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Thursday, 12 February 2015

Hon Tom Uren AC (Motion of condolence).....	227
Hon Kep Enderby QC (Motion of condolence).....	232
Health—priorities for 2015 (Ministerial statement)	235
City centre—revitalisation (Ministerial statement)	250
Regulation of the Electronic Gaming Industry—Select Committee.....	253
Standing orders—amendment.....	253
Executive members’ business—precedence	253
Arts—community events	253
Health, Ageing, Community and Social Services—Standing Committee.....	266
Questions without notice:	
Health Directorate—openness and transparency.....	267
Schools—safety	268
Planning—policy	269
Hospitals—patient satisfaction	272
Transport—light rail	275
Health—bush healing farm.....	276
Roads—congestion	278
Convention centre—cost	281
Business—investment	282
Health—dental.....	284
Supplementary answers to questions without notice:	
Childcare—centres	286
Health—bush healing farm.....	286
Territory and municipal services—mowing.....	286
Environment—Mugga Lane tip.....	286
Papers.....	287
Financial Management Act—consolidated financial report	289
Youth Justice (Ministerial statement)	290
Early childhood education (Matter of public importance).....	295
Planning and Development (Capital Metro) Legislation Amendment Bill 2014.....	305
Adjournment:	
Mr Herbert Roberts.....	330
Closing the gap	332
Environment—Mugga Lane tip.....	333
Professor Michael Raupach	334
Life Unlimited Church.....	336
Schedules of amendments:	
Schedule 1: Planning and Development (Capital Metro) Amendment Bill 2014.....	337
Answers to questions:	
Roads—Constitution Avenue (Question No 347)	339
Energy—renewable (Question No 357)	339
Hospitals—bed occupancy rates (Question No 358).....	342
ACTION bus service—patronage (Question No 359)	342
Sport—ovals (Question No 360)	343
Sport—ovals (Question No 361)	344
Crime—graffiti (Question No 363)	345

Thursday, 12 February 2015

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.

Hon Tom Uren AC
Motion of condolence

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events): I move:

That this Assembly expresses its profound sorrow at the death of the former Minister, the Honourable Tom Uren AC, who leaves a remarkable legacy through his contribution to the establishment of Namadgi National Park in 1984 and the Australian Heritage Commission National Register, which lists many Canberra treasures, and tenders its sympathy to his family, friends and colleagues in their bereavement.

Madam Speaker, I want to express my deepest and sincere condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of the late Tom Uren AC, who sadly passed away on Australia Day, Monday, 26 January 2015, aged 93. I would particularly like to offer my profound sympathy to his wife, Christine, his stepdaughter, Ruby, his adopted children, Michael and Heather, and of course to his many family, friends and supporters.

Tom Uren was a giant of the modern Labor Party, a man whose decisions were some of the most formative events in the ACT's history. Namadgi national park has been enjoyed by countless Canberrans and visitors for over 30 years, and it is Tom Uren they have to thank for it. It was his decision as a minister in the Hawke government that created Namadgi national park in 1984, and we should all be thankful to Tom for his vision.

Tom's illustrious 32-year political career, representing the electorate of Reid in western Sydney, also saw him have a hand in ACT self-government and in overseeing the construction of the new Parliament House. He was a man of conviction, for whom political activism was not a job but a way of life. His extraordinary contributions enriched the entire nation, including the ACT, and it is right that we, as a territory, express our sorrow at his passing.

Tom Uren was born in Balmain in 1921, before moving to Harbord. He grew up in what was then a working class area of Sydney; his father struggled to find work as a jockey and as a jack-of-all-trades. Tom left school at the age of 13 to earn money for his family. He was a surf lifesaver, he played junior rugby league for Manly-Warringah and he was a strong competitive swimmer. He excelled as a boxer and narrowly missed out on the Australian heavyweight title before joining the Australian Army in 1941. This fateful decision would change the entire course of his life.

Tom volunteered for the Second Australian Imperial Force and was deployed to Timor. He was subsequently captured by Japanese forces during their advance towards Australia. As a prisoner of the Japanese, Tom was forced to labour on the Thai-Burma railway, serving alongside Edward “Weary” Dunlop in truly deplorable tropical conditions. Towards the end of the war he was transferred to the smelting plants in Japan where, remarkably, on 9 August 1945 he witnessed the crimson skies over Nagasaki after the explosion of “Fat Man”, the second atomic bomb to be dropped on Japan, bringing an end to the war. The memory of that day stayed with him for life.

Despite having been a prisoner of the Japanese and surviving being held for years in their camp, Tom held no hatred for the Japanese—but he did hold a deep opposition to militarism.

After the war, Tom made a brief attempt to revive his boxing career in England before returning home to work as a labourer and in retail. He married his first wife, Patricia, in 1947. Four years later, he attended Ben Chifley’s funeral and became inspired to join the Australian Labor Party.

Tom was a true grassroots campaigner who argued persuasively, passionately and fearlessly for social justice and civil liberties. He opposed the Vietnam War, he opposed conscription and he opposed nuclear testing. He was also prominent in advocating for Indigenous land rights and the protection of our urban and natural environment.

He was a ferocious opponent but a loyal ally. He had a generous spirit and was willing to work with anyone of goodwill to achieve practical outcomes. Tom’s anti-war activities included a visit to Japan, soon after entering federal parliament, as part of a peace initiative. He urged increased trade with Asia, arguing that “trade and goodwill are our frontline of defence”. He also led a delegation to Iraq, prior to the first Gulf War, to seek the release of hostages held by Saddam Hussein.

Tom campaigned long and hard for a supplementary payment to Australia’s surviving prisoners from World War II and from the Korean War, and lived to see this dream fulfilled when, on Anzac Day 2011, near his 90th birthday, he returned to the Burma-Thailand railway the same day that then Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced that the government would make the supplementary payment to prisoners of war.

Tom was a man of strong principles but described himself as a “collectivist”. He understood that leadership is not about imposing your principles on others but about persuading them and bringing them along with you. He was aligned with the Labor left but he focused more on his passion for the environment and for human rights than on ideological labels. After his retirement from parliament, he said, “I want to help build an environmentally sensitive, beautiful and more tolerant world.”

Tom entered parliament without the benefit of the educational opportunities that we all take for granted today, but he worked tirelessly to absorb knowledge from his colleagues and books, teaching himself the principles of economics and mastering the fine detail of commonwealth legislation.

Tom was appointed to the senior ranks of the parliamentary Labor Party in 1969, when he became the shadow minister for housing and urban affairs, which he remained passionate about throughout his political career. As a minister in the Whitlam government, he was instrumental in many urban renewal and rehabilitation projects, improving public transport, building important urban infrastructure, preserving suburbs, and providing much-needed services and amenities.

He also established the Australian Heritage Commission and the Register of the National Estate, a number of parks and reserves, and preserved important heritage areas. He believed that one of the greatest advances of the 20th century was the new understanding of humankind's impact on the environment.

Tom's many urban, heritage and environment achievements stand as a testimony to what can be achieved when federal, state and local governments work together, with leadership and with vision, to deliver real improvements in people's day-to-day lives.

In his retirement, Tom continued to campaign for the causes he believed in, including the protection of wilderness areas and the Sydney Harbour foreshores. He continued to campaign against militarism and opposed Australia's participation in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Tom Uren was awarded the Companion of the Order of Australia in the 2013 Australia Day honours. His nomination for this award was supported across the political spectrum, in recognition of his extensive and remarkable contribution to this country.

Tom Uren was a man of moral courage and conviction, an optimist who drew encouragement from others, and a man who remained determined to achieve change to the very end. I think that approach, Madam Speaker, is exemplified in something Tom said later in his life:

I hope that right to the end of my days, I'll always struggle for progress. Always have faith in tomorrow. Unless you've got faith in people, got faith in the future, then your life is not worth tuppence halfpenny and a beer bottle top.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Canberra Liberals to pay our respects to Tom Uren. Although acknowledged as a stalwart of the Labor cause, Tom was a man capable of generating respect from all sides of politics. Treasurer Joe Hockey is quoted as saying, "He was widely admired as a very decent man, a beacon of integrity and a genuine true believer." Prime Minister Tony Abbott said Mr Uren had "served Australia throughout his adult life". The Prime Minister also declared that flags would be flown at half-mast on the day of his memorial service. And these tributes, Madam Speaker, are all from those on the other side of politics.

Tom endured much in his early personal life and contributed much in his later public one. He was born in Balmain, grew up in the Depression and was caught up in World War II. Deployed with the Second Australian Imperial Force after joining at age 21, Mr Uren was deployed to Timor. It was there that he was taken captive as a POW by the Japanese army, and there that he was dragged into one of the most horrific, but iconic, Australian events of that war: the construction of the Thai-Burma railway.

Tom suffered unimaginable cruelty and witnessed appalling suffering, but he also experienced great compassion and real tenacity, including from the famous Edward “Weary” Dunlop. He spent three years as a POW, surviving not just the Burma railway but later life in forced labour camps, where he witnessed firsthand the destruction of Nagasaki by one of the two atomic bombs detonated in that war. There is no doubt that these arduous experiences shaped his mind and political leanings, in particular his strong anti-nuclear weapons stance.

Despite his robust and sometimes radical forms of public involvement, he was moved to continue to serve his country and his convictions, and moved into federal parliament. With the election of the Whitlam government, he was made Minister for Urban and Regional Development. When Labor was returned to opposition, he was elected as deputy leader. When the Hawke government was elected, he was made Minister for Territories and Local Government.

It was during this time that he made his most obvious contribution to Canberra life, helping to shape the national capital during an important period of growth and maturity. He was famous with his colleagues for fighting hard for his department and for funding local governments.

After retiring from politics, he remained a committed and outspoken activist. Indeed, it was his ability to stand for his personal beliefs—even when at odds with his own political party—and his willingness to say so that led to the recognition and respect across the political spectrum that we now see.

For his service to our nation during wartime and his service to our parliament during peacetime, I pay my respects to the colleagues of Mr Uren and offer my condolences to his friends and family, on behalf of the Canberra Liberals.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo): I rise to speak today to the condolence motion and offer my condolence to Tom Uren’s family and friends.

Tom Uren was born on 28 May 1921 in Balmain, New South Wales. He lived by what he described as the principle of the fit looking after the sick, the young looking after the old, and the rich looking after the poor. He was a boxer, a surf lifesaver, a soldier, a prisoner of war on the Thai-Burma railway, and, famously, someone who witnessed the crimson red sky of the atomic bomb over Nagasaki.

During his time as a prisoner of war under the command of Edward “Weary” Dunlop, Tom and the other Australian prisoners pooled the meagre wages they earned building the railway and funded a hospital for their sick and dying colleagues. It is easy to see

how these experiences helped form his collectivist politics. For those surprised that he earned a wage on the Thai-Burma railway, it was a stipend paid to circumvent the Geneva Convention.

He entered parliament as the member for Reid in 1958, a seat he went on to win at 13 consecutive elections, for a total of 32 years of parliamentary service. He was, unsurprisingly, the Father of the House at his retirement from representative politics in 1990.

It was in Tom Uren's first speech to parliament that, speaking of progressive reforms, he said, "Every step forward has been won in the face of bitter opposition." He was the first Labor MP to question support for the US intervention in Vietnam, and in 1971 he was jailed for refusing to pay a fine he received for marching in protest against the Vietnam War.

As we have heard, Tom Uren was a minister in both the Whitlam and Hawke governments, and, most consequentially for Canberra, he was the minister for territories and, later, for administrative services during the 1980s.

It was during this period that he and his staff conceived of the idea of a national park in the territory. It was with grit, determination and executive powers that he established the wonderful Namadgi national park which continues to protect the wilderness just beyond our city's borders. As I am sure members are aware, Namadgi is the local Indigenous name for the mountains to the south-west of Canberra.

Mr Uren reportedly overruled the National Capital Development Authority at the time, who were less ambitious about the creation of a national park. It was a source of great pride to Mr Uren that he created Namadgi and he often cited it as one of his finest achievements.

Certainly in the recent celebrations of Namadgi's 30th birthday, Mr Uren appeared in a documentary video about the creation of Namadgi national park, and you could see the passion with which he spoke of the national park. I think he enjoyed telling the story of the battle to create it.

Members may also be aware of the often-told story of Mr Uren that, as the minister for territories, he visited Lanyon Homestead and famously declared, "It stops here," by which he meant that Canberra would sprawl no further than that point. At the time, the NCDC was planning for Canberra suburbs on both sides of the Murrumbidgee River. Given what we now know about the bushfire danger in the area, fortunately Tom Uren had the foresight to put a stop to the urban sprawl, and Canberrans continue to enjoy a corridor of natural bushland between the Murrumbidgee and Lanyon.

Tom Uren had a great affection for the ACT Parks and Conservation Service, an organisation I am fortunate enough to work closely with as the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services. In 1969, he was federal Labor's first spokesperson on environmental issues. As a minister in the Whitlam government, he bought large areas of Glebe and Woolloomooloo, rehabilitated Fremantle and parts of Hobart, helped to

improve urban public transport and green western Sydney. I understand he even opened Australia's first ever bike path, and it was here in Canberra, although the actual details of that have been lost to the vagaries of time.

In closing his first speech to parliament in 1958, Tom Uren quoted Ben Chifley and said:

If from time to time the policy is not favoured by the majority of the people, there is no reason why the things we fight for should be put aside to curry favour with any section of the people. I believe that what we are fighting for is right and just. We must continue and justice will prevail.

I extend my condolences to the family and friends of the Hon Thomas Uren.

Question resolved in the affirmative, members standing in their places.

Hon Kep Enderby QC

Motion of condolence

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events): I move:

That this Assembly expresses its profound sorrow at the death of the former Minister, the Honourable Kep Enderby QC, Member for the ACT in the Whitlam Government and champion for civil liberties, and tenders its sympathy to his family, friends and colleagues in their bereavement.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to move that this Assembly expresses its deepest and sincere condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of the late Keppel Earl Enderby, who sadly passed away on 7 January 2015, aged 88. I would particularly like to offer my profound sympathy to Dot, his wife of 50 years, and his many family and friends.

As I am sure every member of this place knows, Kep Enderby was the last member to represent the entire territory in the House of Representatives and the first to represent the newly created division of Canberra.

Kep was a man who lived his life and pursued his passions with incredible energy. At various times he was described as “a gifted mind”, “a whirlwind of ideas”, and “one of the great progressives of our time”.

Kep was born in Dubbo in 1926. He studied law at the University of Sydney on a scholarship earned through his service in the Air Force during World War II. In the early 1950s Kep practised and studied law in London, advocating tirelessly for social justice and civil liberties as a barrister. He had a particular skill that gave him a bit of a leg-up over his legal peers at the time—Kep's golfing was good enough to see him compete in the 1951 British Open.

He arrived in Canberra in the early 1960s to lecture in law at Australia's shiny, new National University. In 1970 he secured Labor preselection for the single House of Representatives seat for the ACT and entered parliament that same year as the member for Canberra.

Kep was a firm champion of the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and in 1972, as the Labor Party spokesperson for the interior, he opposed the McMahon government's attempts to tear down the Aboriginal tent embassy outside Parliament House.

He was appointed the first minister for the ACT and the Northern Territory in the Whitlam government and was a proud and passionate advocate for Canberra during that time. Kep went on to succeed Lionel Murphy as Attorney-General in 1975. He only served nine months in that role, but the changes he introduced and guided through what was a famously turbulent legislature were some of the Whitlam era's most notable social reforms. Kep's reforms mean Australians now suffer less discrimination even today.

As Attorney-General in 1975 he decriminalised abortion and homosexuality in the commonwealth territories, a groundbreaking reform which at that time affected over two million people from Canberra to Darwin, from Christmas Island to Port Moresby. He also established no-fault divorce and the Racial Discrimination Act—two reforms that have stood the test of time and laid the foundations for a more open, a more tolerant and a much more modern Australia.

Kep lost his seat in 1975, along with a lot of Labor members, it would be fair to say, but that did not stop him being a vocal proponent of civil liberties, unafraid to write and speak on controversial issues. His lifelong commitment to civil liberties saw him speak out against the manipulation of public hysteria about crime and the consequent rising rates of imprisonment, arguing for the release of large portions of Australia's prison population.

The work of progressive change is never complete. I think each of us here, particularly on this side of the chamber, draws inspiration from the reforms that Kep delivered and sees in them what can be achieved if we remain determined to see our country grow ever more open and ever more free. His life will be remembered as one of dedicated and loyal service to the people of Australia and to the Labor movement.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I rise in condolence for Kep Enderby. Kep was born and raised in Dubbo to small business owners and, like others, he served his country in uniform before serving in the parliament. Kep was a trainee pilot at the end of the world war.

After war service, he moved to Sydney to study law at the University of Sydney. He was admitted and later practised law in London before returning to Australia. He set up practice and lectured in Sydney before moving to Canberra to pursue a similar career, practising with distinction to enable him to be named Queen's Counsel in 1973.

It was also here that he was to enter politics to make his contribution to Canberra as a representative and minister, and later as Attorney-General. Kep was elected to represent Canberra when Canberra had but a single federal representative seat. He was deeply involved in the debates about the Canberra floods and was also named as the first Minister for the Capital Territory.

As was the way of those times, he was also involved in far-reaching and often turbulent changes. He often found himself in difficult positions requiring diligent solutions, but he worked hard to find solutions while still pursuing policies that were seen at the time as not just reformist but radical and sometimes unpopular.

He enacted legislation including no-fault divorces and the discrimination act. He contributed significantly to the Trade Practices Act and the provision of legal aid, among a raft of other civil liberty reforms, small and great, successful and not. Most notable from the territory's perspective was his advocacy for the territory to be recognised in the Senate of Australia.

Kep lost his seat when the Whitlam government was swept from office, but he did not lose his zeal or commitment to the greater service of public life. He returned to the bar and practised in Sydney, where he was later elevated to the position of judge of the Supreme Court of New South Wales. He was appointed to the New South Wales Serious Offenders Review Council and set up the New South Wales Council for Civil Liberties. In both of these roles he was both strident and outspoken until the last.

As the last federal member for the single seat of Canberra, as the first Minister for the Capital Territory, as an advocate for Senate recognition and for a lifetime of service to his country, I offer my respects to the colleagues, friends and family of Mr Kep Enderby QC, on behalf of the Canberra Liberals.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo): As members have noted, Kep Enderby was born in 1926 in Dubbo, New South Wales, and he moved to Canberra in the 1960s and lectured in law at the ANU. He was elected to the Australian parliament in 1970 for the seat of the Australian Capital Territory at a by-election called on the passing of James Fraser. He later represented the seat of Canberra and became a minister in the Whitlam government. He was the Minister for the Capital Territory in 1972-73 and later the Attorney-General. His political fortunes were closely tied to those of the Whitlam government and he was removed from office, along with many of his colleagues, in the anti-Labor sentiment of 1975.

During his time as Attorney-General he introduced the Family Law Act, which included no-fault divorce and established the Family Court. He also abolished the federal death penalty. He is well known for his work decriminalising abortion and homosexuality in the ACT. After politics he returned to the legal fraternity and served as a New South Wales Supreme Court justice until his retirement.

Kep Enderby was one of those fine individuals who learnt Esperanto in the belief that if we all spoke a single language there would be less conflict in the world. He was one of the founders of the New South Wales Council for Civil Liberties and head of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society of New South Wales.

Interestingly, Kep Enderby's first speech in the federal parliament focused on the political under-representation of citizens of the ACT. He was speaking long before self-government, of course, and at a time when the ACT had no Senate representation. But the point he was making then unfortunately still echoes to some extent today.

In 2013 Kep Enderby wrote in the *Australian* that he could not support the re-election of the Rudd government, citing disappointment with Labor's policies towards asylum seekers and Julian Assange. The same newspaper recently eulogised him thus:

Kep Enderby was a lifelong champion of human rights, civil liberties and the underdog.

My sincerest condolences, on behalf of the ACT Greens, to his family and friends.

Question resolved in the affirmative, members standing in their places.

Health—priorities for 2015

Ministerial statement

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (10.29), by leave: Today I am pleased to speak about the continued investment this Labor government is making in the area of health services in the ACT and the importance we attach to maintaining this investment. The Labor government to date has delivered strong results for the people who use, rely upon and work in our world-class healthcare system, and as the new health minister I am looking forward to making sure that the people of Canberra continue to have access to first-class health care, as also I do for those in the surrounding region.

The Centenary Hospital for Women and Children, walk-in centres in Tuggeranong and Belconnen, community health centres in Gungahlin, Belconnen and Tuggeranong, a new adult mental health unit and the Canberra Region Cancer Centre, as well as numerous investments in equipment and information technology, all demonstrate how this government has made improving our healthcare system a priority. It is important that we continue to make these necessary investments, to make sure that we not only give the sick, injured and unwell the care they need but also have in place preventative policies and services that will help ease the high demand on our healthcare system.

As the relatively new Minister for Health, my focus and my priorities will continue to include ensuring that the health infrastructure program continues to enable Canberrans to get the right care at the right time in the right place; promoting proactive health initiatives and steps to manage the growing level of obesity in our community; and raising awareness of mental health issues and improving access to services for people who need that care.

There is no doubt, Madam Speaker, that the recent cuts in funding in the area of health from the federal Liberal government must be condemned in the strongest terms.

The level of change that is anticipated by the federal budget in coming years will have a significant impact on a small public hospital system and it will be very challenging to manage major reductions in expenditure and services, both within health services and within other publicly provided services. Further, the abolition of funding by the federal government to important preventative health measures is extremely short sighted.

The Australian community strongly supports a universal healthcare model. Access to comprehensive primary health services works. It is not only good for our citizens; it is good for our economy. The entire community benefits from access to affordable health services. The imposition of any disincentives to use primary health care, such as through co-payments for access to GP services, will only increase demand on already busy emergency departments and/or result in less access to primary health care when people need it.

The health infrastructure program commenced by this government is about investing in Canberra's health by changing how and where health services are delivered. The health infrastructure program is the most significant investment in the history of Canberra's healthcare system. Since 2009, this Labor administration has invested, on behalf of the community, \$876 million into the health infrastructure program.

There are four pillars to this program: models of care, infrastructure, technology and our workforce. It is a holistic approach to addressing our future healthcare needs and demands. Over the next 12 months, work on the health infrastructure program will continue. Design work will continue for the building 2/3 redevelopment at the Canberra Hospital. In addition, construction will commence on four significant projects: the Canberra Hospital emergency department interim expansion, the new University of Canberra public hospital, the secure mental health unit and the Ngunnawal bush healing farm. These projects will help to meet the needs of our community now and into the future. The projects will also boost and diversify our economy, providing hundreds of jobs for both clinical and construction staff.

I will deal with each of these projects: first of all, the building 2/3 development at the Canberra Hospital. In consideration for the redevelopment of buildings 2 and 3 at Canberra Hospital, key opportunities to manage demand for future health services were identified. These include the expected population growth, along with an ageing population and the rising prevalence of chronic and complex disease.

The opportunity has also been taken to review the existing infrastructure to determine its ability to deliver new models of care, which in turn will impact on community access to quality and safe health services. This project is a serious commitment by this Labor government to the future of our healthcare system.

Late last year, the government announced that it will be investing \$23 million in the expansion of the emergency department at Canberra Hospital to help address and respond to the increasing presentation numbers to the ED. The emergency department is the region's major trauma centre. It treats more than 70,000 patients. The last financial year was the highest level of treatment ever recorded.

The expansion and refurbishment of the Canberra Hospital ED will improve the ED's layout, creating efficiencies that will lead to an expected reduction in waiting times. It will also see the integration of transferring children and their parents or carers to a dedicated waiting area and then treatment area for young people.

I turn to the University of Canberra public hospital. This hospital will be the ACT's first subacute hospital and will form an important part of our health system. The UCPH is currently in the development stage, with construction scheduled to begin in late 2015. Construction is scheduled to be completed by late 2017. The University of Canberra public hospital will provide 140 inpatient beds and 75 day places. It will provide services such as rehabilitation, adult mental health and aged care, with both inpatient units and day services available in each area.

Additionally, UCPH will be a teaching facility, allowing it to extend and enable joint clinical training, teaching and research opportunities between the University of Canberra and ACT Health. Located on the University of Canberra campus, the University of Canberra public hospital will be ideally placed for this strengthening of our collaboration with our key tertiary institutions.

Turning to the secure mental health unit, in 2012 Labor committed to build a secure mental health unit. The purpose of the unit is to provide specialist mental health care in a secure inpatient environment. The facility will respond to the mental health needs of those who are likely to become involved, or who have become involved, with the criminal justice system and those people who cannot be treated in a less restrictive environment.

The 25-bed facility, to be built on the former site of the Quamby Youth Detention Centre at Symonston, will provide individually tailored treatment with programs that seek to maximise individual functioning. The unit is scheduled to begin construction in mid-2015 and is scheduled for completion and operation late 2016.

The unit will be a purpose-built, secure 25-bed mental health facility and it will be an integral part of health services provided by ACT Health. The unit will provide a safe, clinical and therapeutic environment for people with a mental illness who may be characterised as complex, often difficult to treat and who are of serious risk to others. This will also include people with a mental illness who cannot be adequately assessed and treated in a correctional setting. The unit will provide a safe and structured environment with 24-hour clinical support for people with acute or persistent and severe mental illness, and with associated functional and behavioural difficulties requiring secure care.

This \$43.5 million project will continue the expansion and improvement of the ACT's mental healthcare system, which has already commenced with the opening of the adult mental health unit at the Canberra Hospital. The secure mental health unit will provide secure inpatient mental health care, treatment and support for those who cannot be safely cared for in a less restrictive environment.

The Ngunnawal bush healing farm is also underway. It will provide culturally appropriate drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our community. The bush healing farm is scheduled to begin construction later this year, with completion scheduled for mid-2017. This important new service will help users to improve their overall health and quality of life, which will in turn benefit their families and the broader community.

Madam Speaker, the ACT implements a range of high quality programs in the areas of preventive health. A number of the initiatives adopted by this government have received national recognition by key industry groups. In recent years, the ACT has been awarded recognition for its work in tackling obesity by the Australian and New Zealand Obesity Society, as well as from the AMA and the Australian Council on Smoking and Health for our work in tobacco control.

Preventive health programs work, and there are some notable ones that have been very successful in reducing mortality and the economic losses from preventable causes. Previous successes include car restraint regulations, reducing smoking rates and sun protection campaigns.

The ACT, for example, consistently leads Australia in childhood immunisation, with the latest Australian childhood immunisation register quarterly report showing the ACT has achieved the highest coverage nationally in all three cohorts for all ACT children. The government's immunisation strategy aims to build on our success in this area and to expand the focus of immunisation to whole of life, reducing hospital admissions for vaccine preventable diseases, particularly in high risk groups.

As a government we also have a strong history of achievement in tobacco control and smoke-free environments, and this is reflected in our low rates of tobacco use. Further work is now being done through future directions for tobacco control in the ACT. This future directions document was launched in May 2013 and sets out actions to restrict access to tobacco products and places of tobacco use.

Two consultations were undertaken in 2014 in relation to options for restricting access to tobacco and regulating the sale and use of electronic cigarettes. In 2015 consultation will further occur for restrictions on places where tobacco can be used, such as children's playgrounds, outdoor pools, sporting fields, bus interchanges and in certain areas of multi-unit apartment buildings.

The government has made tackling the rising level of obesity in our community one of our top priorities and for me as minister this is an area of particular emphasis. Approximately 63 per cent of adults and one-in-four year 6 children in the ACT are overweight or obese and these rates are rising. Being overweight or obese puts people at a significantly higher risk of developing preventable illnesses such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure and even some cancers. These all have subsequent health costs but also a much wider economic impact in areas such as business productivity.

The “Towards zero growth: healthy weight action plan” launched in 2013 is a whole-of-government approach which aims to slow the growing rates of obesity for Canberrans. ACT Health runs a number of programs which align with this plan. Health prevention programs help children build healthy behaviours early in life so that they grow into healthy, productive adults. An example of this is the successful fresh tastes program, which was launched in 2014.

Fresh tastes works across our primary schools to increase the availability and knowledge of healthy food and drink choices through schools and includes supporting teachers to provide nutrition education, supporting canteens to provide nutritious menus, giving kids hands-on experience in cooking and gardening and encouraging families to provide healthy school lunchboxes.

The ride or walk to school program builds the capacity of schools to promote active travel through providing cycling equipment, teacher training and resources such as road safety training to encourage more kids to ride or walk to school and to convince their parents that it is a good thing. The good habits for life communication program, launched in 2014, helps to address obesity by helping parents to role model healthy habits for their kids through three core behaviours of eating well, moving more and connecting with those around them.

Preventive health for adults is also important. The healthier work service delivers employers increased access to information, support, training and incentives that build their capacity to create healthier work environments, reduce absenteeism and increase productivity. I note that my colleague Mr Gentleman was at a breakfast this morning talking about this program and the importance of it.

The ACT government is engaged on several fronts to support healthy eating at sporting events. Its efforts in this context recognise the synergies between physical activity associated with sport, healthy eating, and addressing overweight and obesity. The healthy food at sport program has been a partnership between ACT Health and the government’s sport and recreation services to encourage community sporting clubs to increase healthy food and drink choices in their canteens.

The program will cease in 2015, with the Australian Drug Foundation to implement the good sports initiative, which uses an accreditation scheme for alcohol management practices, tobacco management and healthy food promotion and supply in sporting clubs and organisations.

As part of Labor’s 2012 election commitment on tackling obesity, the health promotion grants program has been realigned to have a much stronger focus on obesity, particularly amongst kids, and in programs that support smoking and alcohol reduction and healthy, active ageing. The grants program now offers two types of grants. The larger of the two funding rounds is the healthy Canberra grants. Once a year we prioritise multi-year programs that can demonstrate impact across our entire population. The smaller health promotion innovation fund, which is assessed three times a year, provides grants of up to \$15,000 for innovative health promotion projects.

I was pleased to recently announce the opening of the third round of healthy Canberra grants. Thirteen programs have been funded in the previous two rounds, including funding of over \$500,000 to the Heart Foundation ACT to deliver the live lighter social marketing campaign, which uses mass media to increase awareness and motivate adults to be more interested in healthy eating, physical activity and a healthy weight range.

The Wirrpanda Foundation was funded over \$450,000 for the “Deadly award” winning program Wirra Club which aims to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children’s health, particularly in relation to overweight and obesity, by improving eating habits and increasing physical activity. Our local ACT Medicare Local received over \$500,000 for the connect up for kids program, which targeted the prevention of childhood obesity through the development of a connected, accessible and quality advice pathway for all families of kids aged between three and seven. There are some great examples of how the government is working in partnership with the community to tackle the real, serious and difficult problem of obesity in our community.

On my appointment as Minister for Health late last year, I made it clear that I want to be a strong advocate for improving mental health. Mental illness is still all too often associated with stigma and shame. People with mental illness face challenges in receiving the care and support they need and acceptance in our community. In 2012, as part of this government’s election commitments, we undertook to increase community mental health funding by \$1 million a year for the life of this Assembly. Half of this funding goes to the government clinical community mental health service and the other half goes to the community sector and their provision of mental health services.

As a government we have also identified other mental health growth areas that will be progressively implemented through each budget. Last year we added a specific budget growth initiative for suicide prevention. In the most recent budget, the community clinical mental health services growth money was dedicated to the expansion of community child and adolescent mental health services.

We are applying this growth money in two areas. The first is in the perinatal and infant mental health consultation service, which provides assessment, diagnosis, treatment and referral recommendations to pregnant and postnatal women up to 12 months postpartum. The expansion and additional staff allow for outreach services that include facilitating emotional wellbeing groups and attachment-focused interventions within the community for mothers in these circumstances.

The second area is an additional clinical position in the eating disorders program which provides services to people of all ages who have complex eating issues. This clinical position focuses on the physical needs of clients, providing nursing, health assessments, ongoing monitoring, education and liaison between GPs and other health professionals.

The community sector mental health growth initiative has provided a community sector forensic mental health initiative and this initiative provides for short-term psychosocial support for people with a mental illness who are exiting the criminal justice system. The service assists people to re-engage with the community and improve and regain independence on their release from custody.

We are also providing important support to provide alternative early intervention options for hospital admission and more discharge options for people with mental illness. The program will provide the least restrictive intervention for people with mental health illnesses, in line with our policies.

I will also speak today about adult mental health, as we do not discuss this matter often enough in this place. Mental Health, Justice Health and Alcohol and Drug Services are developing a comprehensive service model for adult mental health services that encompasses and integrates community based, subacute, acute inpatient and emergency department care.

In September just past we commenced a consultancy to redesign and implement the community-based components of the adult mental health service model of care to improve integrated and contemporary mental health services to the community. The project will provide a detailed model of care for community adult mental health-based services, including, but not limited to, case management, psychological therapies, and assertive and crisis care activities.

One of the big issues we know has been receiving some public focus in recent days and months has been dealing with aggression and violence in relation to mental health care. Our services are committed to implementing sustainable measures to ensure all staff work in a safe system. Safe work practices, risk management and people to coordinate and undertake those safe work practices are the foundations of this system.

The development of an aggression and violence framework which will have aligned action plans across both the adult mental health unit and the Brian Hennessy Rehabilitation Centre is now underway. These action plans for the prevention and reduction of violence and aggression will outline the key actions that have been undertaken in consultation with staff and will be managed through the relevant workplace safety committees. All of these are about providing support for nursing staff in daily operations and ensuring we have systems for the identification, prevention and management of acute agitation and episodes of violence and aggression.

Of course, we have also been active on the legislative front. The Assembly has enacted the government's Mental Health (Treatment and Care) Amendment Bill. This will create our new Mental Health Act, to come into force on 12 November this year. A number of the changes in this new act empower people with mental illness in deciding their own treatment, including considering their capacity to make decisions and ensuring support for that decision-making as well as providing the opportunity to identify a nominated person to represent their views and preferences, and provisions to recognise consent directions made in advance about treatment when their conditions deteriorate.

The new act also advances the statutory options and protections for people who are affected by mental health services and provides for the first time new forensic orders to help ensure access and oversight of treatment for people with mental illness involved in our justice system. We will be undertaking education, training and the provision of plain English explainers to help mental health consumers, carers and their service providers understand what this new law means for them when it comes into effect later this year.

The government is also identifying and responding to an issue that has been on my agenda for some time—providing support for those who are caught up in the emotional, difficult and often traumatic circumstances of a coronial investigation. The government has committed funding for a new coronial counselling service. This fills a big gap in services. The coronial counselling service will provide therapeutic counselling to people who have been bereaved by the death of a loved one that is being investigated by the coroner. The coronial counselling service will offer counselling for the whole period that the coronial investigation is underway. All too often with an unexpected death, family and friends are left isolated and alone during the difficult circumstances of a coronial investigation. This new counselling service is something I think we can be particularly proud of because it helps fill a gap in a very important area of service delivery.

Equally, the government has committed ongoing funding for the “let’s talk for suicide prevention” campaign. The aim of this campaign is to say to people that it is okay to talk about suicide, both to seek help and to offer help to others. In 2015 the focus of the campaign is around World Suicide Prevention Day on 10 September this year, and it will be on groups at higher risk of suicide in our community. ACT Health will support community organisations working with these groups to run suicide prevention education, and in 2015 we will also partner with the Education and Training Directorate to run a competition for high school students to develop new suicide prevention messages for print, radio, TV and web broadcast. I hope we are able to use the winning entries in future years’ campaigns.

Nationally, on 1 July last year the ACT commenced the trial of the NDIS. We know what the scheme will do—provide people with disabilities, including psychosocial disabilities—the opportunity to purchase services that are tailored to their needs. Very small numbers of people with psychosocial disability have been assessed for this scheme in the ACT, but we will continue to monitor what it means for them as the scheme is rolled out. We will also monitor the implementation to make sure that no person currently receiving a government-funded mental health support service is disadvantaged by the implementation of the NDIS.

Finally, I turn to our performance in the areas of the Report on Government Services. This report was released earlier this month, and I am pleased the report shows that, across a whole range of our health services, we are continuing to make good progress in providing quality healthcare services. While we continue to tackle challenges such as the increasing demand for emergency and elective surgery services, the report is a timely reminder of the complexity and the diversity of the health services Canberrans seek on a daily basis.

Firstly, our residents continue to enjoy the highest average life expectancy of anywhere in Australia: 81.7 years for males and 85 years for females. The territory continues to register excellent results in childhood vaccinations, with 93 per cent of all kids aged 12 to 15 months fully vaccinated—the highest rate reported nationally. We have seen the second consecutive growth period in participation rates for women aged 40 and over undertaking breast screening, increasing from 30.6 per cent during 2011-12 to 32.3 per cent during 2012-13.

The practice incentive program regarding diabetes incentives was reported for the first time, and it shows a large proportion of these practices within the ACT registered for the PIP diabetes initiative. The ACT figure of 57.7 per cent is well above the national average. It is great to see our GPs taking on this program.

ACT public hospitals have made very significant improvements in improving patients' access to elective surgery within the clinically recommended time frames. We now have the lowest wait times for elective surgery since 2003 and we have met eight of the nine elective surgery targets for 2013. While there is still more work to be done, this is a very encouraging trend.

The ACT has maintained 100 per cent accreditation of all its public hospital beds, demonstrating our ongoing commitment by our staff to deliver a quality public healthcare system. We have the highest proportion of community follow-up for patients with a mental illness, following their discharge from hospital—73.9 per cent of mental health patients are followed up within seven days of leaving hospital, against a national average of only 60 per cent.

We have seen in the report highlights of the ACT as an exemplar for managing the use of seclusion during acute episodes of mental health inpatient care. Through alternative strategies and engagement with mental health consumers, the ACT has been able to significantly reduce our seclusion rates. Current data from the most recent reporting year shows the ACT has a seclusion rate of 0.9 events per 1,000 bed days compared to a national average of nearly 10 seclusion events per 1,000 bed days. The fact that we are using alternative strategies to ensure people do not have to be placed in seclusion is a good thing.

Our public hospitals have seen 125,890 emergency department presentations in the last reporting year. This is the highest number of annual presentations in the ACT on record, 12 per cent higher than those recorded just three years ago. The proportion of emergency time presentations with a length of stay of four hours or less during 2013-14 was 61.8 per cent. This rate is lower than the national average, but we have seen significant improvement—4.5 per cent improvement to the performance on this performance measure for the 2012-13 year. That is a good outcome; it shows our EDs are working hard to improve timely access to care.

There is further work to be done in reducing the number of patients waiting to be seen within the appropriate triage categories. This will remain a focus for me and the government in the coming year, and we will be pursuing a range of initiatives. I have mentioned the additional beds in our emergency department, the engagement of more

doctors and nurses, and further reviews of our models of care. We have also committed \$23 million to provide 12 new beds in the Canberra Hospital ED, and this is a very important reform.

Turning to commonwealth reforms, the most recent federal budget figures indicate that funding from the commonwealth to the ACT for public hospital services will be approximately \$240 million less than anticipated by the government over the next four years—a quarter of a billion dollars less coming from the federal Liberal government to our public hospital services. This significant shortfall is a real problem.

The major reason for this reduction in expenditure is related to the abrogation by the commonwealth of its commitments under the national health reform agreement to provide funding guarantees up to the levels that would have been provided had the previous healthcare arrangements remained in place. We are now in a situation where we have to report against these new targets under the national healthcare reform agreement, but we do not get any funding from the commonwealth to recognise the shift to those new performance arrangements, contrary to the commitments previously given.

The basis of the NHRA and the commitment to funding guarantees was based on the commonwealth's recognition of its obligation to fund a greater proportion of public hospital services than was the case in the previous agreement. No statements about increases in public hospital funding across the nation by the current Liberal federal government explain the real funding cut to the ACT due to this arbitrary cessation of funding guarantees.

The Abbott government has unilaterally walked away from key commitments contained in the national health reform agreement which was signed in good faith in 2011. The ACT's position in relation to the NHRA will need to be reconsidered, given the commonwealth's abrogation of its commitments to guarantee that no jurisdiction would be worse off. Commonwealth health department officials at the Senate on 2 June last year clarified that there would be \$55 billion less funding nationally for hospitals over the next decade. This is \$55 billion less from the federal government, and there has been no consideration by the Liberals of what this means for our public hospitals. The simple fact is that for the ACT there will be \$210 million less than the growth the ACT has calculated for our hospital systems. We need to manage this, to protect services but also hold the federal Liberal government to account for their failure to support health.

The federal budget also included announcements regarding changes to a range of other agreements. The national partnership agreement on preventative health was abolished four years earlier than expected. This represents a loss of around 47 per cent of ACT health funding for health promotion and prevention. The national partnership agreement on preventative health was aimed at stimulating action in preventing chronic disease and funded some really important programs, like the healthy children initiative, aimed at reducing the level of obesity in kids aged zero to 18 years; the healthy workers initiative to promote healthy lifestyles in workplaces; the healthy communities initiative to reduce the prevalence of overweight and obesity; and infrastructure to support the measurement of risk factors in our health population. All this money is lost.

In addition, we have had to deal with a range of other impacts, and we have responded. We have invested more money in sport and recreation services, facilities and upgrades and more investment in our healthy weight action plan, but we should be doing this in partnership with the commonwealth government. Improving people's lifestyles and reducing the impact of lifestyle-related disease saves everybody money—the ACT taxpayer, the federal budget, the ACT budget—through fewer people having to go to hospital.

The cessation of the national partnership agreement on improving public hospital services also warrants mention. This cessation of reward funding involved programs for the national elective surgery target, the national emergency department target and new subacute beds. This national partnership provided \$56 million over all four years, and it has been lost in areas where we need it most—that is, elective surgery and access to our emergency departments. There have also been cuts in Indigenous early childhood development, although elements of this have been continued. We have seen funding deferred on adult public dental services.

These cuts come as the broader health system has been thrown into turmoil with the announcement of the \$7 co-payment for visits to GPs as well as increases to co-payments for PBS medicines, pathology and diagnostic imaging. This Labor ACT government strongly disagrees with and rejects the notion that there should be co-payments for general practitioner services. This is bad policy that affects those least able to pay for their health care.

The removal of restrictions on state and territory governments from charging patients presenting to hospital emergency departments for GP-like attendances will not be actioned by the ACT. It breaks the Medicare principle of universality, of free public hospital care, and would be administratively complex and costly to administer.

Governments at a commonwealth and territory level have been working for a generation to improve access to health care for our community. We know general practice provides the benefit of establishing a long-term relationship with a healthcare provider, which is integral to achieving good health over the length of people's lives. We are sure that efficiencies can be made, but they need to be designed in a way that is fair. The co-payment is not fair. The co-payment will not raise the level of funding to meet growing demands for health care. Instead, it will add to healthcare costs for consumers. It will reduce early intervention for those who cannot afford the out-of-pocket expenses to see a doctor.

It is worth highlighting that Australians pay and make a contribution when they go to their doctor—it is called Medicare. Contributions we all make based on how much we earn through our taxes and through the Medicare levy provide a progressive funding base for funding essential health services.

We hear the rhetoric from Joe Hockey that some people should make a contribution. Well, they do, through Medicare. Despite the rhetoric from the current commonwealth government, there is no crisis. We have low debt levels nationally and the cost to government for health care is below the OECD average. We have one of the most efficient funding bases for health care anywhere in the world.

It is important that the healthcare system provides for all Canberrans, regardless of who they are, where they live or how much they earn. A priority critical to managing demand on the healthcare system is to implement policies that help prevent illness, injury and disease. Reducing our high level of obesity, helping people to be more active and having a physically and mentally healthy Canberra are key to reducing the high level of demand that already impacts on all areas of our health system.

I thank members for the opportunity to present this comprehensive outline of our program for health services. This is one of the largest areas of the ACT budget. It is one of the most complex, but it is also one of the most important for our community. As health minister, my focus will continue to be on improving access, tackling lifestyle-related disease, illness and obesity, and improving the framework and support services for those with mental illness. These, amongst areas in health, will continue to be a key priority for this Labor government. I present the following paper:

Health priorities for 2015—Ministerial statement, 12 February 2015.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (11.10): Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to talk more about the University of Canberra public hospital in my electorate—indeed, our electorate—in Belconnen. The University of Canberra public hospital will be co-located with the University of Canberra, which trains the majority of allied health professionals and nursing students in the ACT, including psychologists, physiotherapists, dieticians, exercise physiologists, occupational therapists and pharmacists.

When you contemplate the synergy between the education and training and the service delivery, Madam Deputy Speaker, you will see that there are going to be some wonderful things happening there. The hospital, I understand, will have 140 inpatient beds comprising some 20 mental health beds and 120 rehabilitation beds. Added to that are 75 day places, which is apparently a 30-bed equivalent, and that will be split between mental health, rehabilitation and aged care.

The services will be provided to meet the needs of adult, aged care and mental health patients in a sympathetic and therapeutic environment. There is going to be a range of allied health services delivered, including hydrotherapy, psychiatric rehabilitation, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech pathology, exercise pathology, social work and structured psychological therapies, as well as a range of community services, including memory assessment, nurse practitioner services, fall injury prevention, continence, podiatry, driver and vocational rehabilitation services.

I am pleased that this facility is focused on a comprehensive approach to rehabilitation. This focus on comprehensive service delivery is a hallmark of several of our most effective and inspiring government initiatives, including through care for prisoners released from the AMC and coordinating the many services to support prisoners to deliver an outcome, of which the early indicators are extremely positive, with dramatically lower recidivism rates for program participants. Strengthening families is

another ACT government program where a lead worker streamlines and focuses government services across directorates to deliver comprehensive and holistic outcomes for these particularly vulnerable families.

I say that these comprehensive holistic approaches that will be applied at the University of Canberra public hospital to helping people are at the heart of classic Indigenous social theory, an approach which is exemplified by Aboriginal medical services, which have been providing holistic and comprehensive services for more than 40 years across Australia. It is an environment where I began my working life more than 30 years ago and it is an approach which I believe will be of tremendous benefit to those in need in our territory.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (11.14): I rise in support of the health minister's statement on investing in the ACT's health system. This government is focused on the economic and social renewal of the territory. Keeping our community healthy is, indeed, an essential component of the government's renewal agenda. In the shadow of massive funding cuts by the Liberal government at the federal level, which impact on state and territory health systems across the country, and the Liberal government's repeated attempts to tax visits to local GPs, smart and coordinated investment by the ACT government in the community's health assumes even greater importance now.

The 2014-15 federal budget indicated that funding from the commonwealth to the ACT for public hospital services would be approximately \$240 million less than expected by the territory over the next four years. Just think, Madam Deputy Speaker, about what that \$240 million in lost funding could have done for health outcomes for the people of the ACT and the fact that the Liberal opposition locally—particularly its leader, Mr Hanson—has stood by quietly during the drama and the farce of the federal government's health cuts and their tax attempts. It makes our task all the more stark.

Of course, the ACT Labor government is building on a strong track record in health. The Centenary Hospital for Women and Children, the Canberra Region Cancer Centre, the new adult mental health unit, the Tuggeranong and Belconnen walk-in centres, the community health centres in Gungahlin, Belconnen and Tuggeranong and a range of strategic investments in equipment and information technology are all to improve the capability of our health system to continue to provide world-class health care.

As Minister Corbell has set out, in a growing community and with an ageing regional population there is always more to do with finite resources. This is why the government is committed to working in partnership with the University of Canberra for the University of Canberra public hospital.

The Belconnen community and, indeed, the broader Canberra community need another hospital, and building it will create jobs. Building it at the University of Canberra creates growth opportunities for the university, turning it into a nation-leading health and learning hub. It makes it even more attractive for prospective students and researchers, an investment that will serve both our health sector and our education sector for decades to come.

The benefit from the UC hospital will be felt well beyond its 140 inpatient beds and 75 day places. Services such as rehabilitation, adult mental health and aged care will help everyone in the community, as well as teaching the next generation of healthcare professionals. As Minister Corbell outlined, the University of Canberra hospital forms a central component of our coordinated health infrastructure program. The program rollout will ensure Canberrans get the right care at the right time and at a place that is convenient to them, in a supporting and welcoming environment.

Successive intergenerational reports released by the federal government have highlighted the effect our nation's ageing population will have on all aspects of our healthcare system. I expect the impending and overdue 2015 report—whenever it is released by the federal Treasurer—will reconfirm these worrying trends. That is why we also need to properly cater for this city's growing healthcare needs by renewing our existing health infrastructure.

Canberra Hospital will need to serve the community for generations, and that requires us to be smart about developing the facility. We need to think beyond just the health challenges we will face in this coming decade but in fact well into the future—indeed, over the next 40 to 50 years. One immediate step we are taking is to handle a significant increase in acute and trauma presentations. As this place is well aware, the Canberra Hospital is the region's major trauma centre and I pay tribute to the dedicated men and women who work in the hospital who are saving lives there every day. The committed \$23 million expansion to the emergency department will certainly make their working lives easier and help them to help those who are presenting at the hospital.

Mr Corbell also outlined progress with the secure mental health unit model of care. Across Australia and around the world people with complex mental health needs often find themselves trapped in the criminal justice system, and ultimately in prison, simply because there is nowhere else for them to go. So the government's construction of a 25-bed facility at Symonston will be genuinely world leading, a safe, clinical and therapeutic environment for people with a mental illness who are difficult to treat and who are at serious risk to others. The facility will give them the intensive support that they need to keep the community safe outside a penal environment. That is the way we will truly give each individual the best possible chance of recovery.

Of course, one of the most effective ways we can improve the health of Canberrans is through investing in prevention. I know this is an area of passion for Minister Corbell, for the Minister for Sport and Recreation, Mr Rattenbury, and indeed for me. The federal government, unfortunately, made its disdain for prevention of primary healthcare programs very clear through its cuts to a range of important programs and campaigns across the country.

In contrast, here in the territory the ACT government has a strong and ongoing commitment to preventive health programs—for example, innovative ways to reduce tobacco use and provide smoke-free environments for workers and children through our future directions for tobacco control program. Tobacco use continues to take too many lives of our loved ones. For something so important you would like to think

there could be bipartisan support to help adults give up their tobacco habit and to stop young people taking up a lifetime of addiction. It is unfortunate to note that, despite Tony Abbott being reluctantly forced to ban tobacco company donations to the Liberal Party in 2013, the recently released election donation records show the tobacco company Philip Morris donated \$70,000 to state and federal branches of the Liberal Party in the 2013-14 financial year.

This government continues to tackle obesity, one of the leading causes of preventable death in the territory. Minister Corbell has outlined in his statement some of what are, frankly, alarming weight statistics that we face here, and we are not alone in the territory. Our towards zero growth healthy weight action plan that was launched in 2013 provides a whole-of-government approach which is successfully addressing the rates of obesity for Canberrans. I retain oversight for the healthy weight initiative in the Chief Minister's department, which confirms the centrality of this initiative in all government thinking.

Just this morning, for example, Madam Deputy Speaker, 160 members of the ACT business community, including various industries, attended a healthier work breakfast. The healthier work initiative has visited 230 workplaces to provide advice and assistance in implementing health and wellbeing initiatives. So the government is putting its resources and its efforts into an area that improves the health of all Canberrans.

We recognise that you cannot renew Canberra's economy or community without ensuring its citizens are healthy, that they are active and that they would be well cared for if faced with serious health issues. I take this opportunity this morning to commend Minister Corbell for his focus on and his investment in Canberrans' health. It is an important and central element of this government's renewal agenda for the sick.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

Mr Corbell interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Corbell! Mr Doszpot, you had the opportunity to speak.

Mr Corbell: And he didn't take it.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Corbell!

Mr Doszpot: It was a ministerial statement. Madam Speaker, am I allowed to speak to ministerial statements?

Mr Corbell: You are too late.

Mr Doszpot: Would you give me leave to speak to it?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am sorry, Mr Doszpot, I waited to see—

Mr Doszpot: You will not give me leave to speak to it?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot, before putting the question I waited to see if you wanted to speak.

Mr Doszpot: I was not aware I could speak to a ministerial statement, Madam Deputy Speaker. On a point of order, I am being heckled by my colleagues on the other side. I am very happy to make a statement or respond to the ministerial statement. It appears that Mr Corbell is very happy to chastise me, but he will not give me leave to speak on it.

Mr Corbell: What is the point of order? There is no point of order.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Corbell, let me deal with this, please. It is not a point of order, Mr Doszpot.

City centre—revitalisation Ministerial statement

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Planning, Minister for Roads and Parking, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations, Minister for Children and Young People and Minister for Ageing) (11.24), by leave: I am responding to a resolution from 17 September last year to update the Assembly on the progress of key projects in the city centre that are contributing to revitalisation and a sustainable, safe, vibrant and economically prosperous city centre. I would also like to update the Assembly on the progress of implementation of the city plan and associated engagement with stakeholders. The ACT government is committed to the revitalisation of the city centre, and the city plan provides an overarching framework that sets the future for the city centre.

During the extensive public consultation in 2013, Canberrans told us that they love parts of the city centre but want to see change to give it a stronger identity, one that is less about cars and more about people. One of the strongest messages we heard during community engagement for the city plan was: just get on with it. People want to see change and I am pleased to report that change is underway. The ACT government is progressing five priority projects to begin our delivery under the city plan and set a new path for the future. These projects focus on reducing traffic impacts to help people connect across the city and getting more people living in the city to add vibrancy, character and increased safety. Shortly I will update you on the progress of the city plan, but first I would like to mention some of the many exciting and transformational projects already underway.

The city centre has experienced significant growth over the last 10 years with substantial investment in new building projects. The ANU exchange precinct, resulting from a close collaboration between the ANU and the government, has brought the ANU and city together while providing accommodation for 2,530

students close to the amenities of the city centre. Investment by the government in upgrading streetscapes and improving bus facilities has also attracted significant additional commercial office space in the area, with around 82,000 square metres of new office space constructed. The final stage of the Canberra Centre was approved in 2011, which will provide 300 apartments, 41,000 square metres of additional commercial office space and 12,500 square metres of new retail floor area.

New Acton, which was completed last year, has set a new benchmark in terms of the quality of urban renewal projects. This precinct has created a new destination for the city through its innovative events programs, a highly sustainable approach also to building design and the diverse range of uses including residential, cinemas, restaurants, hotels and commercial space. New Acton has gained at least 20 awards from a variety of peak design and property bodies, including the 2014 national award for urban design. I congratulate the Molonglo Group on their sustainable, high density, high amenity development and for their ongoing investment in Canberra.

The city remains the location of choice for both commonwealth and private tenants, with almost 350,000 square metres of new office space developed over the last 10 years. During this period an additional 1,300 apartments were also constructed in the city. The city is a key active travel destination, and the government is working hard to improve access to, from and within the city centre for people on foot, bikes and public transport. The government remains committed to improving the quality of pedestrian and cycle infrastructure in the city, and the civic area action plan released in October 2010 identified a range of projects, including upgrades to footpaths, lighting and general accessibility. Over \$20 million has been invested in these improvements, including the completion of the city cycle loop which has seen a significant increase in cyclists in the city area.

Stage 1 of the Belconnen to city transit way has provided significantly improved sustainable transport options on the Belconnen to city transport corridor, one of the busiest bus routes in Canberra. The project has seen the construction of a new dedicated bus lane on Barry Drive from Clunies Ross Street through to Kingsley Street in the city, a new bus station at city west servicing the new ANU exchange development, with improved bus connections and access, on and off-road cycling facilities along Barry Drive and new pedestrian facilities.

To ensure that Canberra develops as a more compact and sustainable city, the government's transport and planning strategies are working together to manage projected population growth and high quality transport infrastructure, often referred to as transit-oriented development. Although a range of transport modes are encouraged, the government acknowledges that the car will continue to be used by a large number of Canberrans and that parking supply and demand need to be well managed. A parking action plan, which the government will consider in the coming months, will make parking more accessible by improving the availability of different types of parking and making parking easier to locate. The parking action plan will build upon existing government policy and use the latest technologies to administer parking.

Earlier this year, 300 new off-street pay parking machines were rolled out across Canberra, including the city centre, with new payment options including credit card

and pay-by-phone technology. A smart parking trial will be an opportunity to work with local businesses and the community and to test and seek feedback on the new technology. A tender process to replace on-street parking meters with new ticket machines that accept credit cards and pay by phone is currently underway. And last Friday the Chief Minister invited Canberrans to have their say on smart parking. I encourage people to visit timetotalk.act.gov.au to have their say.

Stage 1 of the capital metro light rail network has been chosen for a number of reasons, but, importantly, for the pivotal role it will play in rejuvenating Northbourne Avenue and the city centre. Light rail is the only transport mode that has, in other cities, consistently demonstrated this urban renewal benefit. Urban renewal and transformation along the transport corridor is expected to drive new opportunities for other parts of the city such as employment and investment. Analysis from the global firm Ernst & Young indicates that the government's light rail investment will create over 3,500 jobs during construction and potentially 50,000 jobs over 30 years.

There are many other projects that are contributing to the revitalisation of the city. These include Digital Canberra, providing free public wi-fi in the city, redevelopment in Braddon and the work of Canberra CBD Ltd arranging public events and programs such as skate in the city, Christmas in the city and bud lighting and flower displays.

Returning to the city plan, I am pleased to report that well-respected urban design firm Hassell has been engaged to lead a team of consultants and prepare an urban design framework and a transport and movement action plan for the city. This work will guide the development of high quality building and capital works across the city, particularly for gateway sites around City Hill and the Sydney and Melbourne buildings. It will present options to reduce through traffic in the city centre whilst identifying strategies for the management of parking and the improvement of public transport and active mode linkages to, from and across the city centre.

In conjunction with this work, an economic development analysis is underway to encourage new development, redevelopment and reuse of existing buildings across the city centre. These projects have been undertaken in conjunction with the urban design framework for the city and Northbourne Avenue corridor so that an urban design framework, including built form guidelines, will address both the city centre and this important gateway to the city.

Engagement with local stakeholders is key to the preparation of the framework, and there have been a number of forums in recent months where the city centre revitalisation has been a key topic. These include the recent Radio National forum and in late November a Property Council workshop that discussed city transformation. The urban design framework is responding to the messages from these forums and from consultation associated with the city plan, city to the lake and capital metro. In addition, targeted consultation is planned at key stages in preparing the framework.

The Environment and Planning Directorate will be holding facilitated workshops and design charrettes with key stakeholders, including community and business group representatives. The first workshop is planned for the first quarter of 2015. An additional workshop is planned midyear, and formal community engagement on the draft documents is proposed later in the year.

In concluding, I want to emphasise the ACT government's strong commitment to and action in revitalising and rejuvenating the city centre. The positive changes that have occurred in Civic and Braddon over the past three years are set to continue and have been quite remarkable. The significant investments that government is making in partnership with our private sector colleagues will create a vibrant, safe and economically successful city centre, a city centre that Canberrans have asked for in our extensive consultations and one that will provide a prosperous, economic future for business operators and for people living and working in the heart of Canberra.

I present the following paper:

City Plan implementation and city revitalisation project update—Ministerial statement, 12 February 2015.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Regulation of the Electronic Gaming Industry—Select Committee Proposed establishment

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events): In accordance with standing order 127, at the request of Minister Burch, I fix the next sitting for the moving of this motion.

Standing orders—amendment

Motion (by **Mr Barr**), by leave, agreed to:

That consideration of notice No 2, Assembly business, concerning amendments to the standing orders relating to ministerial statements, be referred to the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure for inquiry and report.

Executive members' business—precedence

Ordered that executive members' business be called on.

Arts—community events

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (11.37): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) live music and events are an integral part of our culture and essential for our increasingly vibrant and culturally diverse community;
 - (b) the Legislative Assembly inquired into live community events in 2009, and there are still opportunities to implement many of the recommendations; and
 - (c) as the density of our city and town centres continues to increase, music venues are facing complaints from local residents. We have even had recent examples where daytime jazz music has been prevented within what has become known as a cultural precinct; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to develop a policy and actions to support live events in our community, including but not limited to:
- (a) identifying and designating particular areas as entertainment zones which would allow greater flexibility around noise levels;
 - (b) implementing the principle of order of occupancy, so that residents moving into areas with existing venues are not able to cause the closure of venues;
 - (c) revising building codes for residential developments in mixed use zones to require acoustic insulation; and
 - (d) review the impact of the Liquor Act on small venues and music events.

I have brought this motion forward today because over the last few years Canberra has been experiencing a dynamic emergence of live music. Canberra is privileged to have such talented, enthusiastic and collaborative musicians in our town, and it certainly brings great richness to our city. This vibrant music scene adds to the cultural life of Canberra, it is helping to keep creative people here and it is building on the work of educational institutions—for example, the School of Music and events management courses at CIT.

Live music contributes to a creative city and a more livable, innovative and prosperous city. It helps create a cycle where highly skilled people are attracted to the ACT, who in turn reinforce the growth and prosperity of our city. Live music contributes significantly to the economic life of Canberra. This includes the employment of musicians, teachers, instrument retailers, venue staff, promoters, and people providing food and beverages and transport. With strategic support and the removal of barriers, Canberra can become a unique centre for music, similar to the way that the city has become an internationally recognised centre for glassworks.

However, the live music scene in Canberra is facing a number of immediate challenges, particularly the growing conflict between live music and encroaching residential development, and a lack of suitable venues. High level support and direction are required to address these issues. The government, and the Assembly as a whole, needs to explicitly recognise the significant role live music plays in the cultural life and economy of the ACT, and we need to commit to active support and removal of barriers to live music.

The value of live music should be considered when decisions on land use, planning and building controls are being made, along with other considerations such as financial return and meeting demands for residential development. There is a spectrum of live music activities in Canberra ranging from large-scale events through to emerging bands practicing in garages in the suburbs.

Each of these faces a range of issues. Consistent across all of them are noise issues, a lack of appropriate venues and transport options. Each of these types of music activity will require different responses, ranging from assisting in making venues available and assessing transport options, through to soundproofing and zoning.

As far back as 2009 the ACT Greens instigated an Assembly inquiry into live music events. The 2010 report on the inquiry into live community events contained over 30 recommendations. Mr Coe will recall the inquiry; I believe Ms Porter was on it too, as well as my former colleague Caroline Le Couteur. The committee, of course, famously traipsed around the live music venues of Brisbane. I can picture the three members of the Assembly taking in those live music occasions. It is a picture that we can all—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: I believe the members did very much enjoy that experience, Mr Rattenbury, and I believe the members of that committee gained a lot of insight at that particular—

MR RATTENBURY: So I understand, because the committee was a very productive committee. It came out with a unanimous report and there was unanimous support from all three parties across the recommendations, which I think was a very positive outcome. I think it reflected the fact that the committee took the issue very seriously and looked at a range of options.

That is what I am hoping to continue today because I think there is a recognition across the chamber of the importance of the live music scene and the need to deal with these issues. Probably each of us in this place has been approached by constituents with a range of perspectives in this debate—residents who are concerned by noise, and musicians and artists who are concerned by the increasing constraints.

Certainly, the committee made far-reaching recommendations. The 32 recommendations covered nine broad areas, including noise standards and complaints, establishing entertainment precincts, noise attenuation in new residential developments in the city and town centres and in new venues, workplace health and safety issues for workers in venues, issues around liquor licensing, the issue of transport late at night, access to venues and multipurpose facilities, public liability insurance, and security and policing. So it was a very comprehensive report that the committee put together.

In 2011 the ACT government provided a response to the recommendations. Now it is 2015 and I think it is timely to revisit the recommendations and look at progress that has been made and at areas that need more work.

I would like to ask the government to provide an update on progress of implementation of the Assembly committee's report recommendations. That is why I have brought the matter forward for discussion today—to both have an opportunity to provide that update and to reinvigorate efforts to make progress in this space.

On a very positive note, a number of the recommendations have been followed through and progress has been made by government. In particular, good progress is being made on developing the Ainslie Arts Centre as a music hub—something that Minister Burch has taken on in her capacity as Minister for the Arts. I think that is a positive development.

Certainly, as the Minister for TAMS, I have been pleased to oversee the Nightrider service, which, for example, operates in the weeks leading up to Christmas and the new year. In the last year it saw an increase in usage of around 21 per cent from the previous year. I was very pleased about that. I think it reflected both an increasing awareness of the service and a strong effort by the TAMS team to actively promote the service and engage with the community on how the service would operate.

Indeed, I would like to note that, with the Multicultural Festival taking place this Saturday night, the Nightrider service will be operating. If members are inclined to let their constituents know about it or put it on social media, it provides people who want to come into the city and perhaps experience some of the international beers and the like a safe way to get home without the risk of drink-driving.

Other recommendations that have been followed through from the inquiry include bollards being provided in key locations around the city and in shopping centres for the promotion of events via bill posters. The EPA is undertaking a noise study and looking at issues in group and town centres. I certainly look forward to the outcomes of that work, and how it will be used to engage stakeholders and inform government policy development.

Again in my capacity as the Minister for TAMS I held an events roundtable with events organisers. That covered sporting issues and various entertainment events and looked at areas where TAMS could assist in the areas it regulates. I note also that the Chief Minister has launched Access Canberra, which is working on red tape reduction and looking to make it easier for businesses, event organisers and community organisations to do these sorts of things in Canberra. I very much welcome the Chief Minister's initiative in this space to make it easier for people to do business with government and therefore make it easier for these sorts of events that we all enjoy to take place.

There are, of course, other areas—and these are some of the things I have touched on in my motion—where further work is needed, where the committee made findings and recommendations and where I think there is still progress to be made. Certainly, noise complaints have impacted on many live music venues in Canberra over a number of years and that is potentially set to get worse as we see more residential development taking place in some of these busy, night-life oriented areas. The tensions that can

arise in these situations may well get worse. That is why I am keen to move this issue forward so that we can continue to see the improvement of night-life and live music venues while being mindful of the way our city is changing.

We have certainly seen live music venues that have had to close where noise has been a major contributing factor. These include the Asylum, the Terrace Bar, the Gypsy Bar and Toast. Other venues, such as the George Harcourt Inn in Nicholls, Suburban in Dickson, Transit Bar, and even the convention centre and venues in New Acton, are all areas where tensions have arisen. There is certainly an issue around resolving the issues and finding ways to ameliorate problems for some of these areas.

We need to think about an area such as Braddon, for example. It has traditionally been zoned as a light industrial and commercial area, and that has enabled some of these businesses to operate. We are now seeing Braddon transform. On the whole I am very positive about the way Braddon is transforming. It is such an incredibly popular area. If you go there now at night it is very vibrant; there are a lot of people around. There is a really positive sense in the air and there is some very innovative business going on.

There is also the development of apartments taking place in Braddon, right on Lonsdale Street and on Mort Street. As people move in, they are presumably moving there because they want to be in Braddon as a vibrant area, but, as we have seen both in Canberra and in other places, some of those residents then start to make complaints about the noise in the area. So the very reason why they have moved there becomes an issue which they are also complaining about. We need to think about zoning issues and possibly the designation of night-life precincts so that we can have some certainty and so that these areas can continue to flourish.

That brings me to the principle of order of occupancy legislation. That is something that has been floated as a way of addressing the issue of people moving into an area where noise already exists. The premise here is that there is a limit on the ability of people who have come after the development of some of these venues to complain. This has been suggested for some of the areas I have been talking about.

However, it is not a perfect principle; people still start to complain. For example, there may be an existing set of venues, but if new venues want to arrive and innovate, how do they fit in to that equation? How can we bind people who might move in further down the line?

These are issues that need to be resolved and they require further work. I am certainly not suggesting they are easy questions to answer, but the sooner we start to work on these issues and look at other jurisdictions and their experience, the better off we will be in terms of trying to avoid some of the conflicts that might come down the line.

Soundproofing is another area that I think is worthy of further investigation. It is, of course, possible to block much of the noise from music venues with soundproofing measures, which, in addition, provide energy efficiency benefits—things like double-glazing and insulation. Best-practice soundproofing should become a requirement in all new residential developments in commercial areas as well. There is scope to look

at this area, because without requirements developers are unlikely to implement such measures and we will see more conflicts. Certainly, in seeking to soundproof both the venues and the residences in the areas there is scope to ameliorate that conflict.

Again, there are limitations to the approach of requiring soundproofing. In some places, of course, it is already going to be too late as the buildings are there. But there are other issues. Residents should have access to natural ventilation rather than needing to rely on air conditioning. On a warm summer evening we want people to be able to throw open the windows or the sliding doors. This, of course, opens them up to the noise that might be coming from the streets below. These are issues that need to be considered in the area of soundproofing.

As I have touched on already, I think there is scope to look at the issue of night-life precincts and whether there are particular areas that we should be designating and perhaps considering whether they should be open to residential development or not, and how those things might be done. We can imagine the sorts of areas where that might apply—areas such as Braddon, Dickson, Manuka, Kingston and the town centres. There are even issues around Exhibition Park which need to be considered.

These are the sorts of issues that need to be brought to the table. I think there is a real, positive energy developing in Canberra. There has always been a live music scene in Canberra. One of the things I have been excited by in Canberra is that I feel we have had a bit of a change of pace in the last five years or so. Before then young people who would have previously come through the more artistic scene upped and left Canberra because they felt there was not enough going on here, but we are seeing some of those younger people staying in the city and continuing to seek to innovate here, and helping to develop a much more vibrant city than perhaps historically has been the case.

Canberra has struggled over the years with being described as a bit of a dead city with no night-life. I think we are making progress, and as an Assembly we need to start thinking about how we can protect that and seek to avoid conflict between our constituents. So I commend my motion to the Assembly.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (11.51): I thank Mr Rattenbury for bringing this motion for discussion today. The Canberra Liberals will be supporting the motion. We believe the live music industry and the events scene are an important part of our vibrant city and should be supported. We also believe residents should not be unduly disturbed by noises coming from these events.

Mr Rattenbury's motion mentioned the 2009 inquiry into live community events. As he mentioned, I, like you, Madam Deputy Speaker, participated in that committee inquiry and found it to be a particularly interesting and informative process. I am pleased to reiterate my support for the recommendations we made at that time. The committee recommended that the government implement the order of occupancy principle. The order of occupancy principle is vital to ensuring that established venues are not unfairly impacted by new occupants. If residential development is placed very close to established venues, new residents may make noise complaints and threaten the viability of evening and even daytime entertainment.

This issue was raised by me in January 2009, just a couple of months after coming into this place, when I raised concerns about a 15-apartment complex constructed on the foreshore of Lake Ginninderra. I was concerned at the time—and those concerns have eventuated in part—that the noise from surrounding venues, most notably the Lighthouse Pub, may well impact the quality of life for the adjacent apartments and that the noise produced at the pub may well be in breach of the existing regulations as administered by the EPA.

Whilst the regulations are in place for a reason, the pub has been there in one form or another for many years, so it seemed to me to be a concern for that small business and surrounding businesses that their ongoing practice could be restricted because of a new DA which was granted next door. Order of occupancy rules may well have helped to prevent the situation where the pub would have to alter its way of doing business, but also they would have served as a good information mechanism for future occupants of the apartment building next door, advising that, if they moved there, they would have to expect a certain level of noise and a certain level of activity, which is, in part, the attraction of living in that place anyway.

Order of occupancy rules are in place in other jurisdictions. They mean that noise and other issues are considered before approving new developments rather than after they are already built. Not only do order of occupancy rules prevent issues between different users but they also provide certainty. Certainty in planning would also be achieved if designated entertainment zones were established. If potential residents are aware that noise levels are likely to be higher in certain zones, they can make an informed decision about whether to live there or not. If they choose to live in an entertainment zone, they can expect access to more facilities but will have to accept slightly higher noise levels.

Indeed, it works the other way around as well. If a residential area has been established and an entertainment venue opens up nearby, as the original occupants the residents would have a fair case to say that the noise from the new establishment is not in keeping with the area.

As Mr Rattenbury flagged, there are some potential issues with order of occupancy legislation, and it may well restrict any evolution of various areas. But I believe they can be managed with an appropriate policy.

Acoustic insulation is a common-sense way to ensure that entertainment venues and residential properties can co-exist. If developers want to build properties close to entertainment areas, they could be encouraged to ensure that they are fit for purpose. There really is no excuse for poorly insulated properties. Quite frankly, I believe the market is doing a pretty good job of meeting this demand at present.

The risk of disturbance to residents of poorly insulated properties is high. Residents who are disturbed by noise are more likely to make complaints and, therefore, take more resources from the government, especially by way of the EPA. Builders should do what they can to minimise the impact of live music on residents, especially when that is the intended purpose of a development. I also note that reasonable noise attenuation should be provided by venues intending to host live music and community events, especially if they are in areas they share with residents.

The committee recommended a review of the Liquor Act to enable the commissioner to consider order of occupancy principles when investigating complaints in relation to a licence. As I have already stated, the order of occupancy principles provide certainty to both live music venues and nearby residents. Provisions in the Liquor Act should ensure that live community events are possible within reasonable limits.

In conclusion, I urge the government to get a wriggle on with this issue. They have had ample opportunity to develop a policy. I am disappointed that they have not taken on the advice that we provided in that committee inquiry. I hope the motion today provides the encouragement and necessary direction for the government to take this issue to the next level.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (11.57): I move:

Omit paragraph (2), substitute:

“(2) calls on the ACT Government to develop a policy and actions to support live events in our community, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including Music ACT in particular.”.

I think there is unanimity across all sides of this Assembly when it comes to the need to further strengthen our policy framework and response to the issue of supporting live music in the ACT. It is an important part of renewal and urban consolidation activity as we bring a range of uses into our centres and as we aim for that objective of having more vibrant 24-hour urban environments where there is activity both day and night. As we also aim for opportunities where people can live closer to where they work, where they can access commercial and retail activities, we have to manage the emerging conflicts that come with those changes and the fact that people are living in what were previously strictly commercial or retail zones, so I welcome the motion from Mr Rattenbury today.

I have moved an amendment. The purpose of the amendment is not to say this is not something that should be done, because the government agrees it should be done. Indeed, in the last couple of weeks I have had a very constructive meeting with MusicACT to talk about the development of an overarching live music policy for the city. But part (2) of Mr Rattenbury’s motion explicitly includes a number of matters that should be part of a live music policy. I think we need to have that discussion with MusicACT. As Mr Coe has indicated, there may be issues with the application of an order of precedence model in terms of occupancy, and we need to work through those issues before we say absolutely that it is applied uniformly or commonly.

A range of issues are at play that I believe need to be addressed, and they need to be addressed in consultation with the live music industry and with the broader entertainment industry, such as liquor licensees and others. We need to undertake that work. I have had consultations with MusicACT. They indicated to me that they were a little surprised that Mr Rattenbury was bringing this motion on today, but they welcome the opportunity for further engagement with the government, and that is certainly my intention.

The government has been taking steps as a result of the committee inquiry. The government has been looking at the issues of the application of the Environment Protection Act, in particular, the noise limit controls in the city centre and other major town centres. As part of that we have been undertaking what is effectively a noise-mapping exercise, noise monitoring and analysis, at these key areas. For example, we are examining the appropriateness of the current noise zone standards for town, group and local centres, including mixed use areas such as New Acton and the Kingston foreshore.

The EPA has commissioned acoustic specialists to undertake noise monitoring in a variety of locations. Whilst the final conclusions are not yet in, I can indicate to members that the initial assessments indicate that, for example, in the city centre there would appear to be good grounds to change the existing noise standards from the existing 10 pm cut-off to a midnight cut-off in terms of the standard for night noise. Recognising that loud music should be provided for in a more flexible manner than has been the case to date—which currently has a 10 pm cut-off—is an important early conclusion of that mapping work. The final bit of that acoustic mapping work will be completed in the coming months, and I expect to see a report from the EPA as a result. That will be an important input into this process.

Equally, the reforms the Chief Minister has announced in relation to Access Canberra present a very good opportunity to bring together all the different regulatory arms of government. The nub of the problem with responding effectively to the live music question and providing a supportive environment for it in the ACT is the silo approach around regulation, whether in relation to liquor, noise, public place permissions to use public spaces, planning controls and building controls. At the moment these are spread across a diversity of silos within government.

The establishment of Access Canberra gives us the opportunity to bring those policy and regulatory environments together and to work holistically towards an appropriate regulatory response that supports live music in our community and in our centres in a responsible and appropriate way which balances the needs of residents with the needs of the broader community when it comes to having a vibrant and active cultural life here in our city.

That is the way forward, and the government is committed to that. As the Minister for the Environment, with responsibility for noise, and also as the Attorney-General, with responsibility for liquor licensing, I am keen to see this work be built upon, and Access Canberra is an opportunity to do that.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (12.03): I thank Minister Rattenbury for bringing this topic to the Assembly this morning, and I take the opportunity from the outset to say I appreciate the spirit behind this motion and the desire to see more diversity and vibrancy in our city's public spaces. Live music and events are undoubtedly an integral part of cultural life in Canberra. We have a diverse musical culture and a history of providing very strong support for a range of live music events.

The government plays an important role in supporting live music, including providing support for a range of free live music performances across the city. Live music is a core part of our biggest community celebrations throughout the year, from New Year's Eve, Australia Day and Canberra Day, amongst others. In fact, this weekend will see one of our largest and most loved public events with music at its core kick off outside the front door of this very building. I am determined that Canberra meets its potential as a vibrant and social city and that it meets its potential as an innovative city.

My government has as its core priorities for this year support for jobs and innovation and urban renewal, and live music and events play an integral part in supporting this agenda. As we drive urban renewal and foster further vitality across Canberra, we also, as many have acknowledged, need to make sure we balance that desire against protecting local amenity. After all, it is a fact that most Canberra residents live in leafy garden suburbs that can and should remain quiet and tranquil places. At the same time, as our city grows into its skin, it is simply the case that there will be more going on, especially in the CBD and around town centres. It is also simply the case that more people will use our public places, and the more people who use those places the more noise will be created.

Regulations that control the hosting and performance of live music and events exist to ensure the safety and amenity of the whole community—public, patrons, staff, performers and venue operators. That is why event organisers are required to comply with a wide range of regulations in areas such as noise control, food service standards, liquor permits, workplace safety, road management and land use, if the event is of that scale. These controls are necessary protections, but the government recognises that they can be hard for event operators to negotiate and comply with, especially for those who are trying to start some new event or do something innovative. This is one of the reasons that one of my first acts as Chief Minister was to create Access Canberra.

Access Canberra brings together the full range of regulators that a live music event organiser would need to seek approval from, and I acknowledge it is a long list: Canberra Connect, building and utilities regulations, environment protection and water regulations, fair trading and registration, inspection and regulatory services, public health protection and food services, public unleased land regulations and WorkSafe ACT. Under the previous arrangements the event organiser would potentially be required to go around to those seven different areas to seek approvals. Now, through Access Canberra, we have a one-stop shop for businesses, community organisations, event organisers and individuals to interact with government. This means there is no wrong door for approaching ACT government. It means businesses will have more time to innovate, invest and grow whilst our regulators provide the appropriate protections for citizens and the community.

In the short time since I have announced Access Canberra, a range of exciting and innovative projects have been supported, and we are already talking with entrepreneurs, promoters and businesses on how we can undertake our regulatory functions even better. One small example: a Canberra business wanting to hold a spit roast in an outdoor dining area was having trouble satisfying the requirements of at

least three different regulators. Access Canberra streamlined the process and Canberrans got to enjoy an outdoor spit roast on Australia Day. Sometimes it is simple examples like this that show how important it is that we make it as simple as possible for small businesses in our city to do new things.

Access Canberra has also taken a lead role in coordinating the process for the running of the Art, Not Apart festival that will run from the New Acton precinct along the Acton beach and through to the new west side pop-up precinct from 14 March this year. Access Canberra will be the single point of contact for the organisers and will take a whole-of-government approach to the festival.

The difference between compliance and community happiness and fines and community distress can sometimes be as simple as turning the speakers in the right direction. That is why Access Canberra is taking a proactive approach to regulation. That is why Access Canberra is working with businesses and event managers to assist them to understand and comply with regulations and not just waiting to issue fines after the fact.

Whilst it still is early days for Access Canberra, I believe this commitment demonstrates that the government is genuinely interested in assisting event organisers, businesses, community organisations and individuals to hold innovative public events to bring vitality to our city but also to protect the amenity of our wonderful garden suburbs. I thank Mr Corbell for his amendment and again thank Minister Rattenbury for bringing this issue forward this morning.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Community Services, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Women and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Social Inclusion and Equality) (12.11): This motion, which I thank Mr Rattenbury for bringing to the Assembly today, taps into the emotional conversation that we are having all across the country, and not just in Canberra. It also speaks to what can be a changeable relationship between events venues and desirable places to live.

On the one hand, the atmosphere and excitement of live music and events can make some locations very sought after and they are very valuable. This is part of the story of New Acton. The Nishi building and surrounding development have received international acclaim for the cultural space which was built into the design and for the events which are held there—the Art, Not Apart festival, the forage and hustle and scout markets, which are already so popular that they have had to move from New Acton to the Fairbairn precinct, and live music in the courtyard, including Sunday jazz, which I believe Mr Rattenbury's motion makes reference to.

But on the other hand lies the element of those who—whether at certain times or as a blanket rule—object to the presence of community noise in their private space. There is no doubt that we all need peace and quiet at home. Some of us need it more than others. Unfortunately, some of the stories charting this issue over the years tend to be examples of where noise regulations, often tied to liquor licensing, have put a halt to events or venues, which has changed the atmosphere in those communities.

Like many people in Canberra, I grew up listening to live music. I went to venues to listen to bands like Midnight Oil, Australian Crawl, ACDC, the Divinyls, Living End and the Angels, and I could go on. These were bands that I enjoyed at venues in the ACT, not in big convention centres or sportsgrounds but at pubs and clubs and other small venues across the ACT. Tomorrow night, at the risk of being uncool and embarrassing my children, I will not be able to disguise that I will be starstruck by Justice Crew and the UK's Z-Star, who will be the headline acts leading the National Multicultural Festival.

We are really lucky in the ACT to be small enough to be so close to our idols but large enough to be able to attract both local and international artists. Former Midnight Oil frontman Peter Garrett launched Labor loves live music in 2012 in support of music venues in Melbourne. Because of this campaign, many small venues were saved. They are working on a good neighbour policy to help residents mediate between residents and live venues.

Canberra should be a place where high quality music performances can be enjoyed and where our children can learn to play and appreciate live music. There are places for our local bands to play, bands like Gravel Rash, a local regular at places like the Basement in Belconnen. We have our own amazing musicians that we need to celebrate who recently were in the top 100 of Triple J's hottest 100—Peking Duk at No 2 and No 5, and their song at No 5 *Take Me Over* included another ACT artist, SAFIA, at No 96.

For governments and regulators the challenge is to strike the balance in an urban environment which protects privacy but also nurtures community activity. I am a firm believer that live music continues to grow our city and make it a more vibrant entertainment culture. As Canberra's artistic community continues to flourish, striking this balance in a way which encourages participation in events is important.

As this community has evolved, it has done so in a decentralised way which reflects the layout of our city. The music venues in different town centres and in some residential areas include the Basement and the Pot Belly in Belconnen, the Lighthouse and the Ha Ha Bar at Emu Bank, the Front in Lyneham, the Greenroom in Woden, which sadly closed a few years ago, the Polish White Eagle Club in Turner, hopefully to reopen soon, and the Tuggeranong Youth Centre, home to many events for young Canberrans.

These are some of the gems of Canberra's community life and many were on show during the centenary party at the shops. They nurture creativity and participation. They showcase the talents of Canberrans and add to the livability we all value in this city.

If we take a look through the lens of social inclusion and equality, there are strong arguments that community events contribute to these goals. That is why it is important that the ACT government supports these venues and the events that they hold, and the development of new policy is a timely step to take.

In 2009 the review into live community events, which we have all talked about today, spelt out many of the issues and views in the community. A number of actions have been taken and have continued through, as my government colleagues have explained.

I believe a process moving towards a new policy should be guided by many elements, including planning and public amenity, economic development and the arts and, of course, social inclusion. We do not, after all, want to end up with a town like Bomont, with only Kevin Bacon to save us. Given such a wide scope, the government's amendment to this motion will facilitate the process. I commend the amended motion to the Assembly.

Amendment negatived.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (12.17): As is fairly self-explanatory, the two amendments that I will be moving together recognise the importance of identifying (2)(a), (b), (c) and (d). I have sympathy with Minister Corbell's view that there may be some technicalities or issues to consider when implementing those, so some wriggle room is required in order to get the best policy outcome. I seek to add a new (2)(e), which would require that the minister report back to this place by the end of this financial year. I seek leave to move my two amendments together.

Leave granted.

MR COE: I move:

- (1) In paragraph (2), omit "including but not limited to", substitute "with consideration of".
- (2) Add new paragraph (2)(e):

"(e) report back to the Assembly by the last sitting day in June 2015."

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (12.18): The government will support these two amendments. Mr Coe's first amendment is largely the same, or certainly achieves the same intent, as the amendment I circulated earlier. Recognising that we should not pre-empt the outcome of the policy process but instead highlight the issues that should be considered I think is the right way to go. We support that amendment because it is consistent with the objective I was seeking.

Secondly, in relation to the report-back proposal, I am very happy to support that, but on the basis and on the understanding that it is a report back on progress. Certainly the government can report back on progress by that time, but it is unlikely to be a fully informed and completed policy by that time, recognising the need for public consultation, cabinet consideration and so on. On that basis, I certainly have no objection to that amendment.

Amendments agreed to.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (12.19): I have a few brief remarks to close the debate. I thank members for the discussion today and the spirit in which it has been conducted. I am very happy to support Mr Coe's amendment. I think that he has found a way through, and I did want to highlight those particular issues. I accept the comments that Mr Corbell made around not necessarily predetermining the position because, as I flagged in my own speech, I think there are challenges in each of these areas. It is certainly not my intention to lock down a particular position but rather to highlight these particular points. We have some work to do to find the right balance between protecting the amenity of residents whilst at the same time promoting the vibrancy of our city.

It has been an enlightening discussion today. Ms Berry has very clearly defined her era with that list of bands and the reference to *Footloose*. It is an era that I can relate to, so I welcome those remarks. We have a serious job to get on with here, to make sure that people can have fun. That is what this is about—having fun, having a vibrant city where our young people want to stay and want to innovate. I think it is possible to find the right balance. I look forward to seeing the progress on some of these proposals and the discussion continuing in this place so that we can, collectively, find the right outcome for our city. I commend the amended motion to the Assembly.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Health, Ageing, Community and Social Services—Standing Committee

Statement by chair

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Health, Ageing, Community and Social Services for the Eighth Assembly relating to statutory appointments in accordance with continuing resolution 5A. Continuing resolution 5A was agreed to by the Legislative Assembly on 23 August 2012. The requirements of the resolution set out a transparency mechanism to promote accountability in the consideration of statutory appointments. The resolution requires relevant standing committees which consider statutory appointments to report on a six-monthly basis and present a schedule listing appointments considered during the applicable period. The schedule is required to include the statutory appointments considered and, for each appointment, the date the request from the responsible minister for consultation was received and the date the committee's feedback was provided.

For the applicable reporting period—1 July 2014 to 31 December 2014—the committee considered the proposed reappointment of four members to one statutory body. The committee has advised the minister it had no comment to make on the appointments proposed. I therefore table a schedule of statutory appointments for the period 1 July 2014 to 31 December 2014 as considered by the health, ageing, community and social services committee for the Eighth Assembly, in accordance with continuing resolution 5A. I present the following paper:

Health, Ageing, Community and Social Services—Standing Committee—
Schedule of Statutory Appointments—8th Assembly—Period 1 July to 31
December 2014.

Sitting suspended from 12.23 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Health Directorate—openness and transparency

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, on 6 June 2014 the Auditor-General published a damning report into the gastroenterology and hepatology unit—the GEHU—of the Canberra Hospital, which found, amongst other things, that the “governance of the GEHU is inadequate and that this compromises its ability to align its activities with the strategic direction of the Health Directorate”. The government has still made no response eight months later. On 22 January the Health Directorate released a staff survey report, under freedom of information, to the ABC, in which every page was blacked out. The quarterly health report for July to September 2014 has still not been released and the next quarterly report is now due. Minister, when will the government response to the Auditor-General’s report into the GEHU be released?

MR CORBELL: A final government response to the recommendations will not be provided until the Standing Committee on Public Accounts has indicated whether or not it intends to hold an inquiry into the Auditor-General’s report. That is consistent with the approach the government is adopting in relation to all Auditor-General’s reports.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, when will the Health Directorate July to September 2014 report be released?

MR CORBELL: That report was prepared for the purposes of the administration of the Health Directorate.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, when will the Health Directorate release its staff surveys?

MR CORBELL: Staff surveys are prepared for the purposes of the administration of the Health Directorate.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, are you still committed to open government within the Health Directorate?

MR CORBELL: Absolutely, very committed—committed even though we report on measures that we no longer get funding for from the federal government, despite that being a condition of signing up to new reporting arrangements. This administration has committed to continue to report on a broad range of measures. We even report on performance against measures for which the federal Liberal Party has withdrawn the contingent funding. So we remain very committed to that regular reporting framework.

Schools—safety

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Education and Training. It is reported today that a person attached to a community group visited an ACT school without a working with vulnerable people card. Regarding the safety of students, does responsibility lie with the school, the directorate or the community group to verify that such checks have been done before engaging with students?

MS BURCH: I do thank Ms Lawder for her question. The responsibility rests with the organisation or the volunteer group that is going into the school. Also there are very clear protocols and expectations from the schools, when they have people brought into the premises, about what the requirements are.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: As education minister, what was your involvement in facilitating the events reported by the *Canberra Times*? Did you give directions or guidance to your directorate or staff to facilitate visits by this person?

MS BURCH: The answer is no.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, did the directorate take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the students? Did you give directions or guidance to your directorate or staff to facilitate the visits by this person?

MS BURCH: I refer Mr Doszpot to the question just before. The answer was no.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, does the government have systemic failures regarding the implementation of the Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011?

Mr Corbell: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order, Mr Corbell.

Mr Corbell: The minister for education is not responsible for the operation of the working with vulnerable people checks act.

Mr Hanson: Within her directorate she is.

Mr Corbell: No, she is not. She is not responsible.

Mr Coe: On the point of order—

MADAM SPEAKER: Are you going to respond to the point of order, Mr Coe?

Mr Coe: Yes. The question that was asked was to the minister in her capacity as the minister for education, and the first question was with regard to verifying that “such checks have been done before engaging with students”. The minister did respond to that part of the question. So the supplementary which Mr Doszpot asked should be in order, given it goes to whether the school, which is within her directorate, complied with the act, which she has already in part answered.

Mr Corbell: I was going to suggest—

MADAM SPEAKER: Could I hear the question again, Mr Doszpot?

MR DOSZPOT: Does the government have systemic failures regarding the implementation of the working with vulnerable people act 2011?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot, I think that if you asked the question, “Does the government have that?” I would probably have to direct that to the minister responsible, but if you want to ask whether the directorate has—

Mr Corbell interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: There have been a range of questions about the education directorate. Are you asking about whether the education directorate has a problem? Would you like to rephrase the question?

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, does your directorate have systemic failures regarding the implementation of working with vulnerable people?

MS BURCH: There was a matter reported, but if the question is whether there are systematic failures with the education directorate, I would say no.

Planning—policy

DR BOURKE: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, why is it important that regulations and approvals always be improved, and what is the government doing to help?

MADAM SPEAKER: I am sorry, Dr Bourke, could you just repeat the question so that I can get the context of what might come afterwards? There is nothing wrong with the question. I do not think I heard it all.

DR BOURKE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Chief Minister, why is it important that regulations and approvals always be improved, and what is the government doing to help?

MR BARR: I thank Dr Bourke for the question. Undoubtedly, regulatory reform and reducing red tape is a whole-of-government priority, and it is an investment which creates a diverse and successful environment for local business and the community to thrive. Government regulation is important and it can deliver better outcomes for the community. As much as regulation can protect consumers, the environment and set industry standards, it can correct market failures.

However, no regulation is costless to government, to business or to the community. Good government means balancing a range of factors to deliver the most positive outcome. Often the most effective thing governments can do to achieve good social outcomes is to educate industry, community groups and citizens.

The effectiveness of a regulatory regime boils down to the practical ways, of course, that our regulators go about their business. Over time the risks and problems that government regulations address may change due to changes in technology, in industry structure or in innovation. For example, the government's recent announcement of an innovation review for the taxi industry is a prime example of the recognition of the impacts of technological change and moving to ensure that appropriate regulatory settings are in place.

This government listens to stakeholders. We continuously evaluate our regulations against the risks they are designed to address, to continuously reform our regulations and improve the performance of our regulators. Another example here is the government's regulatory reform panel, which brings together government and key stakeholders to work on a range of reform options. So this is a priority across government. I am determined that businesses, community groups and Canberra citizens have the smoothest possible regulatory experience. The establishment of Access Canberra is a clear demonstration of this commitment and a significant step towards a one-government regulatory experience.

The government delivered a range of regulatory and red tape reductions in 2014 through the economic stimulus package for the building and construction industry, through capital works procurement reforms and, of course, through the Red Tape Reduction Legislation Amendment Act 2014 that focused on a streamlined application process for outdoor dining on public unleased land, extended licence periods in a range of industries, removed unnecessary regulatory requirements for licensees relating to signage and removed a statutory declaration process when lodging deeds for powers of attorney registration.

The government will continue to pursue regulatory reforms over the 2015 calendar year and beyond.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Chief Minister, what is the government doing to help Canberrans, business and community groups get the streamlined government approvals they need?

MR BARR: Access Canberra is obviously the principal avenue now for business, community groups and individuals to access permits, approvals and licences. This is an important one-stop-shop service for Canberrans. It has been very well received. I note that already Access Canberra has had a number of interventions that have assisted organisations to achieve their goals, not least of which is to ensure that, where there are multi-site events where multiple areas of regulation overlap, Access Canberra has been able to work cooperatively with event organisers in order to ensure that events and activities go ahead.

We have also recently established a new online service that provides a one-stop shop for approvals for businesses applying for licences for outdoor eating. Access Canberra will provide more services and approvals online over time, making it even easier to access regulatory approval services for the ACT community.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, how do individuals, entrepreneurs, businesses and community groups benefit from streamlined access to permits, licences and approvals?

MR BARR: We do take health and safety regulation very seriously, and whether it is road safety work, food safety work or building safety it is important that rules are well understood and that standards are met. But through the no wrong door policy, Access Canberra can provide all of the advice that businesses, individual organisers and community groups need in one place.

A streamlined approach to access to approvals and information certainly will make life easier for anyone looking to host a new event or launch a new initiative in our city—an example here being someone who needs to register a business vehicle and apply for a security licence would have needed to go to two different places in order to get those regulatory approvals. There is now a one-stop shop in place. That will make it easier and simpler and a more effective form of regulation in the territory.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, what has Access Canberra already done to help ACT businesses and community groups?

MR BARR: Access Canberra is working with a variety of businesses to assist them with multiple approvals, permits and licences that they need to run their business or event. It is working on digital solutions to yield benefits for business and the community. Many services, such as motor vehicle registration, are already provided online, but we need to continue that process and have more and more services available online. Access Canberra will continue to work to help people, businesses and community groups take advantage of existing online services, make them easier to use and provide mobile options for use on smart phones and tablets so that interactions with government can happen on the go.

Hospitals—patient satisfaction

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Health. Last week the federal Productivity Commission released its annual report into the performance of health services in all Australian states and territories. Once again, the ACT had the overall worst patient satisfaction results anywhere in the country. On 12 ratings of satisfaction levels measured across emergency department visits and hospital admissions, Canberra patients were the country's most dissatisfied in 11 measures and second unhappiest in the 12th. Minister, why do we have the most unsatisfied patients in the country?

MR CORBELL: I thank the member for her question. What I would say is that these are factors difficult to measure, but what we do know is that one of the areas where we perform the best, which is directly related to issues of satisfaction, is in the area of the need to be readmitted following treatment in the hospital. We have the lowest level of readmission of any patient cohort in the country—

Mr Hanson: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order.

Mr Hanson: I know it is early days, but Mrs Jones's question was clearly about patient satisfaction, not about patient readmission rates. I would ask the minister to be directly relevant about the Productivity Commission's report, which said that we have the least satisfied patients in the country.

MADAM SPEAKER: Can we stop the clock, if you are going to continue to speak to the point of order, Dr Bourke?

Dr Bourke: On the point of order, Madam Speaker, the minister has been into his answer for only 15 to 20 seconds. I have already heard him say "patient satisfaction" on at least two occasions that I can recall. I think he is being relevant and I think he is being to the point.

MADAM SPEAKER: I will remind the minister that the standing orders do require him to be directly relevant. He did mention patient satisfaction but then went on to talk about readmission rates. I would ask him to come back to patient satisfaction as quickly as possible in the remaining three minutes.

MR CORBELL: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is important to make the point that the connection between patient satisfaction and whether or not people get quality care is an important one. One of the main ways that we measure quality of care is whether or not patients are readmitted, following their stay in hospital.

We have one of the lowest levels of readmission—indeed, the lowest level of readmission—of any state or territory in the country. These are complex matters, but when it comes quality of care I am absolutely satisfied that we are achieving some of the best outcomes in the country.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, what are you doing to address the chronic level of patient dissatisfaction in our hospital?

MR CORBELL: It was interesting to hear the President of the AMA on this question as well. The President of the AMA made some interesting observations which I think members opposite should reflect upon. Our hospital staff are very busy. They have demanding and at times difficult jobs, but they are providing a very high quality of care. That is reflected in the various measures reported on in the Productivity Commission report.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, I will ask the same question because you did not answer it last time. What are you doing to address the chronic levels of patient dissatisfaction in our hospital?

MR CORBELL: I could highlight a very broad range of things that I, on behalf of the government, am doing in relation to improving health services. If satisfaction is driven by improvements in health services, let us look at the extra beds that are going into the emergency department.

Mr Hanson: If it is driven by that then you are failing.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson! You have asked the question; let us hear the answer.

MR CORBELL: Let us look at the fact that we have the lowest level of elective surgery waiting since 2004. Let us look at the fact that for the last two years waiting times in the emergency departments have improved. Let us look at the fact that we have some of the best public dental health outcomes in the country. Let us look at the fact that we have the lowest level of readmission in the country.

If a measure of patient satisfaction and what steps I am taking to address it are directly linked to the investment we are making in public health services, it is very clear that we are making that investment. And that stands in marked contrast to the Liberal Party that simply want to ask people to pay more for their health services. That is the Liberal Party's response on health: ask people to pay more to go and see a doctor. It is no wonder that public health patients are deeply dissatisfied with the Liberal Party.

Mr Smyth: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order, Mr Smyth.

Mr Smyth: Under standing order 118(a) the answer must be concise and directly relevant to the subject matter. The minister has not addressed the levels of dissatisfaction, and I ask you to bring him to order.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think the minister might have finished.

Mr Corbell: I have.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, does the toxic culture at the Canberra Hospital, from reports we have seen such as the obstetrics report, contribute to the never-ending levels of patient dissatisfaction?

MR CORBELL: There we have it again—the shadow minister for health degrading and talking down the efforts of people in the Canberra Hospital. Now, I think for the first time, we have the shadow health minister saying there is a toxic culture in every part of Canberra Hospital. What a disgrace. What an absolute disgrace. What an insult. What an insult to all the hardworking medical, nursing and other health professionals in the hospital.

Mr Hanson: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order. Can we stop the clock.

Mr Hanson: I asked the minister if the toxic culture contributes to the level of patient dissatisfaction. I ask him for a clear and concise answer, not necessarily vitriol.

MADAM SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. That is a debating point, Mr Hanson.

Mr Hanson: It is clearly on relevance.

MR CORBELL: Clearly, Madam Speaker, Mr Hanson has made a very serious allegation. He has said that at the Canberra Hospital, no matter where you go, it is a toxic culture. I reject that. I know that doctors, nurses and all the other hardworking health staff in our hospitals reject it. It just shows that this Leader of the Opposition, this grubby little Leader of the Opposition—

MADAM SPEAKER: Withdraw that, please, Mr Corbell.

MR CORBELL: I withdraw.

Opposition member interjecting—

MR CORBELL: He will do anything, anything, to advance his political interests at the expense of the hard work and reputation of the staff of Canberra Hospital.

Ms Berry: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order. Stop the clock. Sit down, Mr Corbell.

Ms Berry: Madam Speaker, I just heard a member from the opposition refer to the minister as “toxic Simon”. I ask for your ruling on whether or not that is an appropriate way to address the minister, even in debate.

MADAM SPEAKER: Did somebody use the expression?

Mr Hanson: It was not me, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: If somebody used the expression, I would ask you to withdraw. I did not hear it, but if Ms Berry heard it—

Ms Berry: Madam Speaker, I ask that you check the tapes after this.

MADAM SPEAKER: I am happy to check the tape, but it would save a whole lot of effort, if somebody did use it, to withdraw.

Mr Coe: I am not sure I used the term that Ms Berry said, but I certainly referred to “toxic” on many occasions, and “hazardous material”. If any of those are indeed unparliamentary then I withdraw.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think that might have resolved it. Thank you, Ms Berry. Do you have anything else—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Wait, Mr Hanson. Can you just wait a second. Mr Corbell, do you have anything else to say in answer to the question?

MR CORBELL: I have concluded my answer; thank you.

Transport—light rail

MR COE: Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister for Capital Metro. Minister, how much will it cost to extend light rail to Russell?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Coe for his question. The government have undertaken a range of analysis to come to the conclusion that we do believe there is value in testing the market delivery price for the extension of light rail from the city to Russell as part of the request for proposal stage. The government have taken the decision, as we have consistently in relation to the competitive process we are about to embark upon, that we are not going to precondition the market; we are not going to say to them, “This is how much we are prepared to pay. You tell us what your price is.” We will test the market through the RFP process, then make an assessment about the affordability of that option and determine whether or not it should be proceeded with as part of stage 1.

What we do know is that there is significant potential in this route extension as part of stage 1. There are 8,000 public servants in the Russell defence area. Connecting them

through to the city through a regular light rail service would a great boon for retailers and other operators and business owners in the city centre. It has been very strongly welcomed by city traders and retailers. They understand the potential of that connection proceeding. It has been well received by the management of the defence department. It has been well received by other government offices along the route, such as ASIO. They understand the significant benefits it will bring for their employees. We welcome that engagement and we will be testing the market, through the RFP process, to determine its affordability and whether or not it should be included in stage 1.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, if you do not want to pre-empt the market, why did you release the \$610 million and \$173 million figures?

MR CORBELL: We did that as part of the development of a detailed business case to determine to proceed with Alinga Street through to Hibberson Street in Gungahlin. We have not yet determined to proceed from Civic to Russell. We have said we will investigate it further and consider its affordability. Once we see the pricing from the market, we will complete the business case analysis and determine whether or not we should proceed.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, will a business case be produced for any possible extension to Russell? If not, why not; and if yes, when will it be publicly available?

MR CORBELL: Mr Wall should have listened to my earlier answer because I just provided him with that information.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, would an extension to Russell increase the annual availability payments required to be paid by the government to a private consortium?

MR CORBELL: That will be determined through the competitive process.

Health—bush healing farm

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. Minister, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body was established under the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Act 2008 with an aim to represent the interests of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Given the charter of the elected body, can you explain why the Chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body was not informed about the asbestos contamination at the site of the bush healing farm?

MR CORBELL: Madam Speaker, I am responsible for matters involving the Ngunnawal bush healing farm; it is an ACT Health project. I will take the question.

Mr Wall: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

MR CORBELL: There is no point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Corbell, I will determine whether there is a point of order. Mr Wall.

Mr Wall: I seek your guidance, Madam Speaker. The question related directly to the briefing of the chair of the elected body. I seek your guidance on whether that responsibility falls under the department of health or whether that responsibility lies with the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, given that they are a statutory officer.

MADAM SPEAKER: Even if they are statutory officers, there would be interaction between multiple government agencies. If the Minister for Health says that he is the minister responsible for matters relating to the bush healing farm, I think it is reasonable that he should answer the question.

MR CORBELL: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The chair of the elected body was not directly advised, but, as I have previously placed on the record, two other members of the elected body were. Indeed, two other members of the elected body—that is, the previous elected body, the elected body at the time—were members of the Indigenous advisory panel for this project. They were directly advised of the circumstances in relation to asbestos. Indeed, one of those Indigenous elected body members is a member of the tender review panel for the works to be undertaken at the bush healing farm, including the asbestos remediation task. Any suggestion that there has not been proper consultation with the elected body representatives or, indeed, with the Indigenous community more broadly, is false.

Mr Wall: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Stop the clock, please.

Mr Wall: On relevance, the question was why the Chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body had not been informed. If the minister could be relevant and explain why the chair was not informed, that would be appreciated.

MADAM SPEAKER: It is quite clear in my notes that Mr Wall asked that question. Could you come to Mr Wall's question, which is: why the chair was not briefed.

MR CORBELL: I am, Madam Speaker, thank you. I am explaining why it was not necessary to consult with Mr Little: because we were consulting other members of the elected body. We have a dedicated Indigenous consultative forum that is established to develop the project that includes members of the elected body, Indigenous health service providers in the ACT and other representatives of the Indigenous community in the ACT. We have a specific consultative forum to manage the project and to consult with the Indigenous community. It includes members of the elected body. It does not include Mr Little, but we are clearly engaged with a broad representative number of people from the Indigenous community here in the ACT.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, when was the elected body last briefed on the issue of asbestos at the bush healing farm site?

MR CORBELL: I would have to seek some further advice on particulars. But what I can say in general terms is that, following Mr Little's concerns being raised publicly, he was directly briefed. Also, the context around the consultative arrangements that are in place was outlined to him, to assist him with understanding how the Health Directorate is continuing, and has been from day one, to engage with a broad range of representatives of the Indigenous community here in the ACT as we progress this very important project for the Indigenous community.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, are you concerned that the presence of asbestos and potential restrictions on the use of the site could restrict the feeling of connection to country by future users?

MR CORBELL: No such concerns have been raised with me.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Has the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs been briefed about asbestos contamination at the site?

MR CORBELL: The project is the responsibility of the ACT Health Directorate. I am the responsible minister for the Health Directorate. Any such briefings are made to me as the responsible minister.

Mr Coe: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Coe.

Mr Coe: The question was not: who is responsible? The question was: has the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs been briefed on this issue?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Corbell, on the—

MR CORBELL: Again, I refer Mr Coe to my earlier answer.

Roads—congestion

MS FITZHARRIS: My question is to the Minister for Roads and Parking. Minister, can you outline how the government is reducing congestion across the territory?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Fitzharris for her question. Integrated transport and land use planning is critical in servicing the ACT population and reducing congestion

across the ACT. The government's transport for Canberra policy commits us to increasing the number of people choosing to walk, cycle or use public transport. This is an important part of managing congestion in the ACT. In fact, transport for Canberra showed that without encouraging higher usage of public transport, bikes or our feet, congestion in the ACT would be on track to double by 2031.

This is why the government has delivered over \$100 million of public and active transport infrastructure since 2012, including busways and bus priority measures between Belconnen and the city and Canberra Avenue; a network of new park and ride and bike and ride facilities; the NXTBUS real-time passenger information system; an expansion of the on- and off-road cycling options, including the Civic cycle loop and Bunda Street shared space; and the upgrade to cycle facilities along Constitution Avenue, which is ongoing.

It is important also to manage and optimise our road network. The Environment and Planning Directorate maintains a strategic transport model that simulates traffic during the morning peak hour period to inform land use planning and transport policy assessments.

The transport model utilises land use data collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, including the travel to work data, to identify and model current traffic flows across the territory. It also considers predictions of land use such as population, employment, retail space, enrolments, transport costs and the likely future road, public transport and shared path networks arising from strategic plans, master plans and land release programs. This allows the transport model to predict future increases in traffic flows across the territory and identify potential traffic issues or bottlenecks before they happen.

Once future issues such as the potential for traffic congestion have been identified, they are reported to Roads ACT, who are responsible for delivering augmentation improvements to the road network. Roads ACT are responsible for the investigation of these future potential issues and the identification of suitable solutions. The investigation process includes the basic design of treatment options, which are passed through the traffic model to gauge which is the most cost-effective and preferred option. This process also clarifies the need for the improvement, including the timing of the improvement.

Through this process a number of road projects across the territory have already been considered for future improvements. Feasibility studies have been undertaken on Gundaroo Drive, from Mirrabai Drive to the William Slim-Barton Highway roundabout; the Hindmarsh Drive-Launceston Street-Eggleston Crescent intersection augmentation; and the Belconnen Way-Springvale Drive intersection augmentation.

Future feasibility studies are proposed for a number of other road improvements. They include Horse Park Drive, from Mulligans Flat to the Federal Highway; William Hovell Drive, from Drake Brockman Drive to Coulter Drive; and Pialligo Avenue, from Canberra Airport to the ACT border. Information arising from the studies is used to inform the ACT government of what funding is required and when, in order to provide these improvements "just in time".

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, how will these upgrades to Constitution Avenue that you mentioned benefit inner city workers?

MR GENTLEMAN: The upgrade project for Constitution Avenue will deliver staged transport improvements along the road corridor in the Civic section, and they include a dedicated bus lane in each direction, a separated cycle path, improved pedestrian facilities, a new central median planted with trees and a cross-section that has been designed to allow future light rail. With the upgrade works, public transport commuter travel times along the route will improve through the provision of a dedicated public transport lane.

The dedicated bike path along the length of Constitution Avenue will link directly with the Civic cycle loop, providing improved facilities for commuting cyclists travelling along this route. This will be an important route for many cyclists and will not only work towards making the commute for inner city workers easier but help to achieve active transport and healthy weight initiatives in the territory.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, can you please update the Assembly on progress on the construction of the Majura parkway and how this will benefit the community upon its completion?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Dr Bourke for his question. The construction of the Majura parkway commenced, as we know, in February 2013. The continuing construction works for the project are expected to be completed by June next year. These construction works are currently focused at the northern end transition between the Federal Highway and Horse Park Drive and at the southern end to progress construction of the Molonglo River and Fairbairn Avenue bridges and associated roadworks along the Monaro Highway, Morshead Drive, Pialligo and Fairbairn Avenue.

The 11.5-kilometre Majura parkway project will connect the Monaro Highway with the Federal Highway and has been included in the Australian Capital Territory plans since the 70s. From a national perspective, it will improve an important freight route linking national and regional roads such as the Barton Highway and Monaro Highway.

From a regional perspective, the project will provide better access to the Canberra Airport, provide a transport hub for the region and add to the capacity of the main road network. From a local perspective, the parkway will provide additional capacity to the arterial road network and improve access to and from Gungahlin to the rest of Canberra.

The ACT government and the federal government have agreed to a shared fifty-fifty funding arrangement to progress the \$288 million construction of the Majura parkway. This is a large and important investment for the ACT and surrounding regions.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, how is the government addressing the traffic congestion situation at the intersection of Gundaroo Drive and the Barton Highway?

MR GENTLEMAN: The ACT government agreed last year to fund a \$10 million improvement to the roundabout at the junction of Gundaroo Drive, the Barton Highway and William Slim Drive. The aim of the upgrade of the Barton Highway roundabout is to improve the capacity of this intersection through the signalisation of the existing roundabout formation at the intersection.

The intersection upgrade is planned in association with an upgrade of William Slim Drive from the south and Gundaroo Drive from the north to improve the level of service of this intersection notably for all commuters through peak periods, catering for increased residential development north of the Barton Highway.

Some of the key features of the works are: traffic signals on the approaches to the roundabout to control balance flows of traffic onto the roundabout, allowing it to operate more efficiently; the provision of three traffic lanes on all of the approaches and through the roundabout; bus lanes on William Slim Drive and Gundaroo Drive; the provision of on-road cycle lanes on all movements, except on the Barton Highway southbound, approaching the intersection; construction of a new shared path bridge; and a bus lane located on the kerbside lane, set back from the traffic signal on William Slim Drive and Gundaroo approaches, with a raised median island between the general traffic and bus dedicated lanes. A temporary tie-in to the existing single carriageway approaches will also occur on both William Slim Drive and Gundaroo Drive.

It is expected that construction will begin in June of this year and will be completed by mid-2016. The signalisation and the additional localised lane improvements will provide more efficient movement through the congested intersection. I am sure that commuters in Gungahlin and those coming into Canberra will be really excited to see these changes come through. This will reduce travel time, especially during the am and pm peak periods. *(Time expired.)*

Convention centre—cost

MR SMYTH: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, your press release of Monday, 9 February 2015 stated:

The \$500-\$700 million project will provide Canberra with an iconic Convention Centre.

Chief Minister, who determined this cost range for the convention centre project? Was it (a) the architects, (b) the judging panel, (c) the department or (d) your office?

MR BARR: I received a range of advice from those who were involved in the development of the project. For those who are familiar with construction costs, the earlier business cases that had been developed for the projected indicated, at a

minimum, in 2014 dollars, about \$450 million. An appropriate escalator for a base design gave a range of between \$500 million and \$700 million, depending of course on the quality of inclusions, the nature of the construction, whether or not you include the value of the land. That was why a range was put on the particular project. Of course it would vary, as I indicated, depending on the nature of the final construction. The advice came from all of those sources.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Chief Minister, what are the assumptions used in calculating this cost range?

MR BARR: I just referred to those.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, what are the next steps in relation to this project?

MR BARR: The next steps are for the now appointed architecture firm to work with stakeholders, particularly the economic development part of the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, together with the major projects area, to move to the next phase of investment-ready status for the project. I need to be clear here, as I was in the media, that the ACT government will not be fully funding this project, and it has never been our intention to fully fund the convention centre. It will always require commonwealth government support and/or private sector support. Preferably, tripartite funding would certainly make the project a more realistic proposition in the shorter term. But the reality for this project is that without significant federal government funding assistance it will not happen.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Chief Minister, will you table the documents that support your costing of this project?

MR BARR: I provided that advice to the Assembly in my earlier answer.

Business—investment

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Minister for Economic Development. Minister, the half-yearly performance report for the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate reported a 543 per cent year-to-date variance for investment facilitation leads. However, the measure qualified that leads are mere entities that expressed an interest to invest in the ACT. What is regarded as a lead, and how many of the reported 45 such leads facilitated led to tangible investment deals?

MR BARR: Leads involve expressions of interest in investing in the ACT in a variety of different industry sectors, with a variety of different potential levels of investment and outcomes. The Invest Canberra area will, of course, report in the annual report of the directorate in relation to all of the performance measures that it is required to meet.

There have been, of course, some tangible outcomes for the city in recent times, with a new investor acquiring the Canberra casino, for example, and making a commitment for long-term sponsorship of the Brumbies as part of a longer term commitment to Canberra. We have also seen investors out of South-East Asia recently participate in a number of ACT government land auctions and acquire land. The Campbell 5 development is another example there.

There are opportunities in the future for new investors from a variety of different locations nationally and internationally to invest in Canberra. We will continue to seek that investment.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, what is the value of all of these deals?

MR BARR: Measured in revenue to the ACT government or in overall economic impact, these would differ, depending on the nature of the investment and whether the investor was purchasing land from the government or, in the instance of the casino acquisition, for example, purchasing off another private owner. I am also aware that, through our cuts to the top rate of commercial stamp duty, a number of significant privately owned commercial properties in the territory have changed hands and that has led to significant new investment in the territory economy as well as revenue to the government.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, does the government count completion of preliminary Austrade requests for market information as a lead?

MR BARR: I will need to take that detail on notice. I will observe, though, that we do work closely with Austrade and, indeed, we have participated in a number of—for want of a better description—“team Australia” approaches to international markets, in particular investment segments that are relevant to the territory. We will, of course, continue to take the opportunities that our partnerships with the national government and, indeed, with other states and territories can provide the ACT.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, are leads qualified only when a potential investor visits the ACT and has conducted meetings facilitated by Invest Canberra?

MR BARR: Physical attendance in the ACT I do not believe would be necessary. I think it is possible to communicate with potential investors using means other than physically having to come to the territory; they are able to communicate with the Invest Canberra team through other means. So I would expect that you could reasonably conclude that discussions with investors can take place other than face to face.

Health—dental

MS PORTER: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, can you please inform the Assembly of how dental health in the ACT is progressing?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Porter for her question. Recent figures demonstrate the achievement of an impressive reduction, I have to report, in waiting times for dental care in the ACT. From 2008 waiting times to access services have been on the increase, with the waiting time to access treatment being recorded at 11 months. This increase was due to both an increase in demand and some workforce shortages. However, I am pleased to advise members that, as of 30 June last year, the dental health program had removed 4,107 clients from the restorative waiting list during 2013-14. This is an increase of over 1,000 clients when compared to the previous financial year.

I can also advise members that year-to-date figures as at December 2014 reflect that 1,969 patients were removed from the waiting list in the last six months of that period. The dental health program means the waiting time, year to date, as at 30 June last year, was 4.82 months, which was facilitated by an increase in the number of recruited dentists internally and an additional number of private dentists participating in the restorative referral scheme.

Since January 2013 the dental health program has employed four additional dentists, two oral health therapists, eight dental assistants, one prosthodontist and two administration staff. These have all increased the capacity for clients to be seen and treated.

Each month, I am pleased to advise, the team at the dental health program review the waiting list and financial statements in order to assess how many clients from the list can be treated within the coming four-week period. All clients who will not achieve access to treatment within that time frame are then targeted for referral to the private sector. We have been able to increase the number of individual agreements we have with private dentists. This is making a big difference; we have seen 931 clients referred to private dentists who have subsequently been removed from the waiting list for general dentistry.

These are great outcomes. Oral health is very important. Access to quality dental care is critical, particularly if you are on a low income. These reforms are greatly improving access to public dental services here in the ACT.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, can you please explain to the Assembly what progress has been made in terms of the 2012 ACT Labor election promise to commission and operate a mobile dental clinic?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Porter for her question. As part of our election commitments Labor did commit to commission and operate a mobile dental clinic to

service residential aged-care facilities in Canberra. The aim would be to ensure that residents are no longer required to rely on either family members or costly transport options in order to receive appropriate dental treatment. It would also enable those patients who are bedridden, who were previously restricted to accessing only emergency treatment, to have a regular oral health treatment regime.

To deliver on this commitment, capital funds of \$600,000 have been provided to the dental health program to procure a mobile dental clinic and a quarter of a million dollars per annum has been committed to operate the clinic for a four-year period.

The mobile dental clinic has recently been introduced to the community. It is collaborating with the Salvation Army, Communities@Work and a private dentist to deliver dental treatment to clients referred by the Salvos. This service will also support those who are unable to travel away from nursing homes to seek treatment.

I am very pleased to see this service well and truly underway. People on low incomes, people in nursing homes and the elderly who are confined to their own homes find it difficult to get quality dental care. This is helping them. It is another great example of how Labor reaches out to provide quality health care for those who need it most and does not seek to put obstacles in the way of that care, such as asking people to pay more to go to the doctor.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, of the 931 people who were removed from the list and referred to the private sector, how many have actually received treatment?

MR CORBELL: All clients who were referred to private dentists have received treatment.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, how do these dental health services help to meet the unique dental requirements of the elderly community in the ACT?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Fitzharris for her supplementary. We know that, with the greater level of research now being undertaken into oral health, the importance of oral health in the elderly is being highlighted as an area of concern.

Poor oral health can have an impact on, and be an indicator of, other medical factors. For example, poor oral health has been linked to increased risk of cardiovascular disease. Oral carcinoma is another identified area of concern and is one of the target areas for the national oral health plan.

Dental diseases are amongst the most preventable of all human illnesses. There is an increasing trend in dental disease and dental decay. About 80 per cent of nursing home patients do not have regular dental care of any sort. Older people living in residential care, including those with dementia, have particular oral health problems, including declining physical function, difficulty in swallowing and nutritional

problems. We know that these types of oral diseases can lead to pain, to speech problems and to discomfort with eating and swallowing. Demand continues to grow as our population ages, with more people waiting for dentures and more people becoming denture wearers over the next 10 years. As I mentioned in my earlier answer, if you have mobility challenges as an elderly person, getting access to comprehensive dental care can be difficult.

That is why our investment in services like the mobile dental clinic is so important, to maintain good health care not just for a person's oral health but for their overall health and wellbeing. It is just so critical for those vulnerable people in our community.

Mr Barr: I ask that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.

Supplementary answers to questions without notice

Childcare—centres

MR GENTLEMAN: Yesterday in question time Mr Coe asked two questions regarding a development application for a childcare centre in Harrington Circuit in Kambah. In reply to his questions I can confirm, firstly, that the development application for the childcare facility on Harrington Circuit in Kambah seeks approval to operate the development as a stand-alone childcare centre and not a home business. Secondly, anyone interested in purchasing land located in commercial and community zones in Kambah can contact the Land Development Agency for available unleased land in Kambah in these zones.

Health—bush healing farm

MR CORBELL: Members opposite asked me in question time today when was the last time the elected body was briefed on the issue of the Ngunnawal bush healing farm. I can advise members that, in addition to the consultations I mentioned in my earlier answers, there was a full briefing of the elected body on site at the Ngunnawal bush healing farm on Tuesday, 3 February. The chair of the elected body was present, as were other members.

Territory and municipal services—mowing

Environment—Mugga Lane tip

MR RATTENBURY: I was asked earlier this week a number of questions by a number of members of the Liberal Party regarding mowing. Mr Coe asked:

... did the contractor fulfil all the requirements of their previous contract with the ACT government?

I have been advised by TAMS that the contractor has met its contractual obligations under its current mowing contract. In relation to its earlier contract, I am advised that there was a non-conforming issue relating to completion of mowing within agreed time frames. Citywide subsequently withdrew from the contract.

Mr Coe also asked me to provide information “about all the contracts awarded to Citywide, including the dates, the scope of work and the amounts of those contracts, and any variations”. This information can be found on the Shared Services procurement website by typing “mowing” in the search function.

Mrs Jones asked me:

... how often are mowing contractors other than the successful tenderer in this case—Citywide—being called upon to complete the mowing of arterial roads?
What is the hourly rate paid for this work?

The answer is that TAMS does not generally use hourly rate contractors. TAMS uses contractors under a standing government contract that has been market tested through a previous tender process. A fixed-price quotation is sought when required for the provision of one-off mowing services.

I am advised by TAMS that additional mowing contractors are called upon to complete mowing of arterial roads on an as-needed basis. Additional mowing contractors are called on depending on the weather and the growth of grass. For example, in the last two months there has been a lot of rain and cooler weather, so TAMS has needed to undertake extra mowing and has called in extra contractors. I was then asked whether ACT contractors did this work, and the answer is yes.

Finally, Mr Wall asked:

... what is the dollar value of the contract awarded to Citywide for the dryland mowing of arterial roads in the ACT?

That information is also on the Shared Services procurement website.

Yesterday I was asked by Mr Wall:

... what suburbs were notified about the potential effects of the work at the tip and in what formats did this notification take place?

The answer is that the opportunity to undertake the re-profiling work at Mugga Lane, which would create extra landfill space, became evident within a limited time frame and was commenced at short notice. This facilitated the closing of the emergency landfill at west Belconnen. The media release was issued on 12 December 2014 to announce the works and then again on 6 February 2015 to announce the completion of the works. For any public queries, information was provided to Canberra Connect throughout the whole process. ACT NOWaste provided responses to every resident who contacted them about the odour and spoke with them. My office and TAMS also briefed Mr Wall’s colleague Ms Lawder about this issue on 23 January 2015.

Papers

Mr Barr presented the following papers:

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

Long-term contracts:

Andrew Stark, dated 27 November 2014.
David Pryce, dated 7 January 2015.
Katrina Giudice, dated 21 November 2014.
Philip Kellow, dated 23 December 2014.
Phillip Perram, dated 16 December 2014.
Trevor Vivian, dated 9 January 2015.
Virginia Hayward, dated 2 December 2014.

Short-term contracts:

Ann Lyons Wright, dated 3 and 4 December 2014.
Anne Glover, dated 19 and 20 November 2014.
Brett Phillips, dated 21 and 22 January 2015.
Christopher Reynolds, dated 5 January 2015.
Clint Peters, dated 25 November and 1 December 2014.
Conrad Barr, dated 2 December 2014.
David Collett, dated 13 January 2015.
David Middlemiss, dated 19 and 22 December 2014.
Geoffrey Rutledge, dated 15 and 16 December 2014.
Goran Josipovic, dated 5 December 2014.
Grant Kennealy, dated 19 and 20 November 2014.
Jacinta Evans, dated 14 and 24 November 2014.
Jacinta George, dated 8 and 9 January 2015.
Karen Faichney, dated 5 and 6 January 2015.
Kim Barton, dated 19 and 22 December 2014.
Maureen Sheehan, dated 15 and 16 December 2014.
Maureen Sheehan, dated 19 and 22 January 2015.
Michael Edwards, dated 24 December 2014 and 5 January 2015.
Michelle Callen, dated 14 and 18 November 2014.
Nicole Pulford, dated 16 and 17 December 2014.
Robert Hyland, dated 16 and 20 January 2015.
Sandra Jill Divorty, dated 15 and 16 January 2015.
Savvas Pertsinidis, dated 11 and 24 November 2014.
Shane Kay, dated 13 and 18 November 2014.
Tracey Allen, dated 10 and 12 December 2014.
Veronica Croome, dated 24 December 2014 and 5 January 2015.

Contract variations:

Andrew Baker, dated 5 and 6 January 2015.

Andrew Parkinson, dated 12 December 2014.

Anne Ellis, dated 13 and 16 December 2014.

Anne Glover, dated 24 December 2014 and 5 January 2015.

Christopher Wilson, dated 14 and 18 January 2015.

David Peffer, dated 12 December 2014.

David Peffer, dated 23 December 2014.

David Snowden, dated 17 and 23 December 2014.

Elizabeth Beattie, dated 22 and 23 December 2014.

Glenn Bain, dated 19 and 22 December 2014.

Jon Quiggin, dated 17 and 23 December 2014.

Judianne Childs, dated 19 December 2014 and 5 January 2015.

Karen Faichney, dated 5 and 6 January 2015.

Karl Alderson, dated 23 and 24 December 2014.

Kate Starick, dated 2 and 7 January 2015.

Katrina Giudice, dated 10 and 12 December 2014.

Maureen Sheehan, dated 5 January 2015.

Melanie Saballa, dated 2 and 3 December 2014.

Michael Trushell, dated 15 and 16 January 2015.

Shane Kay, dated 20 January 2015.

Somasunderam Jeyendren, dated 11 and 12 December 2014.

Susan Hall, dated 20 and 22 January 2015.

Therese Gehrig, dated 23 December 2014.

Timothy Norris, dated 10 and 12 December 2014.

Trevor Vivian, dated 11 and 12 December 2014.

Financial Management Act—consolidated financial report Paper and statement by minister

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 26—Consolidated Financial Report—Financial quarter ending 31 December 2014.

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

Leave granted.

MR BARR: Madam Speaker, I present to the Assembly the December quarter 2014 consolidated financial report for the territory, a requirement of section 26 of the Financial Management Act.

The December quarter headline net operating balance for the general government sector was a deficit of \$62.7 million. This result was \$17 million higher than the year to date budget deficit of \$45.7 million. Total revenue for the general government sector for the quarter to December 2014 was \$2,357.5 million. This is \$3.7 million higher than the December year to date budget.

Major increases in total revenue included higher than expected sales of goods and services revenue of \$24.2 million, mainly due to higher than budgeted sales of land rent blocks; higher than anticipated commonwealth grants of \$22.1 million, mainly due to the timing of payments of GST and an increase in healthcare grants associated with higher activity funding; and higher dividends and income tax equivalents income of \$10.8 million from the public trading enterprise sector.

These increases were largely offset by lower than expected gains from contributed assets of \$0.6 million associated with the timing of the transfer of assets from the Land Development Agency and external developers.

Total expenses of \$2,468.1 million were \$19.7 million higher than the December year to date budget. Major increases in total expenses include higher other operating expenses of \$29.9 million, of which \$18.8 million is due to higher than budgeted sales of land rent blocks; and higher grants and purchased services of \$20.8 million, mainly due to the timing of insurance and Comcare payments for ACTION, Calvary Hospital and Clare Holland House.

These increases were partially offset by lower supplies and services expenses of \$31.8 million, which mainly reflects the timing of project payments as procurement processes are completed and other project delays. The general government sector balance sheet remains strong, represented by key indicators such as net financial liabilities and net worth.

I commend the December quarterly report to the Assembly.

Youth Justice Ministerial statement

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Planning, Minister for Roads and Parking, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations, Minister for Children and Young People and Minister for Ageing) (3.34), by leave: As the Minister for Children and Young People, I present the following paper:

Youth justice—Ministerial statement, 12 February 2015.

I thank the Assembly for the opportunity to speak today about the ongoing achievements occurring across the youth justice system. As members would be aware,

youth justice in the ACT is guided by the blueprint for youth justice in the ACT 2012-22. The blueprint is a 10-year plan to guide the way government and the community respond to children and young people who come into contact with the youth justice system in the ACT.

The long-term goal of the blueprint is to address the underlying causes of youth crime through early intervention, prevention and diversion strategies. The second annual progress report for the blueprint was released today. I am pleased to inform the Assembly of the great results being achieved across the youth justice system, as highlighted in this report. We are seeing real results across the youth justice continuum—from a reduction in the number of young people being apprehended by police, to a reduction in the number of young people receiving supervision orders, including time in detention.

Some of the major achievements that I would like to share with the Assembly today include a four per cent decrease, from 2012-13 to 2013-14, in the number of young people apprehended by ACT Policing; a seven per cent decrease, from 2012-13 to 2013-14, in the amount of time young people spent in detention; an 11 per cent decrease, from 2011-12 to 2012-13, in the number of young people under youth justice supervision; and a 24 per cent decrease, from 2011-12 to 2012-13, in the number of young people in detention. This is a trend that I am pleased to say we are continuing to see.

The over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the youth justice system continues to be an area of challenge. However, the latest annual progress report demonstrates that key actions under the blueprint to address this issue are having a positive impact and are making a difference in the lives of young people.

A snapshot of the data from 2011-12 to 2012-13 shows that the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people under supervision has reduced by nine per cent. The rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people under supervision on an average day has reduced by 33 per cent and the average length of time spent under supervision has reduced by 19 per cent for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

The 2015 report on government services released in late January confirms that the major reforms we are undertaking in the youth justice system in the ACT are working and supports what we know from the blueprint annual progress report. The report shows that nationally we are travelling well on most indicators, particularly when it comes to case planning.

The 2015 report on government services shows a number of important findings. First, it shows that the rate of young people on community-based supervision in 2012-13 was at a five-year low. Second, it shows that the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people on community-based supervision in 2012-13 was at its lowest since 2009-10. The report also shows that the daily average rate of young people in detention in 2012-13 decreased by 25 per cent since 2011-12. In addition, young females were four times less likely to be in detention in 2012-13 than in 2010-11.

I am further encouraged by the feedback I have received from the official visitors in relation to their engagement with the youth justice system, in particular the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre. The Children and Young People Official Visitor and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Official Visitor are independent visitors who inspect the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre and hear complaints from children and young people in detention. These complaints are referred to the Community Services Directorate for resolution.

During 2014, I received ongoing positive feedback from the official visitors regarding Bimberi. The official visitors noted a decrease in the number of complaints received from children and young people. In addition, they acknowledged the professionalism of Bimberi management and staff and praised Bimberi management and staff for their genuine care for the wellbeing of children and young people in detention.

Overall, the visitors acknowledged that the safe and caring environment provided at Bimberi, as well as the range of programs and activities provided to support children and young people, were a great result. This is really good feedback from an independent source that brings quality assurance to operational practices of the youth justice system. I would like to extend my thanks to the staff and management at Bimberi for the important work that they have been doing.

What we are seeing is a sustained reduction in the number of children and young people coming into contact with, or becoming further involved in, the youth justice system. We are also seeing a system that is building on its strengths and achieving positive results. There are a number of tangible actions that are contributing to the successes that we have seen and that we are achieving across the youth justice system.

These include the after-hours bail support service, evidence-based practice in youth services, a single case management approach in youth justice, restorative justice initiatives for eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and first-time offenders and the Bendora transition program at the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre.

We have talked about the various initiatives that we know are working. However, it is always more powerful to hear about how they are working from an independent source. I would like to share the story of a young man. We will call him David. He is a young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander man who has a history of involvement with the youth justice system.

Most recently, he received a community-based sentence for his offending. David had a longstanding issue with school. It was difficult for him to adapt to secondary school life, compounded by some learning difficulties. He gradually slipped behind his peers. He began to see little point in going to school at all. This could be a serious issue as it would mean he would be risking his conditions.

He was referred to Mpower, a group that involves collaborative work across government and community agencies. Mpower has a significant focus on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to ensure that support is culturally

responsive. Mpower was able to arrange for David to move into an intensive educational program for young people experiencing difficulties with the traditional school environment. Here David could access one-on-one support with lessons as well as support to build wellbeing and living skills.

Mpower assisted in practical ways as well, such as helping with transport to the program. David responded well to this approach and he has achieved a near-perfect attendance during his participation in the program. His confidence has grown in small but important ways and he can now hold his head up when engaging with figures of authority.

There have been longer term benefits for David. He has continued with his education, achieving formal qualifications at certificate level. His reading, writing and living skills also continue to improve and he is working towards achieving a trade qualification. Importantly, David has not re-offended.

The Bendora transition unit at Bimberi is a further example of how investment in the youth justice system is delivering quality outcomes for young people—in this case those young people leaving custody. Specifically, Bendora has been highly effective at reducing incidents of violence within Bimberi, improving education and health outcomes, and reducing reoffending and returning to custody, as in the case that I just cited.

As I mentioned earlier, outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people involved in the youth justice system are improving. However over-representation remains a concern. A key goal of the blueprint is to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the youth justice system and reduce rates of detention. We are taking a number of important steps to specifically address this issue.

We are providing staff with strategies and tools to ensure culturally competent practice and we have improved the ability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to engage with young people and their families involved in the system. Three designated positions include a family engagement officer at Bimberi, a transition officer within Bimberi's Murrumbidgee education and training centre and an engagement and cultural officer within the youth justice case management team.

These positions have boosted our ability to support case management for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in culturally appropriate ways. We have strengthened cultural planning for young people on justice orders, providing young people with the opportunity to develop or retain their connections to family, community and culture.

We have also established the Narrabundah house Indigenous accommodation service. The service provides a residential diversion option for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young men aged 15 to 18 years who are at risk of entering the justice system or who have left custody and are experiencing challenges with education, training and stable accommodation.

The program is assisting young men to develop independent living skills, engage with their community and the services they need, and encouraging connections with their culture. The young men are expected to participate in employment, education and training programs that will help to secure their future. The service provides a step-down facility from the Bendora through-care unit and it is assisting young men to successfully connect or reintegrate into the community.

We will continue to improve services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people by partnering with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to design, develop and deliver culturally appropriate interventions and intensive, flexible support to high-risk young people.

Mr Assistant Speaker, I am pleased to be able to share this positive progress with the Assembly today. The blueprint for youth justice in the ACT 2012-2022 is a 10-year strategy. Two years in, we are seeing great results. Importantly, young people, their families and our community are all benefiting from the implementation of the blueprint.

Looking ahead, we will be working to strengthen and build upon the reforms already in place. Future work will focus on strengthening early intervention initiatives to address the underlying causes of youth offending, including responding to young people in contact with the child protection system who can be at increased risk of being in contact with the youth justice system.

This work will include the implementation of the “A step up for our kids” out of home care strategy 2015-20 to strengthen early intervention for vulnerable children and young people to reduce risk factors that can be associated with youth offending.

Also, the integration of youth justice and care and protection services will provide earlier intervention and support for young people and families facing issues to prevent escalation into offending behaviour in adolescence. A lead case management approach in the statutory services of youth justice and care and protection will be more personalised and seamless for children, young people and their families

In doing this, our focus will continue to be on early intervention, prevention and diversion. We are ensuring that children and young people in the ACT are receiving the right services, at the right time, for the right duration to ensure that children and young people in the ACT are safe, strong and connected. I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

MS PORTER (Ginninderra) (3.48): I welcome the opportunity to speak to this very important topic of youth justice. I thank the minister for his remarks this afternoon. Many of you are aware that I have been interested in this area for many years. In fact, I talked about this very issue in my inaugural speech back in December 2004. I am glad to see that much has been achieved since then in addressing issues around youth justice.

I note the achievements reported in the second annual progress report on the blueprint for youth justice in the ACT 2012-2022 highlighted by the minister in his statement. I congratulate him and this Labor government for their achievements in this area.

Mr Assistant Speaker, even as we celebrate the achievements, I join with the minister in acknowledging that this is a scenario in which there is always room for improvement, particularly in the area of youth justice for Indigenous children and young people. The minister highlighted many success stories. I was particularly interested in the story of David, as you called him, and how he was helped.

But, as the minister has rightfully stated, there remains an over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people moving through our justice system. This is where I continually advocated for greater application of restorative justice practice in the youth justice area, which is shown to bring positive results and a very high success and compliance rate.

I believe the application of these practices has prevented many young people from going into detention. As you know, there has been some concern regarding the take-up of Indigenous young people in this program. However, the introduction of the Indigenous guardian officer program has turned this situation around. We now see pleasing results in relation to our Indigenous young people.

Obviously this is still an area of concern. However, I believe the restorative justice approach in most cases is the appropriate response and brings good results. I am glad that the minister is continuing to support these practices.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Early childhood education

Discussion of matter of public importance

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

The importance of renewal of early childhood education in the ACT.

MS PORTER (Ginninderra) (3.51): In rising to speak to this matter of quality early childhood education, I want to say it is an issue that is very important to me and, indeed, many families in the ACT and region. This issue has gained a lot of attention recently with media reports about red tape and affordability of child care and the release of the Productivity Commission's draft report into child care and early learning. It is therefore timely that we step back and consider why the ACT government's investment in early childhood education and care is so critical.

We all know how important it is to have quality education and care that is accessible, affordable and meets the needs of working families. Here in the ACT we have a high level of female participation in the workforce and a strong demand for education and care for children from birth to school age. We also recognise that the vital importance of early childhood education and care extends far beyond simply supporting their parents' workforce participation.

As a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother I have experienced many facets of early childhood education and care, from total absence while working in a remote area of the Northern Territory to working in the community sector in the Tuggeranong valley in the late 1970s and early 1980s as we set up and developed early childhood services to meet the growing need of nappy valley. Through national and international research, we are becoming more and more aware of how a child's early experiences impact on its later health, development and educational outcomes.

Historically, the focus of education has been on children over the age of three. Yet we now know that the first three years of life are particularly influential on a child's developing brain and while physical care of infants is important, so too are the interactions and experiences that will lay the foundations for all aspects of their learning and development. That is why the national early years learning framework recognises children as learners from birth. It is not about teaching children their letters and numbers while they are still in nappies; it is about play-based programs that support children to develop a strong sense of identity, becoming confident, successful learners. It is also about recognising the incredible capacity of young children to actively participate in their learning journey and to have a say in matters that affect their lives.

As a grandmother and a great-grandmother, I am daily reminded of this amazing capacity. It is so exciting to be part of their journey. The ACT has a high number of children using formal early childhood education and care settings, and we owe it to these children and their families and our community as a whole to provide them with opportunities that maximise their potential and develop a foundation for future success. That is why the ACT government has been such a strong supporter of the national quality framework. This historic reform set a new benchmark for quality education and care in Australia. It was based on solid international and national evidence about what elements of service delivery are likely to lead to better outcomes for children.

The Productivity Commission has acknowledged the national quality framework as a driver of improvement in the quality of education and care. Their draft report makes a number of recommendations to improve the regulation of education and care services around the country. At the same time, all Australian governments are reviewing the national quality framework to ensure it is achieving its objectives and to identify any opportunities to streamline requirements for service providers and governments. We should be clear that these regulations are not red tape but a series of robust and well-researched standards to ensure the safety and wellbeing of young children. Regulations provide the framework for structural elements of quality education and care, such as minimum qualifications and educator to child ratios, that directly influence the quality of teaching and learning in the early childhood settings.

These are not standards we want to compromise or back away from. The feedback from the sector is that, while some adjustments could be or should be made, there is no desire to abandon the current standards.

The ACT government regulates the education and care sector through the Education and Training Directorate's children's policy and regulation unit. Each service has allocated an adviser who has qualifications and experience in education and care settings. These officers regularly visit services to provide guidance and support, as well as ensuring services are meeting quality standards. These officers are also responsible for assessing and rating services. This is an important part of the national quality framework that is designed to support service providers in continually reviewing their practices, identifying their strengths and making improvements that support children's learning and development.

We are already seeing significant improvements in the ACT as services strive towards the national quality standards. For example, one long day care service improved its overall rating from working towards the national quality standards to exceeding it within the space of 18 months. This is a fantastic achievement, especially considering the national quality framework has set much higher standards for quality care than previous accreditation systems.

Ratings across seven quality areas also provide valuable information to parents about the quality of their education and care service, while the draft Productivity Commission report indicates that an assessment and rating system is more efficient than the previous systems. All governments are currently looking at ways to streamline the process and ensure we are measuring the right elements of service provision. The Productivity Commission also considers that regulators should maintain an educative function.

This government, through the Education and Training Directorate's CPRU, provides a valuable role in supporting the sector to understand their requirements under the national quality framework and to meet the national quality standards. The CPRU provides advice through its website, information sheets, monthly newsletters, quarterly sector forums and one-on-one interactions with service providers. At the same time, we are committed to supporting the sector in delivering quality service. We are also conscious of the need to support growth in the sector to meet the increased demand for education and care places. There are currently around 9,600 places available to children of preschool age and under in centre-based services in the ACT. There are also around 3,300 places offered in government preschools.

Over the past few years, the ACT government has embarked on a program of facility upgrades to support services to meet new quality standards and to increase available places. The infrastructure program includes extensions, refurbishments and upgrades to facilities owned by the Education and Training Directorate, including long day care centres and public preschools. The directorate has also invested significantly in new facilities, most recently with the construction of the Franklin Early Childhood School, which includes a long day care centre as well as a public preschool, and the Holder Early Childhood Centre.

The ACT government is also continuing to identify suitable sites for education and care centres as part of the planning for new suburbs, to respond to emerging demands in newly established areas as well as changing demands in established areas. As a result of these initiatives, the ACT sector has seen steady growth, with additional places created in suburbs including Campbell, McKellar, Greenway, Narrabundah, Taylor and Macarthur through the establishment of new services and the expansion of existing services. We are also assisting the sector with the cost of leasing premises, which means that the majority of long day care services that operate from the ACT-owned facilities pay discounted rent.

In conclusion, we know that quality early childhood education and care is so important for children, even from birth. We know that it starts them off on their education journey on a positive note. It helps them to develop a strong sense of identity and become confident and successful learners. The ACT government will continue its strong commitment to early childhood education and care because it benefits children, their families and our Canberra community.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (4.00): I welcome this opportunity to speak on the matter of public importance brought on by Ms Porter, namely the importance of renewal of early childhood education in the ACT. The importance of introducing children to learning as early as possible has become the increasing focus of educators in recent years. There is ongoing debate both within Australia and overseas as to what age formal education should start, and there are advocates who believe strongly in both an early and a later start.

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

When you look at what the ACT Education and Training Directorate have to say on the value of early childhood education, not surprisingly they are supportive. Their action plan for 2015 is very encouraging. Included in their intentions are: in the ACT every child, young person and adult will benefit from a high quality, accessible education, childcare and training system; every student will learn, thrive, be equipped with the skills and attitudes to lead fulfilling, productive and responsible lives; and our highly educated and skilled community will contribute to the economic and social prosperity of our city and nation.

Further on, the action plan seeks to increase the number of children who benefit from early childhood education and care. It aims to increase the proportion of children participating in quality education and care; increase the proportion of vulnerable and disadvantaged children enrolled in and attending preschool; and increase the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in preschool. These are all laudable objectives, and I trust they all guide very closely the work which the minister and her directorate deliver this year.

Of course, when one talks about early childhood education, it is closely linked with affordability of child care, and for families in the ACT that is a serious issue. We have the highest cost of child care of any jurisdiction, and it is rising faster than in any other state.

The minister, Ms Burch, is on the public record as saying that the ACT government has no role to play in the cost of child care. She argues that fees set by childcare centres are for those centres to determine. What she fails to acknowledge is the impact that the implementation of the national quality framework for children has. She has been quoted as suggesting it is zero, when clearly it is not. It is just another example of this minister being out of touch with Canberra families and out of touch with the impact of policies administered by her directorate.

I recall Ms Berry last year moved a motion on early childhood education, which could have been an opportunity to talk of all the positive things that are happening in early childhood education and the fact that the federal coalition government has moved quickly to set up an inquiry into this vexed issue. Instead Ms Berry saw it as an opportunity to take a swipe at the federal government, failing to acknowledge that the Productivity Commission had only delivered a draft report and they and the federal government were still awaiting public comment before moving to publication of a final report.

That final report on the Productivity Commission's inquiry into child care and early childhood learning was delivered to the federal government on 3 November. The government now has 25 parliamentary sitting days before it is required to make public the commission's findings and to announce what its plans are for this area. So it is speculative in the least for any comment to be made about what that report might contain, but I think it is appropriate for us to have a look at what the Hon Sussan Ley, the Assistant Minister for Education, said on Monday, 3 November when she welcomed the Productivity Commission's completion of their inquiry into child care and early childhood learning. I quote from her statement about the report:

The Abbott Government tasked this Inquiry as one of our first priorities upon taking office late last year in line with our commitment to make child care more affordable, flexible and accessible for Australian families.

This has been the largest review of the child care system since the 1990s and I thank the Productivity Commission for their hard work and dedication over the past 12 months.

I would also like to thank the thousands of Australians who embraced this once-in-a-generation opportunity to work together to build a better child care system for Australian families, with 2,081 submissions and comments in total.

What this process has overwhelmingly confirmed is that Australian families are struggling as a direct result of child care fees increasing 53 per cent under Labor's watch and want change.

Access to affordable child care is considered the biggest barrier to workforce participation for women, which in turn impacts on everything from the household budget to the national economy.

We are determined to fix that. Australia needs a modern child care system that supports today's 24/7 economy, not the 9-to-5 working week of last century.

Australian families should be able to plan child care around their work life, not their work life around child care.

However, to achieve this we need real, sustainable reform. Labor's legacy of endless band-aid solutions and blindly topping up child care payments on the nation's credit card cannot continue.

As the minister stated, there needs to be real and sustainable change.

The role of the federal Labor Party on this issue has been less than impressive and demonstrates clearly they have no capability for managing difficult issues and delivering a childcare education system in keeping with the needs and demands of the community they represent. All they have done in opposition is vote down legislation and thereby continue to underline the serious financial difficulties that they have imposed on Australian families. They created the mess and now want to walk away and wash their hands of it, just as I suspect this government may do when ACT residents are lumped with the cost of inevitable record deficits, rate hikes and other financial imposts that will accompany some of the recent decisions, including the light rail issue.

In respect of what the federal government might do in this area, there are some appropriate messages from ACT-based organisations for the ACT government. During last year's debate on this subject I quoted from some of the submissions from organisations involved in this space in the ACT. The YMCA, I believe, made some valid points when they suggested that the ACT government needed to work across departments to develop some coordinated planning regulations and parameters around where early childhood education centre services might be established and the size and types of services that may best suit that community. They pointed out that the current pattern for preschool attendance across the ACT did not encourage increased workforce participation. With the current pattern of most preschools, a child attends two days one week and three days the next. That is difficult for parents returning to the workforce or trying to accommodate a career around having a family.

That is an issue that the ACT needs to look closely at, particularly if its action plan is to have the best chance of delivering on its objective of every child in the ACT benefiting from a high quality, accessible education, childcare and training system. There is no argument as to the value and importance of early childhood education. There is no argument that every child in the ACT should have an opportunity to benefit from a high quality, accessible education, childcare and training system. Affordability for government and for families is also paramount. If the ACT government's action plan is to deliver on the objective to increase the proportion of children participating in quality education and care, then it needs to take heed of what ACT organisations suggest that they should be doing to help deliver that.

Since October 2013 this government has been all too quick to blame the federal government for everything and anything. It is time they stepped up and recognised that education is a territory responsibility and also demonstrated real support for Canberra families.

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Racing and Gaming and Minister for the Arts) (4.09): I thank Ms Porter for bringing on this very important MPI. I do not think there is an issue that many families in the ACT would consider as important as access to quality early childhood education and care. The most recent ROGS states that in 2013 the ACT had the highest proportion of children enrolled in a preschool program in the year before full-time schooling, at 108 per cent. That is a very high attendance rate indeed.

We also know that in 2013 the proportion of children aged three to five years in the ACT who were from non-English-speaking backgrounds that were enrolled in preschool, again, was the highest in Australia. We have very high female workforce participation. We also have very high numbers—the highest in the country—of children attending preschool.

I will go to some of the comments that Mr Doszpot made. He comes in here with this notion that this government is out of touch with Canberra families. We are very much in tune with the needs of Canberra families when it comes to early education and care. We have doubled the number of long day care places in this city. In my tenure in this portfolio over 3,000 additional places have come online. There are new services, new providers, land being released and more places available for Canberra families to choose from. For example, at Mount Taylor not only did we rebuild that school but we increased the size of their preschool and long day care. We have definitely invested many millions of dollars in the bricks and mortar to make sure that we have supported services. In line with that, we also continue to support Canberra families.

Mr Doszpot commented that I made reference to the fact that the cost of child care is set by the services. That is indeed a fact. The reality is that the ACT government does not go into a service and determine the cost of its provision of care to Canberra families. What levers we do have, though, involve how we support the sector and the system. One would assume that, with more places available, competition and market forces would come into play and that would provide relief in terms of costs and the daily fees. Again, an extra 3,000-plus places under my watch have gone into the system. That is indeed an increase. So I think we have done all that we can.

The other unique profile of long day care provision here in the ACT is that over 70 per cent of our long day care providers are community organisations. These are not-for-profit community organisations that serve our community well not only in early education and care but across other portfolios. So it is somewhat disappointing that Mr Doszpot says that we have the highest cost of care and that he does not understand that we have pulled the levers that we can by providing land and the bricks and mortar to expand services and support the workforce. I refer also to the unique profile of our providers in that they are predominantly community-based organisations. This government is absolutely committed to investing in an early childhood education and care sector that promotes the best possible outcomes for young children in Canberra.

The national quality framework acknowledges the strong evidence that when we have quality trainers with good qualifications—a good workforce—that has a positive

effect on a child's developmental outcomes. Better qualified educators are more likely to provide a rich learning environment and develop responsive, respectful relationships with children in these education and care settings.

In light of this evidence the ACT government continues to invest in growing and upskilling the education and care workforce. A highly qualified early education and care workforce is essential for providing a strong foundation for the wellbeing and educational outcomes of Canberra children.

In recent years the government has worked to support this group through the provision of a range of vocational education and training programs that are available to meet the needs of educators and employers. For example, traineeships are being funded through the ACT Australian apprenticeships program and have grown strongly across the sector since 2010. Traineeships are particularly valuable pathways. They provide an opportunity for workers to be upskilled whilst maintaining their employment. Last year 312 trainees completed a formal qualification approved by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority. These qualifications range from certificate III to a diploma level.

Also last year our priorities were to make sure that we had a focus on doing all we could to provide support to the workforce to gain relevant formal qualifications. In 2014, 30 participants completed a certificate III in early education and care; another 46 completed a relevant skill set preparing them for further study towards a full qualification.

In 2015 we will see new training initiatives through skilled capital, which will contribute well over \$2 million towards at least 570 training places in a wide range of approved early education and care qualifications, and each graduate will be eligible for a \$500 bonus on completion of their qualification. The skilled capital funds provide a comprehensive range of support services to assist students to complete their training.

In addition to this, the early childhood scholarship program established in 2012 to assist the sector to meet the new minimum qualification requirements continues with a new round of places opening up later this week. The scholarship covers full course fees for a certificate III qualification, a start-up and completion incentive and funding to release working educators to study or attend classes.

Including this year's allocation, the program has provided 145 places, and a further 30 places will be offered in 2016. Fifty-seven students from the first round of the funding have now achieved their cert III in early childhood education and care. This qualification develops educator skills in developing a respectful relationship with children and supporting their development in a holistic way, using the early years quality framework.

Under the national quality framework all childhood educators counted in the educator to child ratios are now required to be working towards this minimum qualification. This gives us confidence that our children are being educated by professionals, with appropriate skills and knowledge to work in partnership with families for the benefit

of that child. We know that the early years are so critical and so important, and that we need to invest in those early years—and no educator or research would dispute that. It is well known that the national quality framework is the right framework for our children, to begin their lives and set them on a path to be good learners, and to have opportunities throughout their lives.

There continues to be a demand for university qualified teachers. Again we support that workforce through funding of the early childhood degree scholarship program that provides \$6,000 over four years towards study-related expenses. The first 25 places of the degree scholarship program were offered last year and 25 more places will be offered each year, with the 2015 places opening in May and June this year. As well as improving educator skills and knowledge and gaining a formal early childhood qualification, it is also likely to lead to improved employment outcomes and career paths for educators.

This government absolutely understands the needs of Canberra families. We provide all that we can in the area of early childhood education and care. We have provided the bricks and mortar. We have provided support to families. We have provided support to the workforce. We understand the importance of this, and we understand the needs of Canberra families.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (4.19): I rise to speak briefly on the MPI, to put on the record my experiences and the experiences that a number of friends have shared with me in recent times, as we have all endeavoured to enter our children into day care or early childhood education.

I will begin by making the obvious reference to the title of today's MPI—"the importance of renewal of early childhood education". It seems that there is an absolute eagerness to use that new buzzword "renewal" in everything that we talk about here. Yet one thing that has been lacking today is a discussion about what actual renewal is occurring within the childhood education sector.

Yes, there are improvements. Yes, the quality of care in this city is great. I think what the minister said about being in touch with the expectations of Canberra families when it comes to the quality of care is well and truly accurate. In large part the range and variety of centres available in the ACT go a long way to meeting the needs of Canberra families. But where those members opposite are completely out of touch on what Canberra families expect is on the cost of living impact. Having the dearest and most expensive long day care service in the country based here in the territory highlights that they are substantially out of touch with what Canberra families expect.

The latest Productivity Commission report reveals that in the ACT the average cost per week per long day care is \$463 per child per week. Just to give my personal experience of it, members opposite mentioned the opening of the new childcare centre in Macarthur. I must say that, as a Macarthur resident who needs day care, it is a great convenience. But at that centre, until this week, the cost has been \$483 a week, and as of Monday it is going up to \$485 a week. So it is well above even what the ACT average is, and it is well above what the national average is.

For the minister to say that they are pulling all the levers they can to ensure that the number of places is increasing and that the cost comes down leaves a lot to be desired, when just across the border in New South Wales the average is \$47 a week less. Given that the frameworks and the standards are largely nationally driven—and the award is a national award, so there is consistency amongst pay rates and the standard of care that needs to be delivered—it means that the costs that are associated with providing care in the ACT compared to across the border, having regard to what service operators are paying in rates, land tax charges, and in insurance, such as workers compensation insurance—

Ms Burch: They are community-based organisations with subsidised rent.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Dr Bourke): Order, members!

MR WALL: If they are on subsidised rent, minister, why is it dearer than in a for-profit across the border? Why is it dearer? It is a question that the minister needs to answer. If we are giving concessions and handouts to community organisations and we still have the dearest level of care in the ACT, it shows that a lot needs to be done on the same things that challenge all businesses in this territory—the cost of workers compensation insurance, the cost of professional indemnity insurance, the cost of hiring, employing and carrying on staff, and the costs associated with running a business in this territory.

A frustration that most families face is weighing up the choices—to send their children into day care and return to work, and in many cases simply to cover what the cost of the child care is, or to stay home and forgo the professional development and the opportunity to continue a career, and spend time at home with their children. It is a difficult decision for a lot of families—including my own—to weigh up. But the more that the cost of child care continues to increase, regardless of the quality of it, the less uptake of it we are going to see, and the more pressure will be put on the local economy and on local household budgets, making it harder for people to get ahead.

I will touch on one point that Minister Burch spoke about—that is, the training and qualifications of staff within the early childhood education sector. Again the Productivity Commission report highlights quite an alarming statistic in the ACT—that is, we currently have the lowest level of qualification within this sector. Just on 50 per cent of the workforce in Canberra childcare centres actually have a formal qualification at certificate III level or above. So not only are we paying at the highest level in the country for the service, but the staff that are delivering it have one of the lowest uptake levels for a professional qualification. For many families that will ring alarm bells, in that the people they are leaving their most valuable family member with, their son or daughter, to be cared for each day do not necessarily have the mandated minimum qualification required to work in the sector.

I think there is a long way to go in improving access to child care in the territory and the affordability of child care in the territory. I look forward to seeing what alternatives this government put forward to address a problem that largely they have been responsible for whilst they have been at the helm for the previous 16 years.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Community Services, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Women and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Social Inclusion and Equality) (4.24): I will be extraordinarily brief on this issue. The affordability of early childhood education can easily be resolved if the federal government will fund early childhood centres. That is the solution. It is not up to the states and territories to fund early childhood centres; it is the responsibility of the federal government, and they could come to the party and fund the whole of the sector.

Discussion concluded.

Planning and Development (Capital Metro) Legislation Amendment Bill 2014

Debate resumed from 27 November 2014, on motion by **Mr Gentleman**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

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

That the debate be adjourned.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

	Ayes 8		Noes 9
Mr Coe	Ms Lawder	Mr Barr	Ms Fitzharris
Mr Doszpot	Mr Smyth	Ms Berry	Mr Gentleman
Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall	Dr Bourke	Ms Porter
Mr Hanson		Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury
Mrs Jones		Mr Corbell	

Question so resolved in the negative.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (4.29): The Canberra Liberals will not be supporting the Planning and Development (Capital Metro) Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. We have serious concerns with this bill and the precedent it sets. We will do everything we can to try to stop this legislation, and we have even tried to delay this legislation, but this government is absolutely determined to shut out citizens from having a say on this planning decision, on future planning decisions and who knows what else.

I will move several amendments to the bill to try to make the bill better. This is a bad bill that we will vote against. But, in doing so, we will try to make it marginally better. However, it is very unfortunate that we are in this situation. The bill we are being asked to support today is designed to ram through the government's light rail project. The bill applies to the proposed light rail project and any future projects, and it covers an area of one kilometre either side of the track.

There will be reduced consultation. In a move to reduce community scrutiny of the light rail project, the bill speeds up territory plan variations required for light rail. The minister is given the authority to require the relevant Assembly committee to report on a variation in the time set by the minister. The bill states that this time must be between three and six months. However, we can be sure that the minister will set the time at three months. This is a very short time for a committee to seek community comments, conduct hearings, consider the comments and produce a thorough report.

Of course, this government obviously has no intention of taking the committee's views or the community's views into consideration. How do we know that? Because they did not even consult on this legislation. It is extraordinary that all the community councils, every single one, had not heard of this bill. Not one piece of contact from any government member about this legislation—Minister Rattenbury did not contact them, Minister Gentleman did not contact them, Minister Corbell did not contact them and the Chief Minister did not contact them. Nobody contacted a single community council about this project.

Mr Hanson: It's grubby government.

MR COE: When I sent them an email to let them know about this scandalous legislation—

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

Ms Burch: I do. I want to check whether “grubby” and “grubby government” are considered unparliamentary. If so, I ask that Mr Hanson withdraw.

Mr Doszpot: It's pretty appropriate.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you; I will check. In the meantime, Mr Coe, will you resume and I will make a ruling in just a second.

Mr Rattenbury: Madam Assistant Speaker, on the point of order, if it assists, you may recall from question time earlier today that Mr Hanson sought to have the word “grubby” withdrawn and Madam Speaker asked that it be withdrawn. At that time it was in reference to him.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Rattenbury. Do you have a point of order, Mr Gentleman?

Mr Gentleman: If I may, whilst you are considering this decision, I ask that if you make the decision that it is unparliamentary, you also ask Mr Doszpot to withdraw his comment calling us a “grubby government” whilst you were talking to Mr Rattenbury.

Mr Hanson: On the point of order, my interjection “It's grubby government” is very different from hurling abuse at someone, as Mr Corbell did to me earlier. My remark was not directed at any individual. “It's grubby government” is something that could be used in a debate—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, please sit down. While I was considering that matter, you managed to repeat the term several times. The word “grubby” certainly has precedence of being withdrawn in the past. Firstly, Mr Hanson, I ask you to withdraw your use of the term “grubby”.

Mr Hanson: I withdraw.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot, I did not hear you say it.

Mr Doszpot: Madam Assistant Speaker, if I can take a point of order on that, I would like Mr Gentleman to tell me exactly what I need to withdraw.

Mr Corbell: No, you’re being asked to withdraw. You’re being asked by the chair to withdraw.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Yes, you have been asked to withdraw.

Mr Doszpot: Well, I did not say that. I never used the word “grubby”.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I will review the tape, Mr Doszpot. At this point—

Mr Doszpot: Mr Gentleman, can you—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you, I am speaking.

Mr Doszpot: What did I say?

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Silence! I am speaking now. Just give me a second. I did not hear it. Mr Gentleman alleges that he heard it. I will review the tape and we will do it then. If you say you have not said it, thank you. In the meantime, Mr Coe, please continue, with restraint.

MR COE: Happily, Madam Assistant Speaker. This government is a government that has lost its way. It features a crossbencher who has lost his conviction. There was a time when the Greens in this place were the champions of Latimer House. They were the champions of consultation. They were the champions of principles in policies. We will always disagree that they actually lived up to that, but they at least purported to do that. Whereas now we have a situation whereby there is legislation to shut out the community about heritage, about Indigenous heritage, about trees, about development applications, about high-voltage electricity wires, about all sorts of infrastructure projects, and Mr Rattenbury is completely silent.

Not only is he silent but he has silenced the community as well because he has not sought to get any feedback whatsoever from the community on this. How is it that the Inner North Community Council went to air about this sort of legislation? How is it that numerous community councils had not heard of this legislation until I emailed them? What is this government hiding?

They are so determined to go ahead with a bogus light rail project that they have thrown out all principles. Imagine if another government did this. Imagine the outcry. Look at the outcry when Labor in opposition in Queensland accused the Campbell Newman government of this sort of thing—the outcry there. Well, here we are in the ACT and the government is trying to bypass all community consultation, bypass the development application process and bypass all the safeguards that are left in our planning system.

It is best said in an email that I received earlier this week in response to an email I sent out. This person wrote to the Greens and the government:

The Bill is almost the same as the Fast Track Planning Bill last year that sought to designate ‘special project’ zones with the same prohibitions on consultation and appeal. At least that Bill went to an Assembly Committee and, due to the level of public opposition; it was subsequently withdrawn by the then Chief Minister.

I have fundamental objections to this Bill. Given the one kilometre boundary, it will effectively ‘de-zone’ much of the residents’ amenity, and possibly the residential streets themselves, in Dickson, Downer and Watson and will allow the Government to ride roughshod over the rights of the community and the understandings we have reasonably held regarding ACT planning and zoning provisions. I personally believe it will also decrease rather than increase property values in the vicinity. Having lived and worked in Melbourne twice during my career, I am well aware that residential values on or very close to tramlines are lower, not higher, than elsewhere in those suburbs.

I strongly urge you to refer this Bill to an Assembly Committee and to invite public comment.

That was one such email. Of course, the Inner South Community Council and the Tuggeranong Community Council have endorsed a thorough submission, which states:

We understand that it is intended to debate the Bill as early as Tuesday 10 February. This timeframe seems to be extremely rushed and scarcely allows time for any informed public debate. There appears to be no need for this urgency.

We ask that you act to delay consideration of this bill to allow a proper public debate about whether it is really necessary. We remain unconvinced that the Minister needs any further powers to override the *Heritage Act 2004* and the *Tree Protection Act 2005*, and the case for these enhanced powers remains to be made. The definitions in the bill need to be considerably tightened to ensure that no wider range of proposals than is absolutely necessary is covered by the Bill.

There are many other emails that I have received. It is interesting to see today the absolutely outrageous misuse of the Latimer House principles that Minister Corbell is putting around. It is an absolutely outrageous abuse of the Latimer House principles. I strongly disagree with the institute at the University of Canberra who put up those remarks. I note that many other people have already contacted me to express their disappointment with the feedback that has been received in that report.

Even if you believe in the Latimer House principles, the very committee which Mr Rattenbury chaired into the Latimer House principles in the last Assembly said:

The committee recommends that potential government shortcomings identified in submissions and listed in paragraph 3.12 of this report could be considered as part of the independent assessment.

And what is one of those issues? It is increased use of public consultation during the pre-drafting stage of legislation and through all the major pieces of legislation being referred to the appropriate Assembly committees, allowing for an inquiry process. They were Mr Rattenbury's views in the last Assembly, but Minister Rattenbury, I am afraid, has different views—totally different views.

What is the purpose of stifling debate about the light rail project? Why is the government so scared about a debate on the light rail project and about debates on development in the light rail corridor? The government seems to be scared that if the community is given the opportunity to voice its opinion it might well raise a concern about tree protection or heritage issues.

The bill allows the Planning and Land Authority to disregard advice from the Heritage Council and the Conservator of Flora and Fauna. Under this bill, ACTPLA is given the authority to disregard advice about registered trees for the first time. ACTPLA also has the authority to disregard advice about regulating trees. This of course means that any trees that get in the way of the light rail project will be cut down. The same principle applies to buildings and objects with heritage value: if they are in the way of the tram they will be demolished.

Why is it necessary to remove the light rail project from the normal planning process? Unlike other jurisdictions which have this legislation—they have councils as well, and that is why they have the legislation to bypass the councils—we do not have councils; we have one planning authority, therefore we do not need this legislation. The legislation in another jurisdiction is about bypassing the councils. We do not have that here in the ACT.

The bill removes important review and appeal rights which are usually part of the planning process. Under the usual planning decision process the community is able to raise concerns about proposed developments, including in cases where the development has been approved. The bill removes appeal rights under the AD(JR) Act and third party appeals to ACAT. The remaining appeal mechanism, a common law appeal, must be brought within 60 days of the decision. This type of appeal is virtually impossible as it is extremely expensive and very difficult to achieve and is effectively locking people out of the process. The provisions in the bill mean that the government has shut the community out of the discussion about light rail development.

Another concerning aspect of this bill is the provision which allows reduced documentation requirements of development applications relating to light rail. This provision means that a development application for light rail does not need to include all the information which any other DA does. If a development application does not

have supporting documentation, how can it properly be assessed? Let me say that again. Another concerning aspect of this bill is the provision which allows reduced documentation for development applications—reduced documentation. So not only do you have a situation whereby there is no consultation, you have reduced documentation. It is absolutely outrageous. This is a circumstance where you need increased documentation, not reduced documentation. So you are going to have reduced documentation and no consultation. So what are we going to get? A one-page DA saying, “Light rail down Northbourne,” and just get a tick of approval? It is scandalous stuff.

If a development application does not have supporting documentation, how can it be properly assessed? Again, the government is removing the ability to scrutinise its pet project. Again, the government is scared that if it actually gives people information about the light rail they might reject it, and those people who might reject it may well be the Heritage Council, the Conservator of Flora and Fauna or perhaps even ACTPLA.

This bill is yet another example of the Labor government trying to avoid scrutiny, and being backed by Mr Rattenbury. The government knows that its light rail project has the genesis of a political deal, a partisan deal. It knows that the community concerns about light rail are so serious that the project will be significantly delayed if the proper process is followed. So if concerning itself with actually listening to the community is so objectionable, the government is just bypassing the proper process. It does not like the idea of the community objecting so it gets rid of their ability to do so.

This bill sets a dangerous precedent. This government is not concerned about proper process or the community’s opinion when it comes to complicated projects. It is so scared of scrutiny that it legislates to stop the community from scrutinising it. Let me remind the Assembly what I said last year when the government introduced similar legislation to prevent scrutiny of its secure mental health facility. Speaking on the Planning and Development (Symonston Mental Health Facility) Amendment Bill 2014, I said:

The bill is not really about the mental health facility. It is about the government setting aside planning laws. Once proper processes have been set aside, what is stopping the government from doing it again? What will be the next urgent project? Will the government bring a special variation to cover the Uriarra solar farm? What about Northbourne Avenue and the government’s grand light rail project? Where will it stop ...

Well, that has come to fruition. Exactly as I predicted, here is the government trying to declare that it has another project which is so urgent that proper scrutiny should not be allowed.

I would like to reflect on the process the government has used with this legislation. As I have already said, it was my office that contacted people who are the informed planning people in our community. They are the usual suspects when it comes to providing advice to the government, to the opposition, to the crossbench and others. We all have these email lists. We all have the community council address book. Yet, for some reason, the government did not send it to them. Why not, Madam Assistant Speaker?

To put it simply, light rail is bad policy for Canberra. It will not achieve its public transport goals. It will cost \$800 million to build, plus interest, but it will carry only one per cent of Canberrans to work and school every day. The passenger numbers are low but the cost is high, and it comes at a time when the territory government is running a large deficit which has just increased by 132 per cent.

For a perspective on these costs, I think it is good to have a look at the government's preferred delivery model of the project, the availability of a public-private partnership. Each year, for the next 20 years after construction, the territory government will make a \$100 million payment to a private consortium—every year for 20 years. That is \$8.3 million a month, \$1.9 million a week. What is more, with this \$100 million payment in outgoings, what is the annual revenue of light rail? It is \$5 million. According to the business case, \$5 million per year is the revenue for light rail—outgoings \$100 million; incomings \$5 million. It is absolutely scandalous that the government is trying to shut down debate on this issue. The total ACTION operating budget is about \$125 million. So the government is saying, "We value 12 trams the same as 400 buses." Four hundred buses in operation is what the equation is—12 trams or 400 buses. It is absolutely outrageous that the government would try and shut down debate on this issue.

The new Chief Minister has also liked to promote light rail as a great job opportunity. But, as he would know, each dollar spent comes with an opportunity cost. We have to ask: is \$800 million on this project the best way to spend \$800 million? What are the alternatives? How many alternatives are there that do not involve international consortia? Could it possibly be that a hundred \$8 million projects might deliver a far better economic return for small businesses across the ACT?

This project is fundamentally flawed and this legislation is fundamentally flawed. This is disappointing legislation. It is legislation which shuts out the community and shuts out the Assembly. It is a government that is using its bare majority of nine members, put together by Labor and a Green after the last election, to simply shut out the community. The opposition will be voting against this bill and will also be moving amendments to try and make the bill marginally better. As I have already said, this is flawed legislation and it should not go ahead.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (4.50): I am pleased to rise to support this debate this evening. This very much is a debate about values. It is about your future vision and perspective and objectives for the growth and development of our city. It is a debate about the next 20 to 30 years, not just about the next 12 to 18 months.

Members interjecting—

MR CORBELL: I heard Mr Coe in silence, Madam Assistant Speaker, and they are entitled to hear the arguments they do not want to hear.

This is a debate not for the next 12 to 18 months and not between now and the next election; this is a debate about the next 20 to 30 years. In the next 20 to 30 years, this city's population will be over half a million people. Indeed, it will be closer to 600,000 people. This government has a plan and an objective and a vision for how the city needs to grow and develop to accommodate those new citizens, many yet to be born, who are going to need homes and places to work and good access to important facilities.

There are two options: we can continue with business as usual. We can continue to bulldoze more and more endangered ecosystems on the fringes of our city. We can continue to do that. We can continue to build more and more roads at a cost of billions of dollars, a cost of billions of dollars—

Members interjecting—

MR CORBELL: They do not like the counterarguments, Madam Assistant Speaker, but they have to listen as much as we have to listen to outrageous misleading of the Canberra community. Madam Assistant Speaker, we can continue with business as usual. In the last 10 years we have spent \$1.2 billion on road infrastructure in this city—\$1.2 billion. Has anyone suggested that over the past 10 years that level of expenditure has been either unsustainable or irresponsible? No, they have not.

But when it comes to investing in a project that is worth somewhere between \$700 million and \$800 million and which is going to change the way settlement happens in our city, where people live, how they are able to access better public transport, all of a sudden it is a controversy. Those opposite have no vision for the future growth and development of our city—no vision. They did not even go to the last election with a public transport policy. Their only policy was to build more car parks. That was their transport policy. You look at urban planning, transport and land use planning trends around the world and you see how stuck in the 1950s they are when it comes to this type of debate.

Let us turn to the detail of this bill. This bill is about providing for certainty and consistency in decision-making on an important infrastructure project. You go to any other jurisdiction in the country; jurisdictions have important infrastructure project legislation that enables timely and certain decision-making on development assistance.

Mr Coe: To bypass councils.

MR CORBELL: No, not to bypass councils. Mr Coe is wrong. It is about providing finality to the decision, to either approve or reject. That is why in many jurisdictions the decisions are made by elected representatives themselves.

We are not proposing that here. What we are instead proposing is a framework that gives certainty on the development approval. Let us have a look at what the review of Latimer House principles in the Australian Capital Territory by the Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis at the University of Canberra had to say on this point. They have looked very closely at the issue of judicial review and they have reflected on the Latimer House principle which says:

Best democratic principles require that the actions of governments are open to scrutiny by the courts, to ensure that decisions taken comply with the Constitution, with relevant statutes and other law, including the law relating to the principles of natural justice.

They make some interesting observations about the right of appeal. First of all, they say—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MR CORBELL: I know they do not like it, Madam Assistant Speaker, but they are going to have to listen to it. The review concludes:

In some matters the right of appeal can be seen as a highly over-rated commodity and itself a cause of concern to the citizenry.

That is a pretty bold statement, but let us listen to why they came to that conclusion. They say:

The common feature in the following examples are that narrow vested interests seek to overturn decisions on public or commercial amenity approved for the wider good by the government.

They reflect on a number of high profile examples, including the Canberra Airport's attempt to stop commercial competition with the development of DFO at Fyshwick, the significant attempts to stall the development of the GDE and, most recently, the Giralang shops redevelopment, where they conclude that the interests of citizens in access to local convenience shopping have been denied, not by the actions of government but by the process of judicial review itself being pursued by competing commercial interests to delay and limit access by other supermarket chains.

That is not my conclusion. That is not the government's conclusion. It was not a review commissioned by the government. It was a review commissioned by the Speaker of this place and undertaken by an independent and expert policy and academic body on governance.

What is their final conclusion of most relevance to the debate this afternoon? It is about the capital metro project. I will just read what the review says:

The Government has recently sought to limit appeal rights through legislation in regard to plans for a light rail system in northern Canberra and Gungahlin in an attempt to reduce the additional cost to the project of being subjected to delay and appeal by narrow vested interests. Its justification for this action has been that the project is part of an electoral mandate. It seems that the unfettered rights of narrow vested interests to seek to thwart broader interests of the citizens of the ACT needs reflection and review if the very expensive and most often fruitless processes are to be avoided.

That is not my argument. That is not a review commissioned by the government. That is an independent review commissioned by the Speaker, Mrs Dunne, and undertaken

by an expert academic body on governance and the principles of good government here in the territory. They are right. They highlight the issue of certainty. They highlight the issue of having regard to the broad public benefit, not just the narrow vested partisan opposition that is inevitable with infrastructure projects of this scale.

The review concludes with a recommendation:

The approach to seek legislative approval through the whole of the Assembly to limit judicial review rights (as in the case of the Light Rail) is—

and I emphasise “is”—

a satisfactory and democratic safeguard to the exercise of such limitations in the ACT’s Westminster system of government and an appropriate way to avoid additional costs being imposed on ACT taxpayers.

That is the underpinning policy rationale for these proposed amendments—nothing more and nothing less. It is worth reflecting on this important report, one that says some things that government will find and does find uncomfortable, but nevertheless an independent expert report commissioned by the Speaker and undertaken by the University of Canberra’s Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis.

The other thing that is missed in this debate—and we heard it in Mr Coe’s speech—is that apparently we are going to remove appeal rights that are going to affect the removal of trees along Northbourne Avenue. I do not know whether Mr Coe has noticed, but right now and for this project any works along the median of Northbourne Avenue, whether it is tree removal, the installation of light rail lines or electrical cables or whatever else it may be, are not subject to any ACT government approval. It is the responsibility of the National Capital Authority. The National Capital Authority will determine what works proceed in the median, including tree removal. They will determine that on the Federal Highway as well. It is a national approach route. It is covered by the national capital plan and it is within the authority of the NCA.

Do the NCA allow third-party review of their decisions on works approvals? No, they do not. We hear the loud, long moans from the shadow minister about how terrible this is, how it is going to remove people’s right to have their say on development along the median in Northbourne Avenue. It is the NCA’s decision; it is not affected by this legislation. What this legislation does is provide for consistency in relation to the other associated works that sit outside of the median on Northbourne Avenue and sit outside of the median on the Federal Highway.

Yes, we do need to build some important pieces of infrastructure—seven power transformers—and we need to realign road intersections at certain places. These will require development approval under the ACT’s planning framework. This bill provides the same mechanisms for decision on those pieces of infrastructure as apply in relation to the NCA’s approval framework. It would be absurd to say that some parts of the works—indeed, the major parts of the works—are subject to no third-party review under NCA approval, but some bits and pieces around the edges have to go through a completely different planning regime.

Consistency, certainty of decision-making and managing the costs are all important considerations. We know Mr Coe and the Liberal Party are not interested in any of those because they just have blind opposition to the future, blind opposition to a piece of infrastructure that will fundamentally reshape the way our city grows and develops over time.

This is an important bill. We need to proceed with it today. It is a reform that is consistent with the approach adopted for other important pieces of public infrastructure, such as the secure mental health unit, and it is extremely limited in its scope, as it should be.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Ms Lawder): Stop the clock, please. Can I ask you to withdraw the word “blind” in keeping with previous Speaker’s rulings?

MR CORBELL: I beg your pardon, Madam Assistant Speaker?

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: “Blind opposition,” you said.

MR CORBELL: Are you suggesting that is unparliamentary?

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: In keeping with previous rulings of the Speaker.

MR CORBELL: I am not referring to “the” opposition. I am referring to their “blind” opposition, Madam Assistant Speaker. Is that truly unparliamentary?

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I think it is similar to a previous ruling that I made about “grubby”.

MR CORBELL: In the interests of not wanting to prolong the debate, I am happy to withdraw any offence.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR CORBELL: But I am very surprised at your ruling, Madam Assistant Speaker.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I presume that was not a qualification of your withdrawal?

MR CORBELL: Absolutely not. The bill is an important reform—

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

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Stop the clock.

Mr Coe: Whilst it might not have been a condition of his withdrawal, it may well have been a reflection on your ruling.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Coe. Mr Corbell, you may continue.

MR CORBELL: Thank you, Madam Assistant Speaker. The bill is an important part of facilitating this important piece of future infrastructure for our city. We need to reshape the way our city grows and develops. We need to provide a real, meaningful and powerful alternative to people using their private motor vehicle. We need to make sure that those people who will continue to have to use the private motor vehicle have less congestion than they will otherwise experience, which we know is the case under a business-as-usual environment. We have heard that from Ms Fitzharris. She knows, on behalf of her constituents in Gungahlin, what business as usual means for road congestion and travel time. We must reshape our city. This bill and the project it will enable timely consideration and assessment of are critical for seeing that realised. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (5.06): This bill facilitates the delivery of a key plank of the ACT Greens-Labor parliamentary agreement—that is, the construction of a light rail network. Both the Greens and the ALP took a proposal for light rail to the election and we are now at the pointy end where we need to ensure that all the planning levers are in place to ensure that it can roll out smoothly.

When the planning and development project facilitation legislation proposal was floated last year as a framework to establish planning clearances, it was quite controversial. All members of this place saw the very clear community feedback, and the proposal was withdrawn. I think the government learned some valuable lessons through that process, though, and it now has a much better understanding of what the community does and does not expect in terms of community involvement in our planning processes in relation to major priority projects that the government is keen to progress in a timely manner.

When that bill was discussed in this place, including through committee inquiry, many groups clearly said they would prefer each individual project to have its own project-specific legislation. I was given that feedback very clearly. I spoke to a number of the community organisations and they said, “No, don’t do it this way. Don’t create a general framework. If you want to take on a specific project, do it with a specific piece of legislation.” That is what this bill seeks to do.

Today we have a bill before us that is specifically for the light rail project. This bill does not create an overall precinct and it does not simply override entity advice such as from the Heritage Council or from the Conservator for Flora and Fauna. What it does do, though, is create specific definitions and criteria that should be clear enough for projects to be progressed without the community feeling excluded.

This bill is specifically designed to help enable construction and completion of light rail without considerable delays and, in particular, to help enable the government to meet the target date of 2016 for the beginning of construction. The framework of this bill still allows for each infrastructure proposal to have its own DA and run through normal public consultation processes. I think many people in Canberra are still unaware that the light rail project is underway, and it is now time for government to knuckle down and put all the right policies and regulations in place to be able to roll it out smoothly in the next few years.

The Greens have spent quite a while considering the merits of this bill and whether it was the right thing to do. I have come to the conclusion that this bill strikes the right balance between ensuring that the government is being open and transparent on light rail related planning and development issues and establishing a system that allows light rail to be rolled out in a timely and functional manner.

It is certainly worth clarifying that this bill does not extend to any other development proposals that may arise within the light rail corridor that are not directly related to light rail tracks or infrastructure. The approvals for installing light rail are already complex, given that the NCA approves proposals within the median strip and ACTPLA approves proposals outside this.

This legislation introduces six key changes to our planning legislation. Firstly, this bill introduces a clear definition of a development related to light rail. I know there are many concerns that this is the clause that will be abused, but the criteria as outlined in section 137A of the bill are very clear and specific. The proposal must facilitate the construction, ongoing operation and maintenance, repairs, refurbishment, relocation or replacement of light rail track or clearly light rail related infrastructure within one kilometre of existing or proposed light rail tracks.

The definition of “relevant infrastructure” is restricted to things such as fencing, access roads, parking, station amenities, entry and access points, substations and signalling and control facilities. This does not allow for infrastructure for any other kind of rail, including that it cannot be used for heavy rail or high speed rail.

The second key feature is that it restricts three avenues of community legal review for, and only for, DAs that fall under this legislation—that is, those directly related to light rail or light rail infrastructure. Firstly, it removes ACAT merit review. There is an interesting debate to be had about ACAT review, as it can be a very time-consuming process. It has been suggested that it would be preferable to review and reform the ACT process rather than remove access rights. This would improve the ACAT experience across the board, and not just for major government proposals. This is a worthy suggestion but unfortunately not one that can be done in a useful and timely manner right now. For now, the proposal in this bill is the best path forward in this area. It is also worth noting that proposals for light rail within the median strip are approved by the NCA, as Minister Corbell noted, and already exclude ACAT merit review.

The second avenue is that it removes Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act matters. I note that if the bilateral agreement with the federal government on EPBC matters is not progressed through the federal parliament, noting that it has been stuck in the Senate since mid last year, these clauses relating to protected matters may never commence.

The third area is that it requires any common law appeals in the Supreme Court to be lodged within 60 days. This should not be a large restriction on the community. I believe two months is enough time to ascertain whether someone has decided that they are so opposed to a proposal in the case of light rail infrastructure and whether there are grounds to appeal it while also giving timing certainty to the proponent.

The third key feature of this legislation is that ACTPLA is able to make declarations stating that a development is related to light rail, and this is a key part of this bill. One clear example of the use of this declaration is that we know that about seven transformers need to be installed for the initial stage of the city to Gungahlin section, and this legislation will help that process.

The fourth feature is that territory plan variations that specifically facilitate light rail will have a revised committee timetable expectation of reporting within six months but not before three months. This means variations will still be subject to inquiry using the same processes outlined in our standing orders. I do not believe this is a problem. The planning committee should be able to run a full and open process within this time frame and it still allows for the full public consultation process within committee inquiries.

The fifth feature is that ACTPLA, as the decision-maker, may depart from entity advice—that is, that of the Conservator for Flora and Fauna or the Heritage Council—on declared light rail related proposals in relation to registered trees and declared heritage sites only if they meet criteria relating to project risks. These criteria, as outlined in section 119A for merit track and section 138A for impact track, are quite specific and they can be used only if ACTPLA is satisfied that following the entity's advice will risk significant delay or impediment to the commencement or completion of the proposed development or will risk significant cost increases.

I make it clear as a Greens member that I am fully aware this could be a contentious issue and we do not take lightly the overriding of entity advice on registered trees or declared tree sites. It is also of importance to note that the application of these criteria does not apply in relation to protected matters—that is, matters of national threatened or endangered species that fall under the federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. Members and the public may be disappointed to hear that, although our current planning processes include these referrals, the legislation is quite weak in these areas and ACTPLA is already able to make decisions contrary to Heritage Council or conservator recommendations.

I know that some people are wondering why these clauses are needed, given this ability to override entity advice. I feel this bill probably strikes the right balance between ensuring that all the right environmental issues are being considered while also keeping our eye on the end game—in this case the rollout of light rail for the benefit of all Canberrans. To clarify, I underline the fact that all other environmental considerations in this legislation still stand. The Greens do not support any erosion of protection of our biodiversity in our planning system.

The last key change in this bill is the reduction in requirements for documentation accompanying a development application for light rail related proposals. This is a reflection of the more simple requirements for infrastructure proposals as opposed to residential or mixed use building proposals. It is worth noting that the development applications must still follow the rest of the standard DA process, including consultation requirements. If the proposal falls into the impact track, it still requires an EIS or an environmental significance opinion. In my view, this bill provides a better

alternative to the use of call-in powers through using the normal DA channels and processes but applying appropriate criteria for light rail-related infrastructure, thus applying a more transparent and democratic process than the use of ministerial call-in powers.

As I have outlined, this bill establishes clear criteria that will allow our planning authority to make declarations as to whether a proposal meets the definition of “light rail related”, and this definition is very clear. I am comfortable with these definitions and criteria and feel that once we have set those, we should keep decisions away from politicians and leave them in the hands of the planning authority. Many people continue to have concerns about the politicisation of our planning system. However, our current system is quite unusual around Australia in that it gives the vast majority of planning decisions to our independent statutory authority, ACTPLA. Thus, decisions on development applications are kept as far away as possible from our ACT politicians. This is a good system and one I continue to strongly support. We certainly would not want to have the planning problems we have seen with some of our state counterparts.

Let me turn to the issue of appeal rights, because this bill also introduces a range of limitations such as those on appeal rights. The Greens are strong advocates for community appeal rights. However, we also agree there are times when society’s overall goals should be able to come at the expense of individual needs so long as they do not infringe on basic human rights. As removal of certain appeal rights is a key part of the intent of this legislation, it is important to reflect on the limits of this legislation. It does not relate to the broad range of other developments, the type which could take any number of forms and which are typically the subject of appeals. These might be private developments, residential or mixed use, for example, high-rise buildings, low-rise buildings and buildings taking a variety of forms. As we know, it is sometimes a complex question as to whether developments such as these are appropriate, and they are sometimes subject to appeals and review. The same planning controls and appeal rights remain in place for these types of developments.

I do not want to repeat myself but I reiterate that this bill only relates to a clear category of light rail infrastructure—the nuts and bolts of the project itself. In the course of light rail in particular, if opponents of the project decide to hold up the project, this will put up the cost of the project and therefore cost taxpayers more. We do not want the cost of a major government project increased due to delays that are based on opposition to the project and not to a specific component of it.

That is a very important point to reflect on. It is clear that members of the opposition and some members of the public are ideologically opposed to this project. They will seek to use appeal mechanisms to curtail this project not because of the merit of the placement of a transformer or the necessity of putting certain works in place that are specifically related to light rail; they will use it as a means to kibosh the project, or at least endeavour to. That is really what we are talking about here. This is not about precluding the community. There remain a range of consultation processes and various channels so the community can remain deeply involved in this project and provide feedback. This is about dealing with people who will seek to litigate this project for reasons beyond the merits of the individual piece of infrastructure being discussed.

I note Mr Corbell has already spoken today about the release of a report prepared by the University of Canberra's Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis and tabled by the Speaker this week in the Assembly. That report on the Latimer House principles and the ACT Legislative Assembly supports the government's decision as outlined in this bill to limit appeals on major infrastructure projects like light rail, so it is worth reflecting on that. I know Mr Corbell has. This group is well respected and I am fairly sure they interviewed quite a few members of the Assembly in putting their report together.

The report states:

The approach to seek legislative approval through the whole of the Assembly to limit rights to judicial review (as in the case of Light Rail) seems a satisfactory and democratic safeguard to the exercise of such limitations in the ACT's Westminster system of government and an appropriate way to avoid additional costs being imposed on ACT taxpayers.

The report also notes:

In some matters the right of appeal can be seen as a highly over-rated commodity and itself a cause of concern to the citizenry.

Finally, the report goes on to state:

The Government has recently sought to limit appeal rights through legislation in regard to plans for a light rail system in northern Canberra and Gungahlin in an attempt to reduce the additional cost to the project of being subjected to delay and appeal by narrow vested interests. Its justification for this action has been that the project is part of an electoral mandate. It seems that the unfettered rights of narrow vested interests to seek to thwart broader interests of the citizens of the ACT needs reflection and review if the very expensive and most often fruitless processes are to be avoided.

I think these are thoughtful comments made by people who study governance and are considered expert. They consult with other academics and they are very much operating in this space. I think the observations they make are quite fascinating and reflect the thought that has gone into this legislation and the balancing of interests that is sought to be made. I certainly understand that such appeals held up the light rail project on the Gold Coast, and that is the sort of issue we are trying to avoid here.

I conclude by making the following remarks. This bill is a very different piece of legislation to the planning and development project facilitation bill we examined earlier last year. Since then, the project-specific legislation for the Symonston secure mental health facility was passed last June, and I do not believe there have been any substantial concerns about how that has progressed. In a similar vein, this bill paves the way for a clear rollout of light rail specific infrastructure. Although the community is often naturally fearful of new large-scale projects, I think this legislation is a fair and open way to progress light rail.

It is the most visionary, bold step that an ACT government has taken for a long time, perhaps in all the years of self-government. I am pleased to be part of this government today that is able to deliver on this vision for Canberra. My decision-making on this bill has been careful and considered. I am confident these proposed changes will not do the community any disservice nor will the changes detrimentally impact the integrity of the planning system.

I want to add that this seems to be in contrast to the Liberal Party's position, which is an automatic and shrill opposition and is certainly designed to provoke opposition to light rail by unnecessarily worrying the community. This fact becomes very obvious when we look at the Liberal Party's previous history on these matters. Members may remember that the Labor government passed the Gungahlin Drive Extension Authorisation Bill in 2004 with the support of the Liberal Party. That bill was considerably different to the one before us today. That bill basically gave the minister complete power to make any decisions in regard to the Gungahlin Drive extension, removed the ability to object and gave no real criteria to guide that decision-making. The Liberal Party supported that bill.

When considering the much more reasonable bill before the Assembly today, the Liberal Party is outraged. It is quite clear to me that the outrage is not based on principle but, rather, is based on a political campaign strategy to oppose and to undermine light rail. That is what this is really about, because in 2004 it suited them fine to have a far more draconian piece of legislation put through, but a piece of legislation like this today—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MR RATTENBURY: I note that Mr Coe's level of interjection increases when he gets uncomfortable. This piece of legislation today is far more reasonable. It is far less draconian than the legislation the Liberal Party was happy to support in 2004. This simply underlines their political opportunism and the fact that they are willing to whip up fear in the community to serve their end of trying to oppose light rail for the future of this city. I will be supporting this bill before us today.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Planning, Minister for Roads and Parking, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations, Minister for Children and Young People and Minister for Ageing) (5.24), in reply: I thank members for their comments during today's debate. I am pleased to support the Planning and Development (Capital Metro) Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. As we are aware, this bill was presented to the Assembly on 27 November 2014. The bill is an integral component of the government's program for the timely delivery of the first stage of the light rail system from Gungahlin to the city. It is also integral to the extension of the light rail to further areas.

I note that the scrutiny of bills committee commented on the bill in its scrutiny report 27 of 3 February this year. I confirm I have responded to the committee in my letter dated 9 February. In my response I noted also that the committee indicated via footnote that the explanatory statement incorrectly refers to appeal rights in the

context of AD(JR) review rather than to rights of review. I hereby table a revised explanatory statement to the bill to correct that error. I thank the committee for that observation.

As I said during the presentation speech, the bill is designed to smooth the way for the timely delivery of capital metro, the light rail project. The bill does this by amending the Planning and Development Act, the Planning and Development Regulation 2008 and the Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1989—also known as the AD(JR) Act—to remove potential legal and administrative delays for the project. The bill proposes changes to the territory plan variation and development assessment processes and puts in place certain limitations on the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal, ACAT, merit review and Supreme Court review rights.

I take this opportunity to underline the significance of the light rail project itself and some of the key measures taken by this bill to expedite it. The capital metro light rail project is critical to the future of Canberra. Canberra is a growing city. According to Environment and Planning Directorate population predictions, Canberra is growing towards a population of 455,000 people by 2031. We need forward-thinking planning strategies and the appropriate infrastructure to support and address this growth.

There is an ongoing need to diversify the Canberra economy. This is vital to the maintenance of a prosperous society. Our largest economic sectors are government administration, defence and construction. This leaves our economy vulnerable to shifts in federal government administrative policy. Infrastructure investment is a proven economic stimulus and is one important catalyst for more jobs, investment, improved community facilities, and more productive and healthy lifestyles.

Light rail infrastructure will create alternatives to car travel, reduce personal vehicle operating costs and improve access to services for individuals who do not own cars. The capital metro light rail project will provide a more sustainable alternative to car travel and reduce car use and greenhouse gas emissions from petrol engines.

The project will create jobs. The Ernst & Young report *Capital Metro: job creation analysis* found that the project would stimulate the ACT economy. The report estimated that more than 3,500 jobs—

Mr Coe: Not 50,000?

MR GENTLEMAN: will be supported during the construction of the capital metro project. Hold on, Mr Coe; we are getting there. When combined with the associated developments, it is estimated the capital metro project will have facilitated a footprint of around 50,000 jobs by 2047. This was echoed by Mr Smyth yesterday during the debate, as he read that report as well.

I would like to emphasise that the scope of the bill is limited and well targeted. In particular, the bill does not amount to a significant overhaul of the planning and development assessment process. The amendments are project specific and tailored to deliver a key priority of the government. While there will be some restrictions on rights of review, the development assessment process, including public notification, will still apply.

As I said during presentation, the amendments made by this bill will only apply to the delivery of the light rail system and associated infrastructure. Further, the associated infrastructure must be for the purpose of the light rail and must be within, or partly within, one kilometre of the proposed light rail track. For the sake of clarity, let me provide some examples of what associated infrastructure would include: light rail stops, shelters, ticketing equipment and bicycle storage; electricity supply infrastructure, including substations and overhead powerlines; and signalling and other control facilities.

I also note that clause 15 of the bill inserts a new definition into the dictionary of the act of the term "light rail". This term is defined as a system of transport for public passengers using lightweight rail and rolling stock. Taken together, there are quite specific parameters on the scope of the bill.

The measures in this bill have been consciously developed with the future in mind. The location of the light rail is not a matter that is determined or restricted under this bill. The bill will apply to light rail and related infrastructure whenever and wherever it is constructed in the territory. The measures can be applied to all stages in the construction of the capital metro project. These include the first stage construction of the proposed light rail from Gungahlin to the city centre as well as any subsequent stages.

The measures in the bill will automatically apply to any extension of the light rail from the city centre to Weston Creek, Tuggeranong or any other destination. The proposed location and extent of the light rail is a matter for government decision and authorisation through the development approval system. The bill proposes changes to the development assessment process to expedite the construction of the capital metro light rail project. The bill proposes some limitations on third-party merit review by ACAT and appeals to the Supreme Court.

As I said during presentation, review processes through ACAT and the Supreme Court are important avenues for review and accountability. However, on occasion these procedures can lead to extended delay. We have heard from Minister Corbell today on how that can occur in a commercial sense. The process can lead to extended delay, uncertainty and costs for the proponent, the government and importantly, of course, for the wider community. A delay can amount to months or, in some cases, years. This uncertainty can be especially problematic for developments that are a high priority for government and the community when their implementation in a timely and certain manner is of the prime importance.

The review process can also mean uncertainty as to the final outcome of the development approval process. The bill proposes some proportionate limitations on these review processes to improve efficiency and administrative certainty for the capital metro project. Clauses 16 and 17 of the bill amend schedule 3 of the Planning and Development Regulation to provide that a development proposal that is related to light rail is exempt from third-party ACAT merit review. This applies to development proposals in the merit and impact assessment tracks.

I note that this approach to limit appeal rights through the Assembly where projects are of benefit to the ACT community as a whole has recently been supported by an independent report. We have heard the details of that from Minister Corbell this afternoon. The report was tabled by the Speaker this week. In addition, clause 4 of the bill amends the schedule of the AD(JR) Act to provide that review under the act does not apply to a decision in relation to the development proposal related to light rail.

Contrary to Mr Coe's statements, this measure does not remove all avenues of review or appeal. The ability to seek review by the Supreme Court under the common law or inherent jurisdictions of the Supreme Court is retained. However, time limits will apply. Clause 12 of the bill inserts a new section 137D into the Planning and Development Act, which provides that any person may not start a proceeding in a court in relation to the decision on a development proposal that is related to light rail more than 60 days after the day the decision is made.

The restrictions proposed by this bill will not apply to a development approval decision involving a protected matter as defined by the Planning and Development (Bilateral Agreement) Amendment Act 2014, or the bilateral agreement amendment act as it is known. Clause 5 of the bill ensures that a development decision involving a protected matter will continue to be the subject of review under the AD(JR) Act.

Clauses 17 and 19 of the bill provide that development approval decisions in the merit and impact track involving protected matters will continue to be subject to ACAT merit review. As I said in the presentation speech, the bilateral agreement amendment act was made to enable the commonwealth to accredit ACT environmental assessment processes under the proposed one-stop shop processes. Full review rights are retained for these decisions to protect matters of national environmental significance and to retain the potential for a one-stop shop approval process here in the ACT consistent with negotiations with the commonwealth.

I would like to make it clear that the existing legislation on matters of national environmental significance will not be affected by the proposed measures in this bill. Contrary to the scare tactics we have heard from Mr Coe today, and taking into account comments from the community councils through the PETAMS inquiry earlier this year, the development application, assessment and approval processes, including public notification and the right to comment, will remain the same as for standard development applications.

In conclusion, this bill makes important amendments to the Planning and Development Act to expedite the construction of a project of major significance to the Canberra community. The measures proposed by this bill are proportionate and appropriate to the future development of capital metro.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is the right time to act on light rail. We cannot afford to wait until our growing city's traffic congestion and infrastructure problems become too large for us to fix.

Question put:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 7

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

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Detail stage

Clauses 1 to 7, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 8.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (5.39): I will be opposing clause 8 of this bill because it gives ACTPLA the authority to disregard advice from the Heritage Council and the Conservator of Flora and Fauna for development proposals in the merit track. We believe that removing the protection is unnecessary and sets a dangerous precedent. We would ask the question: why should the light rail project be exempt from the normal planning process—the very process that every other developer in Canberra must comply with? If there is ever a case to set this precedent, it should be done far more carefully and not in this rushed way by a government that has not consulted on the bill.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Planning, Minister for Roads and Parking, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations, Minister for Children and Young People and Minister for Ageing) (5.40): The removal of this measure as proposed by the opposition is not supported. This measure is essential to permit the decision maker to take proper account of and give due weight to the priority nature of the capital metro project when assessing the relevant development application against government referral agency advice. The measure has a limited targeted effect. The provision retains the ability of referral agencies to comment on proposals and the decision maker must still take this into account in assessing and deciding the application for development approval.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (5.41): I support Mr Coe in his opposition to this and the other clauses that he is moving against. I will speak to all of those on this occasion. The issues in relation to this bill, as was the case in relation to the project facilitation bill, most of all take away the rights of members of the community to have a say in this process. The issue for members of the opposition has been that, if this is such a great process, why is it being done without very much reference to the people of the ACT?

It was interesting to listen to Mr Rattenbury speak about the Gungahlin Drive facilitation legislation that was passed in 2003. He said, “That was a terrible piece of legislation because it took away AAT rights,” but this is an all right piece of legislation when it takes away AAT rights and judicial review because we are doing it in a more nuanced way.

I think it is useful to put on the record what actually happened in the period 2000 to 20003 which culminated in the passage of the Gungahlin Drive authorisation legislation. There was an inquiry by a committee of this Assembly in 2000-01 that looked at the options for Gungahlin Drive. There was an inquiry that took a very long time and took many hundreds of submissions from the people of the ACT. There was an election which was strongly fought not on whether or not we should build Gungahlin Drive but on what was the preferred route. So the question was put essentially to the electorate.

After that there was a lengthy process where the government, which had gone to the election with a particular route, had to reconsider that route. There was considerable inquiry into the reconsidering of that route, and they came up with the current route. All through that process—Mr Rattenbury would not remember because I suspect he was not even in the country at the time—there were appeals to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, as it was at the time, and eventually through AD(JR) an appeal to the Supreme Court, which held up the project for about 18 months. I introduced a bill called projects of territorial significance, and Mr Wood—

Mr Corbell: A point of order.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Resume your seat, Mrs Dunne. On a point of order, Mr Corbell.

Mr Corbell: As interesting as this recitation of history is for those of us who were there, we are at the detail stage and we are debating clause 8, and the specifics of clause 8. I know Mrs Dunne missed the opportunity to speak in the in-principle debate, but that is as it is and she needs to confine her remarks now to the detail of clause 8, not to some wide-ranging debate about the Gungahlin Drive extension, the legislation she introduced 10 years ago, and a whole range of other matters. I simply ask you to ask Mrs Dunne to be relevant and speak to the specific clause that is before the Assembly.

Mr Coe: Madam Deputy Speaker, on the point of order.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Coe.

Mr Coe: Clause 8 is with regard to the government being able to disregard advice from the Heritage Council and the Conservator of Flora and Fauna. That is, in effect, what happened with regard to Gungahlin Drive. I think it is a very important precedent that should be considered for the consideration of clause 8.

MRS DUNNE: On the point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker—

Mr Hanson: Could we stop the clock, please?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Stop the clock. Yes, Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: I did say at the beginning of my remarks that I was going to speak once to all of Mr Coe's amendments, so my comments will be somewhat more broad ranging than just the taking away of rights in relation to the Conservator of Flora and Fauna.

Members interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, this is not a debate. Mr Barr, Mr Coe and everybody else, this is not a debate across the room.

Members interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do we want to get this finished or not? I suggest we stop talking across the room. I will get some advice. Technically, Mr Corbell is correct. In the spirit of collegiality across the chamber, I will allow you to continue, but I would ask you to be extremely brief and get to the point so that we can get on with the rest of the clauses, Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: Madam Deputy Speaker, the point I was making is that this bill takes away rights in a way that the previous bill did not, because the previous bill had canvassed the ideas in the community. After the matter had been through the AAT and the Supreme Court and all of those issues had been resolved, it was agreed between the parties. Everybody in this place agreed except for Kerrie Tucker, who took the very principled position that even though the electorate had agreed, the matter had gone to the AAT, there had been an inquiry and there had already been one round of judicial review, she wanted the opportunity for more. She took a principled position, which is a bit of a departure from the current position taken by the Greens member in this place.

The other issue is that there has been no reference in any way of any matter relating to capital metro to a committee in this place, on the policy of the issue. There has been the project facilitation bill, which was one aspect of it, but there has not been a reference to any committee to take the pulse of the community about what the community thinks about this. Everyone has been very keen to talk about the recently tabled report on Latimer House, but you also have to read the recommendations of that report, which say that this Assembly should consider more often the referral of policy matters to policy-based committees before they are passed into legislation.

That is something we have not done in this Assembly and we have done it decreasingly over the years when this Labor government has been in control of the place. If they have the numbers, they do not want to hear from the ACT community. It is an act of cowardice and it means that what will be happening here through the facilitation of this legislation is that this project will be more easily ram raided through and the people of the ACT will have less opportunity to object. And they have had no opportunity to participate in the decision making on this. That is why this legislation should be opposed and the amendments from Mr Coe should be supported.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mrs Dunne, resume your seat. There is no amendment; he is just opposing the clause. There is no amendment before us at the moment. The question is that clause 8 be agreed to.

Clause 8 agreed to.

Clause 9 agreed to.

Clause 10.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (5.49): The Canberra Liberals oppose clause 10 of the bill because it gives ACTPLA the authority to disregard advice about heritage, including Indigenous heritage and trees, regarding development proposals in the impact track. As I have already said, we believe this is an unacceptable removal of the planning process for a project which is unjustified.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Planning, Minister for Roads and Parking, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations, Minister for Children and Young People and Minister for Ageing) (5.50): The removal of this measure, as proposed by the opposition, is not supported. This measure is essential to permit the decision maker to take proper account of and give due weight to the priority nature of the capital metro project when assessing the relevant development application against the government referral agency advice. The measure has a limited target effect. The provision retains the ability of referral agencies to comment on proposals, and the decision maker must still take this into account in assessing and deciding the application for development approval.

Clause 10 agreed to.

Clause 11 agreed to.

Clause 12.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (5.51): I move amendment No 5 circulated in my name [*see schedule 1 at page 337*].

The Canberra Liberals believe that the declaration that a development relates to light rail should be made a disallowable instrument, and I hope Mr Rattenbury thinks so too. This ensures that the decision is open to scrutiny from the Assembly. Light rail is the biggest infrastructure project the territory government has ever commissioned or will commission and if the government gets its way it will only get bigger. Therefore, the Assembly should have the opportunity to be able to disallow something which the government or the minister put forward. Therefore, we believe that a disallowable instrument is better than a notifiable instrument. Of course, it will only get up if a majority of people in the Assembly support it. We do not know why anybody in this place would not support the amendment to convert it from being a notifiable to a disallowable instrument.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Planning, Minister for Roads and Parking, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations, Minister for Children and Young People and Minister for Ageing) (5.52): The government does not support the opposition's amendment. Given the limited nature of the declaration, it would seem inappropriate to elevate this function to one that requires Legislative Assembly scrutiny by making it a disallowable instrument as proposed. Making this instrument a disallowable instrument would create a level of uncertainty for the project. For example, a development application could be granted on the basis of such a declaration and then subsequently the declaration could be disallowed by the Assembly. This would add to the potential for uncertainty, contrary to the intent of the whole of the provision. Even the mere theoretical possibility of disallowance would make it difficult for relevant agencies and businesses to plan ahead.

The light rail declaration is a limited measure with the following limited features: the declaration would be definitive evidence of the development proposals that are related to light rail; the declaration would be an optional measure to be used on those rare occasions, if any, where there is some doubt or perceived doubt as to whether a development proposal is related to the light rail or not. In such a situation it would be possible for the Planning and Land Authority to declare that the proposal is related to light rail. The declaration will then amount to evidence in itself of this assertion, should the matter ever be pursued in court. The point of this declaration facility is to permit the authority to take action, if necessary, to clarify this point and so limit the potential for counterproductive litigation in the courts or wherever a development proposal is in fact related to light rail.

Question put:

That amendment No 5 be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 7

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

Noes 8

Mr Barr	Ms Fitzharris
Ms Berry	Mr Gentleman
Dr Bourke	Ms Porter
Mr Corbell	Mr Rattenbury

Question so resolved in the negative.

Clause 12 agreed to.

Clause 13.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (5.56): The Canberra Liberals oppose clause 13, which dramatically reduces the documentation requirements for development applications associated with light rail. The government should be doing the absolute opposite. If they are going to be limiting consultation, limiting appeal rights and limiting advice, they should be boosting documentation. Instead they are doing the opposite. They are actually decreasing the documentation they require. Any other development

application in the country will require more documentation, it seems, than this light rail project. It seems that if you do an extension on your house, you are going to require more documentation than to build a light rail project. It is just crazy, absolutely crazy stuff.

The Canberra Liberals oppose clause 13 because of the reduced documentation. We believe that Canberrans deserve more information about this project, not less. The government's pet project should not be approved without proper scrutiny. The light rail project is the first major infrastructure project in the ACT that will feature this provision. The government should not be allowed to push it through without proper documentation. Again, light rail is no different to any other project, and the standard procedure as detailed in the Planning and Development Act should not be altered.

Clause 13 agreed to.

Remainder of bill, by leave, taken as a whole.

Question put:

That this bill be agreed to.

Ayes 8

Noes 7

Mr Barr
Ms Berry
Dr Bourke
Mr Corbell

Ms Fitzharris
Mr Gentleman
Ms Porter
Mr Rattenbury

Mr Coe
Mrs Dunne
Mr Hanson
Mrs Jones

Ms Lawder
Mr Smyth
Mr Wall

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr Herbert Roberts

MRS JONES (Molonglo) (5.59): I rise today to honour Herbert Roberts, a man who gave so much to the city of Canberra and whose efforts can be seen through many of our most well-known organisations and institutions.

Bert was born on 21 September 1936 and only recently passed away, on 31 December 2014, at the age of 78. He was a softly spoken man with a big heart who served Canberra and wanted to develop our city to be the best it could be. One of the many things which Bert Roberts is famous for is running Millers in Manuka, along with his wife, Dorothy. Millers is an iconic fashion outlet that was started by Dorothy's mother, Mary Miller, in 1957, and ownership of the fashion outlet was kept in the family until it was eventually sold in 2012.

A geologist by profession, philanthropist in his spare time, as well as a finance and education expert, Bert Roberts had his fingers in many pies. He was also incredibly involved in local community organisations, one of these being the Rotary Club of Canberra East, of which Bert served on the board as vocational services director between 1973 and 1974, community services director from 1974 to 1975, club service director from 1976 to 1977 and president from 1977 to 1978. He also served as serjeant-at-arms for a number of years and was named a Paul Harris fellow in 1983, one of the most prestigious awards in Rotary.

Bert was also well known throughout the education sector. He served as a board member and also vice-chairman at Canberra Girls Grammar School from 1979 to 2000, as deputy chairman of the Canberra Grammar Girls School Gabriel Foundation from 1981 to 2000, as chairman of the Gabriel Foundation investment committee from 1986 to 2000, as a trustee of the school staff superannuation from 1989 to 2000, and as a member of the ACT Schools Authority from 1980 to 1982. He was on the Schools Commission's ACT planning and finance committee from 1982 to 1988 and the Birrigai outdoor school advisory committee from 1982 to 2005.

Bert was also heavily involved with the local business sector, being the president of the Chamber of Commerce from 1981 to 1982, treasurer of the CARD-Business Council from 1983 to 1984 and chairman of the ACT Block Grant Authority from 1990 to 1995.

In 2003 he was awarded with a centenary medal for services to business and education. These are just some of the many roles that Bert played in the education and business sector.

Another organisation which has benefited greatly from Bert's hard work is the St John Ambulance Association. He was a member of the council of St John Ambulance ACT Association from 1984 to 2007, secretary and/or treasurer of the ACT branch from 1984 to 1986, chairman and member of the national executive from 1996 to 2002 and national treasurer from 2002 to 2007. He became a Commander in the Order of St John in 1999 and was later knighted in the order in 2005. He also held a St John service medal.

Bert gave so much to the community of Canberra through these organisations, but what is often less well known is that he was a big supporter of the Liberal Party and a very active party member. Bert played an instrumental role in forming the ACT division of the Liberal Party, and we are the beneficiaries of his hard work. He was treasurer of the party for several years, and in those days the treasurer did more than just keep the books. There were no paid staff in the division when Bert was treasurer, and it was up to him to raise the funds, pay the bills and make vital decisions about the finances of the party.

Bert set the party up for the future and was a treasurer, finance director and chief fundraising officer all rolled into one. I am told by some of the founding members that Bert was the quiet achiever, who rarely spoke at meetings, but when he did have something to say it was certainly worth its weight in gold and everybody paid attention.

We in the Canberra Liberals today stand on the shoulders of all his hard work to set us up in those early days. The party as we know it was built on his efforts and those of other members crucial at that beginning period in the late 1980s and early 1990s. We are truly thankful and grateful for his efforts.

I pay tribute to Bert and his wife, Dorothy, and their two children and grandchildren and thank them for their hard work and self-sacrifice to help shape Canberra into the great city we know and love.

Closing the gap

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Community Services, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Women and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Social Inclusion and Equality) (6.04): Tomorrow will mark the anniversary of the apology to Australia's Indigenous peoples made by former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in 2008. While the day will be one of celebration and reflection, it is also a reminder to all Australians that reconciliation is an ongoing process which relies on a sustained commitment from all of us. It not only involves the symbolic and historical recognition of Australia's first peoples; it must also embody a commitment to equality in all aspects of life.

In his speech Kevin Rudd spoke about how the national apology should be used as a foundation for a new Australia that embraces the dignity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and works to alleviate the gaps in opportunity and standard of living which persist. The apology was a watershed moment, but at the time we acknowledged that words were not enough. We acknowledged that real and lasting healing would take time and would require ongoing support.

In the closing the gap report released this week by Prime Minister Tony Abbott, this reality is clearer than ever. In life expectancy, early childhood education, school education and employment outcomes, Australia is not meeting the targets which have been set. In some areas we are going backwards.

In the Prime Minister's own words, the report is profoundly disappointing. While money is not everything, it is pretty clear that cuts to essential services on the scale made by the commonwealth are having an impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The Prime Minister has again stated his commitment to turning these indicators around. I urge the commonwealth to revisit these funding decisions as part of that undertaking.

Since being appointed ACT Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, I have had very positive discussions with representatives of Canberra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Today I visited a community forum held by the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, facilitated by Professor Mick Dodson, to explore community attitudes around progress towards constitutional recognition. Members of the elected body volunteer large amounts of their time working for Canberra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and I look forward to working with them in progressing important local issues.

I encourage all my colleagues and Canberrans to stop and reflect on the significance of the national apology. We should celebrate the memory of that day and the progress it signified. We should also recommit ourselves to meeting our responsibilities around reconciliation and equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In finishing, I would like to acknowledge Gabriela Falzon for assisting in writing this speech for me.

Environment—Mugga Lane tip

MR WALL (Brindabella) (6.07): I rise this evening to place on the record the views of over 100 residents of Macarthur, Fadden, Gowrie, Gilmore and Chisholm regarding the overpowering stench coming from the Mugga Lane tip that they have had to endure and put up with for the entire summer period and in some instances well before that time. These residents have been reluctant to open windows at night, have avoided outdoor entertaining because of the smell and have faced hot summer days with dread because they know the smell will be overpowering.

I have heard from residents who have lived in the Macarthur and Fadden area for over 30 years, since the suburbs were built, that, despite having the occasional whiff of the tip on an occasion over the years, they have never before had to endure such an overwhelming stench for such a lengthy period. Residents undergoing chemotherapy have told me that the smell is particularly bad for them because of their heightened sense of smell. Others with disorders such as sleep apnoea cannot open their windows at night as the smell interferes with the operation of specialist equipment. Families with young children are reluctant to allow their kids outside to enjoy the fresh air because there simply has not been any.

One constituent said:

If it is within your power to convey our utter disgust and dissatisfaction to the minister, we will greatly appreciate it.

That is what I intend to do tonight. I will read a few paragraphs from emails I have received and place them on the record as the experiences the residents of Tuggeranong have endured over the past few months. One email says:

... the stench from the Mugga Lane tip has been so strong and overpowering that it is having an impact on our daily lives resulting in my wife and I at times being unable to sit outside, enjoy relaxing in the front or back gardens and our daily walks around Macarthur have also become unpleasant ... At times the smell is so revolting, and to prevent it from coming into our home, we've had to keep the windows and doors shut.

I quote from another resident:

... the stench is, at times, unbearable. It was not a pleasant experience on Christmas day and yesterday I almost threw up, so putrid was the stench. It never goes away completely. Our quality of life has been severely impacted without demonstration of care or recompense from the ACT Government. We have heard nothing from any Government Minister on this—but then it's not a 'good news story' so I am not surprised.

That resident goes on to say:

That TAMS simply says, ‘well, it is going to smell for a while’ is not good enough. And their excuses for taking twice as long as planned to complete the planned work are laughable.

Another resident says:

This year our summer has been ruined by the disgusting smell coming from the Mugga Lane tip. Instead of opening our windows and doors and enjoying the pleasant summer climate we have, on a number of days, been forced to close windows and shut doors and turn the air conditioner on. As retirees this is an added financial burden for us.

To put it simply, residents of Tuggeranong have had to endure horrendous smells over the summer months. The things we often take for granted, like hanging our washing on the clothesline to dry or utilising a cool breeze in the evening to cool the house after a hot summer’s day, have been hijacked by this abhorrent smell. The delight of an evening barbecue or a quiet night sitting outside on the deck, rightly enjoyed by many Canberrans in the warmer months, has been stolen from these residents over this summer.

Let me say this: overwhelmingly the people of Tuggeranong, particularly in these suburbs, are feeling like second-class citizens. They are feeling neglected and ignored by ACT Labor and the lone representative of the ACT Greens on this issue. To finish, I quote from a Fadden resident:

We feel that the ACT government has been negligent in not providing a safe living environment and they may be open to action from residents for the negligence in the event of health problems.

Only partly in jest, we thought that because the smell was so bad it might be coming from the silly and expensive light rail project that we will not get any benefit from but will be expected to pay exorbitant amounts for.

Residents of Tuggeranong deserve better, and I am here to make sure that this happens.

Professor Michael Raupach

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (6.11): This week Australia lost one of its passionate advocates for action on climate change—ANU researcher Professor Michael Raupach, the eminent climate scientist and climate change communicator, who passed away on Tuesday. Professor Raupach will be sadly missed for the contribution he made to climate science, for his pertinent commentary on climate change and, by those who knew him well, for his kindness and his dignity. He was greatly liked and respected by his colleagues in the scientific community, who have described him as an exceptional scientist, an exemplary person and a brilliant scientist, a great mentor and a generous man in every way.

Professor Raupach was a scientist who believed that scientists should step up and engage in the public debate on climate change, and he urged his colleagues to do so. He was eloquent in his assessment of the situation we find ourselves in on this planet. In an online tribute, Brisbane-based journalist Graham Readfearn shares Professor Raupach's thoughtful response to a question he posed last year about the state of public discourse on climate change:

The greatest cause for sorrow is the widespread inability of the public discussion to recognise the whole picture.

Much of the political discourse reduces the complexities of climate change to political football ("axe the tax"); much media reporting sees only the hook to today's passing story; many interest groups want to use climate change to proselytise for their particular get-out-of-jail free card (nuclear power, carbon farming).

All of this misses or trivialises the real, systemic significance of climate change: that humankind is encountering the finitude of our planet, confronting the need to share and protect our endowment from nature, and realising that much will have to change to make this possible.

Professor Raupach was appointed director of the ANU Climate Change Institute in early 2014 after a long career at the CSIRO. He was a Fellow of the CSIRO, the Australian Academy of Science, the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering and the American Geophysical Union. Professor Raupach was the co-founder of the global carbon project, an international project studying natural and human influences on the global carbon cycle and their impact on climate. Between 2000 and 2008 he co-chaired the global carbon project, leading a global research program involving hundreds of scientists, practitioners and policymakers from around the world.

Mike's research, leadership and personal commitment is understood to have been instrumental in making the global carbon project a scientifically rich, innovative and socially relevant international collaboration. Throughout his career, Professor Raupach published more than 150 scientific papers, 50 reports and edited two books. He was also a contributing author of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change fourth assessment report.

I have it on good advice too that Professor Raupach was also a classically trained pianist who loved music and was a good songwriter of over 50 folk songs, having even produced a CD.

Former Climate Change Institute director Professor Will Steffen wrote this tribute to Michael:

Mike was an outstanding scientist, always rigorous and insightful. He was brilliant at connecting his science with the policy community and with society generally, always with respect, dignity and thoughtfulness. He was a wonderful human being. We are all going to miss him very much.

Professor Raupach passed away peacefully after a brief illness, aged 64, surrounded by his family at his home in Canberra. I would like to acknowledge his significant and important contribution and offer my condolences to his family and friends.

Life Unlimited Church

MR COE (Ginninderra) (6.15): I rise tonight to speak about work of the Life Unlimited Church, or LifeUC. LifeUC was formerly known as the Canberra Assembly of God. The church commenced in 1964 with six people and built a multi-function hall and office in Cook in 1974. A new congregation was planted in the Tuggeranong valley in 1986 and a sanctuary was built in 1994. By 2001 the church had grown and moved to its centre campus located in the former Charnwood High School. As the church continued to grow, a new campus was established at CSIRO in 2006. The Civic campus is now located in New Acton, at the Palace Electric Cinema.

As well as holding several services each weekend, LifeUC is involved in a number of community programs. HandUp is a food-care service for people who are struggling financially. People are welcome to visit HandUp as often as they need to seek assistance with food supplies. The Re-Runs op shop provides pre-loved clothing, magazines, books, shoes, toys and household items at a minimal cost.

In partnership with a range of organisations, Life College provides courses and study pathways for local church members. The church also provides life groups, Sunday morning activities for children, youth groups, a creative arts program, leadership and team training events and connect groups. Church members are involved in mission work in the Pan-Asia region, which includes Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos and Vietnam. The church supports them financially, in prayer and through visiting where possible.

LifeUC is also involved in Christians Against Poverty, a national debt counselling charity which offers hope and a solution to anyone in debt, through its unique in-depth service.

In October last year I was pleased to attend the celebration of 50 years of LifeUC. The church has grown significantly in these 50 years and it has become a valued part of the community in the ACT. I would like to place on the record my thanks to all the people, most of them volunteers, who give of their time to serve in the church and their wider community. I particularly thank the church's senior pastors, Sean and Lynda Stanton. I congratulate LifeUC on their 50 years of service to the community. For more information about the church I recommend that members visit www.lifeuc.com.au.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.17 pm until Tuesday, 17 February 2015, at 10 am.

Schedules of amendments

Schedule 1

Planning and Development (Capital Metro) Amendment Bill 2014

Amendments moved by Mr Coe

1

Clause 8

Page 5, line 1—

[oppose the clause]

3

Clause 10

Page 6, line 1—

[oppose the clause]

5

Clause 12

Proposed new section 137B (4) and note

Page 8, line 25—

omit proposed new section 137B (4) and note, substitute

(4) A declaration is a disallowable instrument.

Note A disallowable instrument must be notified, and presented to the Legislative Assembly, under the Legislation Act.

6

Clause 13

Page 9, line 17—

[oppose the clause]

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Answers to questions

Roads—Constitution Avenue (Question No 347)

Mr Coe asked the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, upon notice, on 23 October 2014:

In relation to the stated \$42 million upgrade to Constitution Avenue, what is the cost of, or, if no accurate cost figure is available, the estimated cost of (a) removing the trees on Constitution Avenue, (b) relocating the utility pipes and wires under Constitution Avenue, (c) planting new trees on Constitution Avenue, (d) constructing the upgrades and (e) landscaping Constitution Avenue when the upgrade is completed.

Mr Rattenbury: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (a) The cost of tree removal is approximately \$250,000
- (b) The cost of relocating utilities is approximately \$9.5m
- (c) The cost of the supply of new trees is approximately \$1.0m and the installation of new trees is approximately \$500,000
- (d) The cost of constructing the road upgrades is approximately \$16.5m
- (e) The cost of constructing the landscaping components is approximately \$9.5m.

Energy—renewable (Question No 357)

Ms Lawder asked the Minister for the Environment, upon notice, on 30 October 2014:

- (1) For each agency for each of the years 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14 (a) what proportion of energy consumption was from renewable energy sources, (b) how much renewable energy was used in kilowatt hours and (c) what was the cost of energy consumption, broken down as to renewable and non-renewable energy sources.
- (2) During that period was there at any time a policy or government directive that agencies should reduce their consumption of energy from renewable sources; if so, (a) what was the nature of that policy or directive, (b) what was the rationale for that policy or directive, (c) when was that policy or directive issued, (d) by how much in each year was energy consumption from renewable resources to be reduced, (e) what were the required budget savings for each year, (f) what impact did that policy or directive have on the ability of the ACT to meet the Government's renewable energy targets and (g) when will the policy or directive be lifted.

Mr Corbell: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) ACT Property Group, CMTEDD purchases renewable energy on behalf of all ACT Government agencies. As this is purchased in a single contract it is not possible to attribute it on a Directorate basis.

Question	1 (a)	1 (b)	
	% Renewable Energy Result (Target)	Renewable Energy purchased (kWh)	Total electricity consumption (kWh)
2009-10	32.6% (30.0%)	49,459,850	156,719,339
2010-11	32.9% (32.5%)	52,246,439	158,880,438
2011-12	37.7% (37.5%)	60,616,405	160,643,392
2012-13	4.7% (5.0%)	6,987,000	148,002,712
2013-14	4.9% (5.0%)	7,530,000	154,702,868

- 1 (c) Cost of energy consumption

Question	(c)	
	Renewable Energy Cost	General electricity Cost (excluding renewable)
2009-10	\$2,043,440	\$20,081,906
2010-11	\$2,476,773	\$22,996,333
2011-12	\$1,831,344	\$24,187,977
2012-13	\$287,445	\$25,899,179
2013-14	\$270,854	\$25,755,337

- (2)

(a) In 2012 the government agreed to temporarily suspend its 37.5% GreenPower target and reduce this commitment to 5% until 2018 19. As a consequence, freed-up funding was re-directed to the government's Carbon Neutral Loan Fund to fund energy efficiency projects under the Carbon Neutral ACT Government Framework.

(b) It was determined that the funding allocated to annual GreenPower purchases would be more effectively utilised in maximising energy efficiency and long term cost saving opportunities in government buildings and operations in the first instance, before a further decision was made to purchase GreenPower, or another form of carbon offset, to meet the government's target of carbon neutrality by 2020. The government is of the opinion that this change of focus from purchasing offsets to energy efficiency savings represents better value for money from the allocated funding.

Once energy efficiency measures are implemented they provide ongoing savings for the life of the infrastructure.

(c) The Carbon Neutral ACT Government Framework was endorsed in August 2012.

(d) ACT Government GreenPower purchases were reduced from 37.5% to 5% in the 2012 13 reporting period.

(e) The initiative was designed to be budget neutral in that funding previously provided for GreenPower purchases would be re-directed towards energy efficiency measures through the Carbon Neutral Government Loan Fund. The initiative enabled the employment of two Energy Project Officers (housed in ACT Property Group), with specialist knowledge in energy efficiency opportunities, to identify and implement energy savings projects across government. Examples of energy savings projects implemented include:

- heating and cooling system efficiencies at Dame Pattie Menzies House, Macarthur House, 1 Moore St and Belconnen Library;
- addressing overnight and weekend energy use anomalies and powerfactor correction at numerous sites (detection of equipment malfunction prior to catastrophic failure, eliminating excess demand charges and facility downtime);
- trial of innovative ultraviolet technology for energy efficiency and indoor air quality improvements;
- measurement and verification of initiatives to quantify outcomes;
- capital upgrade project advice on best practise approaches to gas boiler, chiller and air conditioning upgrades; and
- inclusion of best practise maintenance requirements in key service contracts.

Carbon Neutral Government Fund (the Fund)

Fourteen ACT Government projects to the value of \$6.3 million have been conducted under the Fund since 2010. These projects have ongoing annual cost and energy savings from the date of implementation. Estimated annual outcomes/savings from the Fund are:

\$1.6 million in cost savings

8,543 tonnes CO₂-e avoided

9,302 megawatt hours of electricity reduced

3,969 megajoules of natural gas reduced.

Large-scale LED lighting projects are upgrading the internal lighting in 90 Government buildings and expect to achieve a cost saving of \$1.4 million per year and reduce electricity use by 20-30% at project sites.

- (f) The Government's 90% Renewable Energy Target will largely be achieved through the implementation of *the Electricity Feed-in (Large-scale Renewable Energy Generation) Act 2011*.
- (g) The 5% GreenPower purchase commitment will be maintained until 2018-19. The Government will then re-assess the need to purchase GreenPower, or another form of carbon offset, in order to meet the target of carbon neutrality by 2020.
-

**Hospitals—bed occupancy rates
(Question No 358)**

Mr Hanson asked the Minister for Health, upon notice, on 25 November 2014:

- (1) For The Canberra Hospital (a) what were the daily bed occupancy rates for the period 1 July to 28 October 2014, (b) what were the annual average bed occupancy rates for each year from 2001-02 to 2007-08 inclusive and (c) describe the method for calculating bed occupancy rates.
- (2) For Calvary Hospital (a) what were the daily bed occupancy rates for the period 1 July to 28 October 2014, (b) what were the annual average bed occupancy rates for each year from 2001-02 to 2007-08 inclusive and (c) describe the method for calculating bed occupancy rates.

Mr Corbell: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) For the Canberra Hospital
 - (a) The daily bed occupancy rates from 1 July to 28 October 2014 are provided in the attached table (Table 1).
 - (b) Due to the significant resources required, and changes in reporting practices over time, ACT Health is unable to provide average bed occupancy figures between 2001-02 to 2007-08.
 - (c) Deriving Bed Occupancy figures requires the use of live information from a patient administration system. This allows for all the minutes that a patient utilises an overnight hospital bed to be attributed to the day, month or year that activity occurred. The total calculated minutes of care is then divided by the total minutes of care available for these beds over the same period.
- (2) For Calvary Public Hospital:
 - (a) The daily bed occupancy rates from 1 July to 28 October 2014 are provided in the attached table (Table 2).
 - (b) Due to the significant resources required, and changes in reporting practices over time, ACT Health is unable to provide average bed occupancy figures between 2001-02 to 2007-08.
 - (c) Deriving Bed Occupancy figures requires the use of live information from a patient administration system. This allows for all the minutes that a patient utilises an overnight hospital bed to be attributed to the day, month or year that activity occurred. The total calculated minutes of care is then divided by the total minutes of care available for these beds over the same period.

(A copy of the attachment is available at the Chamber Support Office).

**ACTION bus service—patronage
(Question No 359)**

Mr Coe asked the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, upon notice, on 25 November 2014:

Since 1 September 2014, and from 9:05am to 3:50pm, what is the average weekday patronage on ACTION bus route 200.

Mr Rattenbury: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

Since 1 September 2014 until 21 November 2014, from 9:00am to 4:00pm, the average weekday patronage on ACTION bus route 200 was 1,992.

The time has been rounded to comply with the output of the reporting tool used with the MyWay ticketing system.

Sport—ovals (Question No 360)

Mr Doszpot asked the Minister for Sport and Recreation, upon notice, on 4 December 2014:

Can the Minister provide in respect of each ACT Government managed oval/playing field for each of the financial years 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 (a) the number of bookings per week and time and hours of booking, (b) usage by sport, (c) the range of fees and on what the variations are based, (d) criteria used to determine level of fees, (e) electricity and watering costs, (f) security costs, (g) labour costs, (h) other maintenance costs and (i) details of recorded vandalism at each ground.

Mr Rattenbury: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

Due to the number of sportsgrounds across the ACT, and the level of detail being requested, much of the information is not available in a form that can be easily provided. For example, provision of information on booking times would involve printing daily ranger reports, which over a two year period would involve approximately 8,000 individual reports and require a manual adjustment to remove personal contact details of individual hirers to respect their privacy rights. I have therefore sought to provide a reasonable level of information that does not unduly impact on Directorate resources, but still assists in answering your questions.

(1)

- (a) Provided at **Attachment A** are Activity Usage and Ground Usage reports for all grounds
- (b) Refer to **Attachment A**.
- (c) A copy of the fees and charges for each of the years 2012-13 and 2013-14, and the recently approved fees for 2014-15 is at **Attachment B**. Please note the increase in fees for 2012-13 came in effect in April 2013 (as opposed to the usual 1 October each year) due to delayed approval through the caretaker period.

Variations on fees and charges are generally based on WPI unless there is a specific reason for adjustment above WPI or introduction of a new fee. Examples of such reasons include the policy position to set all junior fees at 50 per cent of the senior rate, and the intention to increase cost recovery over time to be closer to the national benchmark of 20% (from current range of 11-15%). The 2014-15 fees and charges introduced a new commercial user surcharge (which effectively increases the set fee by 100%).

(d) The basis of the fees structure was developed several years ago in consultation with all outdoor sports. The relativity between various fees such as why for example AFL is more expensive than Hockey is based on three agreed variables, which are:

- the area used by a given sport, so that a larger area is given a greater value over a smaller area e.g. Netball is a small area while AFL is large;
- the cost of providing infrastructure for a given sport e.g. Touch has no goal posts while Rugby has goal posts; and
- the wear and tear of a given sport e.g. Rugby with studs and scrumaging is high wear while Touch with runners is low wear.

(e) Total cost for electricity is as follows:

2012-2013 - \$311,040

2013-2014 - \$373,605

Total cost for water usage is as follows:

2012-2013 - \$6,592,751

2013-2014 - \$6,747,974

(f) Sport and Recreation Services have security at the Narrabundah Ballpark with an annual cost of \$10,800. In addition the two Sport and Recreation Services depots in Holt and Waramanga have video security systems that cost \$56,800 each to install. The monthly monitoring cost is \$85.00 per depot per month. Some clubs have installed security systems at their own cost at various sportsgrounds, typically where they store large amounts of equipment.

(g) Total Sportsgrounds Maintenance employee expenses are as follows:

2012-2013 - \$1,729,887

2013-2014 - \$1,790,072

(h) Other Maintenance costs are as follows:

2012-2013 - \$4,892,502

2013-2014 - \$5,294,514

Expenditure items within these figures include, but are not limited to, sportsground mowing (Service Level Agreement with TAMS), Plumbing contract and repairs, sportsground vehicle fleet, rubbish and waste removal, floodlight repairs and consumables such as fertiliser and plant materials.

(i) Sport and Recreation Services do not specifically record vandalism as a cost item. Repairs are dealt with out of the operational maintenance budget under repairs and maintenance. Sport and Recreation Services has developed a set of sportsground building guidelines that ensure buildings are robust and vandal resistant in design.

(Copies of the attachments are available at the Chamber Support Office).

Sport—ovals (Question No 361)

Mr Doszpot asked the Minister for Sport and Recreation, upon notice, on 4 December 2014:

Can the Minister provide for each of the financial years 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 the number of playing fields, by number and size (a) available for hire, (b) taken off line or otherwise not available for hire, (c) placed back on line from the previous year and (d) in respect of parts (b) and (c), the reason for their changed status.

Mr Rattenbury: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1)
- (a) **Attachment A** shows a list of all playing fields; District Playing Fields (DPF) Enclosed Ovals (EO) and Neighbourhood Ovals (NHO), that were available for hire in 2012-13 and 2013-14. It should be noted that the Bonython NHO was restored and became available for hire in October 2013, the Watson NHO in February 2014 and the Weetangera NHO in December 2014. This consists of a total of 884 individual fields as at the end of 2014.
 - (b) The playing fields that are currently not irrigated and are not available for formal hire are at **Attachment B**. These facilities are available for informal use by the community.
 - (c and d) No playing fields have had their irrigation turned back on other than Bonython, Watson and Weetangera NHO's as explained at (a), which were part of the ACT Government's three year Ovals Restoration Program.

(Copies of the attachments are available at the Chamber Support Office).

Crime—graffiti (Question No 363)

Mrs Jones asked the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, upon notice, on 4 December 2014:

In relation to graffiti in Canberra where are the exact locations of the graffiti hotspots that the TAMS website refers to and that the TAMS Directorate monitors.

Mr Rattenbury: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

The ACT Government inspects graffiti hotspots weekly. Inspections target public assets in high use areas such as the city centre, town centres and high visibility areas across Canberra such as arterial roads, bus stops and underpasses.

The exact locations of hotspots varies over time. TAMS meet with the graffiti removal contractor on a monthly basis and specific locations are discussed for appropriate action.

The most recent report from the contractor has highlighted areas with multiple incidents per week. These include numerous sites across the Tuggeranong Town Centre, an underpass on Clive Steele Avenue in Monash, bus stops along Ellerston Avenue in Isabella Plains and the Bus Interchange in Woden Town Centre and Woden Town Square.

TAMS do not remove graffiti from privately owned assets. This includes residential and commercial fences and walls.