



Debates

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MADAM SPEAKER (Mrs Dunne) took the chair at 10 am and asked members to stand in silence and pray or reflect on their responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

Transport and urban renewal policies

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (10.01): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) Canberra is now in its second century, and the ACT government remains focussed on ensuring that the city continues to evolve as a modern, well planned and vibrant city; and
- (b) planned investment in building our city must continue if the city is to maintain its position as a city of innovation, urban amenity and one of the world's most liveable cities;

(2) further notes that:

- (a) the ACT government has identified health, education, transport and urban renewal, and remediation of Mr Fluffy homes as its priority areas;
- (b) the projects being delivered in these priority areas are multi dimensional, delivering economic stimulus, jobs and social benefits across the city;
- (c) the ACT government continues to implement projects in all of its priority areas, including work to commence Stage 1 of a light rail network for the city and a light rail master plan to inform future stages;
- (d) the transport and urban renewal priority area is focussed on infrastructure and strategic projects across all modes of transport that provide transport choice to Canberrans and support long term land use change across the territory;
- (e) the government has delivered successful urban renewal projects, including in Braddon, the Kingston Foreshore, Belconnen Town Centre, City West and New Acton, and these projects have delivered economic, social and environmental benefits to the Canberra community;
- (f) urban renewal and transport is supported by extensive master planning, including the recently completed master plans for Tuggeranong, Erindale, Weston Creek and Dickson;
- (g) the light rail from Gungahlin to Civic, for which expressions of interest will be called later this week, will deliver significant social and economic benefits in addition to providing sustainable transport and an impressive entrance worthy of the city of Canberra as the capital of Australia;

- (h) the Canberra Liberals have committed to opposing light rail but have failed to outline their alternative transport and urban renewal policy for Canberra, particularly in relation to the high growth corridor from Gungahlin to the City; and
 - (i) by 2031 commuters from Gungahlin to the City will spend almost two hours each day in their cars commuting, if solutions like light rail are not implemented;
- (3) resolves that transport and urban renewal policies must allow for increased transport demand that will result from population growth across Canberra over the next two decades; and
- (4) specifically rules out:
- (a) any plans to build Monash Drive to accommodate the growth in traffic from Gungahlin to Civic and beyond;
 - (b) policies that result in rat running through inner north Canberra and Belconnen suburbs;
 - (c) expansion of Northbourne Avenue by building an additional two or four traffic lanes for buses and/or general traffic; and
 - (d) policies that force Gungahlin residents to sit in congested traffic for up to two hours each day as there is no other alternative transport infrastructure available.

I would like the opposition to study this motion in some detail, not just throw it away with a three-word slogan like “can the tram”. This motion is about governing for all Canberrans, developing a modern, well-planned and vibrant city. Government is about making choices for the future of this city that will, in the long term, benefit all Canberrans in the north, the south, the east and the west of Canberra. It is about the juggling of priorities and managing to keep many balls in the air at once. That is what good governments, such as this one, do consistently. They plan, they multitask, they look for long-term benefits and spinoffs from major projects. Government is the hard grind of working at it every day and in every way striving to make this city better and better. Unlike oppositions, governments have to walk and chew gum at the same time. The three-word slogans of opposition do not translate well into government.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members. If you want to have conversations, take them outside.

DR BOURKE: Canberrans have already seen the problems the federal Liberals have had transitioning from oppositional slogans to governing and making real choices in the real world and having to expect the unexpected. “Axe the tax”, like “can the tram”, is catchy but it has not proved to be an economic solution to all the economic woes the federal Liberal government suggested it would be. My colleagues today will speak of the breadth of ongoing work of governing for Canberrans and of the exciting plans for the future as we take this city into its second century.

I would like to think the opposition would join us in sharing their vision for this city. They could be in government in less than two years. I would hate to think of them using the federal Liberals' election game plan of sneaking in on a few snappy slogans as the tip of their iceberg. Anything resembling a policy, or a grudge to make good on, will be submerged well below the waterline, out of the sight of the voters.

"Can the tram" as a policy, rather than just a slogan, solves none of the looming congestion problems that light rail is designed to address. "Can the tram" does nothing to take advantage of economic opportunities along the light rail corridor that is a major part of this project. "Can the tram", "damn the tram" or whatever similar "tram spam" slogan the Liberals will use in the election—the Canberra Liberals need to be clear that this is not a transport policy; it is an economic policy; it is no solution to the very real issues facing Canberra.

I am sure that they will have their focus groups working on slogans rather than road-testing policies. Here are a few that they could try: "axe the tracks", "no go metro", "metro, say no!", "rally against rail", "rail wail", "no train, no pain", "chew the choo choo". Alternatively, they could glorify the Liberals' future Canberra car culture dominated by the peak hour traffic jams with bumper stickers: "V8's great mate", "no metro, pedal to the metal", "the back street boys, rat runners rule", "bumper to bumper's better", "if you're reading this, you're too close, 'cause we mashed the metro". The Canberra Liberals need to get beyond a bumper sticker mentality and outline some real policies for the stewardship of our city. Policies for government need to be more than a big "no".

Light rail is not an ACT government fetish that we are pursuing as our plaything. It is a real, proven economic transport solution to a number of issues facing the expansion of Canberra. In the next 40 years Canberra will grow to a city with over 600,000 residents. With a finite amount of developable land, the government needs to accommodate this growth in the most efficient and sustainable way. By 2020 congestion will cost the territory \$200 million per year, an increase of 85 per cent in the last five years. By 2031, the peak hour commute from Gungahlin to the city is estimated to take over 50 minutes if capital metro is not built. That will be a daily commute of nearly two hours. Well may you go, "Tut, tut," Mr Coe, because that is your policy.

In the last decade the territory has spent over \$1.2 billion on road infrastructure, with very little public debate. The territory cannot continue to meet transport capacity through roads alone; it is not sustainable. There needs to be a change in approach, with a focus on highly integrated, frequent and reliable public transport that can encourage people out of their cars. The Civic to Gungahlin line is the start of light rail here, a first stage in the most obvious corridor where it can prove its worth and provide lessons for further rollout over Canberra.

Uninformed comment has compared the projected costs of the Civic to Gungahlin line to costs of the newly opened first stage of the Gold Coast light rail line, the G:Link. The first part of the G:Link is a similar distance to our line but it differs greatly in that it weaves through built-up areas, requires extensive road works, realignments and

three water crossings. It makes the Canberra metro route up the middle of wide boulevards along Northbourne Avenue and Flemington Road to Gungahlin town centre look like a walk in the park.

It is hard to find a policy, let alone any consistency, in the Liberals' statements on capital metro. Half the time their position is that capital metro is too much. Then they will say it is not enough. We need to see a plan for the rollout of light rail across the city right now.

What are the Liberals' alternative transport policies to cope with the growth of Canberra, and the northern suburbs in particular? I have heard Mr Coe wanting more cars using bus lanes. Is that it? I have asked before, "Is the Liberal position to wait until Northbourne Avenue is a gridlocked car park morning and evening and the inner north is clogged with rat runners?" Is that Mr Coe's position, that we wait before building light rail until Ginninderra Drive, Barry Drive and Parkes Way are backed up and Belconnen roads are "chock full to Charnwood"?

In the dire situation that the Liberals ever win office on a "damn the tram" platform, then what do they have as alternative transport options for north Canberra? Will they rule out any plans to revive the Monash Drive plan, pushing an expressway through Canberra nature park across the slopes of Mount Majura and Mount Ainslie to bring traffic to and from Gungahlin and Civic? That is a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars for a start, and a major loss of bushland, and that is before building the car parks in Civic to take the extra cars being driven there.

What policies will the Liberals have to check the rat running through inner north Canberra and Belconnen suburbs that is already an aggravation to residents and drivers? Will the Liberals take over the median strip on Northbourne Avenue and cut down all the trees so that they can build an extra four traffic lanes down the middle to cope with the extra traffic? Will the Liberals' lack of a policy other than "axe the tracks" just leave Gungahlin residents eventually sitting in congested traffic for up to two hours each day along the Civic to Gungahlin corridor?

The Liberals have no alternative transport option and neither will commuters. Then they will be saying, "Why didn't we build light rail?" It has been suggested to me by a Harry Potter fan—and I imagine the Liberals' transport spokesperson is one—that the Liberals are under the leg-locker curse from the series, also known as the locomotor mortis spell. Locomotion or any policy development is impossible under the spell the Liberals seem to be under.

As good as the rapid bus services are along the corridor they will struggle in the future as more congestion sets in, especially without dedicated bus lanes. Light rail running along purpose-built corridors offers a ride of quality, smoothness and comfort that buses can never achieve. Buses are running on the sides of roads that inevitably develop unevenness and wear and tear from other traffic and throw passengers around. Modern trams will deliver a wholly different public transport experience for passengers.

Light rail is part of the wider reinvigoration of the transport network, providing a high-frequency and comfortable spine service between the city and Gungahlin. It will integrate with other transport options and contribute to a public transport network that puts people first. Light rail will help to support the ACT's planning strategy by encouraging urban infill along the Northbourne corridor and offer a range of housing solutions in Gungahlin. The transport for Canberra's public transport corridors link the city to all the town centres. Amongst these links, the Gungahlin corridor has been experiencing both the highest growth rate as well as offering the greatest opportunities for new urban development.

While public transport patronage from Belconnen to the city and Woden to the city is high, neither Belconnen Way nor Adelaide Avenue yet provides similar levels of urban development opportunities as Northbourne Avenue. However, the transit lanes and bus lanes on those corridors can be considered for light rail in the future.

The capital metro project will also complement the city to the lake project in the future when it becomes one of Australia's largest urban renewal projects. It is a transformational project within Canberra's city plan that builds on Walter Burley Griffin's enlightened foundations. It is a long-term and visionary project that will guide public and private investment in Canberra's second century. Capital metro will provide business and investment certainty, stimulating significant economic activity as land surrounding the light rail increases in value and is used more efficiently.

As a modern and attractive transport mode, light rail attracts more passengers out of cars than is typically achieved by buses. Up to 20 per cent of new light rail system patronage comes directly out of cars. Modern transport infrastructure, such as light rail, brings people together, connects them with their destinations, supports a more active lifestyle, reduces emissions and encourages people to explore and interact with the city without being in their car.

We want Canberra to be a smart and sustainable city that grows through more compact means, high-quality transport connections, more active lifestyles, and a revitalised city centre. It is not just the people who will ride the light rail who will benefit from capital metro. It also promises to benefit all Canberrans, with the economic activity generated along its route helping our economy thrive, the different lifestyles and the new developments offered there and the lessening of the dependence on private transport for people living along the corridor.

Investment in light rail will create over 3½ thousand new jobs during construction alone. Over the next 30 years the investment could generate 50,000 direct and indirect jobs for the territory. The Capital Metro Agency is developing a local industry participation policy to ensure local suppliers have the appropriate skills and capacity to be involved in the project.

Infrastructure investment can help ensure that local economies continue to thrive through difficult times. At a time when the territory is suffering from federal government cuts it is important that we make the right infrastructure investment that can create job, business and investment opportunities.

Light rail will be delivered and financed by the private sector, reducing the risk to the taxpayer and ensuring outside investment in the territory. This approach makes light rail affordable, ensuring that we only start to pay for the system when we are already benefiting from the transport and land use improvements. It is time to say, "All aboard the metro; don't get left behind."

MR COE (Ginninderra) (10.14): Once again the opposition are delighted to be discussing this topic which I am sure the government in time will realise they do not necessarily want to be on the political radar here in the ACT. But until that point we will happily keep discussing the topic of this motion in the chamber and in the community.

It is interesting that Dr Bourke should flag a whole heap of possible slogans, because a quick peruse of *Hansard* would show that the first time that "can the tram" has been used in this chamber was actually by Dr Bourke just then. In actual fact I think you would be hard pressed to find any quote from an opposition member that said "can the tram". However, if Dr Bourke, wants to put this slogan into the community, as do, of course, other people including the author of the website, so be it, because there is some truth to that slogan and a lot of people in Canberra are very keen to see this tram project dropped.

This motion is a peculiar one at best. Why it is not just about light rail and why there is a "further notes that", given (1)(a) and (b), is beyond me. That said, I will happily go through and make comments on each of the points that Dr Bourke has raised. Paragraphs (1)(a) and (b) are of course fairly bland; there is not too much to be said about those. Paragraph (2)(a) is particularly interesting:

- (a) the ACT government has identified health, education, transport and urban renewal, and remediation of Mr Fluffy Homes as its priority areas ...

They have identified them. They have obviously had some forensic polling telling them that health, education, transport and planning are big issues. Good stuff; in contrast to every other election campaign in the history of democracy. The motion continues:

- (b) the projects delivered in these priority areas are multi dimensional, delivering economic stimulus, jobs and social benefits across the city ...

Again, just noise. It continues:

- (c) the ACT Government continues to implement projects in all of its priority areas, including work to commence Stage 1 of a light rail network for the city and a light rail master plan to inform future stages ...

It is interesting that you need to do the master plan after you have actually got the first leg of that plan. Why do you need a master plan to inform future stages but not a master plan to inform the first stage? Why is it that they support a master plan for two, three, four, five and six stages but not for the first one?

Would someone like to present to the Assembly the analysis which suggests that Gungahlin to the city was the best place, in comparison to all the other route options, to develop a light rail system here in the ACT? Of course, all we have is the 2003 KBR study, which said, “Don’t do Gungahlin to the city first; do other routes first.” If that is out of date, so be it; but where is the actual data to suggest that that 2003 study is out of date? And if it is not out of date then why are they staging it the way that they are?

The government is failing to meet its three priority measures. Again yesterday it was confirmed that the health system is in crisis and bed occupancy rates are over 90 per cent. A crisis also remains in the emergency department waiting times and, of course, with elective surgery. In education we have known for a long time that our schools are overcrowded and often decaying. And transport apparently is also a priority for this government, but only if it is light rail. The ACTION subsidy continues to increase, yet passenger levels continue to drop. Much to the frustration of industry experts, there are simple ways that ACTION could be improved that are being ignored because of this government’s one-eyed focus on light rail.

Paragraph (2)(d) reads:

- (d) the transport and urban renewal priority area is focussed on infrastructure and strategic projects across all modes of transport that provide transport choice to Canberrans and support long term land use change across the territory ...

Gungahlin, and Northbourne Avenue, is actually very well served by ACTION. The most patronised route in the network, the Red Rapid 200, serves the entire proposed light rail route, and then some. Urban renewal does not require light rail. All the government is doing with light rail is shifting the same passengers who are currently on board ACTION buses onto a tram, but doing so in a slower way, because the tram is projected to take 25 minutes. If you look at the 202, in the middle of the peak hour, it takes less time than it would take for the tram to go down Northbourne Avenue. So there is going to be a less frequent service and it is going to take longer—less frequent and longer. That is what we are paying \$800 million for.

Dr Bourke says it will be delivered and financed by the private sector. Well, guess who pays for it, Madam Speaker? I do not think that the private sector are going to be doing this out of goodwill. They are going to be doing so perhaps because they will take an availability payment of \$100 million over 20 years. That is, in effect, the same as the ACTION subsidy for the entire network. This government is going to spend the same ACTION subsidy which gets 400 buses on the road to get 12 trams on the track. That is, in effect, what this government is doing. For the same price you can have 400 buses or one route in Canberra can have a dozen trams. That is this government’s choice. This government has told every single person in Canberra who lives beyond 500 metres of Northbourne Avenue and Flemington Road that they should sacrifice \$100 million to get a dozen trams on the track. It seems to me like a warped priority.

Urban renewal does not require light rail. This is primarily a matter of planning policy, not transport policy. We have seen it with developments such as Space and Space 2, the Axis apartments, the IQ apartments being built, the Avenue and numerous other apartment buildings up and down Northbourne Avenue. The most under-utilised land on Northbourne Avenue is in fact the land held by the government. If the government want renewal on Northbourne Avenue they should sell the land and allow developers to build something. Instead this government, behind a smokescreen, and who committed to light rail simply to get Mr Rattenbury into cabinet, are trying to pretend that this is somehow some urban renewal policy, that this is somehow going to enliven Northbourne Avenue. If they want to enliven Northbourne Avenue they should sell some land and allow the private sector to develop those blocks.

Paragraph (2)(e) reads:

- (e) the government has delivered successful urban renewal projects, including in Braddon, the Kingston Foreshore, Belconnen Town Centre, City West and New Acton, and these projects have delivered economic, social and environmental benefits to the Canberra community ...

Isn't it fascinating that they are spruiking the benefits of all these areas, yet none of them have light rail? None of them have light rail and none of them are planned to have light rail anytime soon. So how can it be, if you accept their argument that they need light rail to rejuvenate an area, that they can also brag about Braddon, the Kingston foreshore, the Belconnen town centre, City West and New Acton? If these areas all function without light rail then why can't Northbourne Avenue, Gungahlin and the city too?

In paragraph (2)(f) Dr Bourke says:

- (f) urban renewal and transport is supported by extensive master planning, including the recently completed master plans for Tuggeranong, Erindale, Weston Creek and Dickson ...

Where was the light rail in the Tuggeranong master plan? Where was the light rail in the Weston Creek master plan? It seems to me that this government tend to pick and choose their arguments to support the individual circumstances as opposed to having a consistent case as to how and why they are going to develop the city with light rail. This government like to talk about master plans as if they will solve all the issues in town centres and group centres. However, master plans are only as good as their implementation and this government, as we all know, have a terrible track record when it comes to such implementation.

The government is becoming notorious for its glossy brochures and ambitious plans that never actually end up going anywhere. If members want to see master plans, all they need to do is visit the Assembly library where they will find development plans and master plans for many areas across Canberra. However, in so many cases the government commissioned a plan, went through a process of consultation with the community, produced a report and then nothing happened.

The government would be better off spending less time and money on producing reports and actually implementing some of the plans it comes up with. If it did that, there might be more confidence in some of these plans.

Reports do not necessarily solve traffic problems or improve dilapidated facilities, but they can provide a blueprint, although it does not mean much unless it is implemented. It is of no comfort to the community when their shopping centre is a mess that the government has spent a lot of money on a glossy brochure that will never be implemented.

In paragraph (2)(g) Dr Bourke says:

- (g) the light rail from Gungahlin to Civic, for which expressions of interest will be called later this week, will deliver significant social and economic benefits in addition to providing sustainable transport and an impressive entrance worthy of the city of Canberra as the capital of Australia ...

Light rail will not provide an economic benefit to Canberra, and that is exactly what the Deloitte report says. The government's own report which they submitted to Infrastructure Australia says that under even marginally adverse circumstances this could be a net negative for the ACT. So the government's own report which they sent to Infrastructure Australia said that light rail could be a net negative for the ACT. Is it any wonder, when you include stuff like that in your report to Infrastructure Australia, that Infrastructure Australia says, "No, we're not giving you any money"? Even on the government's own estimate, the cost of light rail has gone up by close to 28 per cent. This "minor adverse circumstance" has already occurred.

The Productivity Commission said that "the ACT government's decision to proceed with light rail appears to be an example of where the results of cost-benefit analysis have been ignored without a valid explanation". Just this month Dr David Hughes, a respected economist, estimated the cost-benefit analysis of this light rail route to be at 0.64—64c for every dollar invested. That is in stark contrast to the Majura parkway, which we will discuss later on. The Centre for International Economics, as well as economist Leo Dobes, have highlighted the net negative economic effects of light rail.

The entrance to Canberra, I believe, is already impressive. But, of course, it could be better. To build light rail the government will have to cut down every tree on Northbourne Avenue and dismantle the entrance to Canberra. It will be fascinating to see whether any of those opposite have an objection to the chainsaws being taken to 500 or 600 trees down that corridor. And it may well be that some of the very people advocating for light rail may be the very people who advocate against the chopping down of these trees.

In paragraph (2)(h) Dr Bourke says:

- (h) the Canberra Liberals have committed to opposing light rail but have failed to outline their alternative transport and urban renewal policy for Canberra, particularly in relation to the high growth corridor from Gungahlin to the City ...

It is great that Dr Bourke, in government, is talking about the opposition. It is just wonderful. It is as if he is getting prepared to be in opposition, being prepared to bag out a Liberal government, by having a go at the Liberal opposition now. We do not shy away from what we have said. In actual fact we are proud of the advocacy we are doing on behalf of the taxpayers of Canberra because we do not want to see \$800 million squandered or, perhaps worse, \$100 million each year over 20 years. That is a very real possibility with light rail.

Let me reiterate what I said earlier. The cost of a dozen trams on the tracks is the same as 400 buses on the road. A \$100 million subsidy for ACTION versus \$100 million for light rail: with one you get 400 buses; with the other you get a dozen trams. If you want slogans, Dr Bourke, that is not a bad one.

There is much more that could be said about Dr Bourke's bizarre motion. We, of course, will always welcome the opportunity to discuss light rail in this place. It is interesting that Mr Rattenbury, just yesterday, as he does every week, bagged out the opposition for having a weekly light rail motion. Well, what is this? This is another government light rail motion. We had a government light rail MPI last week and now we have a government light rail motion. So if Mr Rattenbury does not want to hear a discussion about light rail in this place, he should also be speaking to his government colleagues. As long as this is on the agenda, the opposition is going to have much to say about how we can better spend \$800 million of capital expenditure.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (10.29): I thank Dr Bourke for the opportunity to speak on this item today.

The government has clearly set out its priorities, adapting to needs as they arise but with a firm view on the future growth and development of our city. As Minister for Capital Metro, I would like to focus today on transport and urban renewal, and how light rail will help deliver against this priority. That is fundamentally what this motion is about today.

Transport is an important challenge for all cities, and Canberra is no different. Even though we are a small city in population terms, we face significant and growing challenges. We know that over the last century we have seen growth in our city to over 380,000 people. Over the next 40 years we will grow to over 600,000. We need to plan for that growth today. We need to work out where those people will live and how those people will move around our city.

That is what this motion is fundamentally about. Business as usual is not an acceptable response to that ongoing population growth. Think about it, Madam Speaker—an extra 220,000 residents, two-thirds the population of today, in our city over the next 40 years. Where are they going to live? How are they easily and effectively going to move around? How are we going to maintain the quality of life, the accessibility and the prosperity of our city with that level of population growth? These are the questions we need to consider when we think about investments in transport infrastructure like the capital metro project.

We know that congestion on our existing road network already costs our economy over \$100 million a year in lost productivity. That is a direct impact on the capacity of the territory's economy to generate jobs, to generate economic opportunity, to generate prosperity for our city. And we know that by 2020 congestion will cost our city over \$200 million a year

This is an economic issue for us to address. The more people spend in delay on the roads and the more people face longer commutes, the more there is a direct economic impact on our city. We need to address these challenges. We need to think about how investment in better public transport infrastructure can reduce the impact of growing congestion and improve productivity and economic opportunity for our city.

We also need to think about what the particular challenges are for the Gungahlin to city corridor. Obviously Gungahlin is the fastest growing area of our city. It is the new development front. By 2031, the estimates are, based on business as usual projections, that that 12-kilometre journey from Gungahlin town centre to the city centre will take over 50 minutes if we continue with business as usual. That is not an acceptable outcome for our city either.

In the last decade, our territory spent \$1.2 billion on road infrastructure—\$1.2 billion. Those who are critics of this project and cite their main concern as being cost should reflect on that figure. There has been very little commentary about the affordability to our budget of continuing to invest in road infrastructure, but when the suggestion is made that somewhere between \$600 million and \$700 million is spent on public transport infrastructure, all of a sudden it is an unaffordable proposition. People need to reflect on the investment and the commitment taxpayers have already made, over the past decade, in road infrastructure—\$1.2 billion in the last decade alone. This is simply not a sustainable approach.

We know that building more capacity induces more demand; it is a well-understood concept. We need to respond to this challenge not by simply accepting the status quo, not by simply relying entirely—entirely—on road provision for people to move around our city, but also by giving people alternatives.

It is also clear that transport and land use are very closely linked. It is not, as the opposition says, as Mr Coe says, that land use outcomes are solely a function of planning and zoning controls. It is a well-understood concept. It is disturbing to me that the shadow minister for planning seems to think there is no relationship between land use and transport planning when it comes to the future planning for our city. That flies in the face of every well-understood tenet of contemporary urban planning. There is a clear and direct relationship between land use and transport infrastructure; the two sit hand in hand. This was acknowledged by Austroads, the federal government agency, as early as 2001. They said, "There is no question that transport influences land use development and that the effects of each need to be considered in an evaluation."

We know that cities are prioritising public transport because they see the economic benefit from that investment. The lesson for us to learn is that good public transport infrastructure is essential for sustainable growth and for the prosperity of our city.

Light rail is a proven city-shaping tool. It changes the value of land and activity around it. Buses by themselves do not have the same city-shaping effect. Governments are now clearly aware of this phenomenon, and governments globally are changing approaches accordingly to ensure that land use and wider impacts are included in the appraisal of transport projects. The transport infrastructure and the urban form are clearly and inextricably linked.

Light rail is the right investment to provide better transport choices and drive the urban renewal of our city. In addition, the government proposes the project to be delivered and financed by the private sector, reducing the risk to the taxpayer and providing opportunities for outside investment in our city. This helps make light rail affordable for the community. We only start to pay for the system when we are already benefiting from the transport and land use improvements. It ensures that the cost of the project is spread across those generations who will benefit from those investments, rather than simply shouldering the current generation with all of the cost.

Those who oppose light rail have not presented any robust strategy or alternative for our city's future. They do not provide a comprehensive alternative that meets the needs of our city well into its second century. We do not hear those opposite, or critics of this project elsewhere, suggesting that there is an alternative to this proposal. Instead, the reliance seems to be on the status quo: build more roads, invest in more road infrastructure, keep building suburbs the way we build them today, and everything will be all right. Well, no, it will not. We know what the costs are. They have been stated already—over \$200 million, and growing, in the cost to our economy each and every year from congestion if we do not act to improve people's transport choices.

That is why this government is making this investment. That is why this government is setting a clear plan for the future growth and development of our city. This government wants a vibrant, sustainable and prosperous Canberra. We need to achieve that vision with a strong investment in excellent public transport infrastructure that allows people to move easily around our city, that encourages growth and development along key transport corridors so that more people have the opportunity to access that public infrastructure. And fundamentally, we need investment in infrastructure that lays the foundation for a future city-wide network that connects all Canberrans.

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) (10.40): I thank Dr Bourke for drawing the Assembly's attention to this important matter of policy for all members of the Canberra community.

Canberra is facing the challenges of the 21st century posed by population growth, climate change and energy use. To ensure our long-term environmental, social and economic security, we need to decide now what our priorities are and what we are prepared to trade off for a sustainable future. Government's transport and planning must allow for the increased demand for transport that will come from increasing

population as Canberra grows to a city of 500,000 people over the next 20 years and, as we have heard from Minister Corbell, 600,000 soon after. Business as usual is not a responsible choice.

This is not a new issue. As a responsive government, we have already acted by committing to the development and delivery of a number of significant policies. The ACT planning strategy was adopted in 2012 and recognises the drivers for change and the need for us as a community to respond accordingly. Transport for Canberra, also adopted in 2012, provides the foundation for transport planning in the ACT over the next 20 years by putting in place actions that will increase public transport and active travel mode share. One way to do this is by investing in significant public transport projects such as capital metro. The objectives addressed in the ACT planning strategy and transport for Canberra respond directly to the community's vision for our future and the values expressed in *Time to talk: Canberra 2030*. Both the ACT planning strategy and transport for Canberra were developed after considerable research and analysis, and they reinforce our intention for a more compact, resilient and efficient city.

Canberrans value the benefits of living in a sustainable city that supports a prosperous economy. We have the opportunity to deliver a sustainable city as Canberrans are committed to protecting our city's natural environment and securing the wellbeing of future generations. Some of these actions are immediate and urgent, to initiate change, whilst others will commence and develop over the next 20 or so years to build on our progress.

The ACT planning strategy calls for master plans to be undertaken, responding to place-specific needs for Canberra to be a city where everybody can take advantage of its network of centres, open spaces and modes of travel to enjoy a sense of wellbeing and participate in a vibrant civic and cultural life. In addition, I am pleased to advise that the master plan program, as it progresses, is responding to the emergent policy agenda of this government by seeking to implement the outcomes and recommendations of strategies and programs aimed at ensuring that investment in our urban areas meets the aspirations and needs of the community, both now and into the future. Each master plan sets out objectives and strategies to manage development and change in a particular area over time. They work within the context of what is important about the place and how to enhance its character and quality.

Community involvement is defining the scope and area for individual master plans, and that is important. The following parameters are often used to define the area of a master plan: creating a precinct that provides an easy 10 to 15-minute walk along the streets and paths to a centre or rapid transit corridor; the natural and recognisable boundaries set by the landscape character and topographical features; our cultural and natural heritage; the gazetted suburb and district boundaries; and land use policy areas.

Supporting more people walking, cycling and taking public transport 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. As highlighted within successive state of Australian cities reporting by the commonwealth department of infrastructure and regional development, the ACT has one of the highest participation rates for

active travel amongst the major Australian cities. This demonstrates the potential for Canberra to lead the nation in active travel. As government, we need to do more in this area.

Good public transport is the backbone of any well-functioning city. Canberra needs a public transport system that gets people to where they need to go, supporting a more active lifestyle through encouraging walking and cycling. And, of course, it reduces emissions. Active travel is increasingly recognised as a key feature of the world's best cities. The 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.

Walking, cycling and other active modes of transport are low cost and 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 trips taken by walking and cycling, the more we reduce our environmental footprint.

Government's commitment to capital metro and the provision of high-quality public transport will also contribute to the development of a compact and efficient city and is an important part of the ACT government's vision to deliver a truly sustainable and creative city. Capital metro is of key importance to delivering on the actions outlined in transport for Canberra and the ACT planning strategy. The links between these two policies and the master plan program are vital to ensure that land use and transport support one another in encouraging a shift to more sustainable transport and a more sustainable Canberra.

The future growth of Canberra to a prosperous and sustainable city cannot be secured through building too many more roads and extending the city further at its edges. We must be investing in supporting population growth through investment in public transport and building our centres and transport corridors. Previous plans for additional road infrastructure, such as Monash drive, or responding to congestion by increasing road capacity on Northbourne Avenue, compromise this government's objectives to increase the mode share of public transport. Better integration between transport and land use planning will create alternative options to the car for commuters.

Government has recognised the need to plan for this future by considering how extensions to capital metro will maximise the benefits of transport investment across the city.

The light rail master plan will consider the opportunities for development of a Canberra-wide light rail network over the next 50 years and beyond. The light rail master plan complements the existing suite of master plans and commitment to stage 1 development of light rail from Gungahlin to the city by ensuring integrated land use and transport planning which links residential development with areas of employment, retail and entertainment. This initiative will build on work already undertaken by the ACT government on light rail, integrated land use and transport planning, and will deliver on government policies, including transport for Canberra, the ACT planning strategy and the city plan.

Extensions to capital metro stage 1 may include potential public transport corridors as identified in transport for Canberra, including Russell, Canberra Airport, the parliamentary triangle, Kingston, Woden, Erindale, Tuggeranong, Belconnen, Kippax, Lanyon, Weston Creek and Molonglo. And contrary to Mr Coe's comments earlier on, the light rail master plan will consider how these areas could be serviced by a future light rail network and the complementary land use setting required to support future transport corridors.

The master plan program will provide long-term planning for the main transport corridors, town centres and group centres of Canberra. It provides actions and principles to manage growth and development over time and create opportunities for changes, including transport for Canberra, the healthy weight initiative and the active living program.

To date, the government is proud to have completed master plans for Dickson, Kingston, Kambah and Erindale group centres, as well as a master plan for the Tuggeranong town centre that can revitalise and attract investment to the area. A master plan for the Pialligo rural village has also been completed, to protect its unique character setting.

The master plan program has its fair share of the challenges that are typically associated with changes and growth, and seeks to alleviate these through sensitive key stakeholder and community engagement. The government engages with key stakeholders extensively, with face-to-face meetings with groups and individuals throughout the master plan studies.

In conclusion, the approach being taken to integrated land use and transport planning will contribute to the development of Canberra as a compact and efficient city and will deliver on the government's vision for a connected, livable and prosperous city.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Health, Minister for Higher Education and Minister for Regional Development) (10.50): I thank Dr Bourke for moving the motion today, which allows me to speak about the city that I am so passionate about, a city that has grown and developed dramatically over the years that I have lived and grown up here, a city that is really coming into its own as a second century city and, as we all know, a city that has become known as the world's most livable city. But there is no doubt there is still much more to do. In many ways our city is still half-built.

The government has identified four priority areas for this term of office, being health, education, transport and, within that, urban renewal, and remediation of homes affected by loose-fill asbestos. These priorities all link to each other. For example, active transport and urban renewal have a health benefit. The University of Canberra public hospital, for example, has an education component as well as a health component. And investment in transport in the Belconnen area has a benefit for education facilities such as UC and the CIT campus.

But it is the continued development and urban renewal that have created so much of the Canberra pride that we all feel in our second century. Dynamic new precincts like Braddon and New Acton have created the “hipster underbelly” that so impressed the *New York Times* recently. Areas like Belconnen are unrecognisable from the Belconnen that I knew as a young person moving around the city. With the renewal that is underway in Tuggeranong, I have no doubt that some of those changes that we have seen in Belconnen will be replicated down south.

Canberra is a city that has traditionally relied on the car, with much of our transport infrastructure funding being funnelled into new roads to meet the suburban growth of our city—indeed, around \$1 billion over the last 10 years. Transport is an area of priority for this government. We want ours to be a city that is easy to move around. It is good for business and good for livability. Buses and bikes form part of this transport plan, and so do cars. New infrastructure—like the Majura parkway, which is almost complete—is an important part of this overall transport strategy.

The government is investing in an integrated transport system designed to give Canberrans transport choice. Better bus services are part of it, as well as more bike-and-rides and cycle paths, more park-and-rides, better pedestrian facilities, investment in roads and land use change that supports an active transport system.

Capital metro forms a part of this integrated transport network. We know that it is the most appropriate form of transport for the Gungahlin-to-city corridor should we want to be bringing around the urban renewal that will occur around that tram line. We know it will bring enormous transport benefits, particularly to commuters from Gungahlin who would otherwise, based on very detailed evidence, spend two hours a day in the car by 2031. But what is really exciting about the project is the urban renewal we know it will stimulate. Addressing congestion is just one of the benefits, but the economic and social benefits are also present.

When we look at Belconnen we can already see an example of how transport, other government infrastructure and the private sector can come together with what has been achieved over recent years in that town centre. As I have said before, Belconnen is almost unrecognisable from the Belco of 10 or even five years ago. The new health centre, the bus interchange and the revamped shopping mall have all created a dynamic new hub. Nearer the lake, the combination of a bus interchange, high-rise developments and greater urban density have created a new livable corner of the town centre. This shows how, when government infrastructure is carefully targeted, it can promote and complement commercial activity and livability.

The University of Canberra public hospital is another multi-dimensional project being delivered by the government. We need another hospital, and building it will create jobs. We could build this anywhere, but by building it at the University of Canberra we also created a new opportunity for the university to grow. An on-campus hospital gives a university a competitive edge, and this is well known amongst the universities that have university hospitals right around the world. It attracts more students and researchers, which in turn creates jobs and economic activity beyond the campus. This shows how, again, when carefully considered and with careful targeting, our own

infrastructure spend, or necessary government investment, can have a double-barrelled impact beyond its obvious purpose and boost the local economy at the same time.

It is exactly the same with light rail. It is an important transport investment. With commuters from Gungahlin to the city to spend around two hours a day in their car by 2031, we need to act now and plan on how we will avoid problems like that in the long term. But Canberrans deserve more bang for their buck. Light rail is proven to stimulate investment, and people who never use buses will use light rail. Business and developers know this and they are attracted to the permanence of a light rail system. Once somebody buys a home or opens a business near a light rail stop, they know it is there to stay, and that makes the investment a more appealing proposition.

We can afford to build light rail. By entering into a PPP, business bears the up-front cost and most of the risk. We can spread the cost over a generation, which is the generation that will also experience the benefits of such infrastructure. We start paying when Canberrans are riding light rail along Northbourne Avenue. An expert, private consortium builds light rail and operates it, and the city pays it to run and maintain it. In terms of the annual cost, it will be a relatively small part of the ACT's overall budget. So our necessary and affordable investment in light rail is about much more than transport.

Meanwhile, as the city debates the merits of capital metro, and the arguments for and against—and there has been a lot of that being agitated across the city—in order to have a fair debate in the community we need to also understand what those who oppose light rail would do. Would it be more roads, more sprawl, less urban densification, fewer jobs or less infrastructure for the city? That is the debate that needs to be had—not just a one-sided debate with the opposition opposing light rail but then not explaining how they would deal with the growth of the city, the need to densify the city and the need to build infrastructure like that along these major transport corridors.

Sure, they could build Monash drive to accommodate growth in traffic from Gungahlin to Civic and beyond. They could continue to allow the rat running that already occurs through inner north Canberra and Belconnen suburbs to get worse. Northbourne Avenue could be torn up with extra lanes put in for buses to travel down and the associated changes that would have to come with that could be made—that is, no turning left off Northbourne Avenue to allow the bus lanes to operate in the most efficient way they can. Or perhaps they could just leave Gungahlin residents and those who live along that corridor to sit in the congested traffic for up to two hours a day. Those are all possibilities and they deserve to be openly debated as well.

But at the moment there is no debate. There is a one-sided opposition to one project in terms of the overall transport plan for Canberra. It is easy to make politics out of it; I accept that. But the issue that the government is trying to deal with is how we prepare the city for the best opportunities for the future. How do we do that? Do we ignore the pressures that are coming from the transport point of view? Do we seek to just fiddle at the sides, maybe expand a few roads, change a few intersections and add a few more bus routes, or do we play a role in the development of Canberra as the nation's

capital, as a city that is worthy of transport options, just like any other major city? Travel around Australia, travel around the world, and you will see in most cities, particularly national capitals, that there are a range of transport options available for people. Where infrastructure such as light rail has been put in, the city has benefited, not just from having an efficient transport system but from the development and confidence in the city that that development brings with it.

We have no doubt of the strong arguments for a rapid public transport network from Gungahlin to the city. We have no doubt that capital metro, when it starts, will be well used. In fact, it will attract people who at the moment might not think they will use it to use it, and we see that wherever light rail has been started across the country. What the community does not understand from those who oppose it is: what are the options? The do nothing option is not an option, unless you are prepared to let Northbourne Avenue choke up, the inner north suburbs have rat running all through them and people sitting in cars for an hour each day one way in and an hour on the way home to get out of the city and back home to the north of Canberra.

If that is the position then just say it. Say it so that we can all understand it. If it is going to be rapid bus, say that, but then explain how you would run an efficient rapid bus on Northbourne without causing major upheaval to the way Northbourne Avenue works. Say that and let us have an honest debate in the city, not a one-way political debate.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Housing and Minister for Tourism and Events) (11.00): The government is building Canberra's most important public transport project, acting on a century-old vision for the national capital. A well-planned light rail system will do more than move people between origin and destination. It will relate to every aspect of the corridor—housing, amenity, connectivity for people and streetscapes, and surrounding businesses. There are many examples around the world of light rail being a catalyst for urban renewal. The Centre for Economic Development and Research at the University of North Texas shows, for example, that the Dallas area rapid transit light rail generated developments worth \$4.3 billion in 10 years of operation, whilst in Dublin homes near the light rail attract a premium of 10 to 20 per cent.

In the 1990s downtown Hayward in San Francisco was characterised by beleaguered businesses and largely disused surface car parks. Its transformation was driven by the demand for housing and employment near the Hayward rapid transit station and within the corridor. Hayward now provides a range of housing options, including affordable units and senior housing within walking distance of the station, as well as new schools, entertainment and amenities, with residents of new housing being six times more likely to commute by transit than residents city-wide.

Portland, Oregon, is widely regarded as the poster child for the success of urban renewal driven by light rail. The success of Portland's light rail system, and the renewal it has generated, can be traced back to an explicit decision to move away from being a car-centric city dominated by congestion and pollution to become a city for its people. These catalyst decisions were made decades ago. Single-term thinking

did not get the city of Portland to where it is today. Not only is Portland regularly included in lists of the world's most livable cities but also investment in the city continues to go from strength to strength. The Portland light rail project is estimated to have generated more than \$10 billion worth of investment within walking distance of its stations since the project started. This level of growth has valuable lessons that we can apply here to realise commensurate investment in Canberra.

But we do not need to look as far away as the United States for examples of high quality urban development. In our city, precincts such as New Acton, Braddon and Kingston Foreshore are examples of how far-sighted design can create world-class urban renewal outcomes. This is about setting a high bar for what we want from Canberra in the future. To create a vibrant and modern city that attracts and retains creativity, wealth and entrepreneurship across a range of fields, we must focus on driving economic growth and opportunity through urban renewal. Light rail offers Canberra the opportunity to do just this.

With its fixed infrastructure and ability to relate to surrounding streets and suburbs, light rail will promote urban renewal along the route, creating streetscapes and surrounding areas that are hubs of activity. Dickson, at the centre of the first stage of light rail, is one of the best examples of how it will transform Canberra. Dickson is already a bustling economic hub, but being connected to the city by high frequency light rail and having the developmental certainty that comes from the permanent nature of such infrastructure will ensure that it has the impetus to become an even more vibrant area. It will not necessarily mimic New Acton or Braddon, but it will enjoy a similar level of growth and change.

The capital metro project will also provide the catalyst for the most significant renewal of public housing that our city has seen, as well as private development along the corridor. The public housing stock along Northbourne Avenue is a major urban renewal challenge. Maintaining these properties and finding a suitable match to the needs of our housing tenants is an increasing challenge. They are among the most difficult properties to allocate across our Housing portfolio and they have the highest level of turnover. Canberra's light rail system will, as in other cities, support a long-term increase in the value of property along its route and this increase will allow the redevelopment of public housing stock on Northbourne Avenue in progressive stages. The redevelopment of other key areas of Northbourne Avenue will provide a fresh look to the entrance of the national capital, as well as introduce a vibrant mix of uses and pedestrian activity, and will ultimately improve the efficiency and sustainability of the city.

Capital metro will also support the revitalisation of public housing through the construction of replacement stock that will provide accommodation which has higher standards, lower running costs and, most importantly, better amenity for tenants. The new stock will be provided on a roof-for-roof basis, maintaining the number of public housing properties, and will be spread through the metropolitan area. In delivering this program, Housing ACT will work closely with tenants and community service providers.

Madam Assistant Speaker, the capital metro project will lay the foundation for a sustainable and integrated public transport network for Canberra now and into the future. I commend Dr Bourke for bringing this motion forward today.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (11.06): Having grown up in Canberra, I have seen just how much our city and my own local community have changed. While change in our communities is constant, in recent years the investment the government is making in Belconnen and across Canberra to improve our city is significant. Our government is delivering essential infrastructure and services, combined with a commitment to social justice, economic responsibility and environmental sustainability. Capital metro is one element of this infrastructure. It will truly be a transformative project, but it is just one of many investments and projects that are contributing to the renewal of our communities and providing even better services and community spaces.

In Belconnen in the early 1970s, when my family moved here, the only building was the fire station. Almost 50 years on, our town centre has grown and continues to grow and change. We have seen a lot of investment in more recent times, including more services and more staff at the Belconnen Community Health Centre and walk-in centre. The community health centre provides a wider range of health services for the community at a single facility and has the scope for expanded services in the future, including outpatient treatments that are usually provided in a hospital setting. It is a state-of-the-art facility which allows people to receive health care close to their homes. It is centrally located in the Belconnen town centre and close to the Belconnen bus interchange to allow people to easily access the centre from public transport.

In the future we will have a new hospital, the University of Canberra public hospital, a hospital that will offer a range of rehabilitation services, such as neurological and older persons' rehabilitation, as well as mental health and day hospital services such as hydrotherapy. Its location will ensure close links with the university and research sector, with spaces allocated for teaching and research within the hospital itself.

There have also been upgrades to bus stops on Southern Cross Drive, increased weekend bus services in Macgregor, road upgrades to Maribyrnong Avenue and Copland Drive, an upgraded College Street bus transit way, including park and ride, and improved parking at Radford College. The Belconnen-to-city transit way is allowing for quicker and safer trips into the city for bus users and cyclists and the Belconnen town centre has seen many improvements, including investment in residential development.

These projects, big and small, deliver economic stimulus and jobs and social benefits across our city. They represent Labor's proud history of making Canberra the fair, progressive and prosperous place it is—not the dark and dangerous place that the Canberra Liberals continue to moan about. Our investment delivers certainty for both the community and business. It also represents the delivery of successful urban renewal projects for many years to improve the lives of people across Canberra.

We have a clear vision for our community for now and for what our city will need to become in Canberra's second century. In contrast, those opposite have no alternative

and their vocabulary in this respect is a limited “no”. They oppose light rail, but they have no alternative. Do they celebrate Canberra's achievements? No. Will they work with the government to address the challenges we face? No, they will not. We want to build Canberra up; they want to tear Canberra down. They have no alternative plan and no vision for our future. They want to see Canberra fail so they can say that they were right. I think it is sad, Madam Assistant Speaker, that that is the place and that is the position that they want to be in. In this place we should strive to make Canberra better, but the opposition, and Mr Coe and Mr Hanson, are determined to stir up fear, to pit neighbour against neighbour for their own benefit and political gain.

When the opposition attack capital metro they ignore the wider benefits it will deliver for areas like public housing. Canberra's light rail system will, as in other cities, support a long-term increase in the value of property along its route, which will allow us to redevelop the public housing stock on Northbourne Avenue. It will allow us to regenerate the public housing stock across Canberra, providing renewal for tenants and families across our city. It will not just provide homes; it will provide better homes.

While Mr Coe made offensive, crass and, frankly, disgusting comments to me and Mr Gentleman when I discussed light rail last week, he and his colleagues just do not seem to understand that this project is for all Canberrans. But that is all they have got—personal attacks and scaring people. When Katy Gallagher asked the Canberra Liberals to outline their policy, they did not, because they cannot.

Stage 1 of capital metro will lay the foundation for a city-wide integrated network, with light rail as its spine, supported by a feeder bus network and good cycling and pedestrian access. But if we listen to the opposition, they would have everyone believe we live in the worst city. But the truth is that Canberra is one of the best and most livable cities, not just according to us but according to the OECD, and is Australia's most livable city according to the Property Council of Australia.

We have an ambitious vision for the future of Canberra, and all of our local communities, that seeks to make our city even more sustainable—a city that is inclusive, that supports the vulnerable, that enables every person to reach their potential; a city that fosters economic growth, jobs and innovations. Investments in infrastructure like capital metro give our community confidence and certainty for the future and are required for us to maintain our position as a city of innovation, urban amenity and one of the world's most livable cities. I thank Dr Bourke for bringing the motion to the Assembly and I commend the motion.

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) (11.13): I would like to thank Dr Bourke for bringing this motion on today because I think he has raised some very important issues and I think he made a very passionate case for what is happening here, which is the need to think about the future of this city as our population grows to the forecast numbers of around 600,000 over coming decades.

Many of us in this place have lived in Canberra for some time and we have seen the city change very substantially. Certainly I feel there has been a strong difference, even in the last 20 years, as we have gone from being truly a country town to becoming more and more like a city. We have certainly picked up some of both the positives and the negatives that come with being a city. One of those negatives is increasing traffic congestion. I think Dr Bourke's motion really speaks to that issue of wanting Canberra to be one of the cities that gets ahead of the curve and actually anticipates the problems that come with increasing traffic congestion arising from population growth.

In cities like Sydney in particular, where there has been a failure to invest in good alternatives and a focus simply on trying to build more and more roads for private motor vehicles, that simply has not worked. Sydney is now recognised as being dysfunctional in many regards because of its congestion problems. Dr Bourke in his motion sought to pick up on some of these issues and highlight the alternatives that we face.

Do we simply keep trying to build more roads, trying to keep up on an impossible treadmill, or do we make sure that we have a balanced transport system for our city which means that people have good alternatives? Those people who do need to drive for particular reasons—they have to be in many different places in a day, for example—should be able to use roads and we should be able to afford to maintain those roads and build further extensions where required, while also ensuring that not everybody has to drive everywhere all of the time.

There are good reasons for that. We simply cannot build the road capacity for it. It is not physically possible. Sydney has demonstrated that. Also there are social justice elements to this. Having to run a second or a third car in a household has an economic cost that is substantial. So providing decent alternatives is not just a good environmental or urban planning outcome; it is a social justice outcome as well, to ensure that people are not forced to spend the money that is needed for multiple car households. It is simply not sustainable either from an economic or from a personal financial viability point of view.

Mr Barr spoke about Portland, Oregon—a city that I know he has visited, and I took the opportunity to go there while I was on a recent personal trip to the United States. They had a really interesting fork-in-the-road point where they sat down and said, "No, we're not going to do this. We're not going to keep trying to simply build more and more roads through our city and turn it into a concrete jungle." They have already done a little bit of that. There are great overpasses in Portland that in some places really dominate the skyline.

Instead they chose to start building their light rail network nearly 40 years ago. We have seen over an extended period of time, because they made that smart decision at the fork in the road, that they built a city that is really people friendly and that has an extensive network that they have built up over time. This goes to the issue of the politics of envy that the Liberal Party are seeking to build—as Ms Berry put it, seeking to construct a neighbour versus neighbour sort of discussion. But that network

has spread across that city over a period of time. And they had to start somewhere, which is what this government is seeking to do. The partnership between the Greens and the Labor Party is seeking, at that fork in the road, to say, “Actually, we want to build a good future for this city and we want to make decisions now that people will benefit from over an extended period of time.”

Portland did that. Their light rail network continues to be added to and to grow as the city grows. That is the sort of choice that we are seeking to make for Canberra at this juncture. Can we build a better future for the residents of this city and not condemn them to both the urban planning disaster and the financial disaster of simply having an unlimited focus on one mode of transport, the private motor vehicle?

Portland provides us with a real, living case study of what is possible and the sort of decisions we can make, particularly when we contrast that to places like Sydney. It is one example. There are many others around the world. I have cited a couple of times recently the recent report from the Economist Intelligence Unit which highlighted that eight of the top 10 most livable cities in the world have light rail networks. That again underlines the fact that this is about making people-friendly cities that are not condemned to being locked into this sort of—

Mr Hanson: The most livable city in the world doesn't have a light rail system.

MR RATTENBURY: The point is that—

Mr Hanson: You can't have the argument both ways.

MR RATTENBURY: Mr Hanson is interjecting away, because that is how he does things in this place. But the point is that we have a choice here. We can choose which way we want this city to go into the future, and that is what this government is doing. I commented recently that voters want governments to take long-term decisions, and that is what we are doing here. We are taking decisions for the future of this city.

Dr Bourke in his motion touched on a range of points, and I think he made some very good ones. The urban renewal offered by developing light rail is a very important point. It is urban renewal that cannot be delivered through the sort of planning policies that the Canberra Liberals are suggesting or the business-as-usual scenario. We know that light rail has been proven to deliver a range of urban renewal that both the private motor vehicle and buses simply do not deliver. There is an additional factor that comes with having a fixed rail line that increases the level of urban renewal and urban densification. That means we do not need to keep spreading the city further and further out; we can offer a range of housing alternatives closer to the centre of the city that will benefit us in terms of giving people more options and also in terms of ensuring that the urban spread simply does not continue. We can seek to limit the costs that go with that urban spread as well.

Putting infrastructure into further and further areas of our city involves a great deal of expense. Senator Seselja recently suggested we should spread to the west side of the Murrumbidgee River. We have not seen any endeavours to cost the sort of infrastructure that will be necessary for that, but there will need to be at least two new

large bridges to cross the Murrumbidgee River. There will need to be all the other necessary infrastructure for providing suburbs that go with that sort of urban development.

Compare that to providing an increased range of housing types in inner areas as a result of providing enhanced transport options, and you start to see that, even though there is great concern about the cost of light rail, it stacks up very well when one starts to compare it to the considerable infrastructure costs that would be required to spread our city even further across the river, in the south-west corner of the territory.

Dr Bourke picked up some other important notions. I note in particular that he made reference to Monash drive, which I have certainly strongly advocated against in the past. It was put onto the plans as part of planning for Gungahlin in the late 1980s. Anyone who would support the development of Monash drive really is taking a backward-looking approach to urban development.

First of all, who would want to build a motorway through that sort of area of nature reserve? There are significant areas of yellow box/red gum grassy woodland that have been worked on considerably by volunteers over the years in order to restore the ecological values of those areas. They are considered to be one of the prime recreational areas in this city.

We really can do better than building motorways through those parts of our city. People talk about this city being the bush capital. It is the great cliché perhaps regarding this city, but it is areas like the Mount Ainslie-Mount Majura nature reserve that really make it so. I think we can do a lot better for the future of this city than contemplate the construction of a road such as Monash drive.

Doing things like providing light rail and getting ahead of that curve will eliminate the need for a road such as that. To build such a road really would be a retrograde step. I particularly welcome the fact that Dr Bourke made that point, because it is one of the alternatives. It would be interesting to know whether the Canberra Liberals support the construction of Monash drive, because if we do not provide alternatives such as light rail then something like Monash drive would enter the public debate as a necessary solution in some people's minds. It would be interesting to know whether the Canberra Liberal Party supports the construction of Monash drive. I think they should be honest about whether they do see that as part of Canberra's transport future.

Certainly, the issues of rat running through parts of inner north Canberra and Belconnen suburbs, identified by Dr Bourke in his motion, are very real. As the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, with responsibility for issues relating to traffic in suburban areas, I get many requests on issues—people expressing concern to me about this problem and seeking more traffic calming measures.

These are the sorts of things our residents are facing. Again, all of these things have costs. The Canberra Liberals come in here and say, "This is too expensive," but there are other costs if we do not do this—things like needing to put traffic calming into urban environments and suburban streets where families are living and where children are wanting to play in the front yard or cycle to school.

If we have increasing traffic being driven into those areas because of congestion in places like Northbourne Avenue, which is what some residents are reporting, we need to take steps to deal with those. All of those things carry a cost as well, and they are not inexpensive. There is considerable cost associated with those sorts of measures. That does not mean we do not need to take some of those measures, but if we do not provide alternatives, those pressures will only get worse and the cost of those will increase.

Dr Bourke touched on the issue of expansion of Northbourne Avenue. I have certainly commented on that before. It is worth contemplating the consequences of that. Do we eat into the median strip? Do we start eating into the nature strip on the side? I do not think that the scenarios for expanding Northbourne Avenue are very viable at all. Again, the necessity of providing alternatives is very clear.

There is of course much more to be said in this debate. There has been a particular focus on light rail in the discussion. It is certainly part of the package. But overall, Dr Bourke has highlighted questions about the future of this city: where do we want it to land and what do we want it to look like in 20, 30 or 50 years time?

I am very proud to be part of a government that has taken a decision to ensure that Canberra does not become the worst case scenario that one could imagine—congested, and sprawling to the far corners of the land available to the territory—but in fact is seeking an alternative vision for the future of this city that is people focused. It is about providing a livable city that is not choked by congestion but that has fast, modern and efficient public transport systems and the other options that go with it—the active transport options around good cycling and walking infrastructure. We want to have a healthy city, a livable city and one that people want to stay in—a city that is forward thinking and is attracting the sort of residents who are innovative and who are about ensuring that this city has a good economic future.

In a competitive world—and, again, some of us in this place have worked in that expat scene where labour is mobile and some of the best people are looking for what are the attractive cities to go for—I think Canberra, in making sure that we continue to be a livable city, will attract some of the best people and it will ensure the diversification of our economy, which is something we are going to discuss later today.

Bringing the best people requires having a great city to live in. Projects like light rail and seeking to build an alternative urban form to some of the other possible scenarios are the sorts of things that will attract some of the best people to this city and continue to drive innovation and economic opportunity in this city into the future.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (11.27): Very briefly, I want to point out the anomaly in Mr Rattenbury's argument about livable cities. We have heard a lot about livable cities all having light rail, that we have to be a livable city, and that 10 of the most livable cities in the world have light rail. There is the expectation that we can become a livable city if we have light rail. It misses the point, of course, that the world's most livable city does not have light rail, and it is Canberra.

Madam Assistant Speaker, we have been assessed by the OECD as the world's most livable city, and we do not have light rail. I can assure you that there are many cities that are far less livable than the ACT that do have light rail. So enough of that nonsense and the false premise that Mr Rattenbury is trying to put forward about how somehow light rail is all of a sudden going to turn Canberra into a more livable city when the evidence is exactly the opposite.

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Racing and Gaming, Minister for Women and Minister for the Arts) (11.28): I thank Dr Bourke for moving this motion today and for allowing us to have this discussion in the Assembly. I am pleased to speak on the motion today, not because it is about any one issue or problem or its solution but because at its core it is about who has the demonstrated leadership and foresight to lead this city into the second century. This is a government with a clear agenda—a government with a very full program of development and reform—an agenda that will see this city grow and thrive for years to come.

All too often governments and politicians are accused of only having a short-term vision at the expense of long-term interest for the community, and I think our vision and our commitment to this community show that this government have not done that, nor will we do that. Whether it be light rail, needs-based funding for our schools, disability reform, health, asbestos remediation or a score of other areas, this is a government that is active, engaged and focused on Canberra's future. And while it may be true that not every person in the ACT agrees with every element of our agenda, no-one doubts that we have a vision and an active program to get there.

We will not play the short-term, populist game that those opposite have mastered. This side of the chamber is about building this city to ensure that it remains a vibrant city that we love well and that it will thrive in its second century. This side of the chamber is about providing services and infrastructure that ensures all Canberrans can participate and prosper. This side of the chamber is about the long term. We are about vision, foresight and action. Indeed it was Tony Abbott who said:

Oppositions complain; governments decide. It's much easier to complain than it is to decide.

And certainly we see consistently and constantly that the Canberra Liberals are an exemplar of the oppositions that the Prime Minister speaks about. In the 10 years that they have sat on that side of the chamber they have not offered any great vision for this city. Take, for example, the issue of child care. The Canberra Liberals are very quick to run around and talk on cost, often ignoring the fact that the majority of centres are community-based organisations. But when it comes to solutions they are very light on the ground.

In contrast to that, this government has put in place a comprehensive plan to expand early childhood education in this city. It is a plan that has included multiple policy dimensions and it is a plan to support Canberra families who need accessible and affordable early childhood education. We have worked with industry to expand the workforce, while simultaneously investing in expanding existing centres and on a land release scheme that has targeted the construction of new centres.

As a result, we have almost doubled the number of long day care places since we came to government. In the last year alone we have increased the number of places by 903, a 10 per cent increase in one year, and in the coming year we will see a further increase to a record number of 11,137 long day care places. In September 2013 there were 312 services under the national quality framework. In October of this year that increased to 325 services and by October next year we expect that growth to reach 337 services. This is just one example of how we on this side actively confront an issue facing the ACT and how we have worked with the community to put in place solutions for the long term.

It is one example but it is representative of this government's approach to how we plan and make decisions for the ongoing prosperity of the city, and we will continue this approach. We will remain proactive in addressing the needs of this community now and into the future. We have an ambitious vision for this city, but it is a vision that is worthy of this community. It is a vision that includes improvement to our transport infrastructure and public transport, but it is not simply about that. Many of my colleagues have spoken this morning on transport. Our vision is also about delivering on health and education. It is a vision about providing the homes and urban environment that Canberrans want to live in, ensuring that the next generation of Canberrans have the skills and the jobs for the future.

It is clear that we have a plan for the city as a whole, for every Canberran. We have a vision for Gungahlin, for Belconnen, for the inner suburbs, for Woden and Weston Creek and for Tuggeranong. I am pleased to be a minister in a government that is getting on with delivering on these plans for the whole community—delivering on new schools in Gungahlin and the Molonglo Valley and upgrading existing schools across the ACT to ensure that our children have the best infrastructure for decades ahead.

I am very pleased to be a local member for Brindabella in this government that is putting important things in place for my community—projects such as the nurse-led walk-in centre, the new Southquay development and the Tuggeranong and Erindale master plans—and I am also very pleased that this government will be providing a campus in Tuggeranong for the Canberra Institute of Technology. Those planning matters will affect families across the ACT and will improve the amenity of Canberra, recognising that the preparation of a strategic planning framework for the development for our city centre through to 2013 is also important.

Launched in March this year, the city plan identifies five priority projects for immediate commencement, including a transport movement study, an urban design framework, an economic development analysis, the redevelopment of the Allawah, Bega and Currong flats and the city to the lake activities. We are aware that the strategy will also impact and integrate into transport for Canberra, the weathering the change action plan, the nature conservation strategy and striking the balance, the draft ACT water strategy of this year.

The master planning work for Tuggeranong and Erindale supports the urban renewal and transport policy priorities for this government. In supporting urban renewal

directions for the ACT government, master planning works to revitalise Canberra and facilities development. It also supports the transport vision. Master planning links important relationships of land use and transport with a shift to a more sustainable transport system and a more sustainable Canberra. Master plans set out a clear vision, outcomes and strategies to manage the development of change over time and define what is important about the centres, and how their character and quality can be conserved, improved and enhanced.

The Tuggeranong and Erindale master plans were endorsed by this government in September 2012. When we look at the Tuggeranong master plan it recognises that Tuggeranong is Canberra's urban gateway to the mountains. It offers a unique and urban lifestyle with easy access to open spaces and waterways. The Tuggeranong master plan recommends development of dwellings. Up to 7,800 new dwellings in the town centre and Southquay have certainly put that vision into place.

We on this side are a government of bold vision and action and we will continue to be that way. The question is, though, and it has been raised here today: what is the vision when it comes to the Canberra Liberals? We know very well what they are not for, and that is seemingly everything, but we do not have a clear vision of what they stand for. While they figure that out, we on this side will be getting on with the job and delivering for our city now and into the future.

In closing, I reflect on some of the key elements of Dr Bourke's motion. It notes:

Canberra is now in its second century, and the ACT Government remains focussed on ensuring that the city continues to evolve as a modern, well planned and vibrant city; and

planned investment in building our city must continue if the city is to maintain its position as a city of innovation, urban amenity and one of the world's most liveable cities ...

It further notes:

the ACT Government has identified health, education, transport and urban renewal, and remediation of Mr Fluffy homes as its priority areas;

the projects being delivered in these priority areas are multi dimensional, delivering economic stimulus, jobs and social benefits across the city ...

The motion asks that the Assembly:

resolves that transport and urban renewal policies must allow for increased transport demand that will result from population growth across Canberra over the next two decades ...

In closing, I again thank Dr Bourke for bringing this motion to the Assembly.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (11.38), in reply: I thank my learned colleagues, including Mr Rattenbury, for their support for my motion. I begin by having to draw attention to Mr Coe's rather sloppy use of words and his failure to understand that "forensic" means legally related, in the context of perhaps forensic medicine, when he really meant detailed and methodical. There was nothing in the arguments that he presented here today that was either detailed or methodical. It was sloppy and an embarrassment.

Let me talk about the failures and let me list the ways. The Canberra Liberals failed to specifically rule out plans to build a Monash Drive to accommodate traffic from Gungahlin to Civic. They failed to rule out policies which result in rat running through inner north Canberra and the Belconnen suburbs. They failed to rule out an expansion of Northbourne Avenue by building an extra two or four traffic lanes for buses or traffic. They failed to rule out policies that would force Gungahlin residents, Mr Coe's own constituents in those southern parts of Gungahlin, to sit in congested traffic for up to two hours a day. The Canberra Liberals fail to understand the benefits beyond transport that arise from the Gungahlin to city light rail, which we have already talked about.

My colleagues talked about urban renewal, economic benefits, the city to the lake, the social and health benefits that will arise. The Liberals fail. All they could advance in argument was their intent to laugh and to make fun of people, because that is their fundamental strategy, to always play the person and never play the policy because they have no policy. They are policy bereft. They have no ideas and they are unfit, manifestly, for government in this territory. They fail to understand the value of urban uplift that comes from being within walking distance of the light rail line. They fail to advance any policy for Canberra and Canberrans to cope with Canberra's growth to 600,000 people. This is bizarre. They want to do—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr Corbell: On a point of order, Madam Assistant Speaker, you have drawn the opposition's attention to the disorderly nature of their interjections. They are continuing to interject in a manner which is quite in defiance of your ruling and I would ask you to call them to order.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Ms Lawder): Thank you, Mr Corbell. I would like members on the opposition side to listen to Dr Bourke. When you are speaking you make it difficult for me to hear Dr Bourke, let alone anyone else. Please keep some form of order.

DR BOURKE: Thank you, Madam Assistant Speaker. Like the ostriches of legend, they just want to stick their heads in the sand and ignore what is coming. They have failed to address that future traffic congestion, that two-hour drive from Gungahlin to Civic, a congestion which we have been told will cost Canberrans up to \$200 million a year. They have failed to understand the link between land use and transport infrastructure. They have failed to understand the city-shaping effect of light rail, an effect which buses do not have.

Mr Hanson in his little beat, when he got up, failed to see into the future. He wants to be some sort of anti-Cassandra, someone who cannot see the future but who wants everyone to believe him. But the question I put to Mr Hanson is: where will we be tomorrow? Yes, we are the most livable city now but where will Canberra be tomorrow? What are we going to become if we do nothing? And that is his policy.

As I have said, you have to feel sorry for Mr Hanson, having the embarrassment of being lumbered with this shadow minister for planning and infrastructure and shadow minister for transport who is simply unable to come up with any policy to deal with these issues. I think Ms Berry in her speech nailed it. She nailed it when she said, "They think they have got a sniff of the government benches and there is no way that they are going to develop a bigger view." I am confident that Canberrans have a bigger view of Canberra and their capacity to see the benefits that this light rail project will bring, not just to our city but also to their daily lives. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

A division being called and the bells being rung—

Mr Hanson: Madam Assistant Speaker, it is the normal protocol that people do not interject while we are waiting for a vote. If you could call Mr Corbell to order? I note Mr Rattenbury is interjecting. If you could call Mr Rattenbury also to order?

Mr Corbell: Madam Speaker?

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: On a point of order, Mr Corbell.

Mr Corbell: I do not think you can interject on someone when there is no-one actually addressing the chair.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Corbell. I do not feel there is a point of order, Mr Hanson, but thank you for your suggestion.

Mr Hanson: On the point of order, I was making a point of order. Therefore I was on the floor whilst Mr Rattenbury was objecting. On the point of order, it is clear that he was interjecting.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Hanson.

Mr Hanson: Madam Assistant Speaker, I draw to your attention that Mr Corbell has ignored your ruling and is continuing to discourse across the chamber.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I did not make the rules. Thank you, Mr Hanson.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

Noes 8

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

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

ACT Policing—tasers

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (11.48): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) tasers can be an effective non-lethal tool for trained police when confronted by violent individuals posing a risk to the community, to police or to themselves;
- (b) a number of incidents have occurred in the ACT where firearms were discharged by police with tragic consequences when at the time tasers were not available as an option;
- (c) ACT Policing has successfully issued tasers to trained substantive sergeants over the last three years;
- (d) substantive sergeants are not always able to respond in time to incidents where frontline police are confronted by violent individuals;
- (e) all frontline sworn police officers are issued with firearms; and
- (f) frontline police and the Australian Federal Police Association have called for tasers to be issued to all trained sworn ACT police officers; and

(2) calls on the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to agree that the Chief Police Officer (CPO) train and issue tasers to all frontline sworn officers, at the CPO's discretion.

It gives me great pleasure to rise to talk to this motion and to commend it. This is a motion that, if it is passed, will actually have an impact on our community, unlike the nonsense that we have heard for the last hour and a half, which was really a mixture of self-congratulation and politics from those opposite.

The reality is that tasers are a very effective tool for trained police when they are confronted by violent individuals who are posing a risk to the community, to the police or to themselves. Looking after community safety is what we are talking about here—whether it is people who are potentially mentally ill or affected by ice or methamphetamines and who are a risk to themselves; people in the community who are at risk because of people who are behaving in a violent fashion; or, and very importantly, the police themselves, the police who, we say, every day and every night go out there into the unknown and confront people who are posing a risk to our community. We must do everything—it is our responsibility to do everything—to make sure that our community and our police are provided with the tools that allow them to protect themselves.

There are clear examples in our community, sadly, where our police and members of the community are put at risk. Let me quote from the *Canberra Times* of November 2011:

Canberra police are suffering assaults of greater severity and dealing with more hyper-aggressive suspects who are high on the drug ice, according to the Chief Police Officer, Roman Quaedvlieg.

He told a Legislative Assembly committee yesterday that while the annual numbers of police assaults in the capital were holding steady, he believed that the severity of attacks was increasing and that “mobbing assaults” of police were becoming more common.

Mr Quaedvlieg also said he was worried about an increased number of suspects who were high on methamphetamine ... confronting Canberra’s frontline police.

You can only imagine the sorts of issues that our police have to deal with, often at very short notice. They turn up to an incident and have to make decisions instantaneously. Things flare up. They are confronted by people and have to make decisions in split seconds. It is very easy for us to sit back here and think, “These are deliberative matters.” In the heat of these incidents, police have to make quick decisions and have to respond for their safety.

It is not just about people high on ice and methamphetamines. Sadly, many of the people that police confront are people suffering a mental illness. We know that there are incidents where people with a mental illness are fatally shot by police. We do not want to see that occurring. It has happened in this town and it happens nationally. When you look at the figures of the total number of people who have been shot by police across Australia, you see that in 42 per cent of those incidents the individual was suffering from some form of mental illness.

We want to make sure that the police not only are safe but, in dealing with these situations, are not in the position where they are forced to draw a firearm and kill people. That is the last thing that the police want it; it is the last thing that we want. Let me quote again from the media, from February 2011:

Police have discharged a firearm following a disturbance in Wanniasa earlier this morning ...

About 5am ACT Policing responded to a report of a disturbance where a man was armed with a knife and a meat cleaver in Riddell Court.

Police were speaking to the man for approximately half an hour while he was still in the house. The man has exited the house armed with the knife and meat cleaver.

Police made numerous requests for the 27-year-old man to drop his weapons and have withdrawn to approximately 300 metres away with the man following and continually approaching them. All the while police were calling on the man to drop the knife and meat cleaver.

The man has then lunged at the police officer who has fired one shot from his service pistol.

There was a follow-up article two days after that initial report titled "Tasers could have prevented shooting: ACT police":

ACT police have indicated the widespread use of tasers across the Territory may have prevented Sunday's fatal shooting in the suburb of Wanniasa.

Nathan Doherty ... was shot after allegedly lunging at an officer while armed with a knife and meat cleaver.

On this particular occasion, according to the deputy chief police officer:

... I think a taser would have been effective, but every circumstance dictates its own circumstance and there's a whole range of use of force ...

That is but one example. There is another one here: "Without Taser, 'no option' but to shoot." There is the sad case of Mr Crowley, which is well known in this community. Indeed, I believe Mr Crowley has moved motions within the Labor Party to see the use of tasers. Mr Crowley was shot by police in 2001 and suffered very debilitating injuries as a result. It could be the case that, if the police in that circumstance had had tasers, he would not have been shot.

It is clear that tasers have a role. The problem is that at the moment they have only been issued to substantive sergeants. Certainly I welcome that but, as we know, substantive sergeants are not always available when these incidents occur. I have become aware that there are cases where acting sergeants, who are not allowed to taser, are on duty and there is essentially no taser available at short notice if an incident occurs because it does take time for a substantive sergeant, on occasion, to get to the front line where an incident is occurring.

In this debate, I think it is worth referring to what Mr Corbell has said previously. I quote from the Assembly of 2010:

Like any employer, the AFP has legislated obligations to provide police with the best possible training, skills and tools with which to do their jobs effectively and safely. Tasers are but one of a range of tools available to police to employ in a dynamic continuum of force model that has at its core the fundamental notions of good communication, negotiation and the resort to a minimum amount of force ... necessary in a given circumstance.

A continuum of force model contrasts with the old-fashioned linear model involving the escalated hierarchy in this seriousness of use-of-force-options.

He goes on to say:

Real world experience demonstrates that police will, from time to time, continue to be confronted by violent people and, therefore, they do require appropriate force options to deal with those circumstances.

Indeed, the underpinning purpose of the AFP Commissioner's orders on use of force is to ensure that AFP officers operate to de-escalate potential conflict situations.

He goes on:

Each and every time a police officer in the ACT resorts to force they must file a report.

That is reviewed by the Ombudsman. He also says:

I would also make the observation that abuse of use of force is abuse of use of force. It is not related to a particular technological device.

That is an important point to make. We are issuing front-line police officers with firearms but saying they cannot have a taser.

The argument is made very well by Mr Corbell. But then he said, in contradiction of his argument essentially, "We'll give front-line police officers one of those tools, the lethal tool, which is a firearm, but we are not going to give them the full suite of tools which are argued for, tasers." It is an entirely contradictory argument that has been mounted by this minister. I will quote now from 2011 from Mr Corbell:

The evidence provided to me indicates that in 2010-11 ACT Policing recorded an increase in incidents involving use of force by police officers, underlining an upward trend over the last few years. A majority of these incidents involved alcohol, drugs, mental illness or a combination of these factors. Increasingly, police are also observing a propensity for aggressive behaviour towards police ...

He goes on:

Consequently, there is real potential for these incidents to escalate to a point where there is significant risk to the safety of the public and the police officers involved. Some recent examples of serious incidents occurred in February this year when two people were shot by police in two separate and unrelated situations. One of them was fatally injured.

He goes on:

I have no doubt that the incorporation of tasers into the suite of tools available to front-line police provides an additional use-of-force option to assist police when facing such situations as these.

I will say that again, Madam Assistant Speaker. This is from the minister:

I have no doubt that the incorporation of tasers into the suite of tools available to front-line police provides an additional use-of-force option to assist police when facing such situations as these.

He goes on making the case for tasers and the need for them to be with front-line officers.

We know that this government is essentially blocking the police from having them issued further down the line. In answer to a question from Ms Bresnan, Mr Corbell said:

Officers of ACT Policing are sworn members of the Australian Federal Police and they are subject to the direction and orders of the Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police. However, given the significant public interest in this matter, and indeed the broader community interest in this matter, the government has made clear, and the Australian Federal Police have indicated, that this is a matter that will need to be discussed between the government, as the purchaser of the service, and the commissioner, as the provider of the service. So this would be a joint decision between me and the commissioner ...

So Simon Corbell has injected himself into this and said: "I am going to be the man with the red card. I am going to be the one that says whether this occurs or not. I am going to be part of that discussion." He is going to be the man that stops it.

This is the point. The case has been made. The case has been made for tasers. We have seen them rolled out successfully in other jurisdictions. We know the consequence. I have got a range of FOI examples here showing where tasers have been drawn or firearms have been used. If I get the chance in closing or later in the debate, I will read from some of those.

We know that our police down on the ground have got to be given the suite of tools available, as argued by Mr Corbell, so that they can apply the right use of force measure and make sure that they have all the options available to them below lethal force. We know—we have seen it historically both in the ACT and across Australia—that there will be occasions where police are required to use force to stop somebody who is a threat to police, a threat to themselves or a threat to the community, a person who is behaving violently, who is armed, who has a knife, who is affected by ice or methamphetamines.

We know that police in those circumstances have to respond quickly. At the moment there are police out on our streets at night confronted by these circumstances. Their

use-of-force measures are limited; their tools are limited. It means that there is a far greater chance that their use of force will be a lethal use of force in those circumstances.

What I am saying here today is: let's get the Assembly and the politicians out of this debate. Let's say to the Chief Police Officer: it is your discretion. It is not for Simon Corbell to say no, to hold up the red card as he is doing now. Let us say, as the police minister and as this Assembly: we respect our police; we respect you as a decision-maker, Chief Police Officer; it is your decision; it is your decision if you want to roll tasers out further.

The Chief Police Officer is the person who knows what is required the most. It is not Simon Corbell sitting there in his comfortable air-conditioned office. It is the Chief Police Officer and his officers. If our Chief Police Officer wants to roll it out to acting sergeants, good; that is up to him. If he wants to roll it out to senior constables, that should be something that he has the green light to do. If he wants to roll it out to every front-line trained sworn officer in this territory, we should be saying in this place that he has a green light to do it. It should not be Simon Corbell sitting up there in his air-conditioned office saying, "No, you have got to come to me; you have got to argue this through me." Quite clearly, this should be an operational decision for the Chief Police Officer. Simon Corbell should be giving the green light instead of being in the way of our police officers trying to do their job on our streets.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (12.03): Mr Hanson suggests that we should keep the politics out of this debate. What extraordinary hypocrisy from Mr Hanson—the man moving the motion, who has made this a political issue. It is just extraordinary. I will come to some more of Mr Hanson's hypocrisy later in the debate when I refer him to the comments he made in debates in this place about tasers a number of years ago.

Firstly, let me address the issue of the use of tasers, or conducted electrical weapons, as their technical title is. Mr Hanson has moved this motion calling for me to agree, on behalf of the government, as Minister for Police and Emergency Services, that the Chief Police Officer trains, and issues tasers to, all front-line sworn officers in the ACT at his discretion. The government supports the use of tasers by front-line police sergeants in appropriate circumstances, and believes that an amendment should be made to the motion to reflect the government's, and indeed the police's, view that the current position in relation to tasers is both appropriate and prudent. I have circulated that amendment and I will move that at the conclusion of my comments.

There is no proposal before the government at this time from the Chief Police Officer to change the existing arrangements in relation to the operational deployment of tasers. There is no proposal. Mr Hanson can be critical of the current arrangements but the current arrangements reflect the position of the Chief Police Officer of the Australian Capital Territory and his advice to me. So, if Mr Hanson wants to criticise me, he needs to criticise the Chief Police Officer, because the position in the territory at the moment is the position as proposed by the Chief Police Officer. And there has been no recommendation to me from the Chief Police Officer to change the current arrangements.

Indeed the advice I have from the Chief Police Officer is that the current arrangements are satisfactory, and there is no need to change them at this time. So Mr Hanson can beat the drum on what he might consider to be a popular law and order issue, but the facts are that the current arrangements in relation to the deployment of tasers to police officers in the ACT reflect the position of and the advice to the government from the Chief Police Officer.

Perhaps Mr Hanson needs to be a bit more reflective of that when we hear some of the silly language we have heard from him this morning. There is no doubt that police face many difficult and dangerous situations in carrying out their operational duties. They are permitted to use force in circumstances according to law, and have a number of options available to them when faced with a situation when the use of force is necessary. One of those options is a taser, and their use was adopted by ACT Policing to complement other less-than-lethal police response options.

The use of force by ACT Policing is governed by the Australian Federal Police Commissioner's Order No 3. The police are able to use force under common law and under a range of legislative provisions. All force must be reasonable, and the AFP Commissioner's order defines this as "the minimum force reasonably necessary in the circumstances to resolve a particular incident". Ultimately, the question of whether the degree of force used was reasonable is a matter for the courts to decide, and there is considerable legal precedent which provides a clear framework as to how courts reach that decision. This informs the training and advice provided to police.

When tasers were adopted by the AFP in 2004, following an 18-month trial, their issue and use were confined to a very limited number of highly trained police. In October 2010 the AFP commenced a review into the potential expansion of the use of tasers to front-line or general duties police in the ACT.

A major reason for this review was the increasing number of front-line incidents where ACT police were required to use force to resolve situations. I agreed to a formal review by the AFP operational safety committee, the AFP body that considers changes in policy relating to the use of force by AFP members.

The review considered a number of factors, including the risks associated with the use of tasers; community perceptions, including the current social environment; the operational safety of officers, particularly those working in front-line positions; and two incidents which occurred during the course of the review involving a discharge of a firearm by ACT police in operational circumstances.

As a result of that review, the recommendation of the operational safety committee was that tasers be rolled out and made available to front-line operational sergeants. That took place in 2011.

Mr Hanson predicates his rationale for this motion on the ground that if tasers are more widely available then the use of firearms or the need to resort to a firearm will decline. But that is actually not supported by the evidence. The New South Wales Ombudsman reported in 2012 on the use of tasers by New South Wales Police. That

report noted that there was no reduction in a firearm being displayed—that is, being drawn or discharged—by New South Wales Police during the period under review, and that in fact there had been an increase in the number of occasions on which a firearm was drawn or discharged by New South Wales Police between 2009 and 2011, despite the fact that tasers had been made available to all front-line officers.

So it is simply not the case to assert that the broader availability of tasers will lead, as a matter of fact, to less reliance by police on the use of their firearm. It is not supported by the facts. It cannot be said that the availability of a taser would have prevented the need for a firearm to be used, and this is supported by the New South Wales Ombudsman's report.

While the occasions on which a firearm is discharged in the ACT are very rare—in fact there have only been four occasions since 2000 when a firearm has been discharged by ACT police—it is important to draw to the Assembly's attention that, of the four occasions on which a firearm was discharged since 2000, three of them occurred after the introduction of tasers. So this correlation that Mr Hanson attempts to draw—more tasers, less need to use firearms—simply does not stack up.

The government supports the current arrangements with regard to tasers. The government is confident that ACT Policing currently has the right balance. The Chief Police Officer has advised me he has no immediate plans to expand the use of tasers beyond sergeants to all front-line officers. Any such proposal would need to be operationally appropriate and be subject to some pretty thorough testing and detailed consideration, and I am confident that in those circumstances it would be.

Mr Hanson says that I am standing in the way of a decision implemented on the advice of the Chief Police Officer. Setting that to one side, let us see what Mr Hanson said about the government's position on the availability and deployment of tasers back in 2010. He said:

The Chief Police Officer has not provided, as I understand it, advice to government that he requests or is seeking an expanded role for tasers.

But if he does go to the government, provides the evidence and argues that there is a case that tasers should be deployed further to the front line—I can envisage cases where that would be appropriate—I am comfortable to leave it to the minister and to the Chief Police Officer to determine that decision.

So there we have it. Back in 2010 Mr Hanson thought that it was entirely appropriate for there to be a discussion, consultation and a joint decision made between the Chief Police Officer and the minister for police. But today, all of a sudden, the position has changed. All of a sudden I am standing in the way of a decision and a recommendation that have been implemented on the basis of what the Chief Police Officer has told me.

The facts are that the use of tasers is controversial. It is a matter of public interest, and it is appropriate that the elected government is engaged in such discussions as to how tasers are used in our community. It is not purely a technical operational matter. It does have significant operational considerations, and the advice of those who are

expert in operational matters must be very closely considered. But it is also a matter of public interest. These are controversial devices. They have not been devices without problems. We know there have been instances of misuse. We know there have been deaths. It is reasonable for the government to keep a watching brief on the use of these devices.

I believe we have the balance right. There is no evidence, contrary to the assertions made by Mr Hanson, that the greater availability of tasers leads to less reliance on the use of firearms. Indeed the New South Wales Ombudsman's report shows that there is evidence, in fact, to the contrary. And there is no evidence to support Mr Hanson's proposition that the government in some way is obstructing or blocking ACT Policing's position in relation to the use of tasers—none.

We have the balance right. We are fortunate as a community to have seen our highly trained and very capable police only resort to the use of a firearm on a handful of occasions over the last 10 years—four occasions since 2000. We know that the use of tasers by front-line sergeants has helped to support operational police going about their duties, and there is no recommendation to the government to change the current arrangements. If there is such a recommendation, the government will adopt the same considered and prudent approach that it has previously.

For all of those reasons, the government cannot support Mr Hanson's motion today. I have circulated an amendment to Mr Hanson's motion which I now move:

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

"(1) notes:

- (a) tasers are only one of a range of tools available to police in a dynamic continuum of force model;
- (b) tasers are currently available only to frontline sergeants and specialist police, who are extensively trained in their use;
- (c) the occasions of use of tasers in the ACT are limited, demonstrating a use of force model that has at its core the fundamental notions of good communication, negotiation and the resort to a minimum amount of force reasonably necessary;
- (d) any expansion in the use of tasers shall only occur on the grounds of improved public and/or police safety and be supported by evidence; and
- (e) the use of tasers will continue to be kept under review by ACT Policing in consultation with the ACT Government."

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (12.16): The opposition will not be supporting the amendment, but at this stage I would like to bring in the voice of the front-line police officers. I would like to acknowledge the presence in the chamber of Dennis Gellatly, who is the ACT Policing representative for the Australian Federal Police Association; it is great to see him here. His expression, which he has made

clear publicly, is in support of what we have put forward here today. I note that he is saying quite strongly—I hope not to misquote him in any way—that he sees a need for tasers to be deployed further as a very important safety measure for his members. We have an increased risk in our community as a result of recent events, but there is no doubt that it is our front-line police officers who are confronted on a daily basis by people who are behaving in a violent fashion, be that because they are affected by drugs, because they are mentally ill or for other reasons.

I have had an opportunity to go through a number of incident reports on the use of force to get an understanding of the sort of incidents that our police are confronted by. I have to say that reading through these—I would encourage people, if they get a chance, to read through this freedom of information request—really is an eye-opener into the very difficult, very complex and very dangerous job that our front-line police have to contend with.

I will quote from a report dated 12 February 2014 on the use of force, quite a recent one. It is quite a detailed report. I will go towards the end of the report. It says:

At 2.04am—

there are names blanked out, obviously—

[X] emerged suddenly from the house and stepped aggressively towards the negotiating police sergeant. [Y]—

a second sergeant—

fearing the defendant was about to violently attack, deployed a single discharge from his Taser ... striking and incapacitating [X], [who] was immediately restrained and handcuffed by other police, during which police located a 20cm kitchen knife concealed down the back of his pants.

So he was confronted by an offender armed with a 20-centimetre kitchen knife. The report continued:

... [X] provided a breath screening test of 0.259.

So it was someone who was drunk, who was violent and who was armed with a knife. The report continued:

The TASER cartridge was collected and exhibited at Belconnen Station. The TASER video record was burned to DVD and also exhibited at Belconnen.

And so on. It continued:

The TASER ... was an effective tool in the resolution of this incident. However, at this time, they are restricted to substantive Sergeants only. Had only Acting Sergeants been available, a frequent occurrence, the lack of less than lethal options in this case could have significantly increased the likelihood that lethal force may have been necessary. Serious and urgent consideration of the expansion of TASER carriage to senior constables and Acting Sergeants should have high priority for the AFP.

That is one incident report. I will turn to another. I will go to a paragraph within this report:

Members directly involved in the incident participated in a debrief the following day to discuss the incident and any learning outcomes. In relation to the use of force, members raised the benefit they would have if they had a Taser present when the Subject first presented to them at the front of [X]. Constable X in the first instance did not draw her firearm as she was cognisant of the numerous members of the public (including children) standing behind the subject in the department along with numerous nurses and wardsmen following closely behind the subject. Constable [X] stated that the Subject was only 4 metres from her when she raised her knife and advanced on her and she believes if she had a Taser available she would have drawn and deployed.

That is another example where our front-line police have said that if they had had a taser they would have been safer. Let me quote from another report:

The Sgt did not intend to use the TASER device against any person or to attempt an arrest. It was quite obvious that the group was particularly hostile and intent on acts of violence, and the Sgt was concerned that any act of force would lead to an immediate violent confrontation in which he would not have been able to defend himself against sheer weight of numbers. Fortunately, the threat of the taser combined with continuous verbal communication was able to resolve the situation.

Separated from his vehicle, the Sgt did not have access to OC fog canisters, and his normal OC canister would not have been sufficient against the large groups. Use of OC, or any other option, would have likely had the same effect of inciting violence as the TASER.

There are a significant number of examples here. It is clear that, as much as Simon Corbell would try and say differently, there is politics that he wants to inject in this. He wants to be the man that makes the decision rather than saying that this should be an operational decision. We have seen the evidence; we have now seen three years of tasers being rolled out to sergeants in our community. The learnings are there. It is time for the police minister to say, "Chief Police Officer, you have the call. The priority here is keeping your officers safe. The priority here is keeping the community safe. Should you feel the need to deploy tasers further, you have my authority, you have my imprimatur, to do that."

That would be a good thing. It would be a vote of confidence in our police. Certainly it would be sending a message to them: "We care about your safety; that is a priority for us." It would send a very clear message also to the Chief Police Officer that he would be able to do that at his discretion without having to double-think and second-think the politics from a minister who is clearly hesitant to give this sort of direction.

There is a different approach between the government and us. Our priority is to make sure that the community is safe, but our priority also is to make sure that the police officers charged with that are safe. We listen to the voice of those front-line officers, represented here today by Dennis Gellatly, who clearly are calling for the further deployment of tasers to keep them safe.

We will not be supporting this amendment today. Simon Corbell has an opportunity to support my motion and say that it is an operational decision. It should be an operational decision; that has essentially been our persistent position. His refusal to do so today is sending a very clear message to the AFP, to its command, to its leadership and to its front-line members that it is going to be Simon Corbell, in the comfort of his office, who is going to make the call.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (12.26): I would like to indicate that I will not be supporting Mr Hanson's motion today, but I will be supporting Mr Corbell's amendment, because I believe it is a better approach and I think it seeks to deal more appropriately with what is a challenging issue.

Members will recall that in 2010 I moved a motion in this place because at that time there was a very active discussion about the use of tasers in the ACT. At that time there was a police review being undertaken about the future use of them. In this place at that time, I called on the ACT government to commit to not expanding the taser deployment model until it passed a motion in the Assembly agreeing to the expansion. The reason I said that at the time, and Mr Corbell has touched on this to some extent, was that this is an area of significant public discourse. It is an area of disquiet amongst some of the community, and I think there are a range of issues in play that make this an important policy issue. I put the view in 2010, and I still hold, that the Assembly should have some part in the view on it, because, as we debate every day in this place, we discuss matters that impact on the lives on citizens of this city, and the use of tasers is one of those things.

In 2010 I was particularly mindful of evidence that had come from a report of the Western Australian Corruption and Crime Commission which had identified that, in the two years since tasers were issued to all general duty police officers, statistics indicated that police use of firearms had doubled and, quite importantly, injuries to police officers had increased 22 per cent. What that report drew out for me was that there were very serious issues around the use of tasers and that the simple claims that they would make police safer and result in firearms being drawn less commonly were simply not borne out by the evidence. They are simply not borne out. The statistics show quite clearly that the assertions that were being made by some simply were not borne out by the facts on the ground. That is why I was concerned at that time and felt that this needed further debate, and that is why I brought it to the Assembly.

At the time, and I reiterate the point today, I noted that the Greens support our police force and the important work they do in protecting our safety. I acknowledge the very difficult role they have and the dangers they often face. My views on that have only been enhanced since becoming the minister for corrections. I am obviously responsible for people who the police end up arresting and who are sent to jail. There is no doubt that there are some people in our community who either have ill intent towards others or, through some of the mental health problems they have, have inflicted harm in our community.

I said very clearly in 2010 that we believe our officers deserve to be equipped with the very best state-of-the-art de-escalation techniques and non-weapons based training to

enable them to do their job to the best of their ability and in as much safety as possible. Whilst tasers may be a somewhat safer alternative to handguns, there are still significant risks associated with the expansion of the use of tasers. I expressed the concern, and I continue to share that view, that the expansion of taser deployment would result in reliance on their use and have the potential to cause escalation in conflicts and potentially an increase in use.

Minister Corbell has today cited the 2012 New South Wales Ombudsman report. I have also had a look at that in my preparation for today's discussion. There are a range of very interesting findings in that. It shows that this is not a black-and-white issue; there remains complexity to it. They did note, in the particular context, that also of concern is the potential that an overreliance on tasers will diminish police officers' skills in important areas such as communication, negotiation and weaponless control. There is much more to that report. I simply draw that point out to make the observation that, personally, my view is that we need to place greater emphasis on those sorts of skills rather than simply adding to the weaponry available to police officers.

I am not saying that those should not be available in some circumstances, but I think it is about trying to find a balance in some of the statistical evidence we are seeing. Certainly the Ombudsman's report identifies areas where tasers were used inappropriately. It highlights the number of people with mental health problems where tasers were used. And recently there were comments in the media here in the ACT about concerns about the use of tasers on people with mental health problems and whether there are better ways to deal with people who have mental health problems than having the potential risks presented by tasers.

So in some senses my views have not changed since 2010. I think that we can continue to support our police without the need for substantial rollout of tasers, but I also think it is a matter for the Assembly.

I am very interested—again, Minister Corbell highlighted this, and I had picked it up myself on reflecting on the 2010 discussion—that in 2010 Mr Hanson made a number of remarks about the fact that I essentially should not have brought the issue to the Assembly. He made this observation:

The Greens' motion essentially also calls on the decision to be made by the Assembly rather than by the minister and the police. That requirement has been waived in the government's amendment and we support that. It is important to note where that decision should be made.

A couple of paragraphs later he went on to say:

But I do not think it is appropriate that the Assembly should be making such decisions. It would be unusual.

Yet here we are today with Mr Hanson exactly seeking to propagate a similar sort of argument to the one I used in 2010, to come in here and have a policy discussion—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson! You have an opportunity to respond.

MR RATTENBURY: Have a policy discussion, as this place should. Of course, that is very convenient. It underlines the fact that Mr Hanson is simply an opportunist who does not stand for anything other than what suits Jeremy Hanson on the day, at the time, for the most political convenience for him. That is something that I think is becoming clearer every day that he is the Leader of the Opposition in this place.

Mindful of the hour of the day, I do not intend to make further comments. I will simply say that I appreciate the amendment brought forward by Minister Corbell. I think it draws out the careful balance that is required in this matter. It underlines the fact that there are mixed factual outcomes around the use of tasers. I think that Minister Corbell has proposed an appropriate way forward.

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

Sitting suspended from 12.33 to 2.30 pm.

Unparliamentary language Statement by Speaker

MADAM SPEAKER: Before I call Mr Hanson, I would like to revisit an issue in relation to question time yesterday. I have been advised that there was a review of the *Hansard* and no-one could hear anyone use the word “hypocrisy” or the word “hypocrite”, although there was a lot of interjection at the time. I have made rulings in the past in relation to “hypocrisy” and “hypocrite” and I would refer members to the ruling of Mr Berry in October 2003, which is at paragraph 10.86 of the *Companion*.

I would reinforce that “hypocrisy” is a word that in my view borders on the unparliamentary, whereas clearly calling someone a “hypocrite” is unparliamentary and is an inappropriate epithet. However, I was aware this morning that the word “hypocrisy” was bandied about, I think by my count, on three occasions. In thinking about Speaker Berry’s ruling, he said that he would keep it in mind and he would make rulings and intervene if the use of the word would lead to disorder. I would ask members to keep that in mind, that if there is repeated and frequent use at one time of the word “hypocrisy” in an attempt to get around the standing orders, I will rule it out of order.

Questions without notice Transport—light rail

MR HANSON: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, on 21 October this year, you said in this place in relation to light rail:

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.

Chief Minister, how will a light rail system between Gungahlin and the city help residents of Tuggeranong, Woden, Weston Creek, the inner south or Belconnen get around this city easily?

MS GALLAGHER: I think Mr Hanson has the answer in the words I used in answer to that question, which were “a modern transport system”. A modern transport system includes a whole range of different components, light rail being one of them, an improved ACTION network being another and an improved road network being another. If you look at some of the areas where we have had massive road improvement in the last 10 to five years, a lot of that investment has been in roads that supported the south side of Canberra and the access of the south side of Canberra to the north side of Canberra, including the Gungahlin Drive extension, including the duplication of the Monaro Highway, including the improvements on Parkes Way. They were the comments I was making.

Capital metro forms a component of a modern transport network or a modern transport system across the city. I have lived in this place long enough to remember, when Tuggeranong was being built, the cries and claims from areas in other parts of Canberra which thought that Tuggeranong was getting all the infrastructure spend. Indeed, Tuggeranong is well served by a very good road network in and out of Tuggeranong.

I would prefer not to play these issues on a north versus south scenario. I do not think we played in other areas where we have had big spends on infrastructure, particularly roads. We have not said that one particular infrastructure is only going to benefit one part of Canberra and therefore the other parts of Canberra are missing out. It is not the way that we have built this city, it is not the way that infrastructure is built in any other city, and it is not the way that capital metro should be seen.

Capital metro will offer a solution to people wanting to use public transport as commuters from the north into Canberra and back again. Then there are a range of other alternatives which create a modern transport system. Any city in the world has a system like that where there are different alternatives, different types of transport that encourage easy movement around the city. That is one thing that Canberra does well on, and we are going to improve upon it.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, why is the government not waiting until the city is much bigger and can sustain a light rail system rather than building the first stage now when it is not viable?

MS GALLAGHER: I think we have there the approach from the Canberra Liberals: wait until people are sitting for one hour in traffic from Gungahlin into Civic before you actually start planning. Anyone who knows how to plan major infrastructure like this knows that this is about having a light rail system in place in the 2020-21 financial year. The planning has to start now. That is what we are doing.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, you have asked your question.

MS GALLAGHER: We are planning the commencement of a light rail network in the 2020-21 financial year; that is, on the current projections, when the light rail trams will start moving in this city. On Mr Hanson's logic, we should wait till perhaps 2020 and then start a five to eight-year planning process to deal with the fact that we have large areas of congestion on the north side of Canberra, not only people sitting in cars but also the rat-running that will inevitably occur in Belconnen and northern Canberra. That is why we are planning for it.

Go and have a look at where there are cities with real transport problems and congestion right now. They are all playing catch-up. We are trying to make sure that we are not playing catch-up. We are actually continuing Canberra's reputation as the world's most livable city, and we have got that well planned.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Coe! You will have an opportunity to ask questions.

MS GALLAGHER: And we are investing in infrastructure at the right time.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Chief Minister, how will light rail make Canberra an even better place to live?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Ms Berry for the question and for her understanding of the importance of this project not just as a transport alternative but as a way to ensure that Canberra is able to develop and maintain its standing as the world's most livable city. That is because of the other benefits that will come with a project like this.

We know that the interaction between light rail and the urban land use around that corridor will bring other benefits to the whole of the city, and we look forward to realising those. Again, with the release of the business case on Friday, I think it will show very clearly the other benefits that come from a project that will help build a modern transport system for this city.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Chief Minister, when, if ever, does the ACT government expect that light rail will be extended to Belconnen, Woden, Weston Creek, the inner south or Tuggeranong?

MS GALLAGHER: As the government has made clear on a number of occasions, there is currently a light rail master plan exercise being undertaken by the Environment and Planning Directorate. They have been undertaking consultations across the city, and when that is finalised it will be made available to the public.

Visitors

MADAM SPEAKER: I would like to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of members of the University of the Third Age, who are here as part of the education program. Welcome to your Assembly.

Questions without notice Asbestos—loose-fill insulation

DR BOURKE: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, yesterday you informed the Assembly of the detail of the commonwealth government's offer of a \$1 billion concessional loan to allow the government to commence the buyback of the Mr Fluffy homes. Can you advise the Assembly of the reaction of Mr Fluffy home owners to this news?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Dr Bourke for the question. There has been, it is fair to say, a range of reactions to this news, and we expected this would be the case. As I said yesterday in this place, it was regrettable the way the announcement played out early yesterday morning, with the early announcement of an agreement that had yet to be reached. I hoped to be able to give all the home owners some more notice so that they could have prepared for such significant news. However, that was not to be the case. I know that a lot of government MLAs, myself and no doubt opposition MLAs, have received numerous emails in response to yesterday's announcement, and calls. We have also heard a number of the reactions on radio or read about them in the paper or online media.

It is fair to say that some home owners are incredibly relieved and some are very sad. Some are angry, and there is understandable concern and a desire for more information. During yesterday and into the night, we worked really hard—and all credit should go to staff in the task force, staff in Treasury and staff in Chief Minister's—to get out as much policy detail of our planned buyback and demolition program as possible in order to answer some of the many questions that came flooding in.

We are acutely aware that these are family homes, and some have been so for many decades. And for everybody, this is a really difficult and emotional time. I am also aware of those who want to stay on their block and are concerned about their options to stay and rebuild. The scheme as it is designed now is to give a fair market value, as if there were no Mr Fluffy present. We have made a difficult decision to offer fairness while establishing a scheme that can be afforded.

The main issue of concern that has been raised by home owners is their desire to return to their blocks. In terms of making sure that we had a scheme that was able to be operated—that is, that we could go forward with a scheme, considering we are not getting financial assistance for the net cost of the scheme from the commonwealth—the scheme as it is designed now is really the only one that the ACT government and the ACT community can afford.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Chief Minister, what arrangements are being put in place to counsel and support the home owners?

MS GALLAGHER: Again, I thank Dr Bourke for his interest in this matter. The government is continuing to offer personal support through the task force and further assistance for those who need specialist counselling. Canberra Connect and task force officers are assisting people by phone, listening to them and answering questions. ACT Health officials and the asbestos task force have been in discussion again this morning to make sure our arrangements are as suitable as possible and also that Canberra Connect staff and task force staff are able to refer people to the most appropriate health service should they need it.

Flowing on from these discussions, the government will take some further steps to support families at this time that need it. Mental health experts will meet with task force workers to make sure they are fully aware of the appropriate ways to respond and support people who may be in distress. We will communicate further and provide as much information and as many answers as we can to people's questions. Also, we will be holding a series of public meetings and drop-in events over the next little while, certainly in the lead-up to the scheme being operational. We will have health professionals there to answer questions that people might have.

We are acutely aware of the fact that the decision day has really crystallised the way forward or what the future is for many families, and that can be a very traumatic time. I thank home owners for their preparedness to continue to work with us. We will seek to respond to all of the issues they raise as we can.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Chief Minister, what other support will be important to these owners?

MS GALLAGHER: There are a number of important roles for people outside of government to play now that a buy-back scheme has been announced and a way forward has been identified. In particular, I think there is a role for the corporate sector in Canberra, for peak bodies and industry groups and also for the broader community.

Today I have signed letters to telecommunication companies and utility providers seeking their support and assistance for Mr Fluffy home owners in the process that lies ahead. This is to ensure that those companies are looking at ways to ameliorate or support families with the costs that might be incurred as they move home and establish new homes.

We will also be writing—hopefully this afternoon or certainly this week—to the insurance sector and banks, again seeking their support for affected families so that we can make sure that there is some relief there with all of the other costs that will be incurred. I certainly call upon those sectors to think very compassionately about the costs that may be incurred by families.

The community and expert reference group and peak bodies will also help us with our response. The CERG have already discussed the ramifications of the program at length, and they will meet tomorrow to establish actions from here now that an announcement has been made.

I am also aware that the broader Canberra community will want to play a supporting role, as it did with the fires and as we always do in times when local Canberrans are going through a difficult time. The CERG will provide us with further advice on ways that we can encourage that kind of community support.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Chief Minister, will the demolition scheme be voluntary or will home owners who wish not to engage in the scheme be forcibly evicted?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. The intention is not to forcibly evict anybody, but, as I said yesterday, the intention is to have every one of these houses demolished over time, and the sooner the better. That is the very clear advice from the task force. It is not only the people living in the homes who may be able to make choices about their own exposure; it is the fact that these homes would still have to be accessed by tradespeople, and presumably visitors, and there is a range of issues there that the government needs to respond to. I do not want to use the term “compulsory”. The scheme is being established as a voluntary buyback scheme. However, we will need to consider options should people refuse to vacate their homes.

Animals—dangerous dogs

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services. Minister, victims of a dog attack in Richardson have contacted me about the processes used to determine the suitability of returning a dangerous dog back to the scene of an attack. The victim in this case received significant injuries as a result of an unprovoked attack from a neighbour’s dog whilst the dog was restrained on a lead. The registrar has since determined that this dog is dangerous but could return to its owner under restricted conditions. Minister, what criteria are used to determine if a dog is dangerous?

MR RATTENBURY: I am afraid I do not have the specific criteria to hand. I would not want to perhaps generalise them and give the Assembly a non-complete picture on this. I will undertake to provide them on notice to Mr Wall, probably by the end of question time today.

But what I can inform the house is that in these circumstances there is a balance to be drawn between protecting the public and allowing owners to keep their dogs. Certainly this comes through in the amendments we made to the legislation earlier this year where we separated out the offences of harass and attack so that this gives Domestic Animal Services a clearer set of guidelines and a clearer ability to apply penalties to particular animals.

In this case the animal—and Mr Wall has touched on it in his question—has been returned with conditions. Certainly one option open to Domestic Animal Services is to place conditions such as a dog must be walked; if it is to be walked it must be muzzled. Those sorts of conditions can be put in place in order to provide protection to the public.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, are victims of dog attacks consulted with prior to a decision being made as to whether or not a dog should be returned?

MR RATTENBURY: I will check that and provide an answer to Mr Wall.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, is it common practice for the Registrar of Domestic Animal Services to contact victims after a decision has been made to return a dog to the scene of an attack?

MR RATTENBURY: I will also take some advice on that question.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, what appeal process is available to victims of dangerous dog attacks if they do not agree with the decision made by the Registrar of Domestic Animal Services?

MR RATTENBURY: I will be happy to provide the Assembly the full details of the process that is available.

ACT Policing—vandalism

MRS JONES: My question is to the minister for police. Minister, over a period of a week earlier this month, community buildings in Weston Creek were targets in a series of vandalism attacks. It has been estimated that the week-long rampage will cost over \$60,000 to repair. The separate attacks were on the Shepherd Centre for deaf children, Noah's Ark family and community centre, Chapman Primary School and Burrangiri Aged Care Plus Respite Centre. The focus of attacks included windows, vehicles, classrooms, projector equipment, a piano and garden areas. The Shepherd Centre was previously vandalised in August when the school cubbyhouse was kicked in. Some elderly residents now say they fear for their safety after seeing the destruction caused by these events. Minister, do these separate attacks over a two-month period indicate a pattern of antisocial behaviour?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mrs Jones for the question. Clearly, these attacks and these acts of vandalism are despicable and have caused significant distress for the people who use these facilities, as well as the owners of the private property involved and the managers of the government facilities that were vandalised. The police continue to investigate these matters.

I am pleased to say, however, that overall the level of property-related crime in Weston Creek has continued to decline compared to the last five years. We are seeing overall a significant reduction in the level of property-related crime. The most recent data is available on the ACT Policing website. Clearly, these particular attacks are despicable. They have caused significant concern and damage. The police are treating them seriously and they continue to investigate.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, what actions have police taken to identify, follow up and deal with the perpetrators?

MR CORBELL: The police are undertaking their normal investigative procedures to try to ascertain who is responsible and bring them before the courts.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, do the police have sufficient powers and resources to deal with this issue in Weston Creek?

MR CORBELL: I have every reason to believe they do.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, why has property crime in Weston Creek been decreasing over the last five years?

MR CORBELL: I thank Dr Bourke for the supplementary. It is the case that Weston Creek has seen a significant downward trend in property damage. The latest crime statistics from ACT Policing confirm a 40 per cent reduction in property damage reports in Weston Creek for the 2013-14 financial year compared to the year before. So we have seen significant reductions in the level of property damage related reports to police.

This is, I think, overall, thanks to the very dedicated working of ACT Policing in focusing on property crime related matters. The police continue to have a dedicated property crime related task force, which is using a range of responses, including sophisticated intelligence gathering, to target those people that they know are associated with property crime, in particular break and enter, and theft. It is one of the reasons why we are at a 10-year low in property crime across the city, why we have seen very significant reductions in break and enter and burglary and why we have seen very significant reductions in private motor vehicle theft.

Clearly these incidents in Weston Creek are of concern, but they are not indicative of a broader trend. Indeed, as I said earlier, there has been a 40 per cent reduction in property crime related matters and indeed property damage related matters in Weston Creek over the past 12 months.

Education—curriculum

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Minister for Education and Training. Minister, in an interview with the *Canberra Times* on 13 October you are quoted as saying:

We can't change curriculums every time we change governments ... I would like to see more time given to bed this down first and foremost.

Minister, what do you mean by those remarks?

MS BURCH: The remark that I would have a preference to see the national curriculum bedded down before there was wholesale change I think is self-explanatory. Not every state or territory across Australia has actually embedded the fully endorsed Australian curriculum, and this review is calling for some fundamental changes. My view is that we should allow the Australian curriculum to be bedded in, for that work to be done and for changes to be made at a more appropriate time.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, what feedback have you had about the current curriculum being overcrowded?

MS BURCH: The feedback I have had about the development of the national curriculum here in the ACT is that the ACT was a leader in its implementation, and I know many of our educational leaders had a part in the development and the trialling and the testing of the Australian curriculum across a number of subjects.

The other comment is that it is hard to distinguish, in the primary years in particular, whether it is just that the move to change to the national curriculum needs to be bedded in or whether it is, indeed, cluttered and crowded.

There is also a sentiment amongst educational leaders that decisions about what is taught within a class—the curriculum-based activity attached to the national curriculum—is a decision that teachers make each and every week.

Mr Doszpot: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Stop the clock, please.

Mr Doszpot: Madam Speaker, under standing order 118, relevance, I specifically asked the minister what feedback has she had about the current curriculum being overcrowded. She has not addressed that.

MADAM SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order. That is what I wrote down as Mr Doszpot's question and I have been listening for Minister Burch to come to that. You have occupied half of the time for answering the question, so I ask you to come to the substance of Mr Doszpot's question about feedback about the overcrowding of the curriculum.

MS BURCH: I was getting to the point, Madam Speaker, that some of the other commentary is whether it is that the curriculum is crowded or whether it is an element of change of implementing a national curriculum. I was then going on to say that the decisions about the implementation of the curriculum—how a teacher goes about assessing the elements of the curriculum content, what happens in the classroom—is a decision for the teacher of that classroom.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, will you be guided by the advice and recommendations of the ACT Australian curriculum task force?

MS BURCH: Indeed, the ACT Australian curriculum task force is a cross-sectoral group that has on it, by its nature and by what I have just said, public educators, those from the independent schools and those from the Catholic system. They are very sympathetic to the national curriculum and, indeed, have a timetable about how those different curriculums are implemented across different years. They are fully supportive, and have been, of our working as a whole in implementing the national curriculum, as they have been, as a whole, in implementing the associated A-E reporting which has been well received by Canberra families.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, are you able to share with the Assembly the recommendations you had from the ACT Australian curriculum task force?

MS BURCH: What I can provide to the Assembly is the implementation schedule for phases 1, 2 and 3. That was endorsed by the implementation committee at the beginning of this year.

Skywhale—flights

MR SMYTH: My question is to the Chief Minister, on her other favourite subject. Chief Minister, from documents recently received through FOI, on 13 September 2013 an officer of your directorate advised the following to the Canberra Glassworks in relation to an appearance by the *Skywhale*:

As I mentioned, flights over this period are being charged by Global Ballooning at \$... but this is below normal commercial rates and I would ask you please to keep that confidential, lest it create an expectation for the future about what a hot air balloon flight can be done for.

Equally, Global Ballooning wrote the following email on 31 August 2013 in relation to a prospective appearance by the *Skywhale* at the University of Canberra:

It is important that this rate remains confidential as other events that may wish to have the *Skywhale* around Australia will question this if they hear of it.

Chief Minister, why did the government and Global Ballooning strike special appearance deals with these organisations for *Skywhale*?

MS GALLAGHER: I will have to take further advice on that. I know the *Skywhale* did make a number of local appearances during the 2013 year over and above what had been required by the standard contract, but I am very happy to take further advice on it. I have not seen those FOI documents, so I would need to apprise myself of the information Mr Smyth is quoting from.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Chief Minister, what is the standard rate for an appearance of the *Skywhale* and what was the value of the special rate negotiated by the government for appearances potentially at the Glassworks and the University of Canberra?

MS GALLAGHER: I will take that on notice as well. I will have to refresh myself with the details of that. I did remember it back in 2013, but it eludes me right now.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Chief Minister, did the government and Global Ballooning offer special appearance deals to local ACT community groups? If yes, to whom? If no, why?

MS GALLAGHER: From memory, the ACT government had an arrangement with Global Ballooning for *Skywhale* appearances for the centenary. I am aware there were others negotiated above that. I do not believe they involved the government, and I will take further advice on it.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Chief Minister, did the government and Global Ballooning charge local community groups for cancelled appearances or flights? If yes, which organisations and how much?

MS GALLAGHER: There were situations where the *Skywhale* was not able to fly because of the wind but was inflated. I am trying to recall whether that was an issue at one of the community festivals.

Mrs Jones: She appeared at close quarters.

MS GALLAGHER: She did. So people were able to enjoy the benefits of the piece of art and all the reactions that that drew. But I will take further advice. A comprehensive answer to the Assembly on the favourite floating art piece of the centenary is required, and I am very happy to provide that. I would say that she has just appeared in Japan to a lot of critical acclaim and, indeed, Patricia Piccinini is seeking a meeting with me to discuss further opportunities for *Skywhale*, on which I will also keep the Assembly fully briefed.

Children and young people—youth justice

MS BERRY: My question is to the Minister for Children and Young People. Minister, can you inform the Assembly of the government's progress in seeing fewer children and young people engaged in or at the risk of offending?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Berry for her question and her interest in children and young people across the territory. I am pleased to report the positive progress in this area. It can be demonstrated by outcomes from the *Blueprint for youth justice in the ACT*. As members of the Legislative Assembly would be aware, the government's approach to youth justice is set out in the blueprint, which was released in August 2012 by my colleague Minister Burch.

This 10-year plan focuses on early intervention, prevention and diversion initiatives to reduce offending by children and young people. Ultimately, the blueprint is about making sure that children and young people are safe, strong and connected.

For young people who are at risk of coming into contact with the youth justice system, intervening at the right time can transform their lives and set young people on a path to a positive and fulfilling adult life. For interventions to work effectively, they need to tackle the problem at the early stages, rather than responding once the problem has become more entrenched.

We can see the results of this approach in the second annual progress report on the blueprint, due to be released shortly. The outcomes achieved under the blueprint continue to demonstrate success in reducing the numbers of young people engaged in or at risk of further involvement in the youth justice system. Over the last reporting year available we have seen reductions in the number of young people apprehended by police, the number of young people under youth justice supervision, the number of young people under community-based supervision, the number of young people in detention and the number of days young people have spent in detention.

This downward trend reflects a sustained collaboration between government agencies and community organisations, in particular the crucial role that ACT Policing and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community play in reducing youth offending. These positive outcomes have been achieved by investing in prevention and diversionary initiatives that we know are making a positive difference for young people.

These initiatives include the after-hours bail support service. As we know, this support assists young people who are on community-based orders to meet their conditions of bail. This may be through arranging transport or suitable accommodation so that they do not need to breach their bail conditions. In 2013-14 the service successfully diverted 39 young people from custody at the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre.

Also, we have got the continued delivery of restorative justice for eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and first-time offenders. This process gives

victims, offenders and their support people a chance to tell their story. Offenders hear at firsthand about the harm they have caused and are encouraged to accept personal responsibility for their actions.

We have evidence-based practice improvements that have been made in youth services to strengthen the skills of case managers to reduce risk factors associated with offending, increase the compliance of young people under supervision with justice orders, and strengthen protective factors. These include embedding single-case management, implementing the youth justice support and intervention framework and strengthening cultural planning for young people on justice orders.

While it is still early days in the 10-year life of the blueprint, results show that we are on the right track to improving outcomes for children and young people in the ACT. In particular, the results demonstrate progress in seeing fewer children and young people engaged in or at risk of offending.

I would like to thank those who work in the youth justice system in the ACT for their hard work, professionalism and dedication to the work they do.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, could you please inform the Assembly of any initiatives that assist young people to transition from the youth justice service?

MR GENTLEMAN: Again I refer to the *Blueprint for youth justice in the ACT*. A key strategy of the blueprint is to connect and reintegrate young people into a home and the wider community through effective throughcare. This is best achieved through services that assist young people to transition successfully from the youth justice system.

For young people who have been involved with youth justice services, these initiatives include the Bendora transition unit at Bimberi Youth Justice Centre. The unit supports young people to prepare for a successful transition into the community through skills training and work experience. We have seen that, Madam Speaker, on a visit to Bimberi, where we saw a young person exiting the system and preparing to go straight into work as a bricklayer the next day—fantastic opportunities.

The Murrumbidgee Education and Training Centre delivers a program to support young people to engage in education, training and employment on their transition to the community. A transition teacher and transition officer facilitate this program. The Narrabundah House Indigenous supported residential facility supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males, 15 to 18 years of age, who are on community-based justice orders, by providing intensive case management with a focus on community participation and integration. Youth housing and homelessness services can provide young people with supported accommodation to help them remain engaged in education, employment or training. The services can also help young people find their own or shared accommodation.

A range of community-based programs are funded by government to support young people to re-engage with their families or build other supports, to learn skills to prepare them for employment and to access flexible education options.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, can you inform the Assembly of any initiatives your directorate is taking to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the youth justice system?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Dr Bourke for his interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. The ACT government acknowledges the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the justice system. It is a significant issue, not just in the ACT but in all jurisdictions across Australia. Having said this, in the last reporting year available, there have been improvements in the ACT in the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people under youth justice supervision, reductions in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people under supervision, and a reduced average length of time Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people spend under supervision.

These results show that actions under the blueprint are having positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. Some of these actions include the delivery of the case management and support—MPower—initiative. This initiative provides intensive and flexible case management support for young people, with a focus on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and their families through collaborative partnerships; strengthening cultural planning for young people on justice orders through opportunities to develop or retain their connections to family, community and culture; the delivery of the Narrabundah House Indigenous supervised residential facility by providing supported accommodation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young males who are at risk of entering custody or becoming homeless; the provision of a family engagement officer at Bimberi to assist the engagement of families and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives; and engagement with the Indigenous guidance partner from restorative justice to work together with young people who are participating in a restorative justice process.

These measures are all demonstrating some really positive outcomes but further work will continue under the blueprint to reduce that disproportionate representation. (*Time expired.*)

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, can you update the Assembly on how the Murrumbidgee education centre at Bimberi is assisting young people to re-engage in education?

MR GENTLEMAN: The Murrumbidgee Education and Training Centre provides specialised educational programs for young people at Bimberi based on their individual skills and interests. The centre employs two part-time tutors as part of its literacy program and delivers a weekly cultural program.

Young people at Bimberi participate in a range of training and vocational programs delivered in partnership with the Education and Training Directorate and other community partners. Programs aim to develop skills to support young people to gain life skills and meaningful employment on their reintegration into the community.

Key activities assisting young people to re-engage in education and training include participation in programs that develop resilience, such as the Indigenous cultural identity program and skills development focusing on the construction and hospitality sectors; participation in accredited training, including cert II and cert III in hospitality, cert II in business, and certs II and III in sport and recreation; and participation in the “Dream, believe, achieve” mentoring program delivered by Alan Tongue, a former captain of the Canberra Raiders. This program helps young people with setting personal goals and responsibilities and developing team skills.

Ongoing work is occurring to further assist young people to re-engage in education. This work will focus on providing education and skills development to young people who are preparing to transition into the community. In particular, young people who are 17 years and older will have further vocational opportunities to learn new skills and knowledge to help them reintegrate successfully into the community.

Environmental upgrade agreement program

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for the Environment. Minister, on 5 February this year you requested advice from your directorate on the adoption of an environmental upgrade agreement program for the ACT following South Australia’s decision to introduce an environmental upgrade agreement bill into their parliament. What advice was given to you on an environmental upgrade agreement program for the ACT?

MR CORBELL: I thank the member for the question. I did seek advice on that matter. An environmental upgrade, for those members who are unfamiliar with it, is a program that addresses the issues associated with the benefits of the environmental upgrade of buildings accruing to tenants yet the issue as to who finances them is generally left with the landlord. An environmental upgrade allows for the upgrade to be financed and for the tenants to make a contribution through collection of a rates levy by the local government. They have been used effectively in other jurisdictions and I was interested as to the possibility of their use in the ACT.

The key element of the advice that came back to me is that, whilst there may be some benefit, given the very large proportion of commercial office stock in the ACT either owned by or tenanted by the commonwealth government, which already sets a very high standard for the energy and water performance of their buildings, including their tenancies, there would be more limited usefulness for an environmental upgrade program in the ACT.

That was the essential component of the advice provided to me. I would have to go back and review the briefing provided to me to provide a more detailed answer to the member.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, what did your directorate say was the indicative cost to implement a program such as this?

MR CORBELL: I would have to review the advice provided to me.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, have you taken any further action towards implementing an environmental upgrade agreement program or something similar in the ACT?

MR CORBELL: No, I have not, and the reason for that is the circumstances I outlined earlier. We have a particularly distinct commercial office market in the ACT, which is dominated by the commonwealth government and its agencies and their request for environmental upgrades as part of their own arrangements. The commonwealth's own standards in relation to the environmental performance of commercial office stock is already driving significant improvements across the commercial office sector as building owners compete for commonwealth government tenancies. Given that the very large proportion of the commercial office market is dominated by commonwealth-related tenancies, there is more limited usefulness for an environmental upgrades program in the ACT. I intend to keep the matter under review, but at this point in time the government has decided that there are other priorities when it comes to upgrading the performance of the built environment, particularly in the residential sector.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, did you undertake any consultation with builder-owners or their representative groups before you took that decision not to proceed?

MR CORBELL: No, I did not, because the government was initially looking at the usefulness of the proposal and whether it should be explored further. It was an initial consideration as to whether or not further time and resources should be put into engaging with the sector more broadly. We determined that at this point in time, given other priorities, particularly in relation to improving investment and performance of residential building stock, that is where our priorities lie at this time. I do not rule it out for the future, but it is not a priority at this time.

Transport—light rail

MR COE: My question is for the Minister for Capital Metro and it relates to light rail. Minister, on 25 June and 13 August this year you confirmed on the record that the \$20 million provided in this year's budget to TAMS for the Gungahlin to city corridor upgrades was not included in your cost estimate for capital metro. Minister, has the \$20 million since been included in your revised cost estimate of \$783 million?

MR CORBELL: No, it is not included in that cost estimate.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, is the cost of developing a new carriageway from Hinder Street to Manning Clark Crescent and the cost of developing a new carriageway between Well Station Drive and the Federal Highway included in the \$783 million cost estimate?

MR CORBELL: I would refer Mr Coe to the imminent release of the business case for light rail this Friday and would suggest that he review that document.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, is the cost of removing and replanting trees on Northbourne Avenue included in the \$783 million cost estimate?

MR CORBELL: I refer Mr Wall to my previous answer.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, to date, how much of the \$783 million has been spent?

MR CORBELL: The \$783 million is a cost estimate. It is a cost estimate that will be refined as a result of the competitive tendering process. As Mr Wall should know, it is not the government spending that money, nor is it the government's money.

Mr Coe: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

MR CORBELL: It will be money spent by the PPP consortium.

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order; can you stop the clocks, please? Mr Corbell, sit down.

Mr Coe: Under standing order 118, the question that Mr Wall asked was: to date, how much of the \$783 million has been spent? The minister is talking about future expenditure, whereas the point of the question was how much has already been expended.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think Mr Wall may have undone himself by actually referring to the figure. I draw Mr Corbell's attention to standing order 118 and ask him to be directly relevant. The question was: to date, how much has been spent?

MR CORBELL: I have concluded my answer.

Environment—woodlands

MS PORTER: My question is to the Minister for the Environment. Minister, you recently released a review of the conditions of woodlands in the ACT. Can you tell the Assembly about the findings of the review?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Porter for her question. I am pleased to say that a recent review of the ACT lowland woodland conservation strategy found that the extent and condition of the ACT's woodlands, including critically endangered yellow box/red gum grassy woodlands, has improved significantly over the past decade—over the past term of this Labor government. While clearing and invasion by weeds and pest animals following European settlement destroyed and damaged many of these woodlands, here in the ACT we are fortunate to have some of the biggest, best connected and most botanically diverse woodlands in the country. Indeed, of the less than five per cent of this ecological community that is left in Australia compared to what existed prior to European settlement, we know that we have a significant obligation to protect this ecological community.

These are very, very important and highly endangered ecological communities. They include several threatened plants and birds and they are an important source of shelter for other animals. They provide critically important roles not only, for example, for storing carbon but also for protecting water quality and providing recreational opportunities for all Canberrans. Because they are so important, I am pleased to say that the amount of woodland under or identified for conservation management in the ACT has increased, and major woodland restoration is happening in the territory as a result of the ongoing efforts of this Labor government.

Since 2004 this Labor government has seen an additional 2,200 hectares of lowland woodland area added to our reserve or proposed for addition to our reserve network. Urban development has largely been concentrated away from lowland woodland vegetation, and some woodland areas of high conservation significance that have been previously identified for future urban use are now included in our reserve network.

The government is now committed to a woodland restoration program which will consolidate and connect 60,000 hectares of box gum grassy woodland landscape, including the creation of native vegetation to help wildlife move between larger stands of these woodland communities. We have done this and will continue to do this with the widespread support of both funding from the Australian government and the engagement of volunteer groups such as Greening Australia, Aboriginal and urban communities and Landcare groups, researchers and landholders.

This is a really exciting and very pleasing development. We know that we value our city as the bush capital, but we have to look after the bush capital. Since this government has been in office we have increased the amount of land in reserve and we have increased the amount of funding to better manage, connect and ensure the viability of these very valuable and distinct woodland communities.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, what are some of the more significant woodland projects that are contributing to the success of the strategy?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Porter for the supplementary. Under this government we have seen, as I said, an extra 2,200 hectares of woodland communities added or

proposed to be added to the territory's reserve network. These include areas such as Callum Brae, Goorooyaroo, Kama, west Jerrabomberra, Conder, Percival Hill, Kinlyside, Molonglo, east Bonner, north and east Throsby, and Kenny. Of the restoration projects underway, the largest is the restoration of the ACT and greater Goorooyaroo woodlands. This six-year project that began in 2012 aims to protect, consolidate and connect 60,000 hectares—60,000 hectares, Madam Speaker—of the largest box gum grassy woodland landscape left in Australia through on-ground restoration and rejuvenation works.

This is improving the biodiversity of this area, improving the carbon-storing capacity of the landscape, helping to increase the local environment's capacity to respond to a changing climate. We have seen dedicated CSIRO research that has shown most animals in our region will not usually cross a canopy gap of greater than 100 metres and will not travel far from a 10-hectare area. We are using this knowledge to improve the connectivity of these nature reserve areas to improve the biodiversity that is present in them.

The Mulligans Flat woodland sanctuary was established by this Labor administration in 2009 with the aim of restoring the woodlands to pre-1850 conditions. As a result of the leading-edge research at the sanctuary, at Mulligans Flat and at the adjacent sanctuary, we have seen the successful reintroduction of eastern bettongs into the community. (*Time expired.*)

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, how does protecting our woodlands benefit Canberrans?

MR CORBELL: These woodlands, as I said, are central to maintaining our reputation as the bush capital, something that all Canberrans love and value. But they also have broader benefits. They have broader benefits in terms of our contribution to protecting the environment more broadly. For example, more than 30 migrating bird species make their way to the territory each year. They fly down from northern New South Wales, from Queensland; some of them even come further, including from locations such as Papua New Guinea. They come here because of the excellent grassy woodland habitat.

These migratory birds are just one part of the reason that so many Canberrans and visitors to the territory alike use our woodlands for recreational purposes. By improving these woodland communities, we are increasing the opportunity for Canberrans to experience a rich and diverse environment that provides a wide variety of animals—birds, insects and reptiles—with a wonderful variety of native vegetation. It is this government's investment in these woodland communities that is helping to preserve and protect the beautiful qualities of our bush capital.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, could you tell us more about the threats to these woodlands, particularly from those weeds and pest animals?

MADAM SPEAKER: I do not think he has said anything about threats, but the Minister for the Environment, Mr Corbell.

MR CORBELL: I thank Dr Bourke for his supplementary. It is the case, of course, that we see significant problems with weed infestation, in particular impacts on native grassland species as a result of the practices of farming, agricultural practices, over the past two centuries.

We are undertaking very significant work to try to reduce infestations, particularly of woody weeds and other weeds that are causing major problems in these nature reserve areas, and we do so with the great help and support of our ParkCare and Landcare volunteers and other groups such as Greening Australia. We are now seeing the reintroduction of native grass species in some of these reserve areas because of their very dedicated work.

We have an excellent program underway out near Crace, where native grass and flower species are being reintroduced into reserves for the first time as a result of the eradication of weeds in those sites and the capacity to reintroduce these native species. That is helping to build the diversity and the capacity of our nature reserves both to represent what was here prior to European settlement and which was widespread across the landscape and also to build the biodiversity values of these reserves.

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

Supplementary answers to questions without notice Education—curriculum

MS BURCH: In response to a question from Ms Lawder I made a comment that I would table the Australian Curriculum Implementation Committee schedule. I seek leave to table that.

MADAM SPEAKER: You do not need leave.

MS BURCH: I present the following paper:

*Australian Curriculum Implementation Committee—Implementation
Schedule—Phases 1, 2 and 3, dated January 2014.*

Animals—dangerous dogs

MR RATTENBURY: Earlier today I was asked a range of questions by members of the opposition about dangerous dogs. I advised members that under the Domestic Animals Act, division 2.3, sections 22 to 28 provide a range of criteria that are relevant in these circumstances. This covers more than two pages, so I do not intend to provide all of that information to members now. Mr Wall has written to me on the matter that he was questioning me on today. I am informed that the reply to his letter has arrived in my office today. I will have that to him very shortly, and I will include a copy of the legislation and these criteria as part of that response so that Mr Wall has the full information.

ACT Policing—tasers

Debate resumed.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

Noes 8

Mr Barr
Ms Berry
Dr Bourke
Ms Burch
Mr Corbell

Ms Gallagher
Mr Gentleman
Ms Porter
Mr Rattenbury

Mr Coe
Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne
Mr Hanson
Mrs Jones

Ms Lawder
Mr Smyth
Mr Wall

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment agreed to.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (3.34): I thank members for their contributions, some perhaps more than others. When examining some of the debate today it is important to be pretty clear what the positions of the parties are. It is clear what Mr Rattenbury wants. His position is that he is quite resistant to tasers. He has moved motions in this place before. The debate in this place makes it pretty clear that he wants the issuing of tasers to be a political decision. In fact, he previously moved, as I recall, that this should be a decision of the Assembly.

Mr Corbell has made it pretty clear that he wants this to be a decision that he is going to essentially make himself. He will wait, I guess, for the Chief Police Officer to come to him and give the thumbs up or the thumbs down. But the reality is that the Chief Police Officer should be given the green light to make operational decisions. I go to some quotes from Mr Corbell previously in the Assembly:

It is important to stress to the Assembly again that decisions to employ operational police tactics and capabilities and any amendment to operational policies are fundamentally decisions that lie within the purview and the discretion of the AFP Commissioner.

I will quote also from Mr Corbell in answer to a question asked by Ms Le Couteur in the last Assembly:

Further, I would put to the Assembly very strongly that, if there is an alternative use of force option available to police that does not involve the use of a firearm, that surely is a positive development for community safety. That is certainly the view that the government takes.

It is odd to me that despite what Mr Corbell has argued in this place before, which is that it is an operational decision, a matter for the Chief Police Officer, he essentially has got this other position, which is: “No, it is not really a matter for the Chief Police Officer; it is only going to happen if he comes to me and I am happy with it.” What I am saying very clearly in this place from the opposition’s point of view is that the case has been made and we have confidence in the Chief Police Officer that for the safety of the community, the safety of his members, he should have that discretion. Mr Corbell has argued in this place:

I have no doubt that the incorporation of tasers into the suite of tools available to front-line police provides an additional use-of-force option to assist police when facing such situations as these.

But we know that most front-line police do not have this piece of equipment. He went on:

Evidence obtained by ACT Policing during the course of its consultation with other jurisdictions nationally and internationally demonstrates that there is a direct correlation between the employment of tasers and the de-escalation of volatile operational situations as well as a reduction in the number of assaults on police. Experience demonstrates that in 70 per cent of cases, the simple drawing of a taser from a holster has de-escalated a volatile situation and that assaults on police have reduced by 30 per cent as a result of the introduction of tasers to front-line operations.

The clear deduction from that is that the failure to have our front-line police issued with tasers means that they are more likely to be assaulted. Mr Corbell argued in this place that tasers have reduced assaults on police in 70 per cent of cases and volatile situations and assaults on police have been reduced by 30 per cent.

Mr Smyth: Who said that?

MR HANSON: To clarify, Mr Corbell said that. Mr Corbell has argued in this place that issuing tasers to front-line police will reduce—

Members interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Sit down, Mr Hanson. Stop the clock. I do not think we need to deteriorate into vaudeville this afternoon. Seriously! Mr Hanson will be heard in silence. Start the clock, thank you.

MR HANSON: Back to where I was, and just for edification in case Mr Barr missed it, Mr Corbell has previously argued in this place that there is evidence that issuing front-line police with tasers will reduce assaults on police. It therefore follows, based on what Mr Corbell has said, that the absence of front-line police with tasers means that there are more police out there getting assaulted than is otherwise necessary. Mr Corbell has also said:

Like any employer, the AFP has legislated obligations to provide police with the best possible training, skills and tools with which to do their jobs effectively and safely.

It is a legislated requirement. Mr Corbell has argued in here that the issuing of tasers reduces assaults. So I do not think it is a difficult concept to understand that the failure to issue these tasers down to the front line is actually having an effect on police safety. Indeed, we heard Dennis Gellatly from the AFPA say that very clearly today.

There is more from Mr Corbell. He is a goldmine, is he not? He said:

I would also make the observation that abuse of use of force is abuse of use of force. It is not related to a particular technological device. It can occur with a baton. It can occur with OC spray. It can occur with other forms of use of force. It is not driven by a particular device; it is not technologically determined. It is driven by the culture, the training and the capacity of police in how they deal with incidents involving violence.

It is a point well made. If there is going to be an abuse of force, that can occur, as Mr Corbell has told us, with a baton, with a spray or with a pistol. Why is it that tasers are treated differently? Is it because of a concern with the culture? Does he have a concern with that? Does he have a concern with the training or the capacity of police in how they deal with incidents involving violence? What is Mr Corbell's concern? He has said it is not technologically driven. He said that it is a matter of culture, training and capacity. Where is the consistency in his argument? And where is the consistency in the Greens' position?

Given what appeared to be the somewhat strong support by Mr Corbell in the arguments made by Mr Corbell in dismissing concerns of abuse of force, it seems passing strange to me that now that Mr Rattenbury is in the cabinet Simon Corbell's position on the use of tasers seems to be much more closely aligned with the position of the Greens. We know that the Greens have a longstanding resistance to the use of tasers. Indeed, most of the quotes that I am using today were arguments put forward by Mr Corbell against the Greens.

In the last Assembly Mr Corbell argued for tasers. He said that they were a good tool, that they were effective, that they were appropriate, that they would keep our police safe, that any abuse with tasers was just as prone as abuse with batons or firearms. This was in answers to questions from Ms Le Couteur, answers to questions from Ms Bresnan, debates on motions brought forward by Mr Rattenbury. But now all of a sudden he has gone cold on it, has he not? All of a sudden it is different evidence and he is coming forward and saying that the evidence has changed. It seems passing strange to me that this minister's position has changed with the presence of the Greens minister in the cabinet.

Unless Mr Corbell has had some separate revelation it would appear to me that this, again, is a change in the government's tack based on a Green influence. In this case, most disturbingly, it is something that, based on Mr Corbell's own evidence presented in this Assembly, is going to have an adverse effect on the safety of our police. There

are 30 per cent fewer assaults on police when they are armed with a taser and Mr Corbell is saying, “No, not unless I give the green light.” I say: “Let’s get the politics out of this. Let’s say, ‘Chief Police Officer, your call. We trust you. Keep our community safe and keep your officers safe.’”

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Roads—Majura parkway

MR COE (Ginninderra) (3:44): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes regarding the impact on Majura Parkway:
 - (a) the favourable cost benefit ratio for the project;
 - (b) the need for improved road transport links connecting Gungahlin and other parts of northern Canberra;
 - (c) the significant contribution by the Commonwealth Government to the cost of construction;
 - (d) the need for motorists to efficiently use Majura Parkway to travel to and from the centre of Canberra; and
 - (e) the findings of the Fairbairn Avenue Duplication Traffic Modelling report of 2013, including Fairbairn Avenue is already at capacity; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to detail how they will address the congestion concerns of motorists using Fairbairn Avenue to access the City from Majura Parkway.

I move this motion on Majura parkway because I recognise the important role that road transport plays in Canberra. In contrast to those opposite, who believe that cars are evil, I believe that cars have provided great opportunities for lifestyle and personal freedom. In fact, the layout of Canberra, the bush capital, is really only possible due to the space that we have been able to spread out into. Whilst this does provide difficulties for the provision of public transport, it also enables all Canberrans to be no more than a kilometre or two away from a nature reserve. This mix of the natural world and suburbia has created a quality of life in Canberra which is much sought after around the world.

The Canberra Liberals support the construction of Majura parkway because it serves as a great enabler for freight, tourists, local businesses and, of course, households. The stretch of road will link the Monaro Highway with the Federal Highway and divert much traffic which would otherwise be on less efficient thoroughfares, including Northbourne Avenue.

In fact, the benefit-cost ratio for the project is expected to be around \$4 for every \$1 invested in the project. As discussed before in this place, this incorporates assigning monetary values to savings in time, emissions, accidents and other economic and social factors. Given the large number of road projects that take place around Australia and around the world, the methodology for calculating the BCR of such projects is often very accurate so we can have a relatively high degree of confidence in these figures.

The TAMS website states that the Majura parkway project will provide a range of benefits, including improved traffic flow and safety, additional capacity on the ACT road network, reduced travel times, improved access to the Majura Valley, dedicated on-road cycle lanes to encourage cycling, improved access to the national and regional freight route and supporting infrastructure for the Canberra international airport to become a major international freight and commuter hub.

However, there is a real problem looming as the project progresses, and that is the link between the city and the Majura parkway. The project was in part justified by the government as being a way to divert traffic from Northbourne Avenue as being an alternative route into the city and Russell from Gungahlin. In an answer to a question on notice last term, Mr Corbell said:

Majura Parkway can form part of the peak express routes that service directly from Gungahlin to Fairbairn/Majura/Brindabella Parks.

However, it seems that the government has not properly thought through exactly how people are going to travel on the Majura parkway to the city. I think many Canberrans would assume that there is going to be an opportunity to exit the southbound Majura parkway lanes onto Morshead Drive, which turns into Parkes Way, to access the city, ANU or Russell. However, this is not so. There are no plans for a southbound exit onto Morshead Drive. Instead, motorists wanting to travel to the city will have to use Fairbairn Avenue, a road which is already at or near capacity.

Further to this, the process of travelling onto Fairbairn Avenue is not going to be particularly smooth as it involves exiting the southbound carriageway, waiting to turn right at lights and then waiting again at a signalised intersection which serves the traffic turning onto the northbound lane of Majura parkway. So there will be two sets of traffic lights before motorists can crawl along the single-lane Fairbairn Avenue. At that point, motorists will then have to work through the Anzac Parade-Limestone-Fairbairn roundabouts, with the flow of traffic from Limestone making it very hard to access the roundabout for those travelling city bound. All this means that Majura parkway is not going to be a particularly user-friendly way of accessing the city and surrounds, especially from Gungahlin.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am not the first to raise these concerns. In fact, the government foreshadowed each of these issues and commissioned a report into the impact on Fairbairn Avenue following the construction of the Majura parkway. The Fairbairn Avenue duplication traffic modelling document is dated 13 November 2013 and was provided to the opposition through FOI. The document's introduction states:

SMEC was commissioned by Roads ACT to undertake a strategic transport and micro-simulation modelling study of Fairbairn Avenue to evaluate possible upgrade options. This road is an important arterial in Canberra's road network, particularly in its role as an approach route to Canberra Airport, while its location alongside the residential suburb of Campbell poses challenges regarding the road's impact on and integration with the surrounding community.

The report discussed several options, including the base "do nothing" option—this scenario represents the network and land use assuming the proposed Fairbairn Avenue upgrade does not go ahead; in 2021 and 2031 it includes the Majura parkway—Fairbairn Avenue duplication option 1—this scenario represents the duplication of Fairbairn Avenue between Pialligo Avenue and Truscott Street—and Fairbairn Avenue duplication option 2—this scenario represents the duplication of Fairbairn Avenue between Pialligo Avenue and Anzac Parade. Importantly, the report states:

In 2011 AM Base, Fairbairn Avenue is already operating near capacity, while Morshead Drive (particularly westbound) and Pialligo Avenue (particularly eastbound) are also under stress.

In 2021 AM, Fairbairn Avenue still operates at or near capacity, and the eastbound volume has increased compared to the 2011 AM Base. In particular, the addition of Majura Parkway results in Fairbairn Avenue eastbound between Majura Parkway and Pialligo Avenue operating near capacity.

The report also states, which is timely given the government's motion this morning, that rat running is likely to increase significantly as a result of Majura parkway and the limited capacity of Fairbairn Avenue, especially given that it is already at capacity. Residents of Campbell are already witnessing rat running on Truscott Street and Blamey Crescent, and the additional traffic on Fairbairn is predicted to see this increase significantly.

The conclusion of the report includes that: the strategic transport and micro-simulation modelling analyses indicated that Fairbairn Avenue is already at capacity and that duplication of Fairbairn Avenue should be conducted for the full length of the road, rather than only east of Truscott Street and the partial duplication in option 1 will encourage increased rat running through the streets of Campbell compared to the do nothing option, while the full duplication in option 2 will reduce this rat running compared to the do nothing option.

My motion calls for the government to detail how they will address the congestion concerns of motorists using Fairbairn Avenue to access the city from Majura parkway. In 2016, it will not be good enough for the ACT government to say that they did not foresee the issues of congestion on Fairbairn Avenue and dangerous rat running throughout Campbell and other suburbs. The ACT government should address these concerns now so that the problems are mitigated from day one. This government has form when it comes to building roads with capacity. We all know what happened: the GDE went from \$52 million to \$200 million and cost the ACT community much more in lost productivity.

I support the construction of Majura parkway, but I urge the government to ensure that access to and from the road is appropriate. I request that the government address this concern by providing to the Assembly their plans to address this issue.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Corrective Services, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for Sport and Recreation) (3.52): I welcome Mr Coe putting forward this motion today. As the minister responsible for delivering the Majura parkway project, I welcome the opportunity to speak about how it is progressing, the impact it will have on the road network when it is opened up and what other measures the ACT government is currently considering in managing transport requirements in this area.

The Majura parkway project is making good progress, I am happy to report to the Assembly. If any members have been out to the area recently they will have seen how much work is underway, and much of it on very good time frames, with the predominant and remaining large piece of work the construction of the bridge across the Molonglo River, which is, I guess, the single biggest piece of work still to come on the project.

When open, the Majura parkway will complete the eastern parkway system in Canberra. It was confirmed as a priority project nationally when it successfully secured funding through an Infrastructure Australia bid in 2010. The project has a favourable cost-benefit return estimated, as Mr Coe has already spoken of today. The key to developing this successful bid was the ability of the ACT government to demonstrate that the project could contribute to the national, regional and local economies over an extended period of time.

Projects such as the Majura parkway project are not developed in isolation and form part of a wider plan for managing transport needs as the city develops. The Majura parkway is but one element of a wider transport for Canberra plan which outlines how the ACT seeks to develop and implement more sustainable transport options into the future as our city develops.

Transport for Canberra outlines strategies for improved walking and cycling infrastructure and the provision of better links with public transport connections, whether to existing ACTION buses or a future light rail network. Transport for Canberra identifies an integrated approach to transport that can be rolled out incrementally over time across different transport options. Developing a freight strategy also forms part of the transport for Canberra plan. This recognises the importance of commercial freight to the local economy and the delivering of the freight task over the next 20 years.

Transport for Canberra also identifies other road connections across the territory and region that will need to be provided or upgraded to support development in the city and the wider Canberra and south-east New South Wales region. I think that is important, particularly in the context of discussing the Majura parkway, which is not just a road for this city but was clearly designed to be a road from a regional perspective as well in terms of freight and transport movement.

The ACT government is already considering the impact of the Majura parkway on the road network and has commenced discussions with key stakeholders, such as the Canberra Airport Group, in this regard. The ACT government is also participating in the recently established south-east region infrastructure planning forums.

When the Majura parkway opens, it will provide a very good level of service for traffic travelling north and south between the Federal and Monaro highways. This level of service will be sustained into the future and will be beneficial for the heavy level of commercial traffic using the route.

Roads such as Pialligo Avenue, Morshead Drive and Fairbairn Avenue that generally travel in an east-west direction and are managed by traffic lights will attract more traffic in the future, as a result of the Majura parkway, but also with increased development in the Majura Park and airport precinct and in Queanbeyan. There will be a need to provide some improvements to a number of these roads over the next five to 15 years to maintain an acceptable level of service.

A working group between ACT government agencies, the Canberra Airport and the National Capital Authority have been assessing these future needs for some time, and technical work such as the Fairbairn Avenue duplication traffic modelling 2013 referred to in Mr Coe's motion forms part of this overall assessment process.

It is important that this work is considered in the context of other future developments in the city, such as the initial stages of the light rail project, a revised ACTION bus network, the city to the lake project and the airport master plan. Projects that are identified through this process will be developed further for consideration in future capital work programs through the normal process and subject to the usual competing priorities and demands for available funding.

This process underway by the ACT government will not only consider motorists using Fairbairn Avenue to access the city from the Majura parkway but will consider the needs of motorists and other road users on the north Canberra network covering requirements on roads such as Horse Park Drive, Pialligo Avenue, Morshead Drive and Majura Road—and I might also add Gundaroo Drive to that discussion. The opportunities to promote more efficient travel by bus, by bike and by walking will also be considered. Using the Majura parkway project as an example, I can illustrate the types of approaches that can be taken. We need to look at the whole transport network, and, as various pieces are altered, there needs to be a dynamism to the response that is taken. In the context of Mr Coe's motion, Fairbairn Avenue is not the only piece of the puzzle that needs to be considered. That is the point I am trying to make here.

Certainly, the decision by the ACT government to fund an off-road shared path adjacent to the road project, as well as future bus network planning that will consider the use of the Majura parkway in future bus routes, illustrates the necessary integration that must take place to achieve more sustainable and efficient transport options in our city. While I appreciate Mr Coe's motion today, it is important that members of the Assembly understand that planning for infrastructure can take a long time, that it needs to be considered in an integrated way and that it impacts on the overall development of the city.

This government has a vision for a future Canberra and is busily working towards implementing this. The provision of good infrastructure to support transport demands is an example of this, whether it is the planning currently taking place for the light rail project, the revised bus network 14 that has just been launched, the rollout of the strategic cycling and walking network or the construction of important road connections such as Majura parkway or Ashley Drive. The important elements are that they support the economic and social development of the city, that they are managed in an integrated way and result in more sustainable transport options into the future, and that we are able to do them in the context of the ACT's available budget.

Members will be aware that I have circulated an amendment to Mr Coe's motion. Some of it picks up directly Mr Coe's text in places where that is fair enough. As is always my way, I seek to keep as much of the original text as I think is agreeable. Point (f) is probably the substantive addition to Mr Coe's original motion. It states:

... that the latest traffic assessment in this area shows that Fairbairn Avenue is expected to function adequately upon opening of the completed Majura Parkway in 2016 but, with future traffic growth, improvements to some sections may be required in the subsequent five to 10 year period."

The Chief Minister and I have been approached on this issue. We have both looked at it in some detail in light of the representations that have been made to the government. Certainly, the very clear advice to me from Roads ACT is outlined in paragraph (f) of my amendment. I trust that this assures members of the Assembly that the issue has been and remains under active consideration. But at this stage the modelling and the advice to me indicates that, with the opening of the Majura parkway, the capacity is there in the road network.

I note that in terms of the link between the city and the Majura parkway, Morshead Drive is already fully duplicated, and there is an expectation that motorists exiting the Majura parkway southbound may well use Morshead Drive. There is not a direct access ramp, as Mr Coe touched on. This precedes my time in the portfolio. The planning was constrained because of the Duntroon oval at the corner of Morshead Drive and where the Majura parkway will be. There was an inability to bring an exit ramp down to Morshead Drive there.

Certainly, some of the expectation is that traffic exiting south will go onto Fairbairn Avenue but travel towards the airport and then make a right-hand turn onto Morshead Drive and travel to the city along that fully duplicated route. That is part of the expectation that I have been advised on as to the way that traffic will access the city from that once the Majura parkway opens.

With those remarks, I move the amendment that I have circulated. I hope that the amendment addresses the issues, or at least indicates to the Assembly that the issues raised by Mr Coe today are being managed in the way that I have outlined. I move:

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

"(1) notes in relation to Majura Parkway:

- (a) the favourable cost benefit ratio for the project;
- (b) that it is an important element of the Government's *Transport for Canberra* plan as a key link between Gungahlin and central Canberra;
- (c) the significant contribution by the Commonwealth Government to the cost of construction;
- (d) that the ACT Government continues to hold discussions with key stakeholders in relation to preparing for and managing impacts on the road network throughout various stages of construction;
- (e) that, as part of a Working Group including the National Capital Authority and the Canberra Airport, the ACT Government will continue to assess the need for, and plan for, transport improvements to northern and east-west connections to the Majura Parkway in the context of the initial stages of light rail, a revised ACTION bus network, the Airport Master Plan, active transport options, and other developments, e.g. IKEA; and
- (f) that the latest traffic assessment in this area shows that Fairbairn Avenue is expected to function adequately upon opening of the completed Majura Parkway in 2016 but, with future traffic growth, improvements to some sections may be required in the subsequent five to 10 year period."

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education) (4.02): I indicate that we will be supporting Minister Rattenbury's amendment today. The 11½-kilometre Majura parkway will connect the Monaro Highway with the Federal Highway. The project has been included in the ACT territory plan since the 1970s and from a national perspective it will be an important freight route.

The ACT government and the federal government agreed to a shared fifty-fifty funding arrangement to build the \$288 million Majura parkway. I think this was a very generous offer from the ACT government, considering the national importance of the Majura parkway.

From a regional perspective the parkway will provide better access to the Canberra Airport. It will also provide a transport hub for the region and add to the capacity of the main road network. The government is working with councils in the region to promote business, tourism and higher education opportunities, and this road will certainly improve transport access to the regions surrounding the ACT.

As those who drive in that area will know, construction works are currently underway at the northern and southern end of the project to allow for the embankment construction of a bridge over the Molonglo River and Fairbairn Avenue, and to replace an arch bridge at the northern end of the project. In fact I was just out there at lunch today. The bridge is coming along very fast, considering the last time I had seen it some two weeks ago.

Works are also underway to construct the shared path as part of the Majura parkway construction works and are expected to be completed concurrently with the parkway. This is an important element in terms of promoting alternative modes of transport as highlighted in the transport for Canberra strategy.

Mr Coe's motion specifically refers to concerns around access from the Majura parkway to the city via Fairbairn Avenue. The roads planning includes addressing these concerns through a working group that Minister Rattenbury has talked about, which includes not only ACT government agencies but also the National Capital Authority and the Canberra Airport.

The broader issues around the Majura parkway are also important considerations in planning for capital metro and city to the lake, and are also taken into consideration in the airport master plan. I have regular discussions with the Canberra Airport management about a wide range of issues, including the roads network around the parkway. The airport is a significant economic hub in the ACT and hopefully it will continue to grow that role across the region. Our roads planning takes into account improvements to access to the airport. This includes things like the impact on the roads system with the opening of the newest IKEA shop in the country in Majura Park towards the end of next year.

In a broader transport planning sense, and as Mr Rattenbury has noted, when it is open in 2016 the Majura parkway will complete the eastern parkway system in the ACT. Our success in winning funding through the commonwealth, and supported by Infrastructure Australia, was based on clearly demonstrating the national, regional and local economic benefits that this road would bring.

As we noted in this morning's debate on Dr Bourke's motion, it is crucial that governments plan for the future. This is clearly the case not only with roads planning but also with public transport improvements. We cannot sit back and hope that things do not get worse in terms of congestion. As a government we need to have clear strategies that spell out our broader transport plans, as this important road has been central to them.

As with the \$288 million Majura parkway, capital metro will be another major infrastructure project that will provide benefits across the community, as well as benefiting the territory in terms of economic activity and revitalisation when faced with reduced commonwealth employment and spending.

In relation to Mr Coe's motion, our roads and transport planning is taking into account issues such as he has stated in terms of Fairbairn Avenue, and as was well articulated by Minister Rattenbury in his contribution to this debate. We do undertake studies and measuring of traffic flows.

As I said, transport planning happens over a long period of time and we need to ensure that we do have efficient transport networks across the city. This includes roads, public transport and active transport—all topics that we have actively debated here in the Assembly over the last few years and no doubt we will continue to do so over the next few years. The government will be pleased to support Mr Rattenbury's amendment to Mr Coe's motion today.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (4.07): First I would like to thank the minister and the Chief Minister for their input to this discussion and note that I think it has been a worthy debate that has taken place here.

However, unfortunately, the opposition will not be supporting the amendment as neither the minister nor the Chief Minister has actually detailed what the traffic assessment is. It might be useful if the minister were to come back here later today with, or provide it offline perhaps, any information which suggests that the traffic assessment shows that Fairbairn Avenue is expected to function adequately.

In the absence of that, what the opposition does have is the SMEC Fairbairn Avenue duplication traffic modelling study, which suggests there are going to be significant issues on and around Fairbairn Avenue following the construction of Majura parkway. In actual fact we are not necessarily talking about the complete construction of Majura parkway, simply the first stage of Majura parkway; when that opens we will see pressure taking place on Fairbairn Avenue.

It is a bit of a worry that in 2010, when the funding was awarded for this project, Minister Rattenbury said that Morshead Drive was considered and that it was not an option to put an exit onto Morshead Drive from Majura parkway. That demonstrates that in 2010 there was an identified need to have better links from Majura parkway travelling westbound. So there was a need; however, for one reason or another, the off-ramp from Majura parkway on to Morshead Drive could not be done.

I am surprised that here we are, four years on, and the government still has not mitigated the loss of that off-ramp and the fact that that off-ramp was unable to be built. I appreciate that it has a working group to address these issues and perhaps other issues. However, we are now four years on from when the money was awarded. For how much longer is this working group going to function before we get a tangible upgrade to the roads surrounding the Majura parkway, the airport and surrounds?

Further to that, Mr Rattenbury said that the only way into the city will not be to turn right onto Fairbairn but also to be able to turn left onto Fairbairn and then to turn right onto Morshead Drive at the intersection with Pialligo Avenue. I am concerned that potentially that could congest the area even further. If it is not clear that the best way to travel is to turn right down Fairbairn, what we could see is a fair bit more congestion at that junction, which also will, in part, incorporate traffic from the south, whether it be from Tuggeranong or parts of Woden and the inner south, and also Jerrabomberra and Queanbeyan.

Regardless of whether motorists turn right into Fairbairn or turn left into Fairbairn Avenue and then turn right on to Morshead, we are going to see a huge bottleneck. I do not think that will be good for business in Canberra. It will not be good for productivity. It will not be good for people trying to travel in and out of the territory, or for surrounding businesses, agencies and the airport.

The Chief Minister said that they have clear strategies in place. That is exactly what my motion is calling for. I would like them to detail what the strategy to address this

concern is going to be. Paragraph (2) of my motion calls on the ACT government to detail how they will address the congestion concerns of motorists using Fairbairn Avenue to access the city from Majura parkway.

Regardless of whether the road is going to be required to be upgraded now, in five years time or in 15 years time, at some point the road will need to be upgraded or a new link to Morshead Drive will need to be established. Whatever the government chooses to do, I think it is important that it is detailed to the Assembly so that all concerned can have some confidence that the government is in fact aware of this problem and that it has a necessary strategy in place to try and mitigate any problems.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

Noes 8

Mr Barr
Ms Berry
Dr Bourke
Ms Burch
Mr Corbell

Ms Gallagher
Mr Gentleman
Ms Porter
Mr Rattenbury

Mr Coe
Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne
Mr Hanson
Mrs Jones

Ms Lawder
Mr Smyth
Mr Wall

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Paper

Mr Corbell presented the following paper:

Major Events Act—Major Events (One Day Cricket International) Notice 2014 (No. 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-281 (LR, 28 October 2014), together with its explanatory statement.

Renewable energy and greenhouse gas emissions

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (4.18): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) climate change and the threat it poses to our city, our economy and our environment is real;
- (b) cities play a key role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and in addressing the critical economic, social and environmental consequences of climate change;

- (c) that the ACT has established greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets—targets of zero net emission (carbon neutrality) by 2060 and a 40 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels by 2020;
 - (d) the ACT is committed to generate 90 per cent of Canberra’s electricity to come from renewable sources by 2020;
 - (e) the Government has established a bold and comprehensive strategy to make the ACT a more economic, social and environmentally sustainable city;
 - (f) the latest OECD Greenhouse Gas Emissions Index ranks Australia as the highest emitter per capita; and
 - (g) the Abbott Government’s plan to cut the federal Renewable Energy Target will ruin the renewable energy industry, result in the loss of jobs and see investment move offshore; and
- (2) calls on Assembly members to:
- (a) support the Government’s comprehensive strategy to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and encourage environmental sustainability in the ACT; and
 - (b) call on the Federal Government to maintain a Renewable Energy Target which provides certainty for investment and growth in renewable energy projects.

This motion today is about climate change and the important work being done by the ACT government to tackle this issue on behalf of the ACT community. Our government and the Labor Party accept that climate change and the threat it poses to our city, our economy and our environment are real. It will affect Canberra and our region. It will impact our health, our economy and our amenity. Climate change is not an abstract problem in the far distant future; it is real and it is happening now.

Weather conditions across Australia show how devastating the effects of extreme weather events can be on our lives, our lifestyles and our livelihoods. Climate projections for our region indicate warmer and drier conditions with increased frequency of national disasters, including drought and bushfire, and the severity of extreme weather events such as wild storms, flash flooding and prolonged heatwaves. As the number of very hot days—days where the temperature gets above 35 degrees Celsius—increases, the number of illnesses and heat-related deaths in the ACT could more than double, with the elderly and the vulnerable being particularly at risk.

Other climate change-related health risks relevant to the ACT include increases in food-borne infectious diseases, increases in air pollution and mental health consequences. The adverse health impacts of climate change will be greatest among people on lower incomes, the elderly and the sick.

Climate change is likely to threaten water supply in the ACT through reduced rainfall and runoff into the ACT's Cotter and Googong catchments. Water resources are likely to be further stressed due to projected population growth and changes in supply for irrigation, cities and industry and environmental flows. These events will place added strain on emergency services, health services and our critical infrastructure, let alone the personal and financial loss to communities and the financial cost on governments.

Cities are the major consumers of electricity and fuel and generate up to 80 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions. It is here that we can make our biggest advances in reducing our emissions, while at the same time addressing the critical economic, social and environmental consequences of climate change.

The ACT government knows we will need to adapt and become more resilient into the future and is actively pursuing opportunities to reduce our emissions across the city. We are doing this through energy efficiency measures, the procurement of renewable energy and more efficient forms of transport.

The 2003 Canberra bushfire was the catalyst for the ACT government to take major steps to increase our resilience through measures including higher construction standards for buildings on the urban edge, a larger and more reliable drinking water supply, better emergency management and communication systems and greater community engagement to empower residents to prepare for emergencies.

The ACT has established greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets: a 40 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels by 2020 and zero net emissions carbon neutrality by 2060. The majority of the emissions reductions out to 2020 will be formed by wind and solar renewable energy. The ACT is committed to generate 90 per cent of Canberra's electricity from renewable resources by 2020. Amongst the many renewable energy projects having been undertaken in the ACT, a standout example is the Royalla solar farm, which was commissioned in late August 2014 and officially opened by Minister Corbell on 3 September 2014. On completion, this solar farm will be the largest installation of its kind in Australia.

Additionally, in November 2013 the ACT government passed the climate change and greenhouse gas reduction renewable energy targets determination 2013, providing for a 90 per cent renewable energy target, and on 17 April 2014 a request for proposals for a reverse auction for feed-in tariff entitlements for wind-generating capacity was released by the ACT government.

The government has established a bold and comprehensive strategy to make the ACT a more economic, social and environmentally sustainable city. The ACT planning strategy establishes how the ACT will develop into the future to meet the aspirations of the people and the environment, social and economic challenges. Canberra will be a city that makes it easier for people to make sustainable living choices, a city where everyone can take advantage of its network of centres, open spaces and modes of travel to enjoy a sense of wellbeing and to participate in a vibrant civic and cultural life, a city at the centre of an innovative, prosperous region that has established a clean economy.

The transport for Canberra policy will be the foundation for transport planning for the next 20 years, prepared in conjunction with the ACT planning strategy, so that important relationships between land use and transport can be used to support a shift to more sustainable transport, including capital metro.

The ACT recognised that the pursuit of its emission reduction targets will not be without a cost, and an analysis of the cost-of-living impacts of action on climate change is released annually and demonstrates that effective action is affordable. This represents an unprecedented level of transparency in providing estimated costs and savings from various energy efficiency works and renewable energy measures, as well as the modelling and key assumptions that are there for all to see.

The ACT government is mindful of the cost to, and needs of, people who are less well off in our community. The ACT human services blueprint, planning strategy and transport for Canberra strategy are integral to the sustainable development of our city as it grows, ages and becomes more urban intense. These strategies seek to ensure that all Canberrans have the capability to fully participate in city life and encourage active travel with the consequence of its health benefits.

The ACT government is acting on the best available scientific advice on the need to reduce its emissions. We are demonstrating that transitioning to a low-carbon economy is feasible and affordable. The ACT is showing leadership on climate change mitigation for the nation, and we are attracting new industry to our region that will help us grow and diversify our economy.

We know the majority of Australians support sensible, long-term and strong action on climate change, which flies in the face of Tony Abbott's insistence to take Australia backwards. The lack of leadership at the federal level, demonstrated by the Abbott government's plan to cut the federal renewable energy target, will ruin the renewable energy industry, result in the loss of jobs and see investments move offshore. Australia was leading the world in climate policy, but Tony Abbott's destruction of federal Labor's climate change policies is forcing us out of step with the rest of the world and out of tune with the wishes of the Australian people.

Tony Abbott's action to repeal carbon pricing and replace it with a direct action plan is an international joke. It does nothing to tackle pollution, it is expensive, it is inefficient and it will leave Australia lagging behind in the race to create the jobs of the future. Their decisions are putting us behind where we need to be if we are to create a more sustainable and livable future for Canberra.

In contrast, the ACT government's actions are attracting the renewable energy sector to the region and fostering investment, innovation and the creation of new types of business operating towards a low-carbon economy. We will continue to move ahead with reducing greenhouse gas emissions and supporting large-scale renewable energy.

I am astounded by the moral poverty of those who argue that the ACT's ability to impact global warming is small and that because of our size we should hold off on taking action on climate change. This position denies the fact that global warming is a

shared responsibility and requires cooperation and action by everyone in our community, including governments, business, community groups, households and individuals. We must all understand that while the impact of our individual choices may be small, together we can make a difference to enhance the future wellbeing of our people and our environment.

Even if the federal Liberal government takes us backwards on climate change and environmental policy, this government is committed to responsible and far-sighted action, informed by science, that will transition the ACT towards a carbon-neutral territory that can adapt to a changing climate. Ours is a leadership role, not because we are doing more than we should but because we are one of the few who are doing what we must. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (4.28): I thank Ms Berry for bringing this motion to the Assembly today. Today I would like to outline the very significant benefits that renewable energy presents to our community and to add my voice to a call to the federal government to follow this government's example and support a strong and robust renewable energy target.

The government takes seriously the risk posed to Canberra by climate change but also recognises the very significant benefits offered by early action on climate change, particularly by the harnessing of our nation's vast renewable energy resources. We truly are an energy superpower when it comes to wind, solar and wave energy capability, and we should be harnessing these resources for the benefit and the prosperity of our nation and our environment.

Despite global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the underlying cause of global warming, there will be unavoidable changes in the planet's climate during our lifetime. Indeed, these changes are already increasingly notable. Climate projections for the ACT region indicate warmer and drier conditions, with the increased frequency of and potential for natural disasters, including drought and bushfire, and severity of extreme weather events such as wild storms, flash flooding and prolonged heat waves increasing. Incrementally we know there will be changes not just to the weather but what we see around us: our local plants and animals, how much water we have, what types of crops we can grow.

The most recent IPCC report released in March this year stated that climate change poses a global threat to security, food and the future wellbeing of humankind. The IPCC indicated that it is past the time for governments and the public to work to not just cut greenhouse gas emissions but also to plan for infrastructure that will offer protection from a significantly changed climate. The message is clear that both mitigation and adaptation responses are now necessary.

The final report of the commonwealth's renewable energy target review was released on 28 August this year. The report is unsupportive of the RET in its current form and terms it unsustainable. This report is, of course, more commonly known as the Warburton report. Modelling done for the commonwealth's review of the RET showed that, if left unaltered, the target would reach 26.3 per cent of national

electricity supply by 2020. On 22 October this year the federal government revealed that its preferred position on the RET is to reduce it to what is claimed to be the true 20 per cent by 2020 target. The commonwealth also announced its support for renewable energy target exemptions for aluminium smelters as well as possibly other emission-intensive industries.

Reduction of the national RET is regrettable, the latest step in a concerning movement away from meaningful action on climate change at a national level. Yet conversely, the ACT government is pursuing opportunities to reduce our emissions across the territory in a cost-effective and well-considered manner. As Ms Berry has outlined, we have strong and comprehensive greenhouse gas reduction targets and we have a strong plan to achieve those reductions through action plan 2 and a 90 per cent renewable energy target.

In September 2012 I announced that FRV Royalla Solar Farm Pty Ltd had been awarded a grant of a feed-in tariff entitlement for their 20-megawatt proposal at Royalla. As members would now know, this farm was commissioned in late August this year and is now the largest operational photovoltaic installation in Australia and is the first to be connected to the national electricity market. In August 2013 feed-in tariff entitlements were awarded under the large-scale solar auction process to Zhenfa Canberra Solar Farm One Pty Ltd for a 13-megawatt solar farm to be developed at Mugga Lane and to OneSun Capital 10MW Operating Pty Ltd for a seven-megawatt solar farm proposed to be built at Uriarra. These initiatives have been procured at the best possible price through an innovative reverse-auction process.

In November 2013 the government adopted its 90 per cent renewable energy target and on 17 April this year the government proceeded with the next stage of its support for large-scale renewable energy through a request for proposals for a reverse auction for feed-in tariff entitlements of up to 200 megawatts of wind-generating capacity for the ACT. Proposals closed in September this year. Successful proposals can be located anywhere in the national electricity market, which covers all jurisdictions except Western Australia and the Northern Territory. If they are outside the Australian capital region, in the broader national interest, in the market they must satisfy a local ACT region investment criterion as part of the assessment process.

The government's innovative approach through the auction process has attracted praise both nationally and internationally. Most recently, as I advised members yesterday, it was announced that the solar auction policy was nominated as a finalist in the local government sustainability category for the national Banksia sustainability awards. Short-listing as a finalist is confirmation of the ACT's capacity to compete and lead policy innovation at a national level.

One of the great features of AP2 is the unprecedented level of transparency it provides regarding estimated costs and savings from the various energy efficiency and renewable energy measures. The modelling and key assumptions are there for all to see. What does AP2 tell us? Firstly, it tells us that the move to 90 per cent renewable energy, to achieve our 2020 abatement target, results in an estimated 16 per cent increase in household electricity bills or approximately \$4.40 per household per week. But it also shows that a large percentage of this price increase is compensated through

the implementation of the energy efficiency improvement scheme which is now operating in the territory and which is projected to save the average household approximately \$4 per week in electricity consumption.

The EEIS establishes a territory-wide energy savings target and matches the energy savings obligations for our electricity retailers and has a particular emphasis on low income households that may be economically constrained from otherwise being able to act to save energy in their home. Of course, these are the households that are most impacted by any increase in utility prices and therefore the households that are most able to benefit from electricity from energy efficiency measures as long as they are supported and the costs are met to allow them to be implemented. Under the EEIS retailers are required to achieve 25 per cent of their total energy savings in so-called priority households, that is, low income households.

AP2 also tells us that we are unlikely to see a diminishment in the large electricity price advantage we maintain over all other jurisdictions as a result of the 90 per cent renewable energy target, including the 53 per cent price advantage we have over New South Wales household electricity consumers. And that is even after achieving our 2020 targets. It tells us that the economic impact of achieving our 2020 target by pursuing renewables, before energy efficiency benefits are taken into account, is equivalent to delaying the achievement of our business-usual output in 2050 by three months. That is right: it is the equivalent of a three-month delay over a 37-year period. And that is before you factor in the energy efficiency savings that are being delivered to households right now.

In May this year I announced the development of a climate change adaptation strategy for the ACT. This strategy is to deliver policy and actions that are responsive to the changing conditions of the region over time; that is, taking account of future projections in today's decisions. The adaptation strategy is to consider adaptive and transformative pathways for the built and natural environments and will propose actions with measurable targets for the government, individuals, communities and businesses to be resilient to a change in climate. These are very important responses because we know that these changes are occurring right now.

The climate change adaptation strategy needs to be based on the most up-to-date science available. The government has partnered with the New South Wales government and climate science researchers at the University of New South Wales to model climate data at a scale useful for our region. This New South Wales and region climate model, or NARcliM as it is known, will provide the government with regional climate projections and data to assist in understanding local risks.

The ACT can be proud of the considerable action it is taking to respond to a changing climate. Today we are calling on the Australian government to follow the territory's example. This is critical for our collective futures. (*Time expired.*)

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (4.39): I thank Ms Berry for bringing this very important motion to the Assembly today. It is an important topic about renewable energy and greenhouse gas emissions. But I will say straight up that we will not be supporting this motion today. I think we need to take a close look at the motion for what it really is. Firstly, the wording of Ms Berry's motion tries to tie Assembly

members individually to the Labor-Greens environmental policy. It “calls on Assembly members” to “support the government’s comprehensive strategy”, and “calls on Assembly members” to “call on the federal government”.

It calls on Assembly members to do something, rather than calling on the ACT Legislative Assembly to do something. This means in theory that if this motion passes it is tying us all in to having and promoting these same views, which you cannot actually do. It is called human rights, Mr Assistant Speaker. I actually have the right to disagree with you or Ms Berry and think for myself and have my own opinions, whether you like it or not. A vote of the Assembly cannot force me to change that and cannot force me to support the government’s strategy.

Moving from the wording itself to the real point of this motion, the Canberra Liberals believe in the importance of a balance between economic, social and environmental policy and decisions. We believe it is important to take into consideration the economic and social impacts of environment policy and vice versa. But this government has taken this too far.

In the ACT we emit less than half of one per cent of Australia’s greenhouse gas emissions—less than half of one per cent—yet the radical Greens-Labor government are trying to grandstand and force negative economic and social impacts on the people of Canberra simply to prove a point, so that they can go to COAG, Denmark or wherever—take your pick—and waltz around spruiking that they are the best, with their 90 per cent renewable energy targets.

But do they confess that it is going to increase electricity bills, from their own conservative estimate, by 16 per cent? Do they confess that, along with increasing rates, parking fees, public transport costs and everything else, they are likely to increase the cost of living in Canberra for a tiny environmental gain, if any at all?

The Canberra Liberals want to decrease emissions too. In 2008 the policy we took to the election was for a 30 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. It was reasonable, achievable and affordable for the people of the ACT. This government likes to run with policies which cause a lot of pain for little gain.

This motion, I feel, is simply a waste of time. Everyone in this place knows the Canberra Liberals will not support the increase in electricity costs for Canberra families for no gain. That is no surprise. So what we really have in this motion today is the government trying to play politics between us and the federal government. It is simply a cheap political stunt to try to paint us as the climate change deniers. I am not at all ashamed to say that I do not agree with the Labor-Greens government on this. I can stand here knowing that I will continue to do what I can to assist with environmental issues but I will always do it in balance with economic and social needs as well.

We live in one of the coldest cities in the country. We have pensioners struggling to pay bills, and we heard strongly recently from the Tuggeranong Community Council about pensioners who are unable to pay their utility bills and had the electricity cut off. I can stand tall knowing that the Canberra Liberals do not support policies which will make it even harder for those pensioners to heat their homes in winter.

Our engagement with the government on issues like the Nature Conservation Bill over the past few months, including contributing to ensuring greater stakeholder consultation on the Nature Conservation Bill, as well as the environmental protection bill which will come before the Assembly tomorrow, show that we are committed to real improvements and protection of the environment—not political grandstanding and a pointless call on the federal government to do something when, of course, there is no requirement for the federal government to take any notice whatsoever of what this Assembly says.

I think that constituents and even many members opposite know that we are quite fair dinkum about these things, that we are trying to achieve real and meaningful change, and doing things that might make a difference for people in the ACT for the benefit of the environment and the ACT community. It is not about filling up time for the government on private members' day.

This is a pointless motion, motivated purely to try to get some political mileage by painting all of us on this side of the chamber as climate change deniers. Quite frankly, I am not interested in playing that game. I would prefer to move on to a motion that actually tries to achieve something for the citizens of the ACT and stop wasting time with this politically driven motion which will have no impact on the lives of Canberrans or on the federal government. It makes me feel that Ms Berry is trying to write us into act 4 of a play called *Kill Climate Change Deniers*.

Many people accuse Tony Abbott of climate change denialism when in fact he has stated that he believes in anthropogenic or, to put it more simply, man-made climate change. However, he does not believe in every hare-brained scheme that potentially damages the economy for no real environmental benefit.

There is a growing group—and I am in that group—that believe our response should be measurable, achievable and realistic. So when we talk about showing leadership, it is only leadership if someone is following you; otherwise you are out in front thinking you are a leader and people are actually standing back and looking at you from a distance.

Maybe one day this government will start listening to the people of the ACT and realise that it is the urban maintenance problems that I spoke about yesterday or the overcrowding at the Canberra Hospital that they care about, or being able to get a job, being able to get to work and to pay their bills. It is a small minority who have the radical environmental agenda as their highest priority and not the majority of Canberra residents.

Canberrans do want and deserve climate change to be taken seriously, and the Canberra Liberals do that. But they also want the balance between social, economic and environmental concerns to be managed, and the Labor-Greens government is not doing that. Rather than an achievable, realistic approach, they are skewing their response too far in favour of one aspect of the equation. We will not be supporting this motion today which attempts to require all members to think and act in a certain way as prescribed by Ms Berry.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (4.46): I am pleased to speak to Ms Berry's motion today which canvasses the very important topic of climate change and how we respond to it. I think the reality of climate change is stark and it seems that almost weekly now, or at least weekly, there are new and advancing scientific studies which are showing both the certainty of human-induced climate change increases and that the impacts are happening and accelerating faster, in fact, than some of the models suggested. Certainly, a lot of them are in concert, as the models have suggested. Those impacts are, of course, well articulated.

Yesterday I spoke very briefly, at the end of some remarks on municipal services, about the impact in the ACT. I was rather badly distorted in the intent of my comments by Mr Coe, so I intend to take the opportunity to return to them today. There is no doubt that climate change will have an impact on the delivery of municipal services, be that establishing new trees or seeing older trees dying off because of heat and drought stress. I said yesterday that during the heatwave last summer we saw the melting of tar on roads, in car park areas. Over a sustained period of days—that was the key point: a sustained period of days—of unusually high heat for this city we saw that impact coming through. Those are the sorts of things that are predicted to happen more frequently under climate change scenarios.

Finally, I mentioned buses and said that during the extended period of heat this past summer there had been an impact on the ACTION bus fleet as buses had struggled to cope with the excessive levels of heat. Mr Coe then got up and, in a fairly derogatory tone, made reference to the fact that all these other cities in the world operate buses in hot environments and Canberra should be able to cope. His observation was true at one level in the sense that, yes, we can. My observation was true, though, that there is a cost to that. ACTION is now undertaking work to ensure that our buses can cope with a sustained period of heat, but the point is that there is a cost to it.

That was the very observation I was making yesterday. People sit here and go, "Climate change, no worries, and we shouldn't have to pay the cost of trying to tackle it," but they are completely ignoring the fact that there is an absolute cost in not dealing with it. I can assure Mr Coe and the public transport users of Canberra that ACTION is working to ameliorate those sorts of impacts in the future. But there is a cost to it, as there is a cost to the increased bushfire risk that climate change brings about and also the impact on our ability to successfully grow food and the inherent food security issues that go with increasing heatwaves, changing rainfall patterns and the like.

The ACT is providing leadership on emission reduction and renewable energy targets. I am very proud to be part of an Assembly—or at least those members of the Assembly—that supported those initiatives. There are very practical policies now going into making that happen, including the work within government to reduce energy use and improve energy efficiency. I know TAMS has undertaken a range of projects, as have other government agencies, although, again, the whole government has more work to do. While I was the Speaker, the Assembly made great progress and was able to significantly reduce its energy consumption and achieve a payback period which is leading to long-term savings for this building.

Similarly, we have the energy efficiency improvement scheme. The Liberal Party oppose that, but it is actually delivering really significant benefits to this city and will continue to do so for many years to come.

Ms Lawder talked about Canberra being the coldest city in the country. She provided an anecdote about a pensioner that she had met that had struggled to pay their electricity bills as an example of others in the community. That is a really tricky issue because, as we have discussed in this place before, we already have the cheapest electricity in Australia—in the order of \$1,500 a year cheaper than just across the border in Queanbeyan—so already there is a significant advantage to living in Canberra to deal with the cold climate.

The energy efficiency improvement scheme is a sure way to improve the ability of pensioners, as well as other households, to cope with their electricity bills in the long run in what is quite a cold city in the winter. Those sorts of schemes make a real difference. The cheapest unit of electricity is the one you do not buy. So by improving the energy efficiency of homes we are not only assisting people to improve their energy efficiency and therefore minimise their electricity bills and improve their cost of living situation but also to improve their quality of life through simply having a warmer, more comfortable home to live in.

When Ms Lawder comes in here and says, “I’m interested in doing the commonsense, practical things to tackle climate change,” I invite her and her colleagues to reflect on why they do not support the energy efficiency improvement scheme, which delivers those benefits in a very practical way and delivers real savings for our community, as well as delivering a good environmental outcome. We have debated it in this place before, but I call on those opposite to reflect, to look within themselves and to wonder why they do not support very practical and very realistic initiatives like that one.

I am also encouraged by the fact that there is a great deal of innovation taking place in the private sector. There are businesses that are bringing new environmental products into the market in Canberra, and I know a few of them. It is a hard road, but between their personal commitment to making a difference and their drive, and a lot of hard yards, they are making progress in establishing new small businesses in Canberra and creating opportunities for employment at the same time as delivering real environmental outcomes for this city.

Similarly, I am very impressed by the significant efforts in the community, whether it is groups like SEE-Change, the Australian Youth Climate Coalition, Canberra Loves 40% or 35.org. All of these groups are out there doing very practical things and putting a great deal of passion and effort into bringing about policy change and practical change on the ground, reflecting the fact that the community takes this issue very seriously.

It is a real challenge for Canberra in terms of reducing our per capita emissions in the wealthiest community, a community that already has the highest per capita emissions in the country. In that context, it is a real challenge to bring that down, particularly given that to a large extent emissions are still closely correlated to wealth. Being a very wealthy community, on average, Canberra has a real challenge there.

I was interested to reflect on the fact that we saw some of the usual lines from the Liberal Party in Ms Lawder's speech. She brought up the term "climate deniers". I do not think anybody else used it in the debate, and it points to a little bit of sensitivity there. She referred to the fact that the Liberal Party took a 30 per cent target to the 2008 election. That was okay, but a 40 per cent target is the end of Canberra as we know it. The Liberal Party has never explained the difference between those two policies, other than the fact that it is obviously numerically 10 per cent. How come a 30 per cent target is okay but a 40 per cent target is not? It really is an incredible exercise in duplicity to run that sort of argument.

I also utterly dismiss and reject the notion when we hear, "Why should Canberra try? We are a small part of the global emissions and our efforts make no difference." I dispute it for the reasons I have already outlined. Things like the energy efficiency improvement scheme actually deliver economic benefits to our community, so that is one reason to do it. But another simply is that there is no silver bullet when it comes to tackling emissions. Every community in every part of this planet has to do its part. We cannot just say, "China's got to do it, India's got to do it." Everybody has to do their part to make this a more sustainable world we live in.

I reject out of hand the selfish ones, the ones who are not prepared to make the contribution, who are prepared to stand here and say, "Not my problem. I live in the wealthiest city in one of the wealthiest countries in the world, but I don't have to do anything. It's somebody else's problem. China, you go fix it. India, you go fix it." That is morally reprehensible and it should be beneath this community.

Let me turn to the renewable energy target, which Ms Berry has also mentioned in her motion, and focus on the fact that the Abbott government has proposed to slash the renewable energy target from 41 terawatt hours a year by 2020 to about 27 terawatt hours. We know that demand for power has declined since the target was set. We now have the coalition saying, "We need to set a real 20 per cent target." This seeks to hide the fact that the original commitment was 41 terawatt hours. Everybody knows it. Businesses plan on that basis. The Liberal Party come in here and say, "Government should create a receptive business environment." The ones who are providing the true sovereign risk are, in fact, the Liberal Party. They are doing it through dismantling a policy that their previous Prime Minister, John Howard, put in place. It just gets more and more bizarre as you work through the various steps of what is actually being done here.

The Greens' very firm view is that there should be no compromise on the target of 41 terawatt hours by 2020. It is simply an example of the current federal government going entirely in the wrong direction. Minister Macfarlane admits that the RET review is designed to protect big polluters. He has said that there is a surplus of 9,000 megawatts in the system, and that is why he needs to reduce renewable energy, to make sure there is not that renewable energy in the system to protect the coal-fired power stations and simply make them more viable. So we can see very clearly that the agenda here is to protect the fossil fuel industry. Not only is it a rejection of the need to act on climate change but also it is reinforcing the most polluting industries in terms of their contribution to Australia's emissions.

There is oversupply in the energy system. This is the best opportunity we have to shut down coal while maintaining our energy security and, therefore, move Australia towards a clean energy future and away from the dirty fossil fuel energy production of the past. It is vital that in the federal environment the Labor Party and the Palmer United Party do not cave in to any compromises that will undermine the renewable energy target and send clean energy jobs offshore.

The Greens' view is that the renewable energy target should be increased to 90 per cent by 2030. That is what we should be doing. Even the Warburton review, the review that was set up to undermine the renewable energy target, found that increasing the renewable energy target would be cheaper than scaling it down, that Australia's electricity would cost less if the renewable energy target was scaled up than if it was removed. Yet what we see is the federal Abbott government moving in the completely opposite direction.

When members of the Liberal Party come in here and say, "We are concerned about the cost of living for Canberra households; we are concerned about keeping electricity prices down," they should go and look at the Warburton review and talk to their federal colleagues about why they are pushing policy in a direction that will actually increase electricity costs, contrary to the finding of the Warburton review. It really is quite bizarre and again warrants a bit of internal reflection on the disconnect between the rhetoric that we hear in public and the policy decisions that have been taken.

We have seen a clear response from industry around this approach on the renewable energy target. According to a report in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, a report produced by international law group Baker & McKenzie says that lowering the renewable energy target is likely to undermine existing investments while freezing new ones and will open the federal government to demands for compensation. The company, which has provided legal services to clean energy projects, said that any reduction in the renewable energy target would increase the cost of capital and make many existing and future projects financially unviable. Existing projects up for refinancing might not be able to meet the minimum financing requirements based on the revised set of risks and parameters. It goes back to that very question of sovereign risk, doesn't it? The Liberal Party, the ones that say we should create a conducive business environment, are prepared to change the rules and ruin an industry that was making perfectly good progress.

According to wind farm developer Infigen, the proposal to cut the rate is "disingenuous and a misrepresentation of the facts" for the coalition to say that they had only supported a 20 per cent goal rather than the fixed number of terawatt hours, as fixed targets were legislated under the previous government with coalition support and Minister Macfarlane "knows that a floating target would not have been investible". Again, we are seeing a mischievous approach, one that seeks to twist the facts and really does no credit to the current federal government. They are flying in the face of their own advisers. They are pushing us in a direction which will increase rather than reduce electricity costs and doing the planet a disservice by locking in and supporting the dirty fossil fuel industries and the most polluting form of electricity generation.

Australia can and must do better. I am proud of the progress that we are making in the ACT. I think we are setting a benchmark and we are showing it can be done in an affordable way. I thank Ms Berry for bringing this motion forward today. I will be pleased to support it.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (5.01), in reply: I will just reflect on a couple of things that Ms Lawder said in her speech and confirm that I did not once in my speech in moving this motion refer to the Canberra Liberals or Ms Lawder as a climate denier. I did say—and I repeat—that I was astounded by the moral poverty of those who argue that the ACT's ability to impact on global warming is small because of our size and that we should hold off on taking action on climate change. I said that the position denies the fact that global warming is a shared responsibility and requires cooperation and action by everyone in our community, including government, businesses, community groups, households and individuals. We must all understand that, while the impacts of our choices might be small, together we can make a difference to enhance the future wellbeing of our people and our environment.

Ms Lawder is quite correct: of course she has the right not to agree with what the ACT government puts in a motion. She also has the right to put in an amendment outlining some of the ideas that she might have or that the Canberra Liberals have about addressing the very real issue of climate change. But, yet again, all we see from the Canberra Liberals is an attack on the motion and no ideas, no policies, no action. Of course, you have the right to disagree, and we expect that and note that that is a popular thing from the Canberra Liberals. But you also have the right to make some suggestions or tell us what you are going to do. Yet again, this afternoon we have got nothing.

I thank members for their contributions today. I hope that members have a better understanding of the urgency needed to make our city more sustainable. Minister Corbell raises a number of good points when talking about how our government is responding to climate change and how our city is preparing itself to tackle the threats that we face. I also want to acknowledge the leadership that Minister Corbell has shown over many years in championing action on climate change, renewable energy and many other environmental issues.

But, unfortunately, while Minister Corbell and our government show leadership on these issues, we have a federal government and a Prime Minister who are committed to taking us backwards on climate change. This Labor government is committed to responsible and far-sighted action, informed by science, by the increasing research and scientific evidence that there is a very real threat of climate change and that this will transition the ACT towards a carbon neutral territory that can adapt to our ever-changing climate.

As I said, ours is a leadership role not because we are doing more than we should but because we are one of the few who are doing what we must. It is a position that would also attract the renewable sector to our region, as I said before, and foster investment, innovation and creation of new types of business operating towards a lower carbon economy. We will continue to move ahead with reducing greenhouse gas emissions and supporting large-scale renewable energy.

Considering the huge amount of scientific evidence, the increasing amount of scientific evidence on the disastrous effects of climate change, and considering the government's policies to respond to the threats of climate change, I question the reasons behind those who are taking us backwards and creating a less certain future for us all. Any support for the federal government's position is a thinly disguised denial that climate change is real.

Our government accepts that climate change and the threat it poses to our city, our community and our environment are real. The increasing impact of climate change will be felt by all members of our community. It will place added strains on emergency services, health services and our critical infrastructure, let alone the personal and financial loss on communities and financial costs to governments. To not support this motion and action on climate change is to deny the science.

In conclusion, this government are committed to action on climate change and have a plan to achieve our targets. In doing so, we will continue to focus on local job creation, the diversification of our economy and helping vulnerable parts of the community manage our transition to a low carbon economy and a sustainable Canberra. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

Noes 8

Mr Barr
Ms Berry
Dr Bourke
Ms Burch
Mr Corbell

Ms Gallagher
Mr Gentleman
Ms Porter
Mr Rattenbury

Mr Coe
Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne
Mr Hanson
Mrs Jones

Ms Lawder
Mr Smyth
Mr Wall

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Economy—performance

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (5.11): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes CommSec's October 2014 State and Territory Economic Performance Report where the ACT is the:

(a) second worst overall economic performing jurisdiction in the country;

- (b) second worst performing jurisdiction in the country for retail spending;
 - (c) second worst performing jurisdiction in the country for investments;
 - (d) worst performing jurisdiction in the country for decade-average rate level unemployment; and
 - (e) second worst performing jurisdiction in the country for construction work; and
- (2) calls on the Government to:
- (a) stop talking down the economy, and depressing business and consumer confidence, which has in part led to the outcomes in paragraph (1);
 - (b) capitalise on the full potential of our city, and take direct action to diversify the ACT economy;
 - (c) make real cuts to red tape, and measure the value of the Government's regulatory cost burdens; and
 - (d) table in the Assembly by the last sitting day in February 2015, the Government's direct action initiatives to diversify the economy and measure the savings to businesses from the Government's red tape initiative.

Thank you, Treasurer, for being here at the start of the presentation; it is lovely to have you in the chamber.

Mr Assistant Speaker, we are well aware that recently CommSec released their state of the states report for 2014. A summary of the outcomes is made available and makes some interesting reading. The most salient point before we get to the detail is that this time a year ago we were the second best economy in the country and we are now the second worst.

I am sure that much will be made of the Abbott government as we progress through this, but the point is that if you look at the underlying data that supports the report, it is because we have not diversified our economy and we have maintained such enormous reliance on federal spending over the last 13 years that we find ourselves in this position.

I remind members that in 2001, 60 per cent of employment in the ACT was in the private sector. It is now approximately 50 per cent. That has happened under Labor. It has happened because they took their eye off the ball. We know about the disastrous budget for business in this town in 2006 when just about all the business programs were cut and tourism funding was smashed by a government that thought it was business welfare. Yet that same business welfare last year, during the centenary year, was used to bring lots of events, for an economic impact that I think everybody favoured. We see it again. The minister was talking yesterday about the summer of cricket. Apparently summer now goes for about six months, according to Mr Barr. We do have some exciting cricket coming—and not just cricket but soccer events. This is

what happens when you invest and this is what happens when you actually attempt to work things in your favour—unlike many previous years, when the government simply ignored the economy.

What does the state of the states report say? Right on page 1 in the economic summary, it says:

... the ACT economy has moved from a grouping with Victoria and Queensland to the third tier of state and territory economies.

“Third tier” means South Australia, Tasmania and the ACT. If there is anything holding up the economy, it is clearly housing finance. Let me quote again:

The ACT economy is supported by housing finance but rising unemployment has affected growth of consumer spending and business investment.

The minister is quick to jump when there is some good news and take the credit. For example, in August Mr Barr went on the public record saying:

The ACT economy continues to produce jobs ... The trend number of ACT residents in employment increased by 200 to 215,000.

We have this perception—and you should cast your minds back through some of the votes we have had over the last years, members, particularly 12 months ago when we were on the top of the pile—that it was all because of Treasurer Barr and his economic reform. Apparently that has now run out, perhaps because the reform was not as lasting as the minister thought and perhaps because the diversification that should have occurred over the last 13 years has not. We would have been in a better position.

Someone once said to me that the eyes of the economy are retail spending. It is about confidence, and it is about how people see themselves and what they are able to do, but it also tells you how small business is going. Small business in every other jurisdiction is a huge driver. I am not convinced that it is such a driver in the ACT, simply because of the burdens that this government places on it. What is retail spending doing? Again let me go to a dot point from the report:

South Australia still has the weakest result on retail spending, up just 4.2 per cent on the decade average and below the ACT with 5.6 per cent growth and Tasmania at 6.9 per cent growth.

In retail spending, one of the most affluent jurisdictions in the country now lags behind Tasmania in terms of growth in retail spending. That is an indicator itself, because this, of course, flows into jobs. For many people who are starting out, particularly young ones, either with part-time work or just getting their first job out of school, employment is particularly important in the retail sector. We know that a lot of the owners are now doing the work themselves. We know that the impact of penalty rates on the weekends means that businesses are either choosing not to open or doing the work themselves, with family. That is leading to fewer opportunities for others. If we continue to watch those retail figures, we will see that there is a genuine lack of confidence out there.

It was quite amusing—except for the implications of it—that on one day recently we had the Chief Minister putting out a press release saying that she was going to deliver an upbeat speech on the economy. Yet the night before, at a tourism function, there was the Deputy Chief Minister dragging us down, talking about us being abandoned, saying that we are on our own yet again. It is interesting.

And it is interesting to see the effect of our civic leaders in making sure that they take the right approach in how they deliver it. If you listen to Mr Barr, you think that everything is the fault of the Abbott government. There is absolutely no mention that 14,473 of the proposed 16,500 job losses were Labor job losses. Some 87 per cent of those job losses were from the Labor Party. Where was Mr Barr when that budget was delivered? Missing in action. Missing in action, like he always is on every Labor budget that hurts the ACT.

Cast your mind back, members, to when there were cuts by the federal Labor government to the National Gallery. What did Mr Barr say? He said that these were good things, that this was good for Canberra somehow. Even Senator Lundy, the next morning, when asked to support Mr Barr, said that, no, she could not come at that one. There we had the chief cheerleader for the Rudd government—the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government, depending on what day it was, that slashed 14,473 jobs from the Australian public service, much of which would come from the ACT—and this man was mute. Mute. No wonder we have got trouble in our employment. No wonder there is trouble for younger people in employment. No wonder there is trouble for investment and retail when this Treasurer talks us down.

Let me go to equipment investment. Equipment investment is down the most on a year ago in the ACT—down 33 per cent. That is business voting with its dollars. It is not investing for the future. It does not see a lift coming, because it is not putting money into equipment. That is a condemnation of this government.

Let me go to unemployment in the ACT. We are at the bottom of the pile, members. In terms of winners and losers on jobs, Northern Territory is the winner, ACT the loser. Again let me quote from the report:

In the ACT, trend unemployment is second lowest in the nation at 4.6 per cent, but this is up from 3.5 per cent in April and is now just over 34 per cent above its “normal” or decade-average rate level—the worst performance in the nation.

The minister was happy in August to say, “Unemployment, good.” There is Mr Barr on the record:

The ACT economy continues to produce jobs ... The trend number of ACT residents in employment increased ...

The reality is that we are the worst performing in the country according to this report.

Let me go to construction work. The ACT is second last—second last after Tasmania. The next weakest after Tasmania is the ACT, where construction work is just 2.6 per cent above decade averages. We all hear about the transformational light rail: “Light

rail is coming.” But they do not have a plan for it. They cannot deliver it. Construction will not start. I suspect there will be a couple of strategic sod-turnings just before the 2016 election to make it look as though they are doing something.

Remember, members, that from 2010 Mr Barr was saying, “The worst thing for this economy would be a Liberal government.” You would think he would be prepared. You would think they would have shovel-ready projects. If the government had done their work right, they would have. If they had listened to the business community, if they had listened to the 54 groups that signed up to the proposal for a new convention centre, they could be building the new convention centre today. Indeed, it could be open and capitalising on the fact that Sydney is closed.

Instead, we have a minister who says, “Gut feel: it’s okay; it’s pretty good.” He does not understand or he just ignores the market. In terms of its size and in terms of the configuration of the breakout rooms and the facilities in the existing convention facility, it is not adequate for a town of this size, a city this size. The documents—if he has actually read the documents he tabled yesterday—clearly show that. I think there is more gut feel and the fact is that they just do not want to build it. They have got their own pet projects, whether they are a stadium or light rail. They are the things they want to build; they are the things they are interested in. You should listen to your community. The business community is saying that, if you want additional revenue, you have to build productive infrastructure. Unlike capital metro, where the estimates of the subsidy range from \$60 million to \$120 million every year, an enlarged convention facility in the ACT—a new, state-of-the-art, high-tech, world-class convention facility—would have allowed us to accommodate those 90-odd conventions that were turned away last year. Ninety!

Let us mirror the approach of the Victorian government. Victoria, which has the largest convention facility in the country at the moment, has decided to make it bigger, because it was turning away business. It is worried about losing market share in a very competitive region. Let us face it: in our region we are dealing with Singapore and Hong Kong, particularly Singapore. We are not competitive any longer. That is the problem. We never attempted to capitalise on the value of conventions and meetings to this city.

It is quite clear in the Australia forum report that the government had a clear case. They are saying that in the best case it might triple. They are saying that in the average case it would probably double the turnover. That puts money in the government’s coffers. It requires additional expenditure on more hotel beds, which, of course, requires staff. A lot of young people start out working in the hospitality sector, whether in restaurants or hotels. That would stimulate activity in the ACT, and therefore the abysmal construction work figures would not be the way they are. Instead, we have a government that, maybe, two years from now, might deliver something.

At the other end of the spectrum, it does not have to be something like a convention facility. We know that the community of Belconnen have a proposal to extend the Belconnen Arts Centre, as you are well aware, Mr Assistant Speaker Bourke. It is ready to go. They would like it to go. There is a DA. Once the DA is approved we

could start construction almost immediately on that. But the government does not want to fund it. Whether it is not interested, I do not know. We will ask the Minister for the Arts. She can answer why, as to whether she has not been able to get that one through cabinet or whether they are holding it off for a promise of 2016. Who knows? I do not know. But the community clearly uses that facility, and uses it well. It is shovel ready and meets all the criteria for stimulus. It is the sort of project that a lot of Canberra-based, Canberra-owned, Canberra-employing construction firms could build. With it would come some work on the waterfront there, which again would be another contract. Instead, the government sits on its hands as it slowly funnels every drop of available resources into capital metro.

We saw this happen with the GDE. A \$55 million project was turned into a \$200 million project and it sucked the life out of the capital works projects for a long time.

Let me go to housing finance. This is the high spot. This is the high spot if you were waiting for it:

In four of the states and territories—Western Australia, Victoria, NSW and the ACT—trend housing finance commitments are above decade averages. And in six of the eight economies, trend commitments in August were above year-ago levels in all states and territories.

That is the good news, folks. When we get to dwelling starts, the ACT was up 9.2 per cent; it is running fifth.

The only other indicator that is a good indicator for us is this:

The only economy recording real wage growth was the ACT with wages up 2.3 per cent, outstripping a 2.2 per cent lift in prices. Wage growth was equal slowest in the nation but inflation was the lowest in the nation.

So there is the other high spot.

What is the summary? The summary is simply this, looking at “Implications and outlook”, state of the states report, October 2014:

The ACT has lost momentum, a consequence of a weaker job market, lower consumer confidence and falling retail spending.

This government has an obligation to boost consumer confidence. We have the talking down by the Treasurer of the potential of this city by his attacks on the federal government. He should get on with his job and he should make it work a whole lot better.

That is why I bring this motion on today. Part (2) calls on the government to “stop talking down the economy, depressing business and consumer confidence”. I acknowledge the role of the federal government, both Labor and Liberal. Unlike those opposite, I will acknowledge that both have contributed to the state we find ourselves in. If you want a proportion, let me say that 13 per cent of the job cuts come from the Liberal Party and 87 per cent of the job cuts come from the Labor Party.

Unlike those opposite, we have taken on both parties. The Canberra Liberals have taken on both federal governments and said, “Stop using Canberra as a balancing item on your balance sheets.”

Part (2)(b) calls on the government to “capitalise on the full potential of our city, and take direction action to diversify the ACT economy”. This government can do that. This government should do that. We should work on education further. We should work on the arts. We should work on culture. There are so many things that we do here well that we can do more of. We need to make real cuts to red tape, not the petty annual stuff that we have done recently. We call on the government to table some initiatives in the Assembly by the last sitting day in February—(*Time expired.*)

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Housing and Minister for Tourism and Events) (5.26): I am sure I am not the only one who enjoyed the delicious irony of Mr Smyth moving a motion calling on people to stop talking down the economy and then spending 15 minutes doing just that. I have an amendment to Mr Smyth’s motion. It highlights at least 26 fantastic things about the ACT economy, and I formally move that amendment now. I move:

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

“(1) notes:

- (a) that the OECD has this month named Canberra as the most liveable city in the world, with the ACT ranking 10 out of 10 for safety, civic engagement and income, 9.9 out of 10 for health, and 9.6 out of 10 for jobs;
- (b) that a Property Council survey earlier this year rated Canberra as Australia’s most liveable city, according to residents’ views of their own city;
- (c) the strong support of small and medium enterprises in the Territory for the ACT Government, with a recent Sensis survey showing that support for the policies of the ACT Government was the highest of any state or territory government;
- (d) that the ACT has Australia’s second lowest unemployment rate and second highest participation rate;
- (e) that, in 2014-2015, the Government will spend \$4.9 billion in delivering services to Canberra, and make an investment in capital infrastructure of \$735 million in 2014-2015 and \$2.5 billion over the next four years;
- (f) the strong growth in exports from the ACT in recent years, with exports now worth almost \$1.3 billion a year, up from \$774 million in 2000-2001, and the ACT’s share of national exports having increased from 1.6 per cent in 2009 to 2.5 per cent in 2013;
- (g) that there are now about 25 000 businesses operating in the ACT, a doubling since 1995, when there were about 12 000 businesses operating;

- (h) that the ACT is one of only two jurisdictions in Australia, and one of only 26 worldwide, to have a triple A stable credit rating from Standard and Poor's;
- (i) that there are about 212 000 people currently employed in the ACT, with nearly 5000 of these jobs having been created in the last four years alone;
- (j) the more than 35 000 new jobs created in the ACT in the past decade, equating to almost 10 jobs per day for 10 years;
- (k) that the ACT economy was worth \$34.4 billion in 2012-2013, with our economy growing by almost \$1 billion a year since 2000-2001;
- (l) that the ACT has the best educated community in Australia, with the ACT leading the nation in NAPLAN results and Canberrans twice as likely to hold post-graduate qualifications than other Australians;
- (m) the strong growth in the ACT's knowledge economy industries in recent years, with more than 43 000 people now employed across the education, scientific and technical and ICT sectors, with more than 6000 new jobs created over the last decade;
- (n) that Canberra's higher education sector is growing strongly, with the sector currently employing about 45 000 people in the region, and educating about 40 000 students, one quarter of whom are from overseas;
- (o) that the ACT's tourism sector is generating around \$1.8 billion in economic activity for our economy each year and employs around 17 000 people;
- (p) that the ACT's gross per capita income was \$97 269 according to the 2012-2013 state accounts, which is nearly \$40 000 more than the national per capita average of \$57 441;
- (q) that the ACT has a relatively even distribution of incomes compared to the national average as measured by the Gini coefficient, with the ACT measuring 0.373 and Australia 0.427, where a bigger number indicates more inequality;
- (r) the strength of research and development in the ACT, with more than 8 per cent of Australian higher education institutional expenditure on R&D taking place in Canberra, and that as a portion of GDP Canberra's rate of higher education R&D expenditure outstrips that in all other Australian jurisdictions by a factor greater than three;
- (s) Canberra has a young population, with the largest age demographics being ages 0-14 followed by ages 25-34;
- (t) that the ACT Government is investing in transformational infrastructure to boost the long-term productivity of the economy such as Capital Metro light rail and the Health Infrastructure Program;
- (u) that the ACT Government is the only government in Australia to be reforming taxes by phasing out inefficient transaction taxes such as conveyance duty and duty on insurance;

- (v) that the ACT Government's prudent economic management, of running 10 surplus budgets, has created the fiscal capability to respond to economic shocks such as the Global Financial Crisis;
 - (w) that the ACT Government is supporting the private sector in the ACT to grow and create jobs through the continued implementation of the Business Development Strategy;
 - (x) that the Government is fostering growth and innovation in our economy through programs such as the CBR Innovation Network, Invest Canberra, Study Canberra and the CBR Canberra brand;
 - (y) the impact that the Commonwealth's cuts to employment and expenditure are having on the ACT economy, including reducing employment by 2.9 per cent; and
 - (z) the ACT Government's continued focus on supporting the economy and employment in response to the Commonwealth's cuts;
- (2) calls on the Government to:
- (a) maintain confidence in the ACT economy through its plan to support the ACT economy and support jobs;
 - (b) continue to assist the ACT's private sector to grow and diversify;
 - (c) continue the Red Tape Reduction Taskforce to cut red tape for local businesses; and
 - (d) encourage the Commonwealth to reverse its cuts to the Australian Public Service."

It presents a more accurate representation of the territory economy than Mr Smyth has managed in his motion and in his 15 minutes of talking the place down.

Let us go quickly to the state of the states report that was released by CommSec last week, and let us be clear about what it measures. It assesses states and territories on their current performance compared to their own long-term average. So the rankings that they issue are more of an indication of where states and territories are in their economic cycles than they are an assessment of underlying economic strength.

An example of this is that the October CommSec report refers to the ACT coming last in terms of unemployment. However, we have the lowest unemployment in the country. So you can choose to look at this as a positive. I think it is a positive that we have the lowest unemployment in the country. Mr Smyth chooses to present that as a negative. That is disappointing, but such is life.

Let us talk about the positives of our economy, and they are in the amendment I have moved. The OECD last month named Canberra as the most livable city in the world, ranking us 10 out of 10 for safety, civic engagement and income, 9.9 out of 10 for health and 9.6 out of 10 for jobs. The Property Council in their survey earlier this year rated Canberra as Australia's most livable city according to residents' views of their own city.

The Sensis survey shows that the support of small and medium-size enterprises in the territory for ACT government policies was the highest support from small and medium-size enterprises for any state or territory government policies in the country. The ACT has the second lowest unemployment rate and the second highest participation rate in our labour market.

In the 2014-15 fiscal year the territory government will invest nearly \$5 billion in delivering services for the people of Canberra and make a \$735 million investment in infrastructure as part of a \$2.5 billion infrastructure package over four years. There has been exceptional growth in exports, particularly service exports from this economy in recent years. Exports are now worth \$1.3 billion a year, up from \$774 million a little over 10 years ago. The ACT's share of national exports has increased from around 1.6 per cent to nearly 2½ per cent in 2013.

There are now 25,000 businesses operating in the territory, double where they were in 1995. We are one of only two jurisdictions in Australia and only one of 26 worldwide that have a AAA stable credit rating from Standard & Poor's. There are 212,000 people currently employed in the territory, with nearly 5,000 jobs being created in the last four years alone, at a time when the largest employer has been contracting.

We have seen more than 35,000 new jobs created in the territory in the past decade, equating to almost 10 jobs every day for 10 years. The ACT economy was worth \$34.4 billion in 2012-13, and has been growing at nearly a billion dollars a year since 2000-01.

We have the best educated community in Australia. We lead the nation in NAPLAN results, and Canberrans are twice as likely to hold post-graduate qualifications as other Australians. The strong growth in our territory's knowledge economy and associated industries in recent years has seen more than 43,000 people employed across education, scientific, technical and the ICT sectors, with more than 6,000 new jobs created in these industries in the last decade.

Our higher education sector is growing strongly. The sector currently employs around 45,000 people in the region, educating about 40,000 students, one quarter of whom are from overseas. Our tourism sector generates around \$1.8 billion in economic activity for the economy, and employs nearly 17,000 people. Our gross per capita income was \$97,269 in the 2012-13 fiscal year, which is nearly \$40,000 more than the national per capita average of just under \$57½ thousand.

The ACT has a much more even distribution of income compared to the national average as measured by the Gini coefficient. In the ACT it is 0.373 and in Australia it is 0.427. The higher the number in this measure, the greater the level of inequality.

The strength of research and development in the territory continues to be enhanced. More than eight per cent of Australia's higher education institutional expenditure on R&D takes place in our city, and as a proportion of GDP, Canberra's rate of higher education R&D expenditure outstrips that of all Australian jurisdictions by a factor greater than three.

We have a young and dynamic population, the largest age demographics being zero to 14 and 25 to 34. The ACT government continues to invest in infrastructure to boost the long-term productivity of our economy, particularly in transport, health and education infrastructure. We are the only government in Australia reforming our tax system by phasing out our inefficient transaction taxes that slow economic growth and distort the proper allocation of resources, most particularly stamp duty and tax on insurance.

We have run 10 surplus budgets. We have created the fiscal capacity to respond to economic shocks, particularly through the period of the global financial crisis. We support the private sector in the territory to grow and create jobs through our business development strategy. We are fostering further growth and innovation in our economy through the establishment of the Canberra innovation network, the Invest Canberra facility, study Canberra, and of course the new city branding.

However, the impact of the commonwealth government's cuts to employment and expenditure are having an impact on the territory economy, an impact far greater than the equivalent economic shocks experienced in other regions in Australia. I refer, for example, to Geelong, when the Ford factory closed, and in South Australia, when Holden and a number of other car manufacturers pulled out; the impacts there were around one per cent of total employment. In the ACT the commonwealth's contraction has reduced employment by nearly three per cent. It is a big impact.

This economy needs to attract new investment and the government are pursuing that investment locally, nationally and internationally. And we have had great success. Just today, the Chief Minister and I were able to be at a particular event with IKEA, who are investing in our city with a fantastic new facility out at Majura Park.

We will continue our focus on supporting the economy, on supporting jobs, in response to what is happening at a federal level. Our budget is about 10 per cent of the territory economy; the commonwealth budget is 50 per cent. So if it is contracting, it is an enormous load to expect the territory government on its own to be able to respond—50 per cent versus less than 10 per cent.

Private sector investment is critical, and we have the infrastructure projects that are attracting that level of private sector interest, be that city to the lake, capital metro—

Mr Smyth: You cancelled city to the lake.

MR BARR: We have not cancelled city to the lake. Again, you are talking down investment opportunities. I have just come back from Singapore and Japan, where we have been talking up investment opportunities in city to the lake. In fact the private sector investment is going to be even more critical in the coming period whilst the government deals with the costs associated with the Mr Fluffy clean-up. But that will have a stimulus effect on the housing sector. Out of that disaster, and out of this crisis, will emerge some strength in our housing market. That is the reality of how economic statistics will measure an increase in activity in the housing market as a result of the buyback and demolition program, and the construction of new houses. That might be

a perverse way that economic statistics measure social outcomes, but that is going to be a factor flowing through our accounts and the economic statistics in the coming years.

I think it is worth concluding on the point that we are alert to the risks posed by the commonwealth contraction. We have been supporting our economy in the short term with significant investments in infrastructure, with this year's program in particular being one of the largest ever in territory history, and we have longer term plans for growth and economic diversification.

We have spoken at length on this side of the chamber in the last 12 months about our work to support the economy and to support jobs, but I will run through it one more time for those opposite. The 2014-15 territory budget contained numerous initiatives to support our economy, including a four-year \$2½ billion infrastructure program and a stimulus package to support the construction sector.

We continue to pursue policies to boost the territory economy's long-term growth. We continue to implement our business development strategy to grow and diversify the economy. The Chief Minister and I have recently talked in this place about the extensive work being undertaken to promote our city nationally and internationally, and that includes to both debt and equity investors throughout Australia and throughout South-East Asia. We have established the Canberra innovation network to foster innovation and link businesses and entrepreneurs to accelerate innovation and growth. We have launched the first stages of Australia's most comprehensive and free public wi-fi network, and we have made concerted and ongoing efforts to reduce red tape for business.

Those opposite may seek to ridicule the ideas that have come forward from business itself through the consultation process and through that task force, but I know that the issues that were raised in that group and through the various consultations were issues that were relevant to the Canberra Business Council and the then chamber of commerce before the organisations underwent their merger, and their representatives brought those issues forward.

So it is a little churlish of those opposite to be deriding the efforts of the business community. When asked to identify areas in which they want reform, they identify them, the government responds, and those opposite are still critical. That is really a reflection of just how miserable this lot are. Even when there is significant progress made, the business community are asked for areas they would like to be addressed and we respond, that is still not enough for those opposite.

Well, so be it. We will continue with the task of engaging with Canberra's business community, engaging with the national and international business community on opportunities to invest in our city. I am confident that the fundamentals of this economy are very strong, that our future as a city is very bright and that we will continue to attract the investment that we need in order to continue growth in our economy, to continue to offer a wide variety of employment opportunities, and this government will always prioritise jobs.

There is quite a remarkable contrast in the approach of the two political parties around the value that we place on jobs versus the position of the Liberal Party, particularly at a national level, where they have other priorities rather than promoting employment. That is very clear in what we have seen since the election of the Abbott government. Unemployment has risen not just in Canberra but in a variety of other locations around the country—in Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia. New South Wales might be the only economy in recent times where unemployment has come down a little. Everywhere else it has gone up since the election of the Abbott government, which is disappointing, but that is the result of the economic policies that are being pursued at a national level.

Where there is agreement, and where we are able to work with the commonwealth government to promote investment opportunities—I have said this before and I will say it again—Minister Andrew Robb is a very good advocate for investment into this country and into this city, and has been a very helpful partner in working with the territory government to assist us to attract new investment. That is welcome. (*Time expired.*)

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (5.41): Once again we are debating whether we live in the best city or the worst city, a doom and gloom outlook or a bright and rosy one. Members will have to excuse my poor literary reference, but I think at times the community listening to these debates would feel that they are living in a Dickens novel—*A Tale of Two Cities*.

Mr Smyth certainly seems to have some cognitive dissonance going here, and the Canberra Liberals seem slightly off message with this motion. On the one hand we have a litany of complaints about our economy—five worsts in the country here to be recorded in *Hansard*—yet on the other hand, we are being called on to stop talking down the economy and depressing business and consumer confidence.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is a bit more nuanced than that. We have a strong economy that is facing some very real challenges. We have good economic foundations with some major national trends that we are far from immune to and, in fact, are particularly vulnerable to. We as a government, as a city, are responding to these challenges as well as can be expected in the face of the current commonwealth uncertainty.

I say “uncertainty” because while we already know of many of the last budget cuts, we are still waiting for more—budget cuts that will impact on the territory’s bottom line, yes, but, more importantly perhaps, cuts and broken promises that will negatively impact on Canberrans. These are cuts in fees that will hit health and Medicare, social service payments and education, all essential components of a positive and inclusive society and all areas that are being eroded by a government that has to resort to loopholes and tricks to bypass the Senate to pass scraps of their nasty budget.

But we are responding to these times well—quite well in fact, if we want to continue the ongoing comparisons. We are diversifying the economy. The Liberals chose to attack tax reform, particularly, no end at the last election, as we all know. So yes, let

us talk up the economy in what are clearly trying times. Let us talk to the positives of studying, working and living in a uniquely nature-bound city with all the benefits that that brings. Let us talk to our strong and growing education sector that brings both economic and social benefits. And let us all find ways to increase what is a major business in an environment that will be undergoing big changes in the next few years.

We all know, and it is quite clear, that the education sector is a very important driver in the ACT, yet the horizon in the education sector is full of unknowns. I think it presents some real challenges for our education sector if it is to continue making the significant economic contribution it makes to the territory.

Let us do what we can to support our workforce to buck the national trend of unemployment and underemployment rates through further education, skills transfer and basic job creation and through building transformational infrastructure like light rail. I noted Mr Smyth's comments, and it is a trend we are going to see for at least the next two years—every single project that somebody wants to talk about they can go, “Oh, well, if you didn't do light rail, you could do this.” They are ignoring the basic economic reality that we are not spending \$600 million or so in 2016. I note Mr Wall's recent letter to the residents of Conder in which he suggests exactly that. He says: “There's going to be \$800 million spent on light rail. Perhaps we could do something else instead. What would you like to spend it on?” The Liberal Party are out there actively propagating the misunderstanding that \$600 million to \$800 million has got to be chipped up in 2016 or 2017 when in fact that is clearly not the case. The first payments will not be made until something like 2020.

But I am sure the Liberal Party are going to spend that \$600 million to \$800 million figure about four times over in the coming years. To every single person they meet they will say, “I'd love to spend the money on that. And if we weren't doing light rail, we could do it.” Whether it is more lawn mowing, the Belconnen Arts Centre or you name it, they are going to spend that money at least four times over. I am quite sure of it.

Let us be realistic about that, but also acknowledge that, despite the fact the government is investing in light rail, the government is also continuing to do a range of other projects across the city and continuing to invest massively in health and education, in other capital works that will continue, and in the basic urban services that keep this community ticking over. There is still investment going into those things, despite what the Liberal Party say and Mr Smyth seeking to once again propagate that in today's discussion.

Let us work to encourage and attract more people to visit Canberra, not just for the summer blockbusters but all year round. With a vibrant city and a wealth of natural attractions in and around the capital region, we have certainly got plenty to talk about and plenty to sell when it comes to this city. Let us support increased funding and investment towards new technologies, and let us continue to support a green and more sustainable economy, such as the Royalla solar farm and innovative building structures and designs as proposed in new development areas.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I will be supporting Minister Barr's amendment to this motion. I think all members would agree that the amendment speaks for itself at some length. Perhaps we could describe it as the A to Z of the ACT economy. I think that Hansard will be pleased that there are only 26 letters in the alphabet, as it is clear that Minister Barr may well have continued with his list if further letters were available to him. But I do not intend to stand here and let the Canberra Liberals run the same tired old lines, the same negativity and contradictions, without also asking them to take the opportunities presented to them by virtue of being elected members of the Assembly to constructively talk Canberra up.

As a community, as a city, as an Assembly, we know that things are tough out there. There are challenges aplenty, but we are a strong and capable city that has weathered these national storms before and will again. I am actually very taken with the new CBR logo and the messaging behind it about being confident, bold and ready. I think it is very easy to be down on those sorts of slogans, and we have certainly seen our share of controversy over slogans for this and other cities in the past. I thought the CBR messaging was very timely and reflected a real vigour that is demonstrable in this city, something which I think arose particularly through the centenary year but which has been evolving over a number of years now. More and more younger entrepreneurial types are staying in our city and advancing new opportunities where previously they might have left and gone to Sydney or Melbourne. I think that reflects a new confidence in this city that we should be proud of and we should be talking up.

The ACT Greens and I want us to be judged not just for our status as reflected in some bank's performance report card but by the standard of life of our citizens, the equity of access to essential services, the health of our children and the quality of education. I believe being the world's most livable city is a nice accolade, but I also want us to be judged on the quality of our air, the health of our lakes and our waterways and the preservation of our nature reserves and wilderness areas. There is much more to life than just the pure economic indicators. No doubt we could have a discussion at considerable length about whether those sorts of things are a true measure. I think they are an important measure, but whether they are a full and true measure of the value of a society is a far more debatable point.

None of these things are mutually exclusive. We can continue to assist the ACT's private sector to diversify, capitalise on the full potential of our city, maintain confidence in the ACT economy and support jobs, and we can do this by taking the necessary steps to ensure that we retain the best that Canberra has to offer. Further, we can take the steps we need to take into the future, to plan for the future, and to build the city we want our children to live in and enjoy as much as I do.

We are facing challenging times, but we have the underlying strengths. Certainly Minister Barr has touched on quite a few of those in his amendment. That list Mr Barr has outlined indicates the fact that the observations Mr Smyth has made do not go anywhere near telling the true story of this city. This city has got a lot going for it and I think we need to continue to reform.

I particularly noted in Mr Smyth's motion the references to red tape. I was very interested to read the report that came out today from Deloitte Access Economics that talked about red tape on the day the federal government is having their red tape reduction day. The report observed that more of the cost of business in Australia is impacted by internal red tape. It was a really fascinating report and one I intend to look at a bit further. There are some interesting ideas in it around how to tackle some red tape issues. It might be something we reflect on in the future when we have red tape discussions in here. The report invites businesses to do their own work and actually look at some of their own internal red tape. I think it casts an interesting new light on an issue that has long been prosecuted in this and other places. I simply mention that in the context of a discussion where red tape has been identified as a fascinating new insight that I think will add depth to that debate.

As I said, I will be supporting Mr Barr's amendment today because it is a much more accurate reflection of the status of this city and where it is going.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (5.52): I am going to do a rare thing here and go out on a limb and agree with part of what Mr Rattenbury had to say. I think only part of the truth is ever told, and I think it is great that the OECD have rated Canberra as the world's most livable city. But behind that you have to look at what measures they used to rank the ACT as the most livable city. They rated us 10 out of 10 for safety. I agree that, on the whole, Canberra is a safe place to live. On civic engagement, from time to time there is a lot to do here. On income, we all know the significant incomes that are derived from government employment in this city and yes, 9.9 out of 10 for that is expected. On health, we are on par with most Western and developed countries. Access to health care is good. Sometimes you need to wait, but you do get it.

All in all, on those measures, Canberra is a great city to live in. But when you boil it down, it is an expensive city to live in. You can have the best city in the world but, quite simply, a matter of whether anyone can afford to live here or not is the other half of the argument that is seldom told. I think that is what, to some extent, the state of the states report has tried to touch on. On some aspects the city performs well; on others it is struggling.

One of the areas where it is expensive is housing. In the ACT, housing, as we debate in this place all too often, is expensive. The cost of renting a property is amongst some of the highest in the country, and the cost of owning a property in the territory is becoming increasingly more expensive. Rates are continuing to increase, in the realms of eight to 12 per cent a year, depending on where you are. They will eventually triple, despite what the Treasurer says. Do the numbers. In 11 years, the rates will have tripled.

On the other side, let us look at people that are outside the territory, or even someone that does live in the territory and says, "You know what, I love this city so much, I am going to invest in it. I am going to buy an investment property here." It is a decision that many people make. My wife and I have gone down that road. Colleagues in this place have gone down the road of an investment property. I think it is something that should be encouraged. But we are getting to a point now in this territory where, if you

own an investment property, the land tax component is more expensive than the rates. That is plain and simply a tax grab. To own an investment property you are paying more in land tax than you are in rates.

Mr Barr: It is all deductible.

MR WALL: The Treasurer interjects and says that it is all deductible. We danced this merry dance in estimates, and he basically said this is a quid pro quo with the commonwealth for some of the taxation changes that they have made, passing the buck back up to the commonwealth, which is done all too often.

Another area where it is prohibitively expensive in the ACT is child care. If you want to move here and you have a young family and are relying on child care, again you are paying some of the dearest charges in the country—in excess of \$100 a day—to access child care. I remember that Ms Lawder in a previous debate said that it is all well and good talking about the quality of something like a Ferrari or a Lamborghini, but if you can only afford a Commodore there is really no point. That really goes to the crux of living in Canberra: it can be the best city in the world to live in, but if you cannot afford to live here it really defeats the purpose.

But to get to the motion at hand and what it is talking about, ultimately what it boils down to is confidence, the confidence of families to invest, the confidence of business to invest, the confidence that all of us have when we are out in our day-to-day rounds to spend our money or whether we are feeling a little pessimistic about the future and decide to save. The chamber of commerce last year, 2013—and this was prior to the federal election—did a survey of around 125 small businesses in the territory. Even prior to the change in government at the commonwealth level, confidence was one of the number one concerns that business raised. Wages and the cost of employing staff were included in that. The state of the states report touches on the confidence issue we are experiencing here in the ACT.

On wages and prices, the ACT is the only jurisdiction which had a higher increase in wage growth than it did in the consumer price index. Wages grew by 2.3 per cent; consumer prices grew by 2.2 per cent. In real terms there was a 0.1 per cent increase in wages. On the surface, that sounds like a great thing and sounds like something that should be applauded, but, when you boil it down, the economy is still struggling to get started. It is not motivated. People have, in real terms, got more money in their pockets now than they had a quarter ago, three months ago, yet they are still not feeling confident to spend.

We are talking about being proactive here and having a positive discussion, but often it is hard to have a discussion that is positive and builds the economy. It is difficult to have a constructive debate on the issues that need to be addressed without highlighting where they are failing.

I have already touched on taxation. I think a competitive tax base is something that is essential. You have got rates, land tax and other anti-investment fees. You have got commence and complete fees. I think commence and complete fees are something that is really discouraging investment in this city. I have had experience within my own

electorate of working with Kings Swim. Here is a business from out of town that wanted to come to the ACT, make a substantial investment that will see long-term job growth, provide a great community facility and community service and promote a local shopping precinct in my electorate; yet the government stood in the way and wanted to penalise them to the tune of in excess of \$300,000 before they could get started.

Another area that we really need to focus on is supporting the local businesses that we have already here. We all talk fairly regularly about growing the base, diversifying the economy and attracting new investment here, which is important, but if you do that at the expense of the people that have already chosen Canberra as the place that they want to live and invest in, you really send some mixed messages.

The research that the Master Builders Association has done suggests, particularly with government procurement on capital, every \$1 million that is spent in investment in a local business, particularly in the building industry, returns \$2.9 million, almost three times the return, to the local economy. And we see time and again this government putting multinational or national consortia ahead of local builders to do some of our capital investment. I think the courts precinct is a classic example where the shortlist was announced just a couple of weeks ago. The two consortia that have been selected are both multinationals. I understand there was a local bid, but for some reason it was not successful. I look forward to finding out why.

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

MR WALL: Another part of the recipe for improving confidence, the flipside of supporting what we have locally, is encouraging a new employment base. We all talk about the universities here, and Mr Barr even mentions in his amendment that we are educating in excess of 40,000 students, many of whom come from overseas. If we are educating these young people here in our city, instead of the knowledge that we instil in them being our greatest export, perhaps we should be importing the employment base that they are all destined to return to. They are heading to the bigger cities of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane or overseas, but perhaps we need to be attracting that employment base here to the territory.

We have seen incentives being offered to IKEA, which the Treasurer mentioned. But that is just one example of a very large and, again, multinational company that is going to come here—

Mr Barr: No incentives.

MR WALL: There we go. Not even a concession on rates or land tax? Wow! There must be good profit margins in IKEA.

Encouraging employment as well, in the limited time I have got, is somewhere where government policy is really not hitting the mark. Penalty rates are becoming prohibitive and business owners are working in their business more and more on

weekends and public holidays simply because they cannot afford to put the staff in there. If it was more reasonably priced, they would, in fact, hire the extra staff, but currently as the wage rates stand, they cannot.

One thing to be alarmed about is that Mr Gentleman over there has put out a discussion paper again looking to further increase the number of public holidays that the territory has. I think we will become known as the city for public holidays rather than the best city in the world in which to live.

As I said, there is so much more to be done in this city and so many more opportunities that continue to go unmet. I am happy to continue this discussion time and again, but those opposite continue to pass the blame and point the finger at other places, saying that we are simply too small to have an influence on the way our economy tracks at a local level.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (6.02): It is timely that you would arrive, Madam Speaker, because when Mr Barr started his speech it was almost reminiscent of Ted; I was suddenly seeing Ted Quinlan sitting over there. We got to the question of the economic cycle and, “Ted kindly gave me his economic cycle chart before he left.” We had lots of debates when Mr Quinlan was here, and, of course, when it was good, it was all because of what the government had done and when it was bad, “It’s just the economic cycle.” Surely the role of government is to smooth out that economic cycle, to stop the boom and bust as far as you can to ensure that you minimise the damage and the disruption to economies.

I wish Mr Barr had been at a lunchtime address that Brian Schmidt gave—I think it was at the Business Council—where he said, “Yeah, we live in a great city.” I think we all acknowledge we live in a great city. “The OECD measure, yeah, on certain measures, best, most livable city in the world.” But Brian Schmidt made the point—and this is a Nobel laureate; this is not me—“And so we should be. And so we should be for the base we have come from and the money we spend.” Brian Schmidt made the point that we could be doing so much better. And that is the point of the motion today.

We are criticised. The minister will take the credit when the reports are good, but if somebody criticises him in an effort to try and get things working better and to raise confidence, you are criticised. You have to confront the reality. If you genuinely want to fix some of the problems that are out there—and there are problems out there with confidence—then you have to confront what is driving it. The state of the states report gives you some guide to that, minister.

It is great to have a litany of all the things you do. That is what governments do, particularly Labor governments. They are always good with the litanies of things they do. The great virtue of the Labor Party and Labor governments is that they are good at writing their own history and they can populate it with all the things they have done and all the money that they spend. We have the perfect example with Mr Barr: “I’ve got a \$2.4 billion infrastructure spend.” Well, he should read the article in the *Canberra Times* that said the Mr Fluffy clean-up puts brakes on infrastructure projects. Now, we know that year on year they have had difficulty delivering their

infrastructure. We have had Auditor-General's reports that have said they are very poor at doing this. When I said something like, "So you've cancelled city to the lake," he goes, "It's not cancelled." Well, it has certainly been shelved:

The ACT government will shelve or delay major infrastructure projects announced in the June budget as it prepares for a \$300 million clean-up bill for Canberra's Mr Fluffy asbestos homes.

It is an article in the *Canberra Times*, 12 September, by Tom McIlroy. It continues:

Large parts of the \$2.5 billion infrastructure package announced by Treasurer Andrew Barr will be significantly delayed, including the City to the Lake development, a new city sports stadium and a new national convention centre, with money reallocated for likely buybacks and remediation of 1000 properties in the ACT.

Then we go to Ms Gallagher, who says:

The cabinet has agreed that hospitals, schools, public transport and asbestos are now the four key priorities for the government to work on for the next five years," Ms Gallagher said.

"Outside of that, there isn't going to be much else." ... What had been key priorities, including a new convention centre, are now considered too costly in the short to medium term ... While the City to the Lake project and a new city sports stadium remain commitments of the government, their delivery appears in question in the medium term.

And there we have it—good on the promises, good at filling budgets and very poor at delivering.

Mr Barr: So you quote the article back that proves wrong your earlier statement.

MR SMYTH: Well, you have not denied it. You have not—

Mr Barr: I just did in my speech earlier.

MR SMYTH: Where is the commitment?

MADAM SPEAKER: Order!

MR SMYTH: Through you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: This is not a conversation.

MR SMYTH: This is standard Mr Barr. Then we get Mr Rattenbury, who accuses me of being the doom and gloom merchant. I have talked long and hard about diversifying the economy of this city. I have talked long and hard about the potential that is here. I have fought long and hard to reduce our reliance on the federal government to try and smooth out some of the economic cycle so that the dips are not nearly as bad as they have been. Let's face it, we have had troughs under both federal

Labor and federal Liberal, and none of us like it. We are a small jurisdiction, we are very beholden to them. It really is time that we looked at our own potential and steered our own way, but we know from the Treasurer's own budget documents that he says the deficits are temporary because federal spending will return to normal levels. Well, if you are waiting on that, good luck to you. There is a train coming too, apparently.

It is about jobs, Madam Speaker, particularly for young people. There was an article on ABC news online on 17 October entitled "Canberra suffering shortage of entry level jobs from youth, Anglicare says". The article states:

There is a shortage of entry level jobs for young workers in the ACT, a charity investigation has found.

Anglicare collected and examined job advertisements from newspapers and websites over a two week period in September.

It found that fewer than 15 per cent of the positions advertised were suitable for people with no qualifications or experience.

That is the reality out there for a large number of people—there are not jobs for them. That is why we need to diversify the economy. At one end with our IT firms and our high tech there are jobs for the very well qualified. But those starter jobs, whether they be in retail, whether they be in hospitality, largely with small business, they are the sorts of jobs we should be looking at.

Mr Rattenbury quoted from the Deloitte report on red tape today. Yes, a lot of it is red tape that businesses create for themselves. It is red tape I suspect to cope with government red tape. There is an interesting section that starts on page 55 in a sort of a highlight box that says that it is no wonder that almost one in four new workers in the professional services sector from 2006 to 2011 was a compliance worker. What are they complying with? Government red tape.

The professional services sector is a large part of Canberra. Let's face it, there are not too many mining, agricultural or manufacturing jobs here. The report says that the professional services sector encompasses a very diverse bunch including lawyers, accountants, management consultants, tax advisers, advertisers, IT workers and marketers. This sector has added a layer of complexity because many members of this group—for example, the lawyers and accountants—also provide compliance services for others, as does the administrative services sector. That is a significant portion of our economy.

If you turn over to page 56, there is a chart on state and territory compliance sector intensity. The Australian index is 100 per cent. Tasmania is under, South Australia is under, Queensland is under, WA is under, Victoria is just on the mark, as is New South Wales, Northern Territory is slightly above at 120 per cent, and the ACT is at 250 per cent—2½ times the national average. It says it is state and territory compliance sector intensity and it is hard to determine whether or not in that you include the federal government. But it goes on to say that there is no surprise that Canberra is Australia's compliance capital. Chart A2 shows Canberrans are 2.5 times more likely to be working in compliance roles than is true of the nation as a whole.

It goes on to say that, like the ACT, the Northern Territory is above the average. However, the underlying reason is not that both are relatively small jurisdictions, as the next two smallest—Tasmania and South Australia—are at the other end of the scale. I am going to get some advice from Deloitte about how they get to that figure.

Mr Barr: It would be a high level of public sector employment.

MR SMYTH: I am sure the public sector adds to it. But it shows that the red tape here is enormous, and we really need to make genuine efforts to remove that challenge for small business in particular.

This is an important motion. As I have said many times in this place, I think Canberra is a great place to live. I think it has enormous potential. I do not think we are harnessing that potential, and we are not harnessing that potential when you have got a Treasurer who thinks it is okay because the deficits are temporary because the federal government will return to normal levels of spending and, therefore, everything will be hunky-dory. If you have got that sort of attitude, we can blithely go along and be the good fellows and say, “Yes, well done, government,” or you can throw out the challenge and ask, “What are you genuinely doing to diversify the economy and when will we see those results?”

As I have said many times, when we left office, 60 per cent of jobs were in the private sector. It is now 50 per cent. The real opportunity there is to grow the private sector in this town, but not to the detriment of the public sector. The federal government will dictate that in the main. We know that 87 per cent of the current round of job cuts were put there by the Labor Party, something the Treasurer never resisted. It is kind of ironic to have him putting in paragraph (2)(d) to encourage the commonwealth to reverse its cuts to the Australian public service. We never saw a motion like that when Labor was at the helm federally. That says it all about this Treasurer—he is willing to stick it to federal Liberal but he would never stick it to federal Labor, unlike those on this side of the house. We will take on all comers to defend the jobs of the ACT.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

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

Noes 8

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

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Adjournment

Motion (by **Mr Barr**) proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Down syndrome

MR WALL (Brindabella) (6:16): I rise this evening to acknowledge the fantastic work done by the ACT Down Syndrome Association, and particularly the recent Down Syndrome Awareness Week which was held here in the ACT from 12 to 19 October. This fantastic week culminated in the “step up for Down syndrome” walk, which was a great display of support for a cause which deserves such praise and recognition.

It is worth noting that the Independent Property Group is the new major sponsor of ACT Down Syndrome, and I am happy to have played a part in facilitating that new relationship. The Belconnen Lions Club, Just Better Care and Priam Meats are also worthy of acknowledgement in this place for the significant backing and contribution that they also make to the ACT Down Syndrome Association. Again, I would like to commend their efforts, and I look forward to next year’s awareness week as once again it will highlight not only the association but also the significant work and contribution that they make in supporting families and children in our community that are affected by Down syndrome. I commend them on the work that they do.

Youth unemployment forum

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (6:17): Tonight I rise to talk about the recent youth unemployment forum hosted by Anglicare during the national Anti-Poverty Week. During that forum we heard from young people within their services who struggle with marginalisation and poverty due to their experiences of unemployment and underemployment. The event was also a platform to launch Anglicare’s recent research in a report entitled *Limiting futures: youth unemployment in the ACT*.

Anglicare are an advocate for young people and they said it is their job to better inform and give voice to the lived experience which disadvantaged young people have shared with them.

Anglicare are particularly concerned about the impact federal welfare policies will have on young people, especially those from highly disadvantaged backgrounds. Research shows youth unemployment myths include views that people are somehow responsible for their own poverty, either because there are jobs available to those who want them or people are picky or lazy, or have a preference to stay on Centrelink payments rather than work.

Anglicare’s findings are similar to the recent Australian Youth Affairs Coalition report which found that 96 per cent of the 134 young people they asked would prefer to have a job and earn their own money as opposed to receiving Centrelink benefits.

There is an 11.3 per cent unemployment rate for those aged 15 to 24 in the ACT. It is not for want of trying to find work. According to the ABS, in 2014 in the ACT there

were two to three people seeking work for every one job available. This calculation does not take into account people seeking work because they are underemployed, including those who work for as little as one hour a week. Casual work is rising, particularly in junior roles often with poor job and financial stability.

Lack of experience is a major problem for young people. Anglicare research shows the majority of jobs advertised in the ACT require either high level qualifications or expertise, and often both of those at substantial levels with a specific focus. For young people without experience, it would appear that the traditional newspaper and web media may not be the most effective way of looking for jobs. Anglicare ACT chief executive Jeremy Halcrow said:

Young people are identifying the fact that they don't have links with employers as a real roadblock for them to find work here in this city.

Anglicare suggested that job service providers could use their networks to support young people to build their own networks by organising trial shifts, work experience or internship-type roles. I congratulate our education department, who do an excellent job by giving young people the opportunity to gain work experience at the ACT Legislative Assembly and other workplaces with positive results.

At the forum we heard the story of a very articulate and learned young woman, Chris. She has spent a year looking for a job and has applied for over 500 jobs in the last few months. Chris was knocked back every single time. She said:

It really destroys you, my mental health is deteriorating.

She feels there is an element of discrimination, whether it be age, size, sex or lack of understanding of mental health problems. It is her hope that workplaces learn to be more understanding of people looking for jobs and give them a chance, and not just turn away from what they see in front of them. Nelson Mandela said:

Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right; the right to dignity and a decent life. While poverty exists, there is no true freedom.

Alan Foscett

MR COE (Ginninderra) (6.21): I rise this evening to speak about an eminent Canberran, local historian and author, Alan Foscett. Alan has lived in Canberra since 1950, when the city was considerably smaller than it is today. He speaks of arriving at the station and not knowing where Canberra was because he could not see anything that looked like a city.

Alan lived in Reid House, one of the hostels for public servants, and worked in the public service, including the Capital Territory Health Commission and ACT Health Authority. In 1987 he set up his own urban development consultancy business. This gave Alan more time to indulge in his hobby, researching Canberra's history. Since then, Alan has written over 30 books which cover a range of topics, including the suburb of Campbell, the Narrabundah prefabricated houses and community nursing.

Alan has been a self-confessed “history addict” since he completed an honours degree in geography at the University of Sydney, where he studied the history of mining towns in Queensland. Alan was recognised for his service to ACT history and heritage in 2009 when he received a Medal of the Order of Australia.

Alan’s latest book is entitled *They Came to Build Canberra: The Story of the Turner Workmen’s Hostel—the People, the Buildings and the Land 1946 to 2014*. Between 1946 and 1952, seven workmen’s hostels were built in Canberra to provide accommodation for about 2,500 mainly single men, the majority of whom worked in the building industry. The commonwealth Department of Works and Housing was struggling to attract building and construction workers to Canberra due to the acute shortage of housing.

As a way of encouraging workers to come to Canberra, the department provided temporary accommodation at the Eastlake, Riverside and Fairbairn hostels. Over the next few years the department built the Capital Hill, Ainslie, Turner and Hillside hostels. Between the opening of the provisional Parliament House in 1927 and the late 1940s, only 8,000 more people had moved to Canberra. The city was suffering due to the Great Depression, World War II and the general disinterest in the national capital from the rest of the nation.

The men who lived in the hostels were an integral part of the development of Canberra as the national capital. They moved to Canberra from all around Australia, as well as from many European countries, as part of the federal government’s postwar immigration program.

The Turner workmen’s hostel was completed in 1949 and had 360 rooms. It was located on a site fronting Childers and Boldrewood streets in Turner. The hostel was only open until 1952 because by that time most of the residents had been able to build and live in their own houses. The hostel’s buildings were located near the campus of the newly established Australian National University and office accommodation was still scarce.

The city’s administration decided to keep the buildings for other uses rather than demolishing them. They were used for a variety of purposes between 1953 and 2010. The first users of the hostel buildings after its closure were the Canberra University College and Bureau of Mineral Resources when they had to relocate from the Melbourne Building after the 1953 fire. The buildings remained in use until 2010 when they were demolished to make way for the ANU Exchange.

Alan’s book provides a detailed history of the Turner hostel, including recollections from residents, workers and other users of the buildings. I congratulate Alan on his latest book and the valuable contribution he continues to make to the Canberra community through his recording of stories from early life in the city. I recommend all members read Alan’s latest book, and other books he has written, to find out more about a fascinating part of Canberra’s history.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.25 pm.