Athllon Drive at Mawson, and Melrose Drive at Lyons.

I turn to bike racks on buses. Over 80 per cent of ACTION buses in the ACT are fitted with bike racks. It is the most extensive network of bicycle rack enabled bus routes in Australia. Customers can ride to a bus stop that may be a bit far to walk to, hop on a bus with their bike, and then finish their journey by bicycle.

We have also had a trial of bicycle lane markers on the road. A range of devices are being trialled with the aim of improving the safety of on-road bicycle lanes by offering some defined separation from other traffic. Four types of devices are being trialled at five on-road sites across Canberra where the separation between bicycles and motor vehicles could be improved. The different devices, ranging from tactile line marking to raised mountable kerbing, will help identify the edge lines of the cycle lane and adjacent motor vehicle traffic. The trial will run for 12 months, until May 2015.

I turn to way-finding signage. The ACT government has been working to design and install signage to help pedestrians and bicycle riders navigate the off-road path system. We have also had the Canberra centenary trail, a 145-kilometre walking and cycling journey that visits historic and iconic sites around Canberra. There are self-drive heritage trails that promote active travel at schools, and there is Capital Cycling.

As I have outlined for the Assembly today, the ACT government has long recognised the benefits of investing in active transport initiatives. We continue to deliver on our commitments in this key policy area for the benefit of all Canberrans.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (4.00): I welcome this opportunity, and others, to discuss Canberra's transport needs and to contrast the approach to transport planning of the ACT Labor-Greens government with that of the Liberal opposition. It is interesting that, whenever I move a motion or ask questions about light rail, the government says that we are flogging the issue to death. Yet today, Ms Berry is the one who has raised the issue of transport planning, so obviously there is still more to be said about this subject.

I am proud of the ideas and scrutiny that the opposition has brought to the debate about active transport in Canberra. The opposition is unashamedly pragmatic and practical when it comes to developing transport in Canberra. We will not assess projects based on intangibles and unquantifiable benefits, which this government frequently does. A Liberal government will spend taxpayers' money on transport initiatives based on evidence, based on research, based on real outcomes. Instead it seems that evidence has no role in transport planning for this Labor government. The only thing that seems to matter is item 2.2 of the Labor-Greens agreement.

Active transport is beneficial to both the user and the broader community. If, by active transport, we are primarily talking about walking or cycling to a destination then there could be no doubt that there are tremendous benefits for all concerned. However, we cannot be clouded in our judgement as to whether any spending on public transport such as light rail, at more than \$783 million, is the best use of that money, or even the optimal transport solution.

In fact, if the active travel zone is several kilometres around an employment hub, perhaps the ACT government should be targeting these people, such as people living on the light rail route in the inner north, to be walking or cycling rather than catching a tram.

The predicted travel time for the light rail service is 25 minutes—that is, 25 minutes to travel 12.5 kilometres, stopping about a dozen times. So the government is aiming for a travel speed of about 30 kilometres an hour. This is not particularly appealing for the more than 50,000 people who live in Gungahlin. It seems that this light rail proposal is targeted not at Gungahlin residents but at the frequent stopping zone in the inner north.

The Canberra Liberals took to the 2012 election a cycling initiative that recognised the benefits and opportunities of cycling in Canberra. The initiatives included constructing a cycle path along Horse Park Drive, supporting the construction of the Civic cycling loop, and investigating how major roads such as Adelaide Avenue, Belconnen Way and others can have on-road cycling infrastructure improved through separation or segregation.

We committed to injecting further money into the street sweeping program, a safe crossing at Bowen Drive, improving the emphasis on cycling in the L and P-plate written examinations, and also producing literature for distribution through cycling organisations and retailers that inform cyclists of their rights and obligations when riding in Canberra. We also supported the principle of cycling through the Jerrabomberra wetlands and other areas. The opposition has long had the view that separated or segregated cycle paths are optimal, and where possible we should be taking that course of action.

The examples that I have just mentioned as part of our 2012 promise were clear examples of practical and pragmatic options that we should take to transport planning.

The opposition recognises the numerous advocacy and community groups that campaign for better active transport. I would like to acknowledge the good work done by Tony Stubbs and his team, including the LiveLighter initiative. The Heart Foundation has been a strong voice campaigning for better lifestyles, facilitated by the better decisions made by individuals and government.

For every dollar that the government spends, there is an opportunity cost. A dollar spent in one area is a dollar forgone in another. I am very concerned about what we are forgoing as a result of more than \$800 million being spent on light rail.

What would that capital expenditure purchase by way of footpath or cycling infrastructure, for health facilities or for the bus network—or even for Mr Fluffy home owners? These are very real questions which the government have simply ignored as part of their ideological and selfish commitment to the Labor-Greens agreement. The Canberra Pedestrian Forum estimates that 30 per cent of Canberra streets do not have footpaths and that Canberra's network of on-road cycling lanes, off-road shared community paths and footpaths reach only half of Canberra homes. What could \$800 million do to address this issue? Such infrastructure connects people to their neighbours and provides a link from their house that is perhaps more inviting and appealing than their driveway, yet this local infrastructure has been ignored.

Further to this line of thought, the government says that many people will use the tram for park and ride. However, how is this going to help active transport? Of course, it encourages car ownership and actually encourages car dependency.

The commitment to spend \$800 million was not in the best interests of Canberrans. Ms Gallagher's regular hesitance to fully back the project in media interviews is evidence of that. The real reason is that, to date, light rail has kept Labor in power with Mr Rattenbury's support for a couple of years, and will do so for another couple of years.

It is easy for Ms Berry and others to spin the same old intangible motherhood statements about how good and transformational light rail can be. But the reality is that the evidence does not point to that experience in Canberra. Research undertaken by the government, government-commissioned researchers and others shows that this project is going to be economically marginal, financially disastrous and neutral or perhaps even negative from a public transport point of view. Yet the government gloss over this and say all is well and that it is worth while spending \$800 million. Of course, there was no assessment done whatsoever of what was the best route or the best mode. Again, their ideology and their willingness to sign an agreement with Mr Rattenbury were paramount.

I understand why rail and public transport enthusiasts would be excited about light rail. I understand that most people, given a choice, like the concept of a tram. But it still has to be paid for. Most people would probably prefer to get a helicopter to work, but the reality is that it is just not possible, and the reality is that, for the vast majority of Canberrans, light rail is not going to affect them very much at all. The fact is that everything has to be paid for, and there is an opportunity cost for everything that we do.

I have spoken at length in this place about concerns with the patronage, route selection, cost and other elements of the proposal. And to the Assembly's delight, you will be hearing much more from me and my colleagues over the coming years about this issue. We do not back away from our commitment to get the best possible outcome for Canberra taxpayers. What could \$800 million purchase for capital upgrades for active transport infrastructure across Canberra? Perhaps one light rail route already serviced by the best bus in the network, or perhaps it could be a multitude of other options. We should do justice to the other options and at least consider them prior to rushing in and spending even more money on capital metro.

I thank Ms Berry for this opportunity to talk about transport policy.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (4.08): I thank Ms Berry for raising this MPI, which recognises the importance of active transport in our city. Active transport is, of course, part of the broader concept of active living.

Active living and active transport are concepts that have the strong support of the Greens. The Greens have a proud legacy of advancing policies on investment in and recognition of active transport and active living, not just in the ACT but right across Australia.

“Active transport” means travelling in a way that involves physical activity. Primarily, this is walking and cycling. It also refers to public transport where it is effectively integrated with cycling and walking. Beyond that, it is a concept that considers things such as the planning of our city, traffic and safety, the built environment and the way all of these influence people’s transport choices.

“Active living” is a term that basically overlaps with “active travel”. Sometimes it is used more broadly to also refer to recreational activities. It is important that we support recreational activities as well through facilities such as public open space, sporting fields and dog parks.

There are enormous benefits to promoting active travel in Canberra, and in designing our city to support and prioritise active travel—better health, better safety, an improved environment, improved social and community outcomes and even improvements to the economy.

When we spoke on this topic recently, I quoted some evidence from other Australian and international cities showing that slow speed and highly peopled environments are good for business because they create an environment where people like to linger. When people stay, they bring their business. There is a good summary of national and international literature on this topic in the Heart Foundation report *Good for business: the benefits of making streets more walking and cycling friendly*. The contrast to this approach is to build a car-dominated city, and we should all be aware of the detriments to the community that can result from this approach.

I am encouraged at the changes and improvements that we have made in Canberra over the last few years. Some members may remember that the ACT Greens launched a major active transport plan for the ACT over four years ago, in March 2010, which we released to the community and tabled in the Assembly.

One of the key issues flagged in the Greens’ 2010 plan was the issue of funding priorities. It noted the historical discrepancy in transport funding, with sustainable transport traditionally receiving limited funds. The focus, of course, has been on road building and on providing infrastructure for cars, providing space for car parks and increasing the sprawl of our city.

I think it is fair to say that this situation is changing. The light rail project, of course, is the most obvious example. The government’s major infrastructure spend in this area will help deliver a sustainable public transport option that will help create a city that is environmentally sustainable, healthy, active, less congested, more social and more vibrant. I think it is an excellent and welcome change in approach that looks to the long-term future of our city. Of course, it has incensed the Liberal Party because their vision is the exact opposite: think far enough ahead to reach the next election; lock us into roads, congestion and pollution; ignore “pretend” threats like climate change; and never mind the social disadvantages that grow in a car-dominated city.

That is the vision of the Liberal Party. I feel slightly sorry for Mr Coe that he is going to spend the next several years of his life simply having a lifestyle that is all about

tearing something apart, being entirely negative about it and refusing to accept the evidence that will come out in things like the business case that show the obvious benefits for our city, which even the *Canberra Times* acknowledged in its editorial today, despite the way they are approaching this issue.

Cycling and walking funding provides another example. Prior to the arrival of four Greens in the Assembly in 2008, and before the original Labor-Greens parliamentary agreement, cycling and walking received a fairly small, ad hoc amount—around \$350,000 per year.

The first parliamentary agreement secured by the Greens turned this situation around, increasing recurrent funding for cycling infrastructure to \$3.6 million per annum and providing \$2.5 million to address the maintenance backlog and implementation of signage on the cycling network. It also provided an additional \$500,000 per annum of recurrent funding for footpath upgrades and maintenance. The current parliamentary agreement ensures the focus continues, guaranteeing \$15 million above current budget funding over four years for improved walking and cycling infrastructure.

The benefits these changes have brought for active transport have been significant. We have many new paths and cycle lanes all around Canberra, including major path projects such as the Civic cycle loop, the Jerrabomberra wetlands path, Cotter Road cycle paths, and shared paths at Yamba Drive linking to the Canberra Hospital, as well as many repaired and resealed shared paths and footpaths.

The Greens' active transport plan also recommended laying out active transport infrastructure prior to or simultaneously with road design. We are starting to see that occur in a better and more coordinated way in new areas such as the Molonglo suburbs. The recent government response to the vulnerable road user inquiry agreed that the government will further assess whether changes can be made to the estate development code to support and prioritise vulnerable road users in newly developed parts of Canberra. It will also investigate the adoption of a formal ACT urban design hierarchy which would prioritise vulnerable road users over other road users and would provide overarching guidance to government planning and design decisions.

These are two very important changes for making our city supportive of active transport, because cyclists and walkers are vulnerable road users as well as active transport users. I am looking forward to working with Minister Gentleman to implement these initiatives across our shared responsibilities in our two portfolio areas.

The Greens' active transport plan also emphasised the need for connectivity between the active transport network and the public transport network. Recently we have seen this happen a lot more effectively, especially with numerous new bike-and-ride facilities incorporated into park and rides, as agreed to through the parliamentary agreements.

The plan discussed car sharing—a system where members can share a car without having to own it—and we will now see this progressed through the recent

parliamentary agreement. It is a system that can really help people who do not want to own a car or who want to own fewer cars.

The plan also proposed the introduction of low speed environments around shopping centres and community centres. This was also progressed through the 2008 parliamentary agreement. Of course, now we have successful and popular 40-kilometre-an-hour zones in all of the major town centres. Through work in TAMS, and further through the response to the vulnerable road users inquiry, these slower speed zones will be expanded into group centres and potentially into residential areas.

The Greens' active transport plan discussed the benefits of building cycling highways and separated Copenhagen-style cycling lanes. Through the parliamentary agreement, the government is investigating the first cycle highway for Canberra, from Molonglo to the city and parliamentary triangle.

We now have the first Copenhagen-style cycle lanes built in Canberra, at the Kingston foreshore and also around the new Civic cycling loop. Incidentally, that 2010 plan also called for the building of the Civic cycle loop and I have been very pleased to be able to launch the first three stages of that loop. As TAMS minister, I am now overseeing the design of Bunda Street into an innovative shared space, which is now under construction.

It is useful to revisit the Greens' active transport plan from four years ago because it is a good indicator of how far we have actually progressed. The percentage of people walking and cycling continues to increase. In the ACT we have the highest cycling rate of any of the capital cities. But it is still less than three per cent, and there is no doubt that we have much more work to do to ensure that this really is a cycling-friendly city.

If we can make that progress, we will turn Canberra into an exemplar of active living and active travel. We need to do that if we are to meet the mode shift targets that the government has set in its transport for Canberra plan.

An issue that I have stressed before is that mode shifts towards active transport are likely to come from lower represented groups, such as less confident walkers and riders, women, or older people, rather than groups that are already well represented and generally well catered for, such as the more confident sport riders who are using the on-road bike lanes.

As an example, women are underrepresented as bike riders in the ACT. The ACT has the highest participation rate of adults aged 18 to 39, but there is a significant difference in the rate of cycling between men and women. More than half the men but only 13 per cent of the women aged 18 to 39 ride each week. Women say that traffic danger is one of the biggest barriers preventing them from riding. So providing physical separation between riders and traffic and slowing down motor vehicles are good ways to assist more of this group to ride and potentially to increase our mode share significantly.

In conclusion, if we compare where we were in 2010 when we first released that report to where we are today, I think excellent progress has been made. But there is, of course, much more work to do. This is still a very car-dominated city. One of the areas I am concerned about is the level of antagonism between the various modes at the moment. We certainly have some more work to do to improve that level of cooperation and share the roads in an even better way.

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) (4.18): I thank my colleague Ms Berry for her commitment today to the future of our city and the best planning for it. Our city is facing the challenges of the 21st century posed by climate change, population growth and an emphasis on the utilisation of renewable energy sources. These are not new issues and this government has already acted by placing them at the forefront of the government's policy agenda and developing contemporary and innovative, if not bold, solutions to these global issues at a local level.

Planning has a defining role in helping to shape Canberra as a healthy, safe, prosperous and sustainable city. Good urban planning can shape our neighbourhoods to encourage active recreation and the active travel options of walking, cycling and public transport. There is a growing recognition that the built environment influences levels of physical activity, whether for transport or recreation. Canberra already has one of the best walking and cycling path networks in Australia. As our city undergoes further development and urban renewal, the government is committed to embedding active living principles in its transport and urban planning process.

There is a growing body of research showing a connection between our health and wellbeing and the design and structure of our cities and regions. Research in this emerging field is now being undertaken by multiple sectors, including medical, health promotion, recreational studies, urban studies and planning, and transport planning research. The way the built environment is designed, planned and constructed can affect how physically active people will choose to be. For example, low-density suburbs with detached houses and very few community facilities, combined with the distance from public transport, reduce residents' choices in relation to transport, and car use becomes the preferred option.

Making places more supportive of walking and cycling or using public transport requires street connectivity, mixed density and mixed land use. People walk more if they perceive streets are safe and aesthetically pleasing. Urban planning is identified as a focus area under the healthy weight action plan which my colleague Yvette Berry has already mentioned.

I would like to mention the key actions under the urban planning theme. They include incorporating active living principles into the territory plan codes and the Territory and Municipal Services standards for public realm design and development works; creating car parking and other incentives which encourage active travel—walk, cycle

or bus—and discourage private transport for entire journeys into town centres; and promoting and prioritising active travel through the implementation of the transport for Canberra plan and master planning processes.

Modern transport infrastructure also brings people together. It connects them with their destinations, supports a more active lifestyle, greatly reduces emissions and encourages people to explore and interact with the city. There are significant health and social benefits that will come from better connectivity, accessibility, less time in cars, less pollution and more social interaction.

Canberra's obesity rates have increased significantly in recent years. Light rail will support a more active lifestyle and reduce the time that we spend sitting in cars. Incidental exercise as part of a daily routine makes a big difference when multiplied across the city. Capital metro will play a big role in increasing active transport mode share for the journey-to-work trips to an estimated 30 per cent by 2031. Studies have shown that people will walk up to one kilometre to light rail stops, as opposed to 400 to 800 metres for buses.

When planned well, light rail networks can promote active transport through creating attractive, safe and efficient connections with walking and cycling networks. These connections have been a core aspect of the designs produced to date by the Capital Metro Agency. Light rail enhances public transport networks by providing a high-frequency, high-capacity spine that integrates closely with buses. Light rail will also integrate with park and ride facilities.

The first stage of light rail in Canberra will integrate with planned bus interchanges at Gungahlin, Mitchell and Dickson, in addition to connecting closely with the city bus interchange. Light rail will play a key role in encouraging transport-oriented development which facilitates less car use and more walking to local attractions and public transport. Evidence of this change is already evident in Harrison, Franklin and Gungahlin where higher density development is being embraced around the proposed light rail stops.

To reduce high car dependency and mitigate congestion impacts, Canberra needs an attractive public transport system that provides a frequent, reliable, integrated service that can attract people out of their cars. And by 2020, congestion will cost Canberra around \$200 million every year and the Australian economy in excess of \$20 billion per year.

There are also hidden costs of car dependency, such as health costs, greenhouse emissions and restricted access for those who do not own a car. This includes increased costs for car ownerships to households. Studies have shown that, for a second car, across the ACT it is about \$7,340 a year. A recent study found that the average commuter in Perth and Brisbane could gain around 73 hours or two weeks annual leave, if you like, if they did not spend time in congestion.

Despite what you might read in the *Canberra Times* and hear from those opposite, the government continues to invest in roads infrastructure, including \$500 million over the last six years on road-related capital expenditure and on building on our road

network. A good example of this is the recently completed duplication of Erindale Drive and Ashley Drive as part of a \$7 million upgrade to address congestion and delays that drivers experience at key intersections on Ashley Drive and Erindale Drive during the morning and afternoon peaks.

The duplication of Erindale Drive is responsive to population growth and transport needs. Erindale Drive is a green corridor that connects the Erindale group centre and the Tuggeranong town centre, retaining the views to the mountains beyond. The corridor allows for expansion to accommodate additional transport, a bus lane, for example, and traffic capacity into the future should the need arise. The Erindale master plan recommended that improved pedestrian and cyclist facilities also be provided along Erindale Drive to connect the two centres.

But governments must do many things, and that is why capital metro will provide an even greater opportunity to address the issues of congestion and emissions in which our city continues to grow. Modelling shows that by 2031 a trip in peak congestion times between Gungahlin and the city could take over 50 minutes. When compared to the estimated journey time of 25 minutes for light rail we see great value in the reliability of light rail.

Motor vehicles are responsible for over 20 per cent of the territory's greenhouse emissions, well above the national average of 14 per cent. It has been estimated that the ACT needs to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by around 2,200 kilotons of CO₂, roughly half of its current level of emission, to achieve the 2020 target. Light rail is a lower emitter of carbon dioxide than automobiles and bus per passenger. Increased density of housing and reduced private vehicle use can also reduce Canberra's greenhouse gas emissions per capita, which is high in comparison to other Australian cities.

Light rail on the Gold Coast has already achieved over one million passengers and it is estimated to have increased the use of public transport in the area by about 13 per cent. In its first days of operation the inner west light rail extension in Sydney was already reaching capacity in the peaks. Similarly, the Glenelg light rail extension in Adelaide has helped to increase public transport passenger use by about 40 per cent.

Earlier Mr Coe advised us that the Canberra Liberals' view on transport is pragmatic. He has also told us on many occasions that they are opposed to light rail and that our commitment to fund the programs is wrong. I want to take this opportunity today to quote Gough Whitlam:

A conservative government survives essentially by dampening expectations and subduing hopes. Conservatism is basically pessimistic, reformism is basically optimistic.

As we go towards a city of half a million people, capital metro represents a positive, optimistic vision for Canberra's public transport future that includes high-quality transport options that will help reduce congestion. We know that light rail will assist in employment opportunities, giving confidence to industry through government support in infrastructure investment.

Moreover the project will show the community that we are not prepared to let our public transport system go backwards. This government has the courage and vision to plan for the future needs and aspirations of Canberra, and that is not about dampening expectations or subduing hopes.

Discussion concluded.

Adjournment

Motion by **Ms Burch** proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Alzheimer's Australia ACT

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (4.29): As shadow minister for ageing, I had the opportunity last Sunday to attend a benefit dinner for Alzheimer's Australia ACT at the Ainslie football club. At the dinner, special guest speaker Ita Buttrose AO, OBE, a former national president of Alzheimer's Australia and 2013 Australian of the year, highlighted the growing epidemic of dementia within Australia and gave some very insightful and emotional observations on her personal family experience in coming to terms with dementia.

Recent research undertaken by Alzheimer's Australia has provided some alarming statistics on dementia. Here are some examples: there are more than 332,000 Australians living with dementia, and without a medical breakthrough this will increase to almost 900,000 by 2050. There are around 25,000 people with younger onset dementia, some as young as 30. Approximately 4,000 ACT residents now live with dementia. This is forecast to more than double by 2020. Eighty-nine per cent of adults aged 40 to 65 know someone with dementia. Dementia is the single greatest cause of disability in Australians aged 65 years or older and the third leading cause of disability burden overall. If we could delay the onset of the disease by just five years we would halve the number of people with dementia between 2000 and 2040.

Alzheimer's ACT is a great charity organisation that is striving to educate and promote the issues and effects associated with dementia. I would like to congratulate the vice-president of Alzheimer's ACT, Mr Greg Fraser, and the CEO, Mrs Jane Allen, and their board and fundraising committee for this great fundraising event that both highlighted their activities to over 200 people and raised over \$30,000 in much-needed funds.

The national president of Alzheimer's Australia, Mr Graeme Samuel AC, in a recent newsletter highlighted two additional priorities that he would like to tackle during his tenure as national president: increasing investment in dementia research and reducing the stigma attached to dementia. Mr Samuel stated:

I strongly believe that investment in dementia research should not only be increased, but used effectively into the detection, prevention and cure of the disease. I would also like to see dementia-friendly communities and organisations in which people with dementia are encouraged to engage in social activities, access services and continue their lives for as long as possible in the community.

An article in the *Weekend Australian* on Saturday written by Barry Cohen, former long-time federal MP, with the assistance of his son, gave a quite personal and frank opinion on dementia and what I can only describe as the cruel and painful demise into an unknown and confronting disease. Mr Cohen is now living in an aged care facility and whilst he understands that progress has been made into dementia he stresses that we still have a long way to go. Whilst the path ahead for a cure is being explored, consideration and focus need to be placed on how we support the sufferers and families going through this journey now. In his article Mr Cohen articulates perfectly the need for support and states:

We should provide more resources to let nursing homes find a way for family members to spend more intimate time with those they love and care for. Watching television and staring at the ceiling is not the answer. We should also provide more carers to come out to home to look after more sufferers, and now. That's when they need most care.

This superb and sad article written by Barry Cohen provides a very personal insight into the issues surrounding diagnosis and living with the disease. This article gives credence to the important work that Alzheimer's Australia is doing and the need for further support and discussion on this matter.

I will end with another quote from Barry Cohen:

The time has come for governments to take the aged seriously.

When my family wasn't there I cried for them to call. The only break from this misery were calls from former colleagues and friends. I have already lost several friends to dementia, including former West Australian senator John Wheeldon, Clyde Holding and Neville Wran (among the more brilliant). Then there is the man I admired the most, Gough Whitlam, who is fading, although he still goes to his office two days a week—at 98.

When word got out that I had joined the list of dementia sufferers one of the first calls I got was from an old friend.

"A Mr Howard calling," was the message from the nurse. "I don't know a Mr Howard, unless it's the former prime minister."

"That's the one," said the nurse."

Mr Cohen went on to say:

Mr Howard's last question was, "What is it like in there?"

He roared when I shouted back, "Question time."

National Grandparents Day

MR COE (Ginninderra) (4.33): I rise this afternoon to speak about Grandparents Week and National Grandparents Day. National Grandparents Day was first celebrated in Australia in Queensland in 2010, with the ACT first celebrating the day in 2012. For the first time, in 2014 the ACT will, this week, recognise Grandparents Week, culminating in National Grandparents Day this Sunday, 26 October. Grandparents Week and National Grandparents Day pay tribute to the important role that grandparents play in society and recognise the irreplaceable role they hold in our community. Grandparents commonly act as carers, babysitters, guidance counsellors, and many people fondly recall spending time as a child with their grandparents. In fact, in 2011 there were 937,000 children, approximately 26 per cent of all children aged between 0 and 12 years, who received childcare from a grandparent on a regular basis.

Grandparents provide a vital link to the past. Many grandparents remember many historic events, perhaps World War II or the Vietnam War, the moon landing, the Melbourne Olympic Games or perhaps the first visit to Australia by Queen Elizabeth, or perhaps even the very personal decision to move to Australia from far-away places. Grandparents have a very special relationship with grandchildren. Often they are the ones who provide lollies, ice-cream or soft drinks when the parents have explicitly advised otherwise, but also they are a wonderful source of experience, advice and wisdom.

To celebrate Grandparents Week and National Grandparents Day, there are many events being held around the ACT. In my electorate, the Belconnen Senior Citizens Club have been holding open days at their club all week, while Kangara Waters will hold a gala fete on Sunday between 9 am and 2 pm at their premises near Lake Ginninderra. Canberra Seniors Centre, the Tuggeranong 55 Plus Club and Woden Seniors have all been holding events throughout this week. Much of this has been done with support from the Community Services Directorate.

An event I was fortunate to attend this week, along with Mick Gentleman, was a celebration of National Grandparents Day organised by the Migrant and Refugee Settlement Service of the ACT. Whilst I have previously spoken about this organisation in the Assembly, I would like to commend their staff for organising this event and all the other wonderful things they do. As per this year's annual report, the staff include Dewani Bakkum, Niran Karaen, Katy Lambert, Sandra Elhelw, Anne Mann, Warren Jansen, Yepeng Wang, Skye Stranger, Kaitlin Saunders, Rajib Paul, Tipelo Manduku, Leanne Pattison, Andrew Kazar, Chris Jones, Chris Finnegan and Kari Pahlman.

Finally, I would like to thank and acknowledge the Hellenic Club of Canberra for supporting Grandparents Week this year. I wish all the grandparents a very happy Grandparents Day on Sunday, and I hope they enjoy the week.

ACT Rescue and Foster

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (4.36): I was honoured to officially launch the 2015 ACT Rescue and Foster calendar at the National Arboretum on Saturday, 11 October. ACT

Rescue and Foster, also known as ARF, is a Canberra volunteer organisation with around 150 members and 44 foster carers. The 2015 calendar is ARF's eighth, and the photos in the calendar are of dogs that were being fostered during 2014. The calendar's theme is "best friends".

ARF aims to improve the lives of Canberra dogs by rescuing and re-homing unwanted dogs, educating the community about responsible dog companionship, working with local pounds to help achieve minimum destruction policies and procedures, and developing networks for people to look after rescued dogs until new, loving and permanent homes can be found for them. ARF have rescued and re-homed more than 2,400 dogs from pounds in Canberra and across the region since they began in 2001, and they enjoy an excellent working relationship with the ACT government's Domestic Animal Services to maintain high re-homing rates.

It was a beautiful day on Dairy Farmers Hill for the launch of the calendar and I got to meet most of the calendar's doggy stars and their loving humans. Unfortunately many of the dogs that ARF look after had a very sad story. Some, like my own pound dog, Cassie—we do not really know what her story was, but for all these ARF-fostered and adopted dogs their new story is awesome.

Well done to the photographers and designers who kindly donated their time and skills to create this calendar. Well done to Wendy Parsons, ARF President, and committee members, Susan Black, Dianne Heriot, Helen Shannon, Dallas Burkevics, Tess Kent, Bev Margosis, Sarah Rullis and Ruth Underwood. And most importantly, well done to all the wonderful foster carers and members for the work they do in our community.

There are many ways that people can help ARF, even if you do not adopt a dog, including donating clean, unwanted blankets and leads, become a foster carer to provide temporary accommodation until a permanent home can be found, attend an ARF event or donate some of your time to help out on an ARF stall or information booth, become a member of ARF or just simply buy the calendar. Proceeds from the calendar go directly towards veterinary, medicinal, food, training and equipment costs for foster dogs. I encourage all members of the Assembly and their offices to support ARF by purchasing a calendar for a very respectable \$10. You can purchase the calendar through their website, which is www.fosterdogs.org. It is a small price to pay to give these beautiful dogs a well-deserved second chance.

International Day of the Girl Child 2014

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (4.39): I rise this afternoon to bring to the Assembly's attention the International Day of the Girl Child, which occurred on 11 October. The day is designated for promoting the rights of girls and addressing the unique challenges they face around the globe. In 2012, this day focused on the issue of ending child marriage. In 2013, the theme was "innovating for girls education". The theme this year was "empowering adolescent girls: ending the cycle of violence".

This day increases the awareness of gender inequality faced by girls worldwide based solely upon their gender. The inequality occurs across areas such as the right to

education, nutrition, legal rights, medical care and protection from discrimination, violence and child marriage. Around the world, a third of all women aged between 20 and 24 were married before the age of 18. A third of these women were married before the age of 15. This, of course, is in stark contrast to the average marrying age of women in Australia. Where girls undertake secondary education, their chances of marrying as a child are six times less likely.

While this is just one day in the year to raise awareness of these issues, girls around the world face the challenges associated with poverty, discrimination, poor access to health and education daily. On the International Day of the Girl Child, UNICEF and other UN agencies called for governments and the international community to take urgent action to end child marriage, including legislating against child marriage and providing support to ensure married girls can access good-quality education and health services.

Just one of the many organisations that work here in the ACT to promote the rights of women and girls is UN Women Australia, and you can find out more about them at unwomen.org.au. I call on everyone to reflect on the inequitable circumstances faced by girls around the globe and ensure we are always working towards a world where violence against women and girls is not tolerated.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 4.42 pm.

Schedule 1

Ms Rebecca Cuzzillo

Madam Acting Speaker, I would like to thank you and my fellow members for the opportunity to deliver my inaugural speech today in the ACT Legislative Assembly. I would like to begin by acknowledging the Ngunnawal people as the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet and pay my respects to the elders past and present.

It is with great excitement and honour that I stand before you today, an elected member of the ACT Legislative Assembly. I would like to thank my family, friends and everyone who helped me get here, particularly TEDxCanberra who organised this day for us.

As a Canberran born and bred, my passion for seeing this city thrive runs deep. There is so much to love about this city. Throughout my lifetime I have seen Canberra grow in many ways, but I believe that there has never been a more exciting time than right now. This week we have seen Canberra gain international recognition as the “best place in the world to live”. Earlier in the year the New York Times described Canberra as having a “decidedly hipster underbelly”, a description that not only challenges all those who say our city is “boring”, but advocates the complete opposite. At the moment there is an air of excitement in Canberra. It is a city on the cusp of change, a city aware of its own potential. I could think of no better time to be elected to the Assembly.

My vision for Canberra is one of a sustainable, vibrant and prosperous city for *all* Canberrans, and I want to emphasise here “*all*” Canberrans. My background in the community sector might betray my strong social justice values, but I strongly believe that we will only see Canberra reach its full potential as a city when all members of the community have the opportunity to thrive. A rich and vibrant Canberra relies on the rich and vibrant contributions of not just a few but all of its people.

A person’s opportunities should not be determined by their postcode or background. Whether you are living in far West Belconnen, the deep depths of south Tuggeranong or somewhere in the inner suburbs, all Canberrans deserve to live a full and prosperous life.

There are many issues that I could highlight today, but I want to focus on education. We have much to be proud about when it comes to education in Canberra. We have the highest education attainment rate in the country, but as a community there is still some work to do and works is what I intend.

As an independently elected member with significant influence in the Assembly, I intend to make education a top priority for the ACT government. Access to quality education and training is widely recognised as one of the key ways we can ensure

that each person can live a full life. Education is the key to ensuring that all Canberrans can thrive and contribute to making Canberra the best place it can be.

Thank you.

Ms Sarah Jewell

Madame Deputy Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to address the Assembly today in my maiden speech. I would like to begin by acknowledging that we're meeting on the land of the Ngunnawal people, and pay my respects to the Elders – past, present, and future.

This week, there has been much media coverage of the OECD's analysis that Canberra is the world's best city. It's great to hear the conversations, reflections, hopes and dreams that have been prompted by this label. Everyone will have their own opinion of whether we have earned the label of the world's best city. But I think we have much to be proud of in this city; this bush capital of ours.

Canberra is a beautiful melting pot of urban and country – we have the benefit of living in a modern city, but we're still connected to the land and the bush. Canberrans are generally well educated and have access to good jobs. This is a place where ideas and innovation can be fostered; where it's ok to be fascinated by the world around you, and actively find your place in it.

I can think of few other places in Australia where the halls of power are so accessible to the general public – in Canberra, participation in democracy is so much more than voting every three years. Decision makers are at your local coffee shop, and on the radio talking directly to the public every two weeks. I came to Canberra as a wide-eyed university student in 2006, and have been under the city's spell ever since – and being able to chat to our country and our city's leaders while I was still a student played a big role in bringing the issues to life.

Canberra has a strong social justice heart – and I'm proud to live in a city that values diversity. These values have guided those who serve in this place to show leadership when it comes human rights issues like marriage equality.

But there is much more work to be done. The gap between the haves and the have nots continues to grow in Canberra. We need to work hard to make sure that all Canberrans have access to the benefits that we associate with living in this city. I am proud to have worked alongside incredible community workers and advocates in the community sector here in Canberra. I hope that my contribution to this Assembly will build on the work of those who go before me who have elevated the voices of the more disadvantaged and marginalised Canberrans.

If there's one thing that I want to achieve by the next election, it's to increase young women's participation in the political process. For the vibrancy of our political

system, we need to ensure that all groups are heard and able to bring their unique experience and perspectives to the table.

It is an honour to serve in this place. May we continue to build a strong, inclusive Canberra.

Ms Hannah Watts

Thankyou, Madam Deputy Speaker, and fellow members of the Legislative Assembly, for this opportunity to make my inaugural speech here today. I would like to acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as the traditional owners and continuing custodians of the land in which we meet today. I am grateful for support of my family, friends, colleagues, and the community.

It is traditional in these speeches to talk about our past, and our heritage, as if they are the things that define us. But I believe it is not only our history that defines us. What we are doing right now, and what are doing for future generations, will define who we are, and the legacy we leave behind.

Canberra is a wonderful city to live in. It is the place where people from all over our country come together to talk, and make decisions. As a city, we need to be a place where people don't just raise the issues and debate the merits of an argument - we need to set an example of putting words into action.

We need to be a city of activism, not slacktivism.

I believe that we have a responsibility to the young people of this city. The decisions that we make in the coming weeks and years will have an ongoing impact on their lives, and on the future of this city.

We have a responsibility to not only listen to our young people, but also to understand their concerns, and to act in their best interests.

One of the key changes I will be fighting for is for the voice of young people in our community to be heard.

My experience as a youth worker has taught me that to truly hear what young people are saying, we need to do three things. We need to

- stop speaking ourselves
- give them the opportunity and the tools they need to speak up, and then
- act, with them, in a way that shows they had been heard.

As leaders and decision makers in this community, we must lead by example. If we can do that here in this place, the young people of our city will be empowered to keep speaking, to keep acting, and to keep changing.

A key issue of importance to young people is climate change, and our environment. We are lucky to live in a planned city – but we need a better plan for its future. Environmental sustainability needs to become a key factor in the way we plan our buildings, transport systems, and housing developments.

When I was growing up, caring about the environment was for hippies and greenies, and our family was proud to wear those labels.

Today, sustainability is an issue for every one of us, and being aware of the impact we are having on our environment needs to underpin every decision that we make in this place.

It is not just us politicians, or those with money or power who need to act.

I am committed to listening to the voices of our young people, and to be there listening when they raise their voices loud and clear. I am committed to acting with them on the issues that concern them, because their issues **are** our issues.

If we do this together, we will leave behind us a legacy that we can be proud of, and a generation who will continue to act for a brighter future.

Mr Tom Berry

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker and members of the assembly, for providing me with this opportunity to deliver my inaugural speech to the ACT Legislative Assembly. I would like to utilise this time to briefly introduce myself and address a number of topics of discussion, which I believe to be of increasing importance as we move forward in our development as a country of influence.

My interest in Australian politics has grown from a strong basis formed in my childhood. As a child I remember watching 'Parliament Question Time' and to my own surprise, as I was quite young, watched and observed each time in its entirety. I am not sure how much of this was absorbed, but to a degree I believe it shaped my keen interest which is present to this day.

Since moving to Canberra from Melbourne in July I have attended multiple sittings of Question Time in the House of Representatives, showing that after all these years the interest is still there. Much of this exposure is thanks to my Mum, who always had news and politics streaming via radio, or television.

Throughout my undergraduate studies of Commerce and International Studies my passion for domestic politics grew to encompass international politics within my majors of International Relations, Mandarin Chinese and Middle Eastern Studies.

After completing my undergraduate studies I decided to further my knowledge in my initial area of interest in my tertiary studies, Asia and the Pacific, in particular China. I

did so through relocating to Canberra to begin my studies in the Australian National University's excellent Masters of Asia-Pacific Studies and Masters of Diplomacy courses. I believe my studies not only match my areas of interest but also address many regions which will be of great importance to Australia in the coming years.

I consider myself extremely lucky to have been granted the educational opportunities that I have, and fear that if university fee deregulation goes ahead as intended, many Australians may not be given the same opportunity. I believe allowing greater access to tertiary education is an extremely important investment in Australia's future.

We see many strong and well developed nations recognizing this investment potential and moving towards greater access to education, such as Germany's recent move of removing tuition fees for tertiary education. Though this change may not be feasible for Australia at this time, I believe moving in the opposite direction would be a regrettable mistake.

Throughout my studies of the Middle East, it has become increasingly saddening to witness the hardships faced every day and fear in which many of the region's citizens are forced to live their lives. A region which holds such a rich history and culture, has been torn apart by civil war and conflict in the wake of regime change, leading to power vacuums filled by extremist groups exploiting these regretful situations.

Many citizens from this region flee to escape the suppression and dangerous circumstances which they are subjected to, often choosing Australia as their safe haven. We must remember this at times when we feel threatened in Australia, by extremist groups such as ISIS, that many of these people have too fled the same threat.

It is far too common, and worrying that the Muslim community of Australia has at times been targeted as a response to threats made by an extremely small, extremist minority. It is extremely important that all Australians maintain solidarity and not be overcome by fear to let ignorance get the best of us. And that we work alongside Australia's Muslim community, rather than ostracise them, to mutually and supportively to detect and combat any threat to the public safety.

I believe Australia's multicultural nature and acceptance of all people to be a testament to the Australian people. This is why Australia is an extremely desirable destination for those who do not enjoy these freedoms in their native countries, often subjected to oppression or discrimination.

When these people make the very risky and dangerous journey in a desperate attempt to secure a safer and more prosperous future for themselves and their children, it is, in most cases a genuine life and death situation.

Understanding the many technicalities associated, with processing and receiving refugees, including financial and logistical constraints, I do believe more can be done

to give these people a true, Australian, 'Fair Go' and in honouring our accession to the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

Not to suggest that an open invitation to all is the best remedy, but to do more in processing and assessing each case as they deserve to be, and to treat each individual as the human that they are and not simply a statistic, is of utmost importance.

Thank you.