



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

EIGHTH ASSEMBLY

17 FEBRUARY 2015

www.hansard.act.gov.au

Tuesday, 17 February 2015

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Tuesday, 17 February 2015

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

Petition

*The following petition was lodged for presentation, by **Mr Doszpot**, from 187 residents:*

Planning—Narrabundah—petition No 1-15

To the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

This petition of certain residents of the Australian Capital Territory draws to the attention of the Assembly that the Omnibus Draft Variation proposes to change the zoning of two vacant blocks in Jerrabomberra Ave, Narrabundah, Section 34 Blocks 12 & 13.

Your petitioners therefore request the Assembly to maintain the existing zoning of CZ6 for these blocks. Allowing RZ3 on these particular leases will adversely affect the operations of other lease holders in this section. The surrounding Clubs, Veterinary Centre and Sporting facilities need the protection of CZ6 zoning to allow the potential of their businesses to expand and grow into the future. Keeping the CZ6 zoning will also provide the opportunity for future leaseholders of the vacant blocks to use the land for purposes more compatible to the rest of Section 34, Narrabundah.

The Clerk having announced that the terms of the petition would be recorded in Hansard and a copy referred to the appropriate minister for response pursuant to standing order 100, the petition was received.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo), by leave: The petition signed by Canberra residents this morning, as presented, draws to the attention of the Assembly the omnibus draft variation plan that is proposed to change the zoning of two vacant blocks in Jerrabomberra Avenue, Narrabundah, being blocks 12 and 13 of section 34 Narrabundah.

The petitioners are requesting that the Assembly maintain the existing zoning of the CZ6 for these two blocks, stating that allowing RZ3 on these particular leases will adversely affect the operations of other leaseholders in this section. It is residents' view that the surrounding clubs, veterinary centre and sporting facilities need the protection of CZ6 zoning to allow the potential for their businesses to expand and grow into the future. Keeping the CZ6 zoning will also provide the opportunity for future leaseholders of the vacant blocks to use the land for purposes that are more compatible with the rest of section 34 Narrabundah.

Residents are concerned that the change in zoning to RZ3, which allows for residential development in the area, could potentially have severe implications for the current leases in the vicinity, particularly as it relates to noise restrictions. These potential noise restrictions will have an adverse effect on all other businesses within this section and pose the potential for heavy licensing restrictions or even closure.

The Harmonie German Club is the last remaining licensed club in Narrabundah and plays an important part in the social and community framework of the area. The club is located directly beside those two blocks and frequently holds live music events, including the popular Canberra Blues Society, and has been approached by at least three musical associations to use its hall as they have been forced out of Civic, Acton and even Belconnen because of noise complaints. Residents believe that, should the zoning changes go ahead, the Harmonie German Club's existence could be in jeopardy, should noise complaints be made.

The Narrabundah ballpark, located behind block 13, is home to Canberra Cavalry, and plays host to the thousands of fans that come out to show support during their season. The change in zoning and, therefore, noise restrictions could pose a real threat to the use of this ballpark for baseball games.

The residents, having taken into consideration the needs of the current leases in the area, are therefore requesting that these two blocks are leased under the current CZ6 zoning to ensure that the land is used for purposes more compatible with the rest of section 34 Narrabundah. I would ask the government to take into consideration the views and concerns of these residents in their proposal and understand the importance of the current facilities to the community, the value that they bring and the significant impact that these zoning changes may bring.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Scrutiny report No 28

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

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 28, dated 16 February 2015, together with the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MR DOSZPOT: Scrutiny report 28 contains the committee's comments on 60 pieces of subordinate legislation and three government responses. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

National disability insurance scheme—implementation Ministerial statement

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) (10.06), by leave: I am very pleased today to provide a progress report on the implementation of the national disability insurance scheme in the ACT.

On 7 May and 4 June last year, in separate resolutions, the Assembly called for regular reports on the implementation of disability reform in the ACT. On 7 August last year I presented the first NDIS implementation update to the Assembly, and I am pleased to be able to provide further information today.

The ACT government is committing \$14.4 million to the NDIS this financial year, and by 2019-20 the government will provide \$167 million and the commonwealth contribution will be \$175 million of the total cost. This amounts to a doubling of investment in our disability sector in 2019-20 of \$342 million.

On 1 July 2014 the NDIS was officially launched in the ACT. Over the past eight months we have been watching closely as the scheme gradually ramps up. We are one of the trial sites for the NDIS—and this is an important opportunity for our society. We have an opportunity to learn from other trial sites around Australia. We are working closely with people with a disability, families, carers and service providers to make sure our transition to the NDIS is a positive experience. Yes, there will be hiccups along the way; that is the very nature of reforms such as this one. But we will not lose sight of the horizon ahead of us—a better deal for people with disability.

As I mentioned, the NDIS in the ACT is being implemented gradually. People are phasing in to the scheme according to their age, or academic year for school-age children. All eligible school-age children will begin to access the NDIS this year. Students in high school, from years 7 to 12, will transition first, from January to March, and primary school students, kindergarten to year 6, will transition from April to June. Adults aged 49 to 60 will also move to the NDIS this year, consistent with our ages and stages phasing schedule.

We saw the release of the NDIA's first quarterly report in November last year. That report showed that in the first three months of the scheme, from July to September last year, we had 223 people make an access request and 103 approved plans. We expect data for the second quarter in year 2—that is from October to December last year—to be released very soon. In fact, I think it could be released later this week.

The NDIS means big changes to the way our disability sector operates. That is why the ACT and commonwealth governments are investing \$21.8 million to prepare the ACT for the NDIS. This includes \$9.3 million for enhanced services and \$12.5 million for sector development.

During the second half of 2014 we saw the final grants allocated for the enhanced service offer, and I was pleased to see that we were able to offer some people a grant

that they had previously missed out on as final funding was acquitted. In total we had 2,320 people apply for a grant—some more than once. A total of 1,349 people were offered a grant. This is a great result and I hope it has helped people to prepare for the NDIS, which is what it was designed to do.

In addition to the enhanced service offer, we will continue to see record investment being made in preparation for the NDIS. \$4.4 million in sector development funding has gone towards a number of initiatives, including capacity building workshops and community conversations, to prepare people for the NDIS; \$20,000 governance and financial management package grants for service providers—25 have been allocated so far, at a total cost of \$500,000; \$50,000 business investment package grants for service providers—20 have been allocated so far at a cost of \$1 million; an analysis of the impact of the NDIS on volunteering and philanthropic investment; an NDIS Aboriginal outreach worker, to support the community in preparing for the NDIS and link to the NDIA; and a workforce awareness project to develop resources for managers, educators and trainers who need to know about the NDIS.

A further \$6.3 million in sector development funding was recently approved by the commonwealth for additional participant readiness and market development initiatives. This investment will involve consultation with stakeholders and will include initiatives such as building individual and community capacity for people with disability and psychosocial disability, bringing business to disability, and preparing the workforce for person-centred planning.

A grants program valued at \$100,000 has also been prepared to support NDIS eligible participants, their families and other unpaid carers to attend conferences, training and assistance. Grants will also be available to organisations hosting NDIS-related conferences and events here in the ACT.

The government continues to work with the sector to prepare for the NDIS. When it comes to the number of service providers that are offering services under the NDIS, it is great to see the list growing every week. There are now more than 100 providers registered with the NDIA to provide services to NDIS participants. And we are seeing new specialist providers emerge and growth in particular service clusters such as early intervention.

Madam Speaker, I would like to talk now about funding contracts because this is an important issue for the ACT government and service providers. As you know, community organisations have previously received block funding from the ACT government to provide services for people with disability. This was a rationed system, and one we know resulted in unmet need in our community. The money the ACT government previously gave to organisations to provide services to people with disability will now go to the NDIA, so they can give it to people directly.

As a result the government has worked hard to model a step-down approach to funding agreements with organisations that corresponds to the NDIS participant phasing schedule. As a result, all contracts are expected to cease by 30 September 2016 and by this time all 5,075 eligible people should have phased to the NDIS.

Of course, this process will require careful management. We do not want service providers to have their contracts stepped down faster than people are phasing in to the NDIS. A working group has been established to monitor the situation. They are working with providers on a case-by-case basis to determine if any reimbursement is required due to delays in participants phasing to the NDIS. Reimbursement will be based on identification of a material gap.

I have spoken in this place before about the government's decision to withdraw from specialist disability service delivery. As you know, the plan is to transition services to the community sector over time. This will impact on Education and Training early intervention small group programs, Disability ACT supported accommodation services and Therapy ACT services.

Early intervention services have been the first to transition to the community sector. This was a difficult decision and I know many families were concerned about how this may work. To provide families with certainty and to offer financial security to providers as they adjusted to the new model, the NDIA worked with us to develop a tender for early intervention services.

As a result of that tender, six organisations are contracted by the NDIA to provide early intervention services this year for NDIS participants. The six organisations are Northcott, Noah's Ark, Cerebral Palsy Alliance, Autism Spectrum Australia, EACH, and SDN child and family services. Parents are able to choose from these six contracted services or, indeed, any other service that meets their needs. Around 100 families are working with these new services as their provider of early intervention services. Some of the other providers who are offering early intervention services include the Shepherd Centre, Vision Australia and the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children.

While a number of the contracted providers will offer small group programs, as these are valued by families, the new services are gradually transitioning to a transdisciplinary approach where a key worker works with the family to support the child's needs. Part of the key worker role is to link people to other supports and services they need, including mainstream supports such as early childhood education and care.

This approach is designed to target the needs of the children in an individual way. Although the approach is new to the ACT, it is widely practised across Australia and aligns with best practice. I know for many families this process has not been easy, but I am confident that over time it will offer excellent outcomes for families and their children.

The Education and Training Directorate will continue to support all children who have been accessing early intervention programs and their families as they transition to the new providers this year. For Therapy ACT, it has largely been business as usual. Therapy ACT received 647 new referrals from July to December last year. This is down from 835 in the same period in the previous year.

In response to this decrease in referrals and the movement of current clients to new providers, services will be stepped down as clients continue to phase in to the NDIS. New clients are being prioritised for assessment of functional need to determine if they are eligible for the NDIS. If the client is eligible, they are referred to the NDIS according to the phasing schedule. If the client is ineligible or does not phase in in the near future, therapeutic services will continue to be provided by Therapy ACT. A dedicated transition team is working with families to facilitate referral to the NDIS and engage with the community sector to build robust services that give families choice for the future. The government has retained responsibility for mainstream services, including information provision, referral and assessment of children who are at risk of developmental delay.

The Community Services Directorate, ACT Health and the Education and Training Directorate commenced work on the new ACT Child Development Service in January this year. The Child Development Service will be established in the Community Services Directorate and will be supported by staff from the Health and Education and Training directorates. ACT Health community paediatricians and early intervention psychologists from the Education and Training Directorate are now located at Holder with Therapy ACT allied health professionals.

Stage 1 of the ACT Child Development Service includes speech pathology and physiotherapy drop-in clinics, intake and referral services, small group parent support and playgroups, diagnostic allied health, educational and medical paediatric assessments, and short-term interventions.

The ACT Child Development Service will be fully functional as an integrated whole-of-government service from January next year. This service will provide streamlined access to allied health and medical assessment for ACT children from birth to six years who are at risk of developmental delay. This service will provide referral to appropriate services, including the NDIS, or provide supports for those children who are not eligible.

Disability ACT is also gradually moving out of supported accommodation services, which will conclude by June 2017. To support this transition Disability ACT has established a dedicated team to support residents and their families to phase to the NDIS and transition to a community-based service provider.

Disability ACT staff are meeting with residents and families two months before they phase in to the NDIS to develop an individual plan that documents the person's goals, dreams and aspirations. This helps residents to have a clear vision for their future and for their NDIS conversations. Residents are also being supported prior to the NDIS phasing to formalise their tenancy arrangements with Housing ACT.

Another issue related to the government's decision to transition services to the community sector is the impact it will have on the government's disability workforce. I am pleased to say that the memorandum of understanding for our industrial relations is being successfully implemented. We are working very hard to support staff to remain in the disability sector through workshops, training and professional advice.

Disability ACT and Therapy ACT staff have had the opportunity to participate in development workshops provided by the Lighthouse Business Innovation Centre. These workshops have offered advice to people interested in establishing a private practice or business, with personal mentoring available. Opportunities for Therapy ACT staff to undertake secondments in the community sector have also been available to assist with employment transition to practitioner roles outside government.

A number of people in Disability ACT and Therapy ACT have taken up these opportunities, and I expect that many others will do so over the next year. It is wonderful to see the entrepreneurial spirit alive and well in our disability sector, and I know there are some really excellent staff who are taking the opportunity to do something new and develop a service that people with disability will want to engage with.

In conclusion, the launch of the NDIS last year was a result of much preparation and planning. But there is still a lot to learn as we continue to transition to this new world of service delivery for people with disability. As the scheme continues to build this year we will see more people getting access to services that are person centred and individually tailored to fit their needs.

I would like to thank everybody who has worked with us to get to this point. It would not be possible without the collaboration, dedication and perseverance of people with a disability and their families, government agencies, community organisations and the NDIA. You have all worked hard to make the NDIS a reality here. I know it is not all smooth sailing, but the NDIS is a reform that is overwhelmingly supported by our community and everyone in this place. The ACT government is committed to making it work. Again, on record, I thank all those service providers, families and people that are working collaboratively and so hard to make sure the NDIS fulfils the optimism with which we launched it last year. I present the following paper:

National Disability Insurance Scheme—Implementation report—Ministerial statement, 17 February 2015.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (10.22): I thank Minister Burch for that comprehensive update on the implementation of the NDIS in the territory. As Minister Burch indicated, 1 July 2014 was a very significant date in the territory's history, with the NDIS trial beginning in the territory.

The NDIS is a new way of providing community linkages and individual support for people with a permanent and significant disability. Let me be clear that this is a visionary policy that was advocated by a federal Labor government and delivered by Prime Minister Gillard as a way to properly care for some of the most vulnerable members of our society and to help them lead their lives to the fullest.

Here in the ACT, two shopfronts, on Northbourne Avenue and in Belconnen, are now welcoming people with a disability on a daily basis. And, based on the quarterly report for the first three months of the trial, 103 individual plans have now been approved and there have been 242 access requests lodged.

The NDIS planning process is new for many people and it does provide an opportunity to consider life goals and supports that may be included in an individual's plan. It is really pleasing to see more than 100 organisations have now been registered with the NDIA to deliver services to ACT NDIS participants.

A joint investment in the scheme in the ACT by the 2019-20 fiscal year is anticipated to be \$342 million, of which the ACT government provides 49 per cent, \$167 million, and the commonwealth provides 51 per cent, \$175 million. It is pleasing to see collaboration between the two levels of government with the commonwealth and the ACT investing \$21.8 million to prepare the ACT sector and people with a disability for the NDIS. And this includes \$9.43 million from the ACT and commonwealth governments through funding for enhanced services in the territory, including \$7.7 million for enhanced service offer grants.

\$12.5 million from the commonwealth has been allocated to the national sector development fund for the territory. This sector development funding has gone to initiatives such as capacity building workshops and community conversations to prepare people for the NDIS; the NDIS organisational readiness toolkit to help services prepare for the NDIS; a series of governance and financial management packages of \$20,000 each, 25 allocated in 2014; and a business investment package of \$50,000 each, of which 20 were allocated in 2014. \$6.3 million in sector development funding was recently agreed by the commonwealth for new participant readiness and market development initiatives.

The ACT will be the first jurisdiction to accept all eligible residents into the scheme by mid-2016 and more than 5,000 people will gradually transition to the NDIS according to their age or life stage to ensure that the scheme is equitable and sustainable. The next people to transition to the NDIS include all school-age children, people aged between 49 and 62, and group homes where the youngest resident is aged between 26 and 36. Group home residents will transition to the NDIS based on the age of the youngest person living in the home. Of course, in this instance "group home" refers to residents who have very high support needs and receive close to 24 hours a day, seven days a week support, provided either by Disability ACT or by a community service provider.

I take the opportunity this morning to congratulate Minister Burch on all of her efforts to make the NDIS a reality and indeed a highly functioning program in the territory. I commend the minister for her work to date and for what I know will be continuing close attention to the rollout of one of the most important social policy programs this country has seen in this century, and I thank her for her efforts.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Out of home care strategy 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) (10.27), by leave: Madam Speaker, as the Minister for Children and Young People I thank you for the opportunity to speak to the Assembly today about “A step up for our kids: one step can make a lifetime of difference”, the ACT’s new five-year strategy for out of home care.

There is no greater responsibility for our community than stepping up for vulnerable children and young people. Indeed, we all have a responsibility to ensure that we step up for all vulnerable Canberrans, and as Minister for Children and Young People I feel this responsibility keenly, which is why I was so proud to stand together with the Chief Minister on 22 January this year to launch “A step up for our kids”, a strategy that will see an additional \$16 million investment in the future of our most vulnerable children and young people.

Around the country, child protection and out of home care services are facing many challenges, such as increasing numbers of children and young people entering care, significant over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care, many young people finding it hard to adjust to life as adults when they leave care, a need for more carers, an ageing profile of kinship carers, and the need to create more financially sustainable systems. The ACT’s care system is not immune to these challenges and although we have had many advances in recent years it is time for the ACT to step up and deliver on a whole-of-system reform.

“A step up for our kids” is about investing in better ways and enhancing proven ways of keeping children out of care when it is safe to do so. We are embarking on a major reform of out of home care services but the aim is simple: give children in out of home care better lives.

How do we do this? By ensuring the support we provide to children and young people better meets their needs, by providing the right service at the right time and for the right duration, by providing support earlier and reducing a need for intrusive and expensive intervention, by providing more support to keep families together where appropriate, by ensuring that our kinship and foster carers get the support that they need when caring for children and young people, and by providing out of home care agencies with the autonomy that they have asked for to be able to provide the best support possible for children and young people. Since “A step up for our kids” was formally launched last month there has been a great deal of work done to prepare for the full service implementation from January 2016.

Just a couple of weeks ago I visited Karinya House to announce a \$736,000 expansion to this excellent service. Karinya House already provides supported accommodation and transitional housing and outreach support to pregnant women, mothers and their families who are in crisis. Through “A step up for our kids” we are proposing to

expand Karinya House so that it can provide 24-hour supervised support for up to three months for mothers whose babies are at risk of entering care. We want to get in early to provide support before a baby has to leave their family.

I would like to briefly show the value of this investment. While I was at Karinya House I met two young women who were staying there, the manager of Karinya House and volunteers as well. It was wonderful to hear about the plans that these young women had for themselves and their children's future thanks to Karinya House. The challenges they and their babies had faced were huge, but thanks to this support they were now turning their lives around. It was easy to see at first hand the impact of stepping up to provide the right support at the right time. Expanding the services at Karinya House will help us step up for even more vulnerable young mothers and their babies.

Another announcement was the child health passport. This is a document for children in out of home care that will stay with them and track critical health information. The first round of the passports is being distributed this month to all children aged 14 and under entering out of home care. It is only a small cost but with major benefits. Carers have told us the difficulties that they often have in knowing the complete health history of a child or young person in their care, and this passport will address that.

As I mentioned earlier, "A step up for our kids" will provide agencies with far more autonomy than ever before, something that they have asked for. For the first time these organisations will be responsible for case management of all children in kinship, foster and residential care where they are on a long-term order. It will also create a continuum of care where service providers are providing support throughout a child or young person's time in care. It is a significant change and we are working closely with service providers to ensure that the new system can be delivered. The sector is excited about the reforms and there is already a lot of interest being shown.

The Community Services Directorate held a pre-tender information session on 2 February, attended by more than 50 people from 30 different organisations. There was strong interest from our valued local service providers as well as organisations from New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. I expect the formal tender will be released later this month. My directorate also recently met with peak organisations to discuss the new strategy and is hosting ACT carer roundtable sessions to talk to carers about how changes under the strategy will affect them.

We have begun to establish a team of therapeutic assessors who will gradually assess all children and young people under the new system. The therapeutic assessment model is central to the implementation and success of a trauma-informed system which is based on the understanding that all children and young people who enter care have suffered trauma as a result of the circumstances that have led them to enter the care system. Initially, assessments will focus on children and young people entering the care system and the needs of young people who reside in non-family-based placements. All assessments will result in a therapeutic plan which will be implemented and reviewed regularly. "A step up for our kids" is a five-year strategy and in that time I will be able to provide the Assembly with updates on how this strategy is supporting vulnerable children, young people and their families.

I can provide members with an insight into the impact of trauma by referring to the \$3.05 million investment in Melaleuca Place, the trauma recovery centre. One of the driving forces of “A step up for our kids” is its focus on trauma-informed support, looking closely at the trauma a child or young person has endured when developing their support. Melaleuca Place, which I was honoured to open last July, is seeing this trauma-informed support already being provided. For the first time in the ACT we are providing a range of services under one roof for children up to the age of 12 who have experienced trauma as a result of abuse or neglect, and it is working. All of the respondents to a survey of families receiving services from Melaleuca Place within the first six months said the support had made a positive difference and half said the services had made a significant difference.

“A step up for our kids” is a major part of our better services suite of initiatives that has the key aim of providing the right service at the right time and for the right duration. It has been developed over a two-year period, following extensive consultation with all areas of our community involved in out of home care.

I have talked about some of the initiatives under this strategy and would now like to highlight some more. There will be an extension to carer subsidy payments which will no longer automatically cease at 18 but, where appropriate, will be extended until the young person reaches 21. We know that although kinship carers are the largest carer group in the ACT they have not always had the access to or been provided with the support that they have needed. We will provide enhanced training for kinship carers, reflecting the fact that they are members of the child’s family and that the circumstances leading to kinship carers stepping up for their children are often complex.

New carer advocacy services will be funded to give independent advice and support to carers and birth families who feel their voice has not been accounted for by child protection and out of home care services. We will be setting up in the interim the Children and Youth Services Council to oversee this reform process. It will be chaired by one of Australia’s leading foster care advocates, Ms Bev Orr OAM. Ms Orr brings with her more than 40 years work with children, young people and families. She was a longstanding executive of the Australian Foster Care Association and Families Australia.

But while we have, with the community’s input, identified components of a more effective system, we now need to work with carers and service providers to deliver these services. The implementation of the strategy has already begun.

We recognise the importance of working with the community and listening to the voices of people at the core of our care system. I know that people involved in the consultation to develop our strategy will see their issues reflected in “A step up for our kids”. Many people have been working towards this day for a long time—children, carers, advocates, and staff in the Community Services Directorate. We have put together a way forward that recasts our support for vulnerable children, putting them at the centre of a radically new system. The pathway has been mapped out and now it is time for us all to take the first step and step up for our children and young people.

I present the following paper:

Out of Home Care Strategy 2015-2020—A Step Up for Our Kids—One Step Can Make a Lifetime of Difference—Ministerial statement, 17 February 2015.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (10.38): I thank Mr Gentleman for bringing this matter to the Assembly this morning to update us on his good work in this portfolio.

For most of us our city, Canberra, is a great place to live. It is a city full of brilliant possibilities that are waiting to be realised. It is a city with the country's best education system. It is a city with the country's best health system, the best employment outcomes in Australia but, most importantly, it is an inclusive city where we each help each other to take the next step up. But not everyone in Canberra is able to make the most of these opportunities.

So the unveiling last month of this enhanced strategy to help our community step up for its most vulnerable people, children and young people who have been abused or neglected, is a timely reminder of the importance of this issue and also of the government's clear focus on social inclusion and equality as a major priority for us in 2015. The five-year, \$16 million strategy for children in care and the wider system Mr Gentleman has outlined can make a difference and will make a difference, and the government, in partnership with the community sector and individuals in our city, can step up and make that difference.

The strategy, as I have indicated and as Minister Gentleman has outlined, provides an additional \$16 million in the coming three years for out of home care. Children and young people in the out of home care system are amongst the most vulnerable in our community and clearly have a range of complex needs that require specialised support, and "A step up for our kids" provides key services that put the child at the centre by focusing on their needs, reducing disruptions to their support, providing better support for their families and their carers and creating systemic change in our out of home care system.

The strategy has been developed following two years of consultation—with children, with families, with carers, with service providers and with other stakeholders. As Minister Gentleman has said, the main elements include strengthening support for high risk families to prevent children from entering the care system in the first place; where appropriate, assisting children to get back with their birth families as quickly as possible; an expansion of Karinya House, a dedicated facility for struggling mothers whose babies are at risk of entering care; creating a more complete system where a child is supported by the same organisation throughout their progression into adulthood rather than changing as they mature; reducing the time a carer must wait

before applying for permanent guardianship of a child; improved support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children through measures including a team of cultural advisers; providing non-government organisations with a far greater role, including having responsibility for all children on long-term orders until the age of 18 and all support for kinship carers; and strengthening oversight and accountability through a range of measures, including the introduction of a new oversight council to be chaired, as Minister Gentleman said, by Australia's leading foster care advocate, Ms Bev Orr OAM.

The government has announced—and Mr Gentleman has been to Karinya House—the provision of \$750,000 in new funding for expansion, which invests in a new level of service, including a mother and baby unit which will provide supervision and support for up to three months for new mothers whose babies are at risk of entering care. This unit is part of the placement prevention component of the strategy and will extend to provide practical in-home support to mothers and fathers struggling to care for their babies. The expansion of Karinya House will allow mothers to remain with their babies whilst they are supported in learning parental skills, reduce the likelihood of those children coming into care and, most importantly, improve the health and wellbeing outcomes for vulnerable infants. All mothers should have the chance to parent their child and, for those who are assessed as high risk parents, learning how to care for a child in a supportive environment can make all the difference.

There is no doubt that around the country child protection and out of home care services are facing many challenges. There are increasing numbers of children and young people entering care. There is a significant over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care. Many young people find it difficult to adjust to life as an adult when they leave care. There is simply a need for more carers in our society. We have an ageing profile of kinship carers, and there is a need to create a more financially sustainable system of support.

The ACT's care system was not immune to those challenges and although big changes have been made over the years there was a need to rethink the entire system. "A step up for our kids" investment provides that rethink, the partnerships, a new way of delivering services and a new approach. The new system that we are investing in will mean that we are focused on keeping children and young people out of expensive and intensive programs, and a major part of our better services suite of initiatives has been, as Mr Gentleman has said, to provide the right service at the right time for the right duration.

I would like to take this opportunity this morning firstly to commend the Minister for Children and Young People for leading this change process that focuses on better support to keep families together, better support for carers to step up for children and young people and better support for service providers to step up for children and young people.

We are a strong community, and I think that was exemplified in the attendance not only at the launch of this strategy but in the two years of work that led up to it. I would like to also acknowledge this morning the work of Bev Orr, the Chair of the Children and Youth Services Council, and indeed the entire membership of the

Children and Youth Services Council. I also particularly acknowledge the work of Barnardos Australia, through senior manager Annette Kelly-Egerton; Marymead child and family centre's Amanda Tobler, the acting CEO; Premier Youth Works, through CEO Matt McGovern; the Richmond Fellowship, through CEO Wilf Rath; our commissioners, Alasdair Roy, the Children and Young People Commissioner, and Helen Watchirs, the Public Advocate of the ACT; Emma Robertson, in her role as Director of the Youth Coalition; Susan Helyar, in her role as Director of the ACT Council of Social Service; and Will Mollison, in his role as executive officer of Families ACT. Those individuals, their organisations and a range of others who I have not mentioned this morning have all contributed to this strategy under the leadership of Minister Gentleman. It is the right thing for this community to be doing now. It shows leadership and social inclusion and equality, which is a key priority for this government in 2015.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (10.46): "A step up for our kids", the new out of home care strategy, is a culmination of work over, as we heard, years, drawing together the experience of the community sector, affected family members, our community services and other directorates in a whole-of-government approach.

It brings together that expertise across a range of fields. That is because our kids are always worth it. They deserve the best start in life. The children who have, for whatever reason, missed that innocent, carefree childhood deserve all the help we can give to ensure that they reach their full potential as valued members of society. They deserve a caring, supportive environment, wise mentoring and a quality education.

I am particularly pleased in this strategy to see the strong emphasis on assertive engagement with high risk families. "A step up for our kids" is a new way of providing that kind of support, tailoring it to the child's needs, and the family's needs, and ensuring a holistic approach to finding the best outcome for the child.

Indeed, I am reminded of the holistic approach of community-controlled Aboriginal health services such as Winnunga Nimmityjah, which I talked about last week as classic Indigenous social theory. It is about dealing as much as possible with the individual's need as a member of a community, not just applying, in that case, a particular medical model to care. Sadly, as with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in other jurisdictions, Canberra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is over-represented by children in out of home care and families at risk.

"A step up for our kids" will provide more support for these families, hopefully before they reach crisis point, with intensive prevention and reunification services intended to support high risk Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to stay together. Practical in-home support to address issues and to create a safe environment for the child will be a priority. It will be backed up by cultural advisers from our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to provide advice to child protection officers.

Let me look at some of the tactics which will be contained in the strategy. We are looking at things like placement prevention, actually preventing kids getting into out of home care in the first place by providing more support to the family. Many

children and young people are only in out of home care for very short periods. It begs the question: why did they have to go there in the first place? Was there something we could have done? That is what this strategy is going to address.

And then it is looking at reunification, getting kids back with their birth parents where we know they will provide that kind of loving relationship which is so important for that child's development. There is the mother and baby unit that the ministers have already talked about, working in conjunction with Karinya House, and also the parent and child interaction programs and supporting supervised contact between birth parents and children.

I commend this strategy to the Assembly.

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) (10.49): I would also like to talk about how we will step up for Canberra kids through the “A step up for our kids: one step can make a lifetime of difference” strategy.

This is a major piece of work but its aim is simple: to give children and young people in care better lives. We want to provide support to help keep children and young people at home and reduce the need for them to enter care. Through extensive consultation that has been carried out over the last two years, we have been able to identify that we need to step up for higher risk families; we need to develop a continuum of service that provides more stable lives for children; and we need to work more with carers and service providers to help them step up for families.

We have already talked about the five-year strategy that will provide an additional \$16 million investment in the future of our most vulnerable children and young people. It is about breaking the intergenerational cycle of disadvantage and keeping children safe at home. It will help to reunify children and young people with parents as quickly as possible and, if this is not possible, help to find a long-term, loving family. And it will create a therapeutic, trauma-informed care system which responds more effectively to the needs of children and young people.

Among the components in the new strategy is more support for keeping families together, with services to prevent children and young people entering the care system or to get them back with their birth families as soon as possible. These components include the whole-of-government Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement, the territory as parent strategy and the NDIS.

Achieving a reduction in the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care is one of the key goals of the out of home care strategy. However, for the achievement to be meaningful it must be the outcome of genuine improved safety and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people at risk. Dr Bourke has already talked about the great work that Winnunga Nimmityjah has been doing, and continues to do, in supporting people in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives have already welcomed the strategy's focus on diverting children and young people from care through strengthening high risk families. The ACT government will continue to engage with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body as the strategy implementation progresses to ensure it remains culturally appropriate.

In order to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people, it is important to harness resources from across government. The territory as parent strategy brings all areas of ACT government together to support children and young people in care to ensure that they have the best possible chance to grow up to lead a happy, healthy and productive life.

Work which has already commenced includes ACT Health's participation on the strengthening high risk families panel. This panel facilitates access to health services for vulnerable children and their families who are clients of statutory services. There is also an education and training pathways initiative which brings the Education and Training and Community Services directorates together on an ongoing basis to plan for and monitor the achievement of improved education and training outcomes for children and young people in care.

The development of the out of home care strategy has coincided with preparations for the ACT's rollout of the NDIS. Disability is a significant issue for the out of home care strategy. It is generally accepted that children and young people with a disability are over-represented within child protection services, although little research has been conducted to identify their prevalence.

Historically, some children with disability came into care as a last resort in order to obtain services needed as a result of their disability. The out of home care strategy reflects the view that parents of a child or young person with a disability should not have to relinquish parental responsibility for their child in order to receive a service related to the child's disability. The NDIS should help to relieve pressure on parents of a child with a disability by providing reasonable and necessary supports, including early intervention supports, to children and young people with a disability.

The out of home care strategy will seek to ensure that parents, children and young people with an entitlement access services through the NDIS. In particular, the introduction of comprehensive developmental and therapeutic assessments for all children and young people entering placement prevention services or care will help to ensure that eligible children and young people are identified.

Through strengthening high risk families' services, birth parents with a disability will be encouraged and supported to access NDIS services, and parents and their support workers, with consent, will be invited to attend case planning meetings for the family to ensure all services are working together to keep the child or young person with their birth family.

One of the best examples of the commitment to strengthening high risk families is the long-term investment made by this government in Karinya House. Mr Barr, the Chief

Minister, has already talked about some of the work that Karinya House does in providing short-term supported accommodation to young mothers to help them care for their babies and teach them the skills that they need as young parents. The ACT government is continuing to invest in this critical service by investing about \$736,000 in the expansion of the Karinya House facility.

Through this expansion, we will be investing in a new level of service, which includes the mother and baby unit which we have already talked about and which is such an important part in supporting families. This unit is part of the placement prevention component of the strategy and will extend to provide practical in-home support to mothers and fathers struggling to care for their babies. All mothers should have a chance to parent their child. For those who are assessed as high risk parents, learning how to care for a child in a supported environment can make all the difference.

I thank the Minister for Children and Young People, Mr Gentleman, for the work that he has done in implementing this strategy and for bringing his statement to the Assembly today.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Food security ministerial roundtable

Ministerial statement

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Justice, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Transport Reform) (10.56), by leave: On Thursday, 22 May 2014 I hosted a roundtable on food security in the ACT. The key focus of the roundtable was to explore ways the ACT government can facilitate increasing the amount of food consumed in the ACT region that is produced and processed locally.

Food security is an important issue nationally, and for Canberrans. It is a global issue, essential for livelihoods, economies and environmental protection. It is also a local issue, from regional food production through to community gardens. Canberra has a tradition in this regard, particularly with the earlier suburbs providing larger blocks that were designed to integrate food growing in backyards.

Agriculture should be sustainable within the local context, taking into account climate variability, water availability, soil fertility and wider emerging issues such as climate change and peak oil. Land and water should be valued as scarce and precious resources, and with ecological communities and ecosystem services being protected.

The roundtable was keen to see an increase in locally produced food, less food wastage and organic matter being diverted from landfill and instead being composted for local food production. Issues around valuing the skills of food producers and researchers were also raised. Attendees were keen to foster networking between local and regional growers to enhance their resilience to changing conditions and cooperate with neighbouring regions to enhance food security. The roundtable was an example of this type of networking.

A broad range of stakeholders attended, including primary producers and urban food producers; distributors and retailers, including farmers markets; consumers, such as restaurants and caterers; relevant policy and advocacy organisations; food production and food security academics; and ACT government representatives. The roundtable agreed that in the context of increasing threats of climate change and peak oil, food security is an ever growing and significant issue. We agreed on the importance of reliable local food supply to help develop resilience in relation to ACT and regional food security.

The United Nations publishes an annual food report and every year it shows a decline in food quality, highlighting the importance of funding for agricultural research, especially into food quality. It is important to note the role of food production systems to people's health and that, sadly, only 68 per cent of people eat enough vegetables.

The roundtable first held a plenary session where people raised both obstacles to and opportunities for increased food production in the ACT. Small groups were then formed to further explore particular issues. The roundtable explored a broad range of policies and initiatives that could be used to support food production, including exploring improvements that could be made to the planning system for rural use, such as introducing agricultural zoning into the territory plan so that productive agricultural land is protected and utilised, and improving policies that facilitate the use of private land and public open space for food production within urban areas, whether they be domestic, community, market or commercial gardens.

Together, the roundtable explored how the ACT government's strategies and policies could deliver practical food security outcomes. I will provide a general overview of the ideas and comments that participants contributed on the day, both through the plenary and the smaller group sessions. As you will hear, this is a very diverse list—some simple, some rather more complex—but I believe they are worth sharing in this place so that all members might hear the ideas. It also highlights many opportunities to improve the use of our land that do not particularly need government funding but may be facilitated through policy change.

The key issue of land use for primary production was raised on the day, with a range of suggested actions, such as creating specific zoning for agricultural use in the territory plan; identifying high quality agricultural land in the ACT and applying agricultural zoning; ensuring water security for agricultural use and reducing obstacles to the reuse of water; ensuring continued and accessible, affordable, arable land—lack of security of tenure is an issue for many farmers: it is hard to be a responsible land manager and plan for the longer term when you only have a short to medium-term lease—exploring food security legislation, including requirements for food security impact statements for development, including assessment of soil and water, and secure leases for designated agricultural land; master planning for rural areas; better integration of agriculture into other land uses, such as the use of surplus land around vineyards; investigating communal farming opportunities, including finding out whether rural leaseholders in urban fringe areas would be interested in land share arrangements for market gardens; and, finally, identifying underutilised agricultural grade land such as the Molonglo River flats. Given the water and nutrients available there, perhaps the area could be used for market gardens.

In relation to urban land use, the roundtable explored rights and responsibilities that could be given to the community to help increase opportunities for local food production. These opportunities include exploring the increased use of urban unleased land for food production, such as setting aside land for more intensive production such as greenhouses, hydroponics and aquaponics, with participants noting that 700 hectares would be enough to produce enough food for around a third of the ACT population; better use of unleased land near creeks, cycle paths, road easements and power line easements; relaxing public-residential restrictions on the use of public unleased land and nature strips for home gardening, provided that residents take responsibility for controlling fruit tree pests; identifying more productive areas—one suggestion was that areas that need mowing more often would indicate higher water and nutrient levels and, where appropriate, dedicating these areas to community gardens or market gardens; increasing community gardens above the current 3.65 hectares across the ACT—ideally these sites should be on transport routes with access to water, electricity and toilets and land should be reserved at the outset of suburban planning; supporting the Canberra City Farm; using grass from TAMS mowing, as it could be baled and used as stock feed—this was apparently done in the past during the last drought; better water collection, including more use of swales and reed beds; better use of building walls and roofs for food production; honey bee security, which includes registration of beekeepers, reducing pesticide use, increasing bee-friendly plants, especially in new suburbs, reducing monocultures and bee biosecurity; inviting business cases for agricultural land; and investigating the creation of “agri-hoods” or neighbourhood agricultural production areas.

The roundtable also explored better capture and use of water and nutrients, including using organic matter from food and waste streams; composting solids; using liquids as fertilisers and removing organics from the waste stream, instead using it for worm food or soil conditioner—this could be through a project similar to the groundswell project across our borders, in regional councils, or by creating large-scale composting for use by community gardeners; using effluent for agriculture, recognising the potential health issues; providing water for agricultural purposes, incorporating an allocation of water for agriculture in the water policy; managing urban and stormwater run-off, including a revegetation strategy to retain water in situ before it becomes run-off; and reducing chemical use at a household or garden level and setting targets for this.

The roundtable looked at issues around regional food processing and market access, noting that the ACT cannot provide for all of our food needs; thus it is important to plan regionally. Potential opportunities identified included improved opportunities for regional production, perhaps by introducing local or regional food production or purchasing targets towards self-sufficiency; a local label to help distinguish between local and imported foods; improving paddock to market opportunities, including support for farmers markets, noting that 15 per cent of stallholders are from the ACT and the other 85 per cent are from the region; developing local food processing options, such as an abattoir for meat and poultry, as well as facilities for winemakers; and, finally, establishing more cooperative production and distribution.

The roundtable also discussed agriculture's role in diversifying the ACT economy. Agriculture should be part of ACT economic planning. It would be useful to have a business case to show the benefits of a large-scale agricultural proposal, with one suggestion that 10,000 to 12,000 people could be employed in the sector. One group focused on red tape reduction and there was discussion about issues that would be better explained to producers and retailers through fact sheets and check lists, for example, on relevant rules and regulations. There was also examination of some areas which are perhaps over-regulated, such as requirements for weighing individual eggs, the size of hand washing sinks and requirements for selling food. Creating a single point of contact with ACT government on food production issues was also raised.

Opportunities for food-based education were also a key issue at the roundtable. As well as residents simply wanting to know what they can grow and where, there is also a need for consumers, caterers, schools and retailers to understand the availability and nutritional value of fresh and high quality food, as well as opportunities to be involved in food production.

There was ample discussion about how to promote the region, and also how to support and invest in demonstration gardens similar to CERES in Melbourne. This provides people with practical education about food while having a pleasant visit, thus supporting increased tourism and creating jobs. Supporting champions to drive school gardens is important, and schools need to be resourced to do this work. This could also be replicated to support food production for Canberra's most vulnerable.

I would like to thank all the people who attended the roundtable. As you have heard, there was a considerable amount of interesting input. I would also like to acknowledge the work that is already being undertaken by the ACT government. TAMS continues to support existing community gardens and will continue work to support new, similar arrangements, such as the City Farm, and plant waste from Floriade being composted at Mugga Lane and then made available to the public. The Health Directorate has a number of programs that support growing and harvesting food, including building the capacity in schools to establish and maintain kitchen gardens. ACT Health has funded the University of Canberra to develop an interactive map of community gardens to facilitate connections between gardeners and sites with benefits including food, exercise and social inclusion.

The Environment and Planning Directorate has developed the ACT water strategy "Striking the balance" and is reviewing the water sensitive urban design code, which addresses some of the water issues raised at the roundtable. It is also implementing Canberra's integrated urban waterways program, which allows for stormwater reuse within the Sullivans Creek catchment.

All these initiatives are a great start, but there is more to be done. I look forward to continuing to work with TAMS and my government colleagues to improve policies and work towards food security for the ACT. I see a bright future with an expansion in regional production, including regional food tourism focused on sustainably produced food and wine, and an ongoing growth in community gardens. It is worth noting that on 12 November last year I launched the Canberra City Farm in Turner,

which will provide great opportunities for education and community engagement in food production. I think this is an excellent example of where targeted government support and facilitation can help unleash an enormous amount of community interest and goodwill. This is something I would like to see more of. I present the following paper:

2014 Food Security Round Table—Ministerial statement, 17 February 2015.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (11.09): I thank Minister Rattenbury for bringing this matter forward this morning. I acknowledge the considerable work that Minister Rattenbury and his team have undertaken in pursuing a number of these issues. Recognising that they cross over portfolio responsibilities, it has been very good to have this level of leadership within the community. I am particularly interested in the tourism opportunities that Minister Rattenbury has highlighted. There is no doubt that the region's food and wine offerings are starting to get the recognition nationally and internationally that they deserve. It has been terrific to see the Canberra District Wine Industry Association, for example, and its members achieving such significant levels of recognition.

Minister Rattenbury also highlighted a number of other important ACT government initiatives in the area of community gardens, for example, that are being pursued and I think have greater opportunity. One need only see the level of community interest and support for events like the farmers market at Exhibition Park each Saturday to get a sense of what is a broader community movement towards more support for regional produce. It is very heartening to see the economic development opportunities that are emerging for high quality producers in this region. I think this opportunity today is timely to raise these issues again. I certainly look forward to working with Minister Rattenbury in those areas that cross over into the economic development and tourism portfolios because I think it is very clear that there are significant opportunities for Canberra.

The other issue that has been raised with me, and I think is a brilliant possibility, is through the Canberra brand and the "We are CBR" activation that will allow local businesses and local producers to very proudly display their connection to the Canberra region—the opportunity for that to be embraced throughout south-east New South Wales as well as the surrounding councils to adopt our city's branding as part of their approach to regional tourism. That presents a further opportunity not only to promote the good work that is already occurring but to expand upon that and look at the region's possibilities in terms of food production, which obviously encompasses a much greater land area but also, importantly, a diversity of opportunity for different products to emerge or to go to the next level.

Direct international flights out of Canberra Airport would also provide an export opportunity for fresh produce to find its way into South-East Asia in a timely manner. That would open up, again, further opportunities for the local region and for local producers. I thank Minister Rattenbury for bringing this matter before the Assembly this morning and certainly commend further work in this area.

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) (11.12): I wanted to speak briefly on this statement and thank Mr Rattenbury for bringing it to the Assembly today. I have spoken before on community gardens, backyard gardens and the ways in which communities can come together—how we can do it better and educate and facilitate that in our communities. If we can work out a way where people can take responsibility for spaces, nature strips and reserves in their area—and that includes ways in which they can produce product for people to share, whether it is fruit or vegetables—it would be a great thing. I really want to see some more work done on that area.

I am not sure whether this was mentioned in Mr Rattenbury's speech—I may have missed it—but backyard chickens are extremely popular in the ACT. Perhaps how these are kept can be part of the process. I have spoken before in the chamber about bees and beekeeping and how important that is for not only the people who keep bees but also our environment, and ensuring that our native fauna is continually regenerated through the hard work of bees.

I also wanted to have a bit more of a conversation about how families who might be time poor or live in higher density housing can create balcony gardens, small places and gardens that need very little maintenance, so they are still able to provide produce for their families and their friends. In addition, I have talked about providing opportunities—again, this comes down to how we legislate or how we make it safe for people to do this—for people in their communities, in their suburbs, to be able to barter or swap produce that has been grown in their community gardens, on their nature reserves or in their own backyards.

Mr Rattenbury also talked about school gardens. These need to be resourced. Unfortunately, often they need to be resourced with volunteers and there is not too much money. We need to work out ways in which we can properly facilitate volunteering in our school communities so that our school gardens can thrive and flourish, people can swap produce and children can learn about eating healthily, and families can also learn as well.

Last year in the ACT Legislative Assembly I asked about worm farms. We produce quite a lot of green waste here. I know that there has been a reluctance for that as an idea in this place, but I still think it is something that we could investigate. Some of the small gardens that we have around this place could be fertilised through our own waste that we create in this place. It is something that I will still be investigating. I think it is an opportunity for us as a community in this building. I thank Mr Rattenbury for bringing this conversation to the Assembly today.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2014

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

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (11.16): I indicate at the outset that the opposition will be supporting this legislation. This is an omnibus bill that amends a number of laws in the criminal framework. I will not go through all of them in detail, but I will comment on a couple.

First, I turn to the amendments to the Crimes Act 1900. These amendments seek to criminalise intentional observation or recording of another person if it amounts to an invasion of privacy and is indecent. We would refer to this perhaps as voyeurism. It includes elements such as emerging technologies and live internet streaming, and a specific offence for, in the terms of the bill, “capturing visual data” of another person’s genital or anal regions or female breasts.

There are strict and absolute liability elements involved. A defence is available if consent can be proven. There are slightly softer provisions when young people are involved. There is also a range of exemptions.

This area of law is very complex, and I acknowledge that it is difficult to write legislation that covers all existing situations, let alone emerging technologies.

The explanatory statement has a thorough analysis of indecency, intent, consent, the role of young people, the justification for strict and absolute liability offences, the interaction of the law with human rights for both offender and victim, and the interaction of the law with other laws. Importantly, the explanatory statement notes that the issue of intent is crucial for whether an offence will be proven.

In considering the report of the scrutiny committee on these amendments, I note that the Human Rights & Discrimination Commissioner and the Children & Young People Commissioner made a lengthy joint submission to the committee.

The committee commented on three matters. One of them coincides with my main concern with the amendments in this area of law, and that is the legal burden that the provisions cast on the defence to prove their innocence. The dictum that has stood the test of time immemorial is enshrined in the Human Rights Act: the defendant has the right to be held innocent unless they are found guilty of an offence; the burden of proof of guilt lies fairly and squarely with the prosecution. Not in this case, in this legislation, though, Madam Speaker.

I do accept that it is difficult for the prosecution to prove the attitude of the mind of a defendant. Was the offence committed by mistake or was there intent? What was the attitude of the victim? Did the victim consent or object? Was there consent at the start but a claim of objection after subsequent events? These matters go to one of the significant challenges in drafting legislation of this kind.

In responding to the scrutiny committee's report, the attorney noted that presumption on the defendant only comes into play once the prosecution has established "that a reasonable person would expect privacy and that the defendant intended to invade that privacy". The Attorney-General then goes on to say that the defendant is able to rebut the presumption "by proving on the balance of probabilities that they did not know or could not reasonably expect to know that they captured an image without consent".

In consulting with peak legal bodies, I note that the Law Society is generally supportive of the bill. The society says, however:

... in general, the Society's concerns align in broad terms with the committee's assessment—particularly in regard to the provisions being vague and the potential for them to ensnare defendants where their moral culpability is low. While the Society supports the creation of the offence, it is important to ensure that any new offences do not operate unfairly, particularly for young people in times of changing social standards.

In my assessment, as I said earlier, the drafters seem to have covered off on these issues as best they can, on the back of the experience of a number of other jurisdictions.

In considering these issues, I benefited from a briefing I took the week before last from the Attorney-General's staff and directorate officials. I thank them for that. Further, I received a response to questions that I asked that were raised in that briefing about how other jurisdictions deal with these matters, and I thank the staff for providing that. I note from further advice that the ACT has followed the example of a number of other jurisdictions. Of note, New South Wales initially took a path of trying to create specific offences. However, they abandoned that approach after discovering that this just became too prescriptive, creating a menu for the prosecution. They found it could not keep up with changes with social values and emerging technologies.

Meanwhile, it is worth noting how the Law Society concludes its feedback to me. The society makes the more general comment that it "continues to oppose the imposition of absolute liability offences". The government needs to take on board and examine the effectiveness and fairness of absolute liability offences. That is a very important point that we have seen emerging in recent legislation.

In summary, we have a range of provisions that quite deliberately are somewhat broader in nature but carry the capacity to cover emerging technologies. The bottom line is that an attempt is being made to counter this very difficult and ever-evolving problem. It may not be perfect, and we will monitor its progress. I trust that the government will, too, and facilitate evolution of the law as required.

I will comment briefly on the amendments to the Crimes (Forensic Procedures) Act 2000. These amendments, put simply, are to provide interview friend support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who undergo forensic procedures. There are significant cultural issues at play here for a sector of our community that is far too over-represented in the justice system. The proposed amendments are welcome because they will provide additional levels of support for that vulnerable sector.

The amendments also address an issue about the dearth of suitably qualified male practitioners who can undertake forensic procedures. Although it is fair and proper that a person undergoing the procedure should be able to choose the gender of the practitioner undertaking the procedure, it is not always practicable. It is often the case that forensic procedures must be undertaken with some urgency. Lack of male practitioners can put that urgency at risk. Therefore, it is sensible to provide that the procedure be undertaken by a person of the same sex, if practicable, rather than by consent. I note that volunteers will continue to have the choice.

Finally, I comment on the amendments to the Firearms Act 1996. Among the amendments made to this act are some that will cut significant lengths of red tape in circumstances in which trainers and students are using firearms owned by an approved club on the shooting range for instructional purposes. As a matter of principle, any parliament should support cuts to unnecessary or burdensome red tape that gets in the way of practicalities. Cuts to red tape of this nature clear the way for outcomes. Clearly, this is of benefit to the community as a whole and, in my view, will not lead to a reduction in firearms safety.

These amendments and others in the bill that I have not covered specifically are a step forward, an improvement in the law. I acknowledge that but note that I look forward to working cooperatively with the government, particularly should the elements regarding the use of carriage services and the capturing of information require amendment in the future.

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (11.25): The Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 makes a number of significant amendments to our criminal laws in the ACT. This government is on a continuous reform and improvement journey. The attorney is constantly bringing forward changes to ACT legislation as a response to issues and concerns raised by the full range of stakeholders in our justice system. This bill responds to concerns raised by the Victims of Crime Commissioner, the ACT Firearms Consultative Committee, the Family Violence Intervention Program Coordinating Committee, firearms clubs, women's services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advocates, to name a few. As you have heard from the Attorney-General on its introduction, the bill will make important amendments to the Crimes (Forensic Procedures) Act 2000 to address issues around fairness, procedure and the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The bill will also address a gap in our laws to capture behaviour involving observing or recording people in a way that amounts to a violation of their privacy. I am very supportive of the measures on voyeurism offences which bring the ACT into line with other jurisdictions in the protection of members of the community against indecent, repugnant invasions of privacy. It is particularly important that we protect young and vulnerable people in our community. This behaviour is not tolerated by the community, and the law now reflects that sentiment.

This bill will also progress a number of other amendments to improve criminal laws in the ACT.

The bill makes a number of key amendments to the Firearms Act 1996 which have been raised and endorsed by the ACT Firearms Consultative Committee.

The first of these amendments ensures that a person must be at least 12 years old to be authorised to possess and use a firearm on a shooting range. The purpose of this amendment is to reflect the current position under the act that a person cannot be issued with a firearms licence until they are at least 12 years old. This also brings the ACT into line with other jurisdictions with respect to the temporary possession and use of firearms.

Secondly, the bill removes red tape on approved firearms clubs by allowing approved instructors to use firearms owned by the club for the instruction and education of prospective licensees. This amendment recognises that there is currently an administrative burden on clubs and the Firearms Registry and gives instructors the ability to operate without the existing administrative burdens while still ensuring public safety.

Finally, there are a number of minor amendments to the Firearms Act to minimise unnecessary red tape and ensure appropriate delegations are available under the act.

The bill also makes amendments to the Crimes (Sentencing) Act to allow a victim impact statement to be in the form of drawings or pictures. This amendment is supported by the Victims of Crime Commissioner and endorsed by the Family Violence Intervention Program Coordinating Committee. The amendment will reflect a current practice adopted in a small number of cases, normally involving young children. It supports the national and ACT strategies on preventing violence against women and children to ensure that the practice of tendering drawings as part of a victim impact statement can continue to occur.

The bill also makes two important amendments to the Crimes (Forensic Procedures) Act 2000 to improve the operation, effectiveness and fairness of forensic procedures in the ACT. These amendments relate to interview friends and forensic procedures generally.

An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person who is a suspect, serious offender or volunteer under the act will now be entitled to have an interview friend to support them in a forensic procedure or during an application process for an order to undergo a forensic procedure. Under the existing law, an interview friend must already be provided for a child or person with an incapacity at any hearing for, or the carrying out of, a forensic procedure. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are a recognised class of vulnerable people who are over-represented in our criminal justice system. It is fair and appropriate that they be afforded appropriate assistance and safeguards when involved in the justice process.

The bill also amends the forensic procedures act to provide that, when an intimate forensic procedure is to be carried out on a person, the person carrying out the procedure or helping to carry out the procedure must be of the same sex as the relevant person, "if practicable". There are a limited number of suitable, qualified male practitioners and nurses, which can pose significant operational difficulties for clinical forensic medical services.

The current drafting of the forensic procedures act risks forensic samples not being obtained in time simply because there is a lack of male medical practitioners qualified to carry out forensic procedures. The amendment ensures that evidence is collected in a timely and appropriate manner to ensure that the most reliable evidence is provided in sexual assault cases and other serious matters. A number of safeguards have been included to ensure that any limits on human rights are proportionate and justified. Clinical Forensic Medical Services also have an obligation to act consistently with human rights under section 40B of the Human Rights Act.

Amendments will also allow the court to order the Director-General of the Community Services Directorate to bring a young detainee before the court for a civil proceeding and return them afterwards. The power will only exist if the young detainee consents to being brought before the court, as the amendment does not compel the young person to be brought before the court.

Examples of the way this amendment may be used include if a domestic violence protection order or forensic procedure order is sought against the detainee, or where the detainee is a witness who is the subject of a subpoena.

Nothing in this amendment will negate existing safeguards young people have access to when they attend civil proceedings. Part 7A of the Court Procedures Act 2004 provides a range of protections and support for young people who are involved in court proceedings, including ensuring that they are given enough information, that they understand the proceedings and that the court can only hear a proceeding in relation to a young person who is represented by a lawyer.

These amendments are similar to existing provisions for adults and allow a mechanism to transport young detainees to and from custody when they need to attend a civil proceeding.

In addition to the amendments I have already mentioned, the bill makes a number of minor amendments to criminal legislation to ensure efficiency and consistency within the criminal justice system.

I am proud to be part of a government that has brought forward these important reforms. As the Attorney-General noted on its introduction, this bill makes tangible steps in promoting many of the government's policies, and I commend the bill to the Assembly.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (11.32): This bill makes several amendments to crimes legislation and I would like to comment on some of the main changes in the legislation. Firstly, I am supportive of the amendments to the Crimes (Forensic Procedures) Act which will ensure that an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person who is a suspect, serious offender or volunteer under the act will be provided with an interview friend. Interview friends typically provide support to Indigenous or Torres Strait Islander people who are in custody for a police interview. The aim is to ensure that they are treated fairly, respectfully and legally during the interviews and to provide support and assist with cultural issues. This is a legal requirement that was first implemented in response to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

The amendment extends the requirement to provide for an interview friend when an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person is undergoing a forensic procedure or during an application process for an order for them to undergo a forensic procedure. This positive change has been recommended by the Aboriginal Justice Centre and the Aboriginal Legal Service, and I am pleased that the ACT has closed this gap in the law. The same change has already been made in New South Wales.

A second amendment removes the absolute obligation for a person carrying out an intimate forensic procedure to be the same sex as the suspect, offender or volunteer on whom they are carrying out the procedure. Instead, they must be of the same sex if practicable. It is not ideal to weaken this requirement. In fact, this change undoes the policy that was put into the legislation only a few years ago. However, I understand that the government have made a significant effort to recruit an appropriate number of suitably qualified male practitioners and nurses and they are simply not able to meet this requirement in every circumstance.

Turning now to the provisions around the display of drug paraphernalia, the bill will make a change to the ACT law which will prohibit retailers from displaying drug paraphernalia such as ice pipes, hash pipes and cannabis water pipes. This is a clear policy change to a law that has perhaps been quite obvious to the general community. Like the sale of X-rated films and previously the sale of fireworks, many people who come to Canberra notice that drug paraphernalia is visibly on sale, something that is different from other parts of Australia.

I strongly believe in a harm minimisation approach to drugs and I think that health and social interventions are a better approach than the sledgehammer war on drugs approach we often see. I do not think hiding the sale of drug paraphernalia will really make any material difference to the harms done by the use of dangerous drugs, but I do agree that displaying them is not consistent with a policy of minimising the harms of illicit drugs. To some people it might seem prudish to hide these devices from sale, but I agree that it is problematic to allow the open display for sale of ice pipes, for example. Potentially it weakens the message to people that ice is an extremely dangerous and harmful drug.

Members will know that I am strongly supportive of a change to the law to allow people in genuine need access to cannabis for medicinal use. Regardless, I agree with the amendment in this bill that will prohibit the display of bongs and other devices used for consuming cannabis. The two positions are completely consistent. I have no interest in promoting the recreational use of cannabis and there is no need for the advertised sale of such drug paraphernalia. My wish is only for a very targeted change to the law to allow cannabis to ill people who can benefit from it as a treatment.

I will briefly discuss some of the more minor amendments in the bill. I agree with the amendment that allows the Director-General of the Community Services Directorate or their delegate to bring a young person before a court for a civil proceeding, just as they can already do for a criminal proceeding. The amendment which clarifies the provision that the director-general is responsible for certain young offenders subject to a good behaviour order with a supervision condition is also a welcome clarification. It

will provide greater certainty to both the Community Services Directorate and JACS and ensure consistency when providing support to juveniles who may be transitioning to the adult system. This is essential to ensure the appropriate people and agencies are involved in the support and management of the young person.

The amendments add an example of when the Sentence Administration Board might reject a parole application under the Crimes (Sentence Administration) Act 2005. The addition of an example in this section will both assist the Sentence Administration Board in guiding their decision making and, perhaps more importantly, offer clearer guidance to detainees seeking to appeal those decisions or reapply for parole when they have not made any tangible changes towards addressing the reasons for previous applications being denied.

I also support the clarification to the Crimes (Sentencing) Act to ensure that a victim impact statement may be presented to the court in the form of a picture or drawing. This is already a current practice. Pictures or drawings can, of course, make a powerful statement and can be an important way for some people, particularly children, to express themselves. A good example that I have seen and that I am sure other members have seen is not from a court but pictures drawn by asylum seeker children whose drawings express the sadness and trauma they experience while held in detention.

The Australian Human Rights Commission's forgotten children report was tabled last week. It interviewed over 1,000 children held in detention over a period spanning both Labor and coalition governments. It showed there were 233 recorded assaults involving children and 33 incidents of reported sexual assault. It talked about how children are being detained indefinitely on Nauru and are suffering from extreme levels of physical, emotional, psychological and developmental distress and it presented pictures that have been drawn by the children—pictures of crying children's faces, families behind bars, pleas for freedom.

Turning to the issue of voyeuristic conduct, the bill also proposes two new offences for the ACT's criminal law which would prohibit certain types of voyeuristic conduct. One new offence is for observing with a device or capturing visual data of another person where the content observed or captured is, in all the circumstances, an invasion of privacy and indecent. Examples include behaviour such as using a phone to record in a change room, streaming live data of a person in circumstances where they could reasonably expect to be afforded privacy or taking photos of other people having sex.

A second offence is for observing with a device or capturing visual data of another person's genital or anal region or female breasts when a reasonable person would, in all the circumstances, consider the observing or capturing of visual data to be an invasion of privacy. This offence addresses behaviour called upskirting or downblousing, a practice where recording devices are used to surreptitiously film under women's clothing. Unfortunately, this is occurring more frequently now due to advances in recording technology.

There are some very interesting human rights issues that are raised by these new offences and members will have seen that the scrutiny of bills committee have raised

some of these. In particular, they comment about the framing of the offences and the rather nebulous concepts of “invasion of privacy” and “indecent” upon which the offences turn. I agree that this is a very difficult area in which to legislate and in which to balance human rights. Certainly there are some challenging issues with framing an offence where the offending conduct must be indecent or an invasion of privacy.

How do we define exactly what type of behaviour crosses the line from non-criminal to criminal? The way the offence is framed, determination is largely left to the magistrate. I have looked at the issue quite closely and I think that the framing of the offence makes a good attempt at balancing the competing rights.

It is important to remember how vital it is that the ACT have offences to criminalise and help prevent this type of invasive, indecent behaviour. It is critical, in my view, that we have a law that is framed in a way that can satisfactorily capture the range of these voyeuristic and intrusive behaviours that are committed too frequently against women.

We need to be mindful of the context in which these new offences are made. Sexual and physical violence perpetrated by men against women in Australia is endemic. One in three women will suffer violence at the hands of a man. This violence is underpinned by attitudes that regard women as second-class citizens. It is underpinned by a sense of male entitlement to female attention and, in many instances, it reflects the shameful reality that these women are still considered public property by some men in our community.

Upskirting or downblousing, where women’s bodies are filmed or photographed in a way that is intended to be sexual and without their consent, is an appalling demonstration of the way in which women are objectified. I agree that our job as a government—and, to varying degrees, it is our responsibility as citizens—is to ensure that our streets and public places are accessible to all members of our community.

The fact is that women have very real reasons to feel that many public places are not safe or welcoming spaces for them. A VicHealth report released at the end of last year found that one in four women felt unsafe using public transport and one in three felt unsafe walking home alone, compared to approximately one in 10 men. That means that a third of women feel that they can participate less freely in public life than I and other men can, and that is unacceptable.

Upskirting or downblousing can happen on shopping centre escalators, in change rooms, on train station platforms, at bus stops, on park benches. The list goes on. All around the world upskirting and downblousing have become an increasingly large problem. The internet is filled with photos of women—some of whom would be unaware that they were photographed at all—which are displayed on websites, bought, sold, rated and consumed by men all over the world. This is a serious violation of women in and of itself and must be dealt with seriously by the law.

There is also part of a spectrum of violence and harassment that women experience in public places, which ranges from cat calls to groping, to stalking, to physical or sexual

assault. Canberra, unfortunately, is not immune from these practices. A case currently before the courts involves a man allegedly witnessed taking upskirt photos at the National Multicultural Festival a year ago. In 2012 a man was charged with an act of indecency without consent for allegedly taking photos of a 17-year-old girl under a changing room partition. He allegedly had on various devices over 100 other video clips of young girls.

It is worth remembering that this area of law is one where different human rights intersect and there is an obligation on the government to ensure they have appropriate laws to protect people's privacy, to protect them from intrusive, voyeuristic behaviour. The European Court of Human Rights examined this issue in 2013 and held that Sweden had violated article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights; that is, the right to respect for private life. The case involved a 14-year-old girl whose stepfather had attempted to covertly film her when she was naked. The attempt to prosecute the man for an act of molestation failed, as it was too difficult to meet the elements of that offence. According to the European court, Sweden had breached its obligation because at the time it did not prohibit filming without someone's consent and its legal framework was, therefore, not adequate to protect the girl from a violation of her personal integrity.

I think there are areas where it may be possible to extend laws to help protect women from this type of behaviour. One area I would suggest the government examine, for example, is an offence to target malicious distribution of images or videos which could initially have been taken with consent but have later been distributed for revenge purposes when a relationship breaks down.

Lastly on this matter, I note that the scrutiny committee has raised the idea of creating a series of greater offences, as New South Wales has done. However, I am attracted to the fact that the framing of the offences in this bill is able to provide scope for covering emerging technology, a feature that is lacking in the New South Wales approach.

I will speak briefly on firearms, because the bill contains several minor amendments to the Firearms Act related to the use of firearms at club shooting ranges. These should always be examined very closely. Australia and the ACT generally have very strict gun control laws, and the Greens are supportive of these. They arose through the national firearms agreement after the Port Arthur incident in 1996 and the national handgun control agreement after the Monash University shooting in 2002. They put in place a broadly uniform regime for the regulation and licensing of firearms. The balance they seek is to enhance community safety while preserving the privileges of responsible firearms owners.

Firearms licences and sports shooting are highly regulated. The ACT Firearms Act is some 250 pages long. I would be concerned if there were changes to the firearms regime which I felt were relaxing the requirements and restrictions on obtaining firearms, particularly handguns. While I know there are many dedicated sporting shooters who greatly enjoy their sport and who are very responsible, there is an unfortunate reality that guns are a terrible danger to the community. In the past, gun licences were an avenue by which people had obtained guns to commit crimes. The

tragic Monash University shooting is perhaps the most notable example, where the perpetrator had become an approved holder of a Victorian handgun licence. The result is that shooters face a higher regulatory burden for the privilege of possessing a handgun.

The changes made by this bill can be characterised as minor and administrative and do not impact on the important community safety goals of the firearms regime. One amendment will give authorised instructors a general authority to use club-owned firearms while they are instructing instead of having to use the specific firearm registered to them. A second allows licensees to use their firearms on club shooting ranges where they are registered for genuine reasons other than club use. There are genuine examples where this is necessary—for example, as the explanatory statement notes, to sight the firearm, develop and refine self-loaded ammunition and be certified for employment circumstances.

A third amendment adds clarity to the act, specifying that a young person must be 12 years or older before possessing or using a firearm for the purpose of receiving instruction on a shooting range. This places on shooting ranges an age limit that otherwise did not exist. I agree it is an improvement. The limit parallels the existing limit in the act on when a person can be issued with a minor's licence, which is also 12 years of age.

To conclude, I support the bill and welcome the improvements to law that are being made by it.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (11.47), in reply: I thank members for their support of this important bill today. As members have highlighted, the bill makes a number of amendments to the criminal law in the ACT. The amendments result from issues that have been brought to the government's attention by a range of justice stakeholders, including the Director of Public Prosecutions, ACT Policing, the Aboriginal Justice Centre and the Victims of Crime Commissioner.

As members have highlighted, there are a number of key amendments in this bill. I will briefly, in closing, address the issue of most interest to members, which is in relation to the protection of ACT residents from voyeuristic acts. These acts include behaviour commonly known as upskirting and downblousing, as Mr Rattenbury has referred to. They include recording or taking photographs of people in a private place or engaged in a private act.

New technologies present significant opportunities but also substantial risk. They allow quieter and more surreptitious ways of invading another person's privacy. Mobile phones can be used to take illicit photos to embarrass and intimidate victims. There are websites dedicated to furtive upskirting and downblousing photos of unidentified women. Wearable cameras make clandestine photographs, videos and observations easier. The proposed offences aim to protect the community from the worst of these behaviours.

The nature of the behaviour constituting the offences means that a violation of privacy often occurs without the knowledge of the victim. Accordingly, the victim is not given the opportunity to defend themselves and protect their right to privacy.

The community has a reasonable expectation that certain private acts and parts of the body should not be subject to voyeuristic observation. There is a strong need to criminalise indecent observations or recordings of people in situations where that person should be afforded privacy. It is important to send a clear message that this behaviour is not acceptable and will be taken seriously by the courts.

The harm caused by voyeurism is significant. Studies suggest that women and children are the main victims of unauthorised photographs on the internet. These amendments support, therefore, the national and ACT strategies on preventing violence against women and children. A key outcome under the national strategy is that “justice responses are effective”. So these offences help support that outcome.

A recent European Court of Human Rights case considered the right to respect for private and family life and held that a failure to implement legislation to prevent covert or non-consensual filming or photography of an individual is a violation of that individual’s right to privacy.

Upskirting is not an offence that affects people in isolation, and it is not a victimless crime. The offences can occur at any time, potentially to anyone. It could happen to a mother, a wife, a sister, a daughter or a grandchild. New section 61B(1) of the Crimes Act will therefore criminalise indecent observations or recordings of other people in situations where that person should be afforded privacy. Section 61B(5) will criminalise what is commonly referred to as upskirting and downblousing.

The offences have been developed in response to the way in which advancing technology can be used to capture such material and are designed to cater for further technological innovation.

The amendments will address criminal acts of observing using a device, recording or capturing indecent content and observing, recording or capturing the genital or anal region. To prove the offence, it must be shown that the observation or recording was intentional, an invasion of privacy and objectively indecent in all the circumstances.

Strict liability applies to whether the observation or recording was an invasion of privacy, and absolute liability applies to the assessment of indecency. The use of strict and absolute liability applies only to elements of the offence that are already measured objectively. The use of such elements does not create a strict or absolute liability offence, and a specific intention to take the recording must still be proved by the prosecution.

The offence also provides a number of exemptions to ensure that lawful activities such as law enforcement and security activities can occur.

A range of justice stakeholders have provided comments in relation to these amendments. The offences as drafted seek to balance the rights of the accused person while providing appropriate protection to the community against such offences.

I am aware that there has been some comment on the use of a defence of consent with a legal burden on the defendant. I have noted those comments and the concern that a legal defence for consent could be too restrictive. But voyeurism is, by definition, an offence which is conducted in relative secrecy. The nature of the offence means that the defendant may be the only person able to identify the victim or know if they consented.

A legal burden is appropriate because the defence relates to a matter that is peculiarly within the defendant's knowledge, and evidence about this question would not be available to the prosecution. If it is necessary for the prosecution to prove there was no consent in circumstances where it is not clear who the victims are, then almost by definition we are saying that in most cases we think it is acceptable for the people who commit these offences to go unpunished.

Before the defence is raised, therefore, the prosecution must prove every element of the offence beyond reasonable doubt, which is already an onerous task. Having the defence prove consent requires the defendant not to disprove knowledge but to prove something that is solely within their knowledge.

The explanatory statement, at the recommendation of the Human Rights Commission, includes reference to the Australian Law Reform Commission definition of consent and notes that the Human Rights Act applies to every part of the offence. The use of a legal burden is controversial because it is unusual. For that reason the government intends to keep these offences under review.

As members have noted, the bill also creates a new offence in the Criminal Code to prohibit the display of certain drug equipment. New section 621A will make it an offence for a retailer or wholesaler to display drug pipes, including ice pipes, hash pipes and cannabis water pipes, in retail and wholesale outlets.

The display ban is consistent with the ban on the display of smoking products at a tobacco retailer and wholesaler under the Tobacco Act. The prohibition does not apply to the display of smoking equipment that is not intended for use with illicit drugs but could conceivably be used in that way anyway.

Banning only the display for sale of these items and not the sale itself supports the government's commitment to a harm minimisation approach to illicit drugs. Banning the sale of drug equipment completely will only lead to less safe drug-taking behaviour. Sharing drug-taking equipment can lead to devastating consequences such as illnesses like hepatitis C or HIV, and the take-up of more extreme and dangerous ways of using drugs—for example, through injection. Banning the display for sale of drug pipes is an important health initiative that will support Canberra as a healthy and safe place to live.

As members have commented, the bill also makes a number of minor or technical amendments to ensure consistency across laws and allow for the effective operation of the criminal law. These amendments address issues that have been raised by other justice stakeholders, including clarifying the firearms licensing regime and preventing children younger than 12 using a firearm at a shooting range.

The bill provides extra protection and support to members of the community in particular need, and it provides protection for the privacy of the community as a whole. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (ACT) Bill 2014

Debate resumed from 30 October 2014, on motion by **Mr Corbell**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (11.56): The Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (ACT) Bill 2014 repeals and replaces the Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards Act 2005—the ACT WELS Act—and adopts a uniform national approach to the regulation of water efficiency labelling and standards. This bill is being introduced to bring the ACT into line with the federal water quality legislation. A number of the states and the Northern Territory have already enacted very similar legislation, and we will be supporting this bill today.

The commonwealth WELS Act commenced in 2005. The WELS scheme was intended to increase water conservation and to provide market incentives for manufacturers to improve the water efficiency of products. The original ACT WELS Act was mirror legislation. However, subsequent reforms and amendments to the commonwealth act have resulted in inconsistencies between the two.

The WELS (ACT) Bill 2014 adopts the commonwealth WELS Act 2005 as an act of the ACT. Future amendment to the commonwealth WELS Act 2005 will automatically apply in the ACT unless the ACT takes action to prevent such amendments applying. One exception to the full adoption of the commonwealth act by this Assembly relates to the substitution of penalty units in the ACT act for six months imprisonment in the commonwealth act. This applies to section 61, failure to give WELS information to a WELS inspector, and section 62, failure to appear before a WELS inspector and failure to answer questions or provide material.

The opposition supports this national harmonisation of legislation where it is in the best interests of Canberrans, and for this reason we will be supporting this bill today.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (11.58): Today the Greens will be supporting the passing of the Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (ACT) Bill that seeks to update the ACT water efficiency scheme by aligning ACT law with the most recent version of the commonwealth law.

The water efficiency labelling scheme is a national scheme that requires particular products to be registered and labelled so that consumers are able to determine the water efficiency standard at the point of sale. The WELS scheme sets particular standards for products such as showers, taps, washing machines and dishwashers, and then rates products against the standards.

The scheme being national means that there is a consistent language of water efficiency across the country, something that is useful and efficient for the operation of the scheme. Much like other national standard systems, such as the national Building Code, there is a significant range of standards and a massive range of products that get classified—nearly 11,100 currently registered tap products, nearly 5,000 shower products and 400 washing machines. The scheme also sets requirements for some products—namely, toilets and washing machines—making it illegal to supply products that do not meet the minimum standards.

The WELS scheme was started in 2005 as a demand management strategy. Indications from a study completed in 2008 are that projections of saving are even more than was originally modelled at the commencement of the scheme. From the WELS website it is estimated that by 2021 using water efficiency appliances will help to reduce domestic water use by more than 100,000 megalitres each year; save more than 800,000 megalitres, which is more water than in Sydney Harbour; and reduce total greenhouse gas output by 400,000 tonnes each year, equivalent to taking 90,000 cars off the road each year.

Compliance and enforcement of the WELS scheme is managed by the commonwealth. Compliance has primarily focused on educating industry about meeting obligations under the act. However, it will now shift direction as inspectors are assessing compliance breaches and taking appropriate action.

The ACT water efficiency act was passed in 2005, but this bill repeals the act and starts afresh in mirroring the commonwealth act, which was significantly updated in 2012. The measures in this bill effectively adopt for the territory the uniform national approach to water efficiency. More than its predecessor, the new act will, in essence, mostly refer the reader to the commonwealth legislation. Indeed, the objects of the act, rather than being about water efficiency or providing information on water efficiency, are literally to implement the uniform approach to water efficiency labelling and standards.

The terms used in this act will have the same meaning as in the commonwealth act. Clause 7 of this bill talks about the reference to the commonwealth act because, clearly, should the commonwealth act change, then the rules in the ACT will also change; so effectively the governance of this area rests with the commonwealth. The commonwealth regulator will have the same functions under the provisions as they have under the commonwealth. However, this bill does provide for the territory to modify the commonwealth law through regulations made under the act.

Part 4 of the bill outlines issues in regard to offences. An offence under this act will be an offence against the commonwealth as if the law were a commonwealth law and is not to be taken as an offence against the territory. Part 5 outlines that the administrative laws will also apply as laws of the commonwealth and not the territory and confers functions on commonwealth offices and authorities. Part 6 outlines that fees and penalties payable under the act are payable to the commonwealth and also gives the regulation-making power to the executive. The WELS scheme plays an important role in ensuring better demand management in the ACT, and the Greens will be supporting the bill today.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (12.02), in reply: I thank members for their support of this bill today. The bill reforms the existing ACT water efficiency labelling and standards scheme that was enacted in 2005. The basic objects of this legislation have not changed and they are still very important for us to use water efficiently. The objects are to conserve water supplies by reducing consumption, provide information for purchasers of water use and water saving products, such as washing machines and dishwashers, and promote the adoption of efficient and effective water use and water saving technologies.

The legislation is essentially template legislation applied across all Australian jurisdictions. This bill, therefore, in essence adopts the latest commonwealth law here in the ACT. The commonwealth administers the water efficiency labelling and standards scheme throughout Australia through a water efficiency labelling and standards scheme regulator that deals with product registration, a labelling system and an enforcement system. Since 2005, the commonwealth has had to amend the scheme from time to time and incorporate a number of regulatory instruments for its administration. The range and number of products has expanded and civil penalties have been added for offences of providing misleading information or failing to provide information. By adopting the commonwealth law as ACT law, the legislation will remain current in the ACT.

It is not a controversial bill, Madam Speaker, but it makes for sound and improved legislative and administrative practice, as well as updating the current law. Reviews of the WELS scheme have indicated that the scheme is successful and is achieving significant water savings across the nation. The bill is similar to laws that have been enacted by a number of states and also the Northern Territory in the last 18 months.

There are no human rights issues in regard to this bill, but I point out that the ACT bill differs from the current commonwealth law in one respect: the criminal penalty imposed for three offences—namely, subsection 51(3), subsection 61(3) and subsections 62(3) and (4) of the commonwealth legislation. The ACT bill will retain, from the current legislation, a monetary penalty of 60 penalty units instead of the penalty of six months imprisonment that applies in the commonwealth legislation if it is found that a person fails to provide information to a water efficiency labelling scheme inspector or fails to answer a question of a WELS inspector.

The bill supports and improves the administration and currency of the current ACT law. It is non-controversial, it does not create any new regulatory burden or imposition and it is being adopted across all Australian jurisdictions. I thank members for their support of the bill.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 12.05 to 2.30 pm.

Schools—safety Statement by minister

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), by leave: I would like to make a statement in regard to my adult son's involvement in Menslink, to put on record the circumstances of that involvement and also the very good work of Menslink.

It is a matter of public record that my son was a volunteer for the silence is deadly program, a program designed to help and support young men to open up about their troubles and to get help. It is also a matter of public record that my son committed a serious offence in 2013 and was sentenced last year.

For members' information, my son first volunteered at Menslink at last year's Multicultural Festival, following a general request from Menslink for volunteers, as they have done for this year's festival. He had heard of the good work they do and wanted to see firsthand how they worked with young people. This experience led him to want to talk more with Menslink about his own challenges. My son met with the CEO and, while I was not a party to those conversations, they resulted in my son linking in with Menslink and the silence is deadly program.

The silence is deadly program is targeted at young men and is about supporting them to ask for help. As one comment on Menslink's page notes:

The Menslink's silence is deadly program ... provided a clear and simple message for our students and one that is crucial for all young men to hear—that it is okay to fail. If you're experiencing difficulties, then talk to somebody. Seeking help is the answer.

Another matter on the public record is that Menslink was fined for a breach of the working with vulnerable people check. This has been described by Menslink as unfortunate and as an operational compliance issue. The guide to working with vulnerable young people in the ACT notes:

You will not be required to be registered if you engage in a regulated activity (other than an overnight camp) for no more than three days in any four-week period or seven days in a 12-month period.

For the interest of members, my son volunteered three times more than what is allowed under the act—that is, my son went 10 times in one year to a school and volunteered rather than the allowable seven times in one year.

On the Menslink website there is a letter from the chair, and I will read from that letter:

As the recently elected Chair of Menslink I write this message to advise our community of an operational compliance matter the Menslink Board and organisation have been dealing with and unfortunately has now attracted media attention ...

The Canberra Times ran a story on Thursday 12 February regarding a breach by Menslink of the Working with Vulnerable People ... legislation for conducting regulated activities with young people in 2014 which was reported to the Office of Regulatory Services.

The reported matter concerned a volunteer who worked with our staff when presenting the 'Silence Is Deadly' program to a number of local schools. The volunteer did not hold a WWVP card and the number of times he volunteered was in excess of the number allowed in the legislation, without holding a card. At no time were school students placed at risk due to this breach ...

I will continue to read from the letter from the chair of the board of Menslink:

When the matter was reported to the Menslink Board in October 2014, they took immediate action to address the issue and consequently reported the breach to the Office of Regulatory Services and affected stakeholders.

The Board subsequently reported the matter to the membership of Menslink at the Annual General Meeting in November.

The Office of Regulatory Services received the final incident report in December 2014 and recently issued Menslink with an infringement notice.

Volunteers for Menslink are supported by a trained and highly capable team and work within a defined system of responsibility. This volunteer was accompanied by a staff member of Menslink at all times, along with staff from the schools involved in the Silence is Deadly Program.

The letter continues:

The Board has implemented a review of Menslink policy and procedures to ensure there are no further breaches to this legislation.

As a community organisation, with 12 years of success working with young people, we are very disappointed this situation has occurred. Menslink will

continue to advocate for young men, to encourage them to turn their lives around and to seek assistance if they feel they are getting into trouble.

We value the ongoing support of volunteers, sponsors and staff, as without it we could not help the young men and their families as we do.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Battenally

To me, it is very clear from that letter that at no time were school students placed at risk, as volunteers were always accompanied by staff.

For members' information, the then chair of Menslink made contact with me late last year, following media reporting of my son's sentencing. He alerted me to the fact that Menslink was in breach, that my son had exceeded the number of days as allowed under the act and that Menslink, quite rightly, were referring this matter to the ORS. As a result my son received a letter from the ORS seeking an explanation of the breach. My son replied and received, in turn, a reply from the ORS recognising that there was a breach and providing him with a warning not to undertake any further volunteering until he had applied, been assessed and been provided—possibly, I would say—with a restricted working with vulnerable people card.

In regard to the matter of Menslink providing a reference for my son, yes, the CEO did provide a reference for my son, as he has provided for many other young men at the request of the young men themselves, their families or legal counsel. The reference provided for my son was at the request of all three. On the advice of my son's legal counsel, I approached the CEO on behalf of my son. It should be noted that this approach was made after he started voluntary work with Menslink.

As I said last week, any volunteering activity undertaken by my adult son is his choice and his responsibility and has no bearing on my ministerial responsibilities. The arrangements for my son's involvement with the silence is deadly program are between my son and the CEO of Menslink.

For the information of members and the community, at no time did I ask or direct Menslink to send my son into schools as a volunteer, nor have I at any time asked or directed my staff or officials from ETD to make any exceptions for my son. Further, I did not at any time approach any representative of Menslink and ask that my son be involved in the silence is deadly program. My son's involvement is his own, and not my, initiative.

ETD have systems and processes in place that allow community groups and volunteers into schools that meet necessary requirements. I have no hesitation in asking ETD to review their current arrangements and to ensure that all that can be done is being done. I have no doubt that other agencies and organisations across Canberra will be looking also at their systems and at where improvements can be made.

Let me now put on record my absolute respect and regard for Menslink and for the work that they do in our community. I again quote from the Menslink website:

Menslink has been supporting young men in the Canberra region for over ten years through our free counselling, volunteer mentoring and schools' programs. In that time we've helped thousands of young guys get through tough or lonely times and develop into responsible, productive and contributing adult men. Our charity aims to help young men achieve their full potential. Because we believe everything is possible for them, their families and our community.

Madam Speaker, I will never be able to say a big enough thank you to Menslink for the kind and honest support that they have offered my son. I know that there are many families in our community that would echo that thank you because Martin Fisk and his team do a fabulous job in helping those that need help.

I would also like to read from a letter to the *Canberra Times* on Saturday. It is from Ben Aulich, who quite openly said he represented Lloyd in his matters. In reference to an article, he said:

Given the comments of the then-chairman of Menslink, Peter Clark, I can only assume he has not met Mr Burch and does not know anything about him. My legal firm represented Mr Burch for what can only be described as a terrible offence ...

Since ... I have watched Mr Burch transform from a troubled youth to a vibrant, healthy and articulate young man. That change should be celebrated. I cannot think of a better person to speak to young men about the dangers of drug abuse and encouraging youths to get help if they need it, even if he does not have a shiny little card in his back pocket issued by the government ... I would have thought Chief Assembly reporter Kirsten Lawson had more important matters to report on.

That was a letter from Ben Aulich.

The narrative that has been created by the *Canberra Times* and the Liberals shows politics at an extremely low ebb. Mr Hanson has been on radio today and in the press describing my son in the most negative terms. As a politician, it is one thing; to hear it as a mother, it breaks my heart. There is no mention of the fact that my son has gone to great lengths to improve his life and to be a positive member of our community. He has enrolled at tertiary institutions to further his study. He has enrolled to complete his apprenticeship. He is a good young man.

If this is going to be the tenor of political attacks in this place, where family and friends are fair game for the Canberra Liberals and the *Canberra Times*, I think it is a sad indictment of this place. My son erred. He was sentenced. He was found wanting. He has changed his life around. That should be celebrated—not this vicious, nasty attack that got started through the *Canberra Times* but has been held, with high abandon and absolute venom, by Mr Hanson and the Canberra Liberals.

I say to each and every one of you over there: think of what you are doing to individuals when you stand in this place and out there, in the guise of a political attack on me—a young man who is troubled and who erred. Make no mistake; I am not excusing what he did. It was nothing but serious and horrible compared to where he is

now. I will stand by him as a son and as a young man that has shown, against the odds, that he can pick himself up and be the good man that he will be today and for years to come. And damn them to say any differently.

Questions without notice

Schools—safety

MR HANSON: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, it was reported in the *Canberra Times* last week that an organisation had been fined as a result of exposing ACT schoolchildren to a convicted criminal awaiting sentencing without a working with vulnerable people clearance. With regard to the safety of children in schools in the ACT, Chief Minister, when did you or your office first become aware of this situation and what action did you take?

MR BARR: I have responded to those questions that Ms Lawson put to me, so it is good to see that the collaboration between the *Canberra Times* and the Canberra Liberals continues on this issue. I became aware at around the same time as other members of the community. In relation to these issues, I think Minister Burch has just given a thorough explanation of all that occurred, and these grubby, gutter tactics of the Leader of the Opposition reflect on his character and the character of all of those who support him to continue in the leadership of his party. If this sort of approach is going to dictate how this place is going to run over the next 18 months, it is a new low for the Legislative Assembly. The lengths to which this man is prepared to go to besmirch the reputation—

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, on a point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order.

Mr Hanson: It is on relevance. The question very clearly is: when did the Chief Minister become aware of this breach of law?

Mr Corbell: He has answered it.

Mr Hanson: He has not answered that question. To say it was when the rest of the community became aware is a vague answer. I asked him for a specific date—when the Chief Minister became aware of this breach of law. It is a reasonable question, and I would ask that the Chief Minister be directly relevant.

Mr Corbell: On the point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: On the point of order, Mr Corbell.

Mr Corbell: Mr Hanson did not say on which date; he asked when, and the Chief Minister said when. He may not have liked that answer, but the Chief Minister has said when he became aware, and he is elaborating on that answer.

MADAM SPEAKER: On the point of order, I cannot direct the Chief Minister on how to answer the question, but I would draw to the Chief Minister's attention that

there were two parts to the question: when did he know and what did he do? Chief Minister, do you have anything to add to the answer?

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. What I am doing is standing up for dignity, honesty and the respect that family members of members in this place deserve. That is what I will stand up for. I will stand up for standards in this place that do not stoop to the gutter. That is what I will stand up for, and I will not stand by and allow the Leader of the Opposition to bring down the reputation of a good organisation in Menslink and to bring down the reputation of a young man who is working so hard to rehabilitate his life. It is not fair. This question would not be asked if Lloyd Burch's mother was not sitting two chairs down from me. And those opposite ought to reflect on that, because if that is the way politics is going to be played in this city, it is a disgrace. Jeremy Hanson is a disgrace.

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, on a point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: On a point of order.

Mr Hanson: Calling members opposite a disgrace and attacking the opposition is not an answer.

MADAM SPEAKER: What is the point of order?

Mr Hanson: He needs to be relevant. On what date; when did the minister find out about this breach of law?

MADAM SPEAKER: I think the Chief Minister is answering the question in a way that fulfils the requirements of the standing orders. Do you have anything more to say, Chief Minister?

MR BARR: I have concluded, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Chief Minister, on what date did you become aware of this breach of the law?

MR BARR: At the same time as other members of the community.

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, a point of order on relevance. I asked for a date. To simply say "when other people became aware" is not answering the question. He is not being relevant. My question was very specific, asking for a date. If the minister does not have the exact date, he could take that on notice.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, I think that is more a debating point. I cannot direct the Chief Minister to answer the question in the way that you would like. I think that that is a debating point.

Mr Hanson: Come on. It is a reasonable question to ask.

MADAM SPEAKER: Don't talk back to me, Mr Hanson. A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Chief Minister, on what date, given that you have had a week to consider this since the story broke, were you first advised of this situation?

MR BARR: I have become aware of this situation at the same time as other members of the community.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: On what date did the rest of the community become aware of this issue?

MR BARR: That is something I cannot answer. Some people would be aware following reading the *Canberra Times*. Other people would be aware following a statement from Menslink subsequent to that *Canberra Times* article.

Schools—safety

MR COE: My question is to the Minister for Education and Training. Minister, it has recently been reported that a convicted criminal awaiting sentencing was allowed into ACT schools and interacted with ACT students without having the necessary working with vulnerable people checks. Minister, will you now give a full and frank explanation as to how this entire event came about?

Mr Barr interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Barr. Stop the clock.

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. Mr Barr just interjected, pointing in an aggressive manner, at Mr Coe, saying, "Remember this day. Remember this day. You're grubs." I would ask him to both withdraw and apologise to Mr Coe for that threatening behaviour.

Mr Corbell interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: The use of the word "grub" is unparliamentary and I ask you to withdraw it.

Mr Barr: I withdraw, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Before I call Minister Burch—

Mr Smyth: Mr Corbell also used the term, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Corbell.

Mr Corbell: I withdraw.

MADAM SPEAKER: This is a very sensitive issue. This is question time and this is a robust, grown-up parliament. I will call people to order if they exceed themselves. Mr Barr, I was calling you to order previously, before the point of order, and you did not come to order. This needs to be dealt with sensibly and as respectfully as possible. If I call people to order I expect them to come to order. Minister Burch, in answer to Mr Coe's question.

MS BURCH: I am quite happy to stand and answer the question, and I think I explained it in the statement. But, without pointing a finger across at them, just remember this day where the Canberra Liberals have hit a new low. I have explained the relationship of my adult son and Menslink. I will stand here; I will stand outside and say Menslink is a great organisation.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson.

MS BURCH: I am also on record—I deliberately came here and put on record—that I, in this role, sitting on this bench, have not directed any organisation or staff in ETD to do anything for my son that they would not do for any other troubled young person in the Canberra community.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, when were you first made aware that the events that transpired were an offence?

MS BURCH: Again, I am just interested if they have all got their set pieces now and, because I have made a statement, they do not quite know what to do. That was reflected in my statement. The then chair brought to me the intention—

Mr Hanson: When?

MS BURCH: I said late last year. He was the then chair. Before the AGM. It is also on record from the current chair that at the AGM they told the stakeholders; they told their volunteers. They have disclosed this. They have done nothing wrong. They have not hidden this. I have not hidden this.

There is an opportunity for the Canberra Liberals to think bigger than a political attack. There is an opportunity for everyone over there to reflect on their own families—

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, a point of order on relevance.

MADAM SPEAKER: On a point of order. Stop the clock.

Mr Hanson: Ms Burch is now providing a commentary on the Canberra Liberals. Mr Coe's question was quite specific, requesting the date when she was first informed of the breach of law. I ask that she be directly relevant.

Mr Corbell: On the point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: On the point of order, Mr Corbell.

Mr Corbell: Minister Burch has answered the question directly. She was asked when she became aware, and she has provided that answer. She is now providing context to that answer. She has a time limit to do so. There is no point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: I cannot uphold the point of order. The minister has been asked to answer the question. She has given an answer to that question. But there is only a certain amount of context that can be given after the event. If you have anything to add, add it briefly; otherwise sit down.

MS BURCH: I will take the opportunity—

Dr Bourke: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order, Dr Bourke.

Dr Bourke: I seek clarification on what is the amount of context that you consider can be provided after an answer is given.

MADAM SPEAKER: Normally when people are giving context, they are giving it up-front before they get to the answer, and there has always been a fair amount of leeway. But here we had an answer up-front. There is not an elaboration on the answer; the answer is a particular date or the description of a particular time. Anything beyond that is some sort of elaboration which does not actually add anything to the answer. It is providing context. I am not saying how much context—37 seconds, 28 seconds—is the right amount of context. I am just asking the minister to be mindful of, having given the answer, whether she can provide more information. If she is providing more information, that is fine, but merely elaborating on context does not add anything to the answer. I am asking her to be brief and, if she has nothing else to say, to bring her answer to a conclusion so that we can get on with question time. Minister Burch.

MS BURCH: I will wait for the next one, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, when did you first alert the Chief Minister or Deputy Chief Minister of this breach?

MS BURCH: I think I have been very clear that the breach is a personal matter. It is a very personal matter. I just look to each and every one of you over there that have family and friends to understand that now you have opened the door for us to bring them into this place in any way, shape or form we like. That is what you have done today. That is exactly what you have done today.

Mr Hanson: On a point of order.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Stop the clock, please.

Mr Hanson: The minister was asked a specific question about when she advised the Chief Minister of this breach of law in her department. She stood up and turned it into a threat against the Canberra Liberals that she is going to be attacking family members. I would ask her to be specific to the question, which is: when did she advise the Chief Minister about this breach of law in her department? Did she, and when did she?

MADAM SPEAKER: On the point of order, as members know, it is my practice to write down the questions as we go. Most of the time that is not a particularly useful exercise, but from time to time it is. On this occasion Mr Doszpot asked Minister Burch when did she first alert the Chief Minister or the Deputy Chief Minister to this breach. So we will not have any backwards and forwards from members as to what the question is. It is quite clear what the question is. Minister Burch should be directly relevant to answering the question and I would ask her to be so.

MS BURCH: The breach involved my son; it was a personal matter.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, did you seek any professional or legal advice as to how to deal with your actual or perceived conflict of interest?

MS BURCH: No.

University of Canberra—urban renewal

DR BOURKE: My question is to the Chief Minister and Minister for Urban Renewal. Can the Chief Minister update the Assembly on the government's close collaboration with the University of Canberra to support the university's delivery of world-class higher education and to strengthen its presence in the wider community?

MR BARR: I thank Dr Bourke for a question of substance. This is a very exciting time for the University of Canberra. The university attracts enthusiastic and top-level students and leading researchers from all over the country and all over the world. We need to help the University of Canberra to offer them the accommodation services, facilities and the cultural and academic life that they expect.

Canberra is Australia's knowledge capital. It is one of our city's core strengths and a great competitive advantage for us. But we cannot just assume that this advantage is natural and perpetual. This is a highly competitive field, and any institution that is not offering top quality educational and career opportunities will be left behind.

The ACT government and the University of Canberra share a vision that will allow the university to reach its full potential by enhancing its reputation for providing high quality student experiences, being financially sustainable and making a positive contribution to the Canberra community. It is very clear to me that we can only renew the economic, social and cultural life of our city by having our premier higher education institutions as a central part of this renewal agenda.

The ACT government will be turning this vision into action through the signing of an agreement of strategic intent with the university in the near future to capture our shared commitment to growing the University of Canberra. We are already well underway, though. In December last year I announced that we are bringing forward reforms that will facilitate \$1 billion in new investment, development, expansion and job creation on the University of Canberra campus and in the surrounding community.

The legislation I will introduce into this place later this week will cater to the needs of a modern university with diverse commercial and community interests. By removing unnecessary constraints on the university and amending the university's governing act to clarify and adjust functions and governance, we are paving the way for the University of Canberra to achieve the vision set out in its master plan.

Among the current investments ready to go through to contract are residential housing, private health facilities based around the new University of Canberra public hospital, a technology park that will bring a range of businesses onto the campus and also aged-care provision. The new University of Canberra public hospital will provide the best models of care for inpatient and day services in rehabilitation, aged care and mental health, as well as allowing students to put their knowledge into practice.

Another important aspect of the relationship between the university and the ACT government is through the study Canberra initiative, which helps to promote Canberra as a destination of choice for world-class higher education. Study Canberra capitalises on our city's educational and research assets, and demonstrates that we are a city that welcomes new ideas, new people and innovation.

Of course, these exciting projects are the culmination of years of hard work by the University of Canberra leadership. I want to acknowledge Vice-Chancellor Professor Stephen Parker and his team for their commitment to the University of Canberra and the broader Canberra community. I recently visited the campus, and there certainly is a sense of excitement, vibrancy and life and growth on that campus that we have not seen before in the institution's history.

These coming changes that the government will introduce to the university's governing act, our collaboration on a shared statement of intent and our joint vision and efforts mean that the university will go to being at the centre of an education revolution for this city. *(Time expired.)*

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, what benefits will flow to the wider Belconnen and Canberra community from this development?

MR BARR: The equation is very simple. By working closely with the university to modernise its governance, to develop a joint vision for the campus and to encourage innovative and entrepreneurial activities, we will bring more students, more researchers, more investment and more jobs to Belconnen and to the wider Canberra community.

The University of Canberra already has strong ties to the local community, to local business and to government, and it plays an important role in the lives of many people in Canberra and the region. A recent report by Deloitte Access Economics found that the University of Canberra and the ANU combined contribute over \$1.7 billion a year to the territory economy and support more than 11,500 full-time jobs in our city.

With 10,000 international students and 10,500 interstate students living here, the universities' contribution to our local economy makes the sector more valuable than the financial and insurance services and the utilities sectors. This is in part why the government is pleased to support the university's plans to develop more residences on the campus and to invest in a sporting commons, a health precinct and to foster the growth of an innovation precinct around the campus.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: My supplementary question to the minister is: what will the housing expansion that you mentioned and the establishment of the hospital mean for students?

MR BARR: The government is reviewing the land planning and unit titling arrangements to better enable the University of Canberra to deliver our shared vision. This will mean better residential accommodation on campus so that students can focus on their studies and not worry about finding a place to live.

The new University of Canberra health innovation precinct will have a strong focus on subacute, primary and preventative health care and research, by building the hospital on the campus and co-locating university and ACT Health staff within the one facility. It will allow students to learn within a functioning hospital, increase opportunities for research at the coalface and promote the university as a regional hub for professional development of health professionals. Students will be able to access a diverse range of allied health professional training.

This is a clear investment from the government in our city's future health and education needs and is just one example of how the university will stand out from the crowd of higher education providers over the coming years. Not only will it enhance the university's reputation as one of the institutions whose graduates can be considered amongst the most employable in Australia but it will assist in growing the territory economy, diversify our economic base and ensuring that our university, the University of Canberra, has a very strong future in what is a challenging time for the higher education sector.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, how does the ACT government's collaborative and supportive approach to higher education compare with the federal government's recent actions in this area?

MR BARR: There can be no clearer contrast between the ACT Labor government's efforts and those ideologically motivated attempts by the federal Liberals to cut funding to our universities, to deregulate university fees and to see students in this city and around the country forced to pay \$100,000 or more to get a university education.

The federal education minister and the Prime Minister have effectively taken a sink or swim approach to Australia's higher education sector. They appear to think that degrees can be priced and bought like any other consumable product. We disagree. The ACT Labor government knows that higher education means much more than this. It is about an opportunity and a fulfilling career. It is about research, innovation and ideas. For the ACT, these are fundamental components of what higher education means for this city. It does not just begin and end with the group of eight universities.

Those opposite, the Liberal Party, have been conspicuously silent in relation to the impacts of their federal counterparts' agenda on Canberra's universities. Once again, it is a situation where the Liberal Party want to hack into a significant Canberra institution. Their friends up on the hill want to strip 20 per cent of funding away from the University of Canberra, and it is their view, the Liberal Party's view, that this is a good thing for the university sector. Well, they are wrong and their approach stands to be condemned.

Our approach to support the University of Canberra to enter into a new phase of development, of vibrancy, stands in marked contrast. We support the University of Canberra and are proud to do so. We will bring in a package of legislative reform that will allow the university to achieve its full potential. The choice from the Liberals is cuts, cuts, cuts. (*Time expired.*)

Schools—safety

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Education and Training. Minister, I refer to the situation where a convicted criminal without a working with vulnerable people check visited ACT schools through a program facilitated by a community organisation. Minister, did your conversations with this organisation represent a conflict between your ministerial responsibilities and your personal interests?

MS BURCH: I hope Ms Lawder feels all the better for asking that question. I refer you to my statement, and the answer is no.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, did your position as minister explicitly or implicitly influence the placement of the person within that organisation?

MS BURCH: No.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, have you had any communication with any representatives of the organisation since the *Canberra Times* published details about the matter last week?

MS BURCH: Yes.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, have you been given or have you read a copy of the chairman's report provided to the ORS on the matter?

MS BURCH: No.

Schools—safety

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Minister for Education and Training. Minister, I refer to the situation where a convicted criminal without a working with vulnerable people check visited ACT schools through a program facilitated by a community organisation. A number of school principals have stated they would not have allowed the individual to engage with children in their schools had they been aware of the individual's criminal history. In fact, it would seem to be illegal for them to have allowed this person to engage with students. Minister, can you explain who is responsible for ensuring school grounds are safe and visitors have working with vulnerable people checks when applicable?

MS BURCH: I am sure Mr Doszpot feels better for asking that question. A school has strong systems in place for organisations and volunteers that come into their grounds but, as I said in my statement, I have no hesitation in asking ETD to go back and review those, as I am sure other organisations across this city will be doing.

Again, I will stand here and make comment that Menslink is a good organisation that does good things. This narrative, this conversation, actually puts that reputation at risk. I ask you all just to think about and reflect on that. Again, you are taking the lowest, the cheapest and the nastiest political shot at me, through my son and through a good-standing community organisation. If that is the tenor of your leadership, Mr Hanson, well, let it rest on your shoulders, because the community I talk to are appalled by what you are doing.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, is this a one-off situation or are you aware of any other circumstance where convicted criminals have attended ACT schools without having the necessary working with vulnerable people checks?

MS BURCH: I am not aware of any; nor can I account for the families of the 72,000-odd students that are in our schools across the ACT. If I hear one more word from the Canberra Liberals about supporting vulnerable people and seeking to restore troubled young men onto the road to the straight and narrow—what a bunch of hypocrites each one of you are.

MADAM SPEAKER: Withdraw. Minister Burch, withdraw.

MS BURCH: I will withdraw "hypocrite".

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, are all people in trouble with the law afforded the opportunity to speak in schools to students in an effort to reduce a pending sentence?

MS BURCH: Mr Wall must feel particularly gratified to ask that question. I hope that when he has children they grow up to be decent, civilised young people—

Mr Wall: A point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! Sit down, Minister Burch.

MS BURCH: and that no-one—

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister Burch, sit down. A point of order.

Mr Wall: Standing order 118(b) says that an answer to a question without notice shall not debate the subject to which the question refers. I ask that you draw the minister to the question.

MADAM SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order.

Mr Corbell: On the point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: On the point of order?

Mr Corbell: Yes. Madam Speaker, they are asking about Minister Burch's son. They are calling Minister Burch's son a criminal, for base political advantage. She is entitled not only to answer the question—and has an obligation to do so—but also to defend her family. The point of order ignores—

MADAM SPEAKER: This is a debating point, Mr Corbell.

Mr Corbell: the base political attack from those opposite.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Corbell, this is a debating point. Sit down. On the point of order, the question that Mr Wall asked was: are other people who are in trouble with the law allowed to do particular things? Minister Burch should be mindful of standing order 118(b) and not debate the question. I think that if there is a program that allows such things to happen in schools, Minister Burch is free to talk about that. If there is not, she should say whether there is not. But I would ask her not to debate it. This is a difficult issue and people have been taking points of order and using them as debating points on both sides. I would like us to have orderly progress through question time on a difficult issue, and I would ask Minister Burch, along with everyone else, to be mindful of the standing orders. On this occasion I uphold the point of order and ask Minister Burch not to debate the issue but to answer the question.

MS BURCH: I have answered the question.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: I will again ask the minister if people who are in trouble with the law are offered the opportunity to enter schools in the ACT in an attempt to impress the judiciary prior to sentence.

MS BURCH: In my ministerial portfolio, I think that is outside my remit, Mr Wall.

Mr Coe: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think she has answered the question, so I am not quite sure what the point of order could be.

Schools—safety

MRS JONES: My question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney, I refer to the situation where a convicted criminal without a working with vulnerable people check visited ACT schools through a program facilitated by a community organisation. The organisation self-reported to the ORS late last year. On what date was your office notified of the breach?

MR CORBELL: I would have to check the record, and I will take the question on notice.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Attorney, what steps have you taken to ensure that the Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act is correctly being reported and regulated across the ACT?

MR CORBELL: I am not the minister responsible for the administration of working with vulnerable people checks.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Attorney-General, are all breaches of working with vulnerable people background checking reported to you only or to you and other ministers?

MR CORBELL: I am not the minister responsible for the operation of the working with vulnerable people act.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Who are breaches reported to?

MR CORBELL: My understanding, from my previous responsibilities, is that they are dealt with internally by the Office of Regulatory Services and by the senior executive responsible within that office.

National Multicultural Festival—success

MS FITZHARRIS: My question is to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. Minister, the annual Multicultural Festival was held in Canberra over the weekend of 13 to 15 February. Could you update the Assembly on how the event went.

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Fitzharris for her question. I know that many people in this place enjoyed the success of the festival.

It is a pleasure to talk about the success of our 2015 National Multicultural Festival. This was my first major event since becoming Minister for Multicultural Affairs and my first official launch, as Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, at the Indigenous showcase. I have only been in this role for almost a month now; I cannot take full credit. I do give my thanks to Minister Joy Burch for all of the hard work that she has done leading up to the National Multicultural Festival.

It is a weekend that my family and I have always looked forward to and enjoy so much because there is so much to see and do. No matter how young or how old you are, there is something for everyone. Personally, I am thankful to the many communities that made me feel so welcome at their stalls and performances. I would not have had it any other way.

It was such a great weekend. The weekend showed just how amazing and diverse our city is. I am proud of how much this festival is embraced by so many people across Canberra, from our volunteers and staff to sponsors and festival visitors.

Our festival is now in its 19th year, evolving from a small celebration of a few hundred individuals to one of the biggest multicultural events in the country. The idea for Canberra's annual National Multicultural Festival started in the late 1970s. Canberra Week celebrations in 1977 included cultural exhibitions which focused on our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community as well as on the country of origin of many Canberrans, who at the time were mostly from European countries.

In 1996, the annual National Multicultural Festival became official, and in the space of a decade the festival grew to incorporate the food and dance spectacular, the Indigenous showcase, the Greek Glendi, Carnivale in the City, Chinese New Year, India in the City and the Pacific Islander showcase, which are now annual cornerstones of the program. Today it is an event that reflects the more than 170 nationalities that represent our Canberra community.

The ACT government works each year with many thousands of stallholders, performers, community organisation members, members of the diplomatic community and tireless volunteers to bring together our wonderful festival. Huge crowds flock to Civic to eat, dance, enjoy, connect and learn at the three-day extravaganza.

There are growing numbers coming from out of town and even from overseas, with the average crowd figures topping well over 250,000 people. It has become a celebration that unites our city like no other. That is quite a journey from its humble

beginnings in 1977. The cultural performances across the nine stages and more than 400 stalls providing food, information and craftwork over the three days ensured that all visitors were left spoilt for choice.

I want to make particular mention of the Indigenous showcase, which is coordinated each year by the ACT NAIDOC committee and this year attracted a wide array of local and interstate artists, craftspeople and performers. The festival gives people an opportunity to explore our city and learn more about the many cultural and faith communities that are so important to our city. This is especially so with Canberra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Each year the festival gives us all the chance to come together, to experience the colour, sound, sights, food, dancing and fun that represent the world's unique and diverse cultures that are the heart of our city. It is an event that just keeps getting better.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, volunteers are an essential element of the festival. Could you outline what role the volunteers played in the success of this year's Multicultural Festival?

MADAM SPEAKER: Before I call Ms Berry, I will be lenient on this occasion, but I draw to your attention that supplementary questions do not have preambles.

MS BERRY: Our National Multicultural Festival is our biggest, loudest and most fun celebration of Canberra's amazing, diverse communities, and our official volunteers are one of the main reasons for the festival's continued success, helping to run the showcases, support the performers, give information and assistance to visitors and so much more.

Before the festival I met with Amelia, Deki, Stephanie, Kabu and Christopher, all of whom had volunteered at this year's festival, to thank them for the important job they do in supporting our Multicultural Festival. Each volunteer gives a minimum of at least four hours over three days, but a majority do so many more hours. All volunteers receive training leading up to the festival to support volunteers and enable them to deliver festival goers a great experience.

This year we were fortunate to have more than 80 volunteers sign up. Our volunteers come from all walks of life, from teenagers to seniors. Some volunteers helped out for the first time. Others have regularly volunteered for more than a decade.

As well as our official volunteers, I would like to pay special tribute to all of the community volunteers who often do not get the recognition that they deserve. Of the more than 400 multicultural community groups who showcased their respective cultures and faiths through displays of music, dance and food and making information available, there were over 4,000 volunteers who helped out in the stalls of the community groups.

I am proud that our festival is so strongly supported by volunteers, local businesses and hundreds of community groups and their volunteers. I have to pay special thanks to Nic Manikis, who spent most of the weekend by my side. In fact, on one occasion we were confused as husband and wife. I thank him for his support over the weekend.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, could you provide an outline of the diversity of the communities represented at the festival?

MS BERRY: I thank Dr Bourke for his supplementary question. The ACT government is proud to stage this event, in partnership with our community. There are so many people across our community who contribute to the success of our festival, including community stallholders, performers and artists who work incredibly hard in the lead-up to and during the three days of the festival.

Included in our community are those diplomatic missions based here in Canberra, where the diplomats, their families and staff live and work locally. This year there were 75 countries represented, and their presence demonstrates our festival's international appeal. In fact, I can say that for the first time I visited Europe, visiting over 28 countries, all in about an hour, at the Multicultural Festival.

Also, organisations such as the ACT Community Language Schools Association and the ACT Bilingual Education Alliance support the next generation of festival goers through the children's sanctuary and the children's parade, to harness our kids' cultural pride by encouraging them to get dressed up and get involved.

The Canberra Interfaith Forum brings together people from a variety of spiritual and cultural backgrounds to discuss and promote social and cultural harmony within our community. Of course, without the over 250,000 people who voted with their feet and visited the festival over the weekend, there simply would not be a festival. So I thank and pay special tribute to the Canberra community, interstate and overseas visitors for their ongoing support for the festival and for the practical way that they help us to embrace, celebrate and cherish our cultural and religious diversity.

I look forward to working with Canberra's multicultural and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities into the future, to build on the good work our festival does in bringing people together and promoting diversity and strength in our city and community.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, how did festival organisers work with other ACT government agencies and non-government groups in planning and running the festival?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Porter for her supplementary question. The work that goes into planning the Multicultural Festival for next year starts the day after the end of this

year's Multicultural Festival. The planning and delivering of logistics and infrastructure required for our festival are immense. There is the preplanning, months in advance, of the festival. There is the building of the stalls and stages throughout the city, and the list goes on.

So much of this work is done behind the scenes—before, during and after the festival—and tends to go unacknowledged. This work involves special efforts by staff in ACT Health, in TAMS and, of course, in the Community Services Directorate to ensure a safe and enjoyable event for all Canberrans. There are our police and emergency services teams who work to support festival goers and make sure that they are safe and secure.

I would like to make special mention of ACTION buses—their drivers and other staff—for their hard work throughout the festival. The special platforms and service diversions were done well. This year there was a free ACTION shuttle bus on Saturday from Mitchell, Kippax, Jamison, Kambah, Weston, Mawson and Calwell shops park and ride facilities. The use of the free park and ride shuttles and the special Multicultural Festival nightrider services shows how ACTION bus services adapt to the changing needs of the Canberra public to get people to the festival and safely home again.

Last, but certainly by no means least, there are our festival sponsors, who partner with the ACT government to make this event possible. Our sponsors are so important to the growing success of our festival. This year we were delighted to welcome on board Swedish furniture giant IKEA as a major sponsor, joining other generous sponsors such as CBD Ltd, ACTEW Water, ACTTAB, AFP, Lease and Salary Masters, media partners Prime TV and 666 ABC, and charity partners Menslink and— (*Time expired.*)

Schools—safety

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Education and Training. Minister, I refer to the situation where an individual without a working with vulnerable people check visited ACT schools through a program facilitated by a community organisation. Minister, will you provide to the Assembly by the close of business today which schools were visited and on what dates?

MS BURCH: I will seek some advice about what that is, but let us be very clear: we all know what this matter is. I have read a statement which included an extract from the letter from the chair. That has been very pointed in saying that at no point—at no point—were kids put at risk and I know that the schools have valued the silence is deadly program. So, again, I just caution those opposite to say where they are going to land with this, because the silence is deadly program is a great program—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS BURCH: It is a great program that is making a good impact on troubled—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson!

MS BURCH: young people. What you are doing here—and Mr Hanson can dress it up any which way he likes—is an attack on me, and this is an attack on my son, on my family. You should be ashamed of what you are doing. He is a good young man. Make no mistake that he was troubled and it was a serious and offensive act. He is now a young man who, through the support of Menslink, has changed his life around. I will not have you, Mr Hanson, drag him down into the gutter again.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, does the Department of Education and Training have any policies or procedures in place in order to contact the parents or guardians of students who attended the schools where these breaches occurred?

MS BURCH: Again I refer you to the letter from the chair of Menslink where they self-disclosed this. They made contact with the ORS. They made contact with the parents. I hope that when every one of the Canberra Liberals goes home tonight and pats themselves on the back for the good work they have done today, they reflect on what they have actually done today. What you have done is to bring Menslink into disrepute. Give me a venomous attack; so be it. But you have dragged my son down again—a young man that could not get any lower. He has changed himself around. Each one of you has given him a good old kick into the gutter.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, could you remind members of the Assembly opposite what are the requirements for volunteers to register when they engage in a regulated activity such as visiting a school?

MS BURCH: I thank Dr Bourke for his interest. The working with vulnerable people check is quite clear in that it does allow people with an interest to participate in a regulated activity on a number of occasions, or a number of days, as it is referred to in the act. This breach was that my son had 10 when the guidelines allow for seven in any one year. So Mrs Jones can nod, but that is what it is. And schools and organisations are well aware of this.

We are transitioning the working with vulnerable people checks in over time—children first, then disability, and the very fraught sector of drug and alcohol support at the very end. And we will do a review of the working with vulnerable people check.

Heaven forbid that a volunteer, who could have a history of drug and alcohol abuse, courtesy of the Canberra Liberals over there will not want to put their hand up to help anybody. Because you, collectively, get them, drag them down and will never, ever allow them to improve themselves. Shame!

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, how many breaches of a similar kind occurred in ACT schools in 2014?

MS BURCH: I am not aware of any.

Schools—safety

MR SMYTH: My question is to the Attorney-General. It was reported in the *Canberra Times* last week that an organisation had been fined as a result of exposing ACT schoolchildren to a convicted criminal awaiting sentencing without a working with vulnerable people clearance. Attorney, it has been reported that you are in receipt of a report undertaken by the organisation in question. By close of business today, will you table this report?

MR CORBELL: I am not in receipt of any such report, nor am I the minister responsible for the working with vulnerable people checks.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, which arm of government decided who was culpable for the strict liability offences involved in a convicted criminal entering an ACT school without a working with vulnerable people clearance?

MR CORBELL: I am not the responsible portfolio minister.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Attorney, who did decide the \$2,500 quantum of the penalty and what are the justifications for the differing amounts of penalties?

MR CORBELL: I refer Ms Lawder to my previous answer.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Attorney, have all investigations regarding possible offences been concluded and dealt with?

MR CORBELL: Just to make it clear, I am not the minister responsible for the administration of working with vulnerable people checks. I cannot answer these questions.

Emergency services—infrastructure and personnel

MS PORTER: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, what renewal is underway in both infrastructure and personnel in the emergency services across the territory?

MS BURCH: The ACT Emergency Services Agency is undergoing a process of reform. This has been underpinned by a number of ongoing reviews of the organisation, such as the ESA expenditure review that has been undertaken by the government to examine opportunities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of services in the agency in a financially sustainable way. A range of sub-reviews has also been undertaken, which includes the review of the current communication centre's capability.

The ACT Ambulance Service cultural review has been undertaken. It focuses on organisational behavioural aspects of the Ambulance Service, including the characteristics necessary to continue to ensure commitment to change and to service growth. I understand that the final report is being finalised. I expect this to be provided to me shortly.

As you are aware, the government has significantly invested in the Ambulance Service since 2011, which has resulted in the ACT Ambulance Service having equal fastest response at the capital city 50th percentile and the fastest at the capital city 90th percentile, according to the 2015 *Report on Government Services*. This means that ambulance code 1 response times have reduced to 8.2 minutes in 2015 from 8.7 minutes in 2014. In addition, the 2014 Lennox review released in July of last year was highly complementary of the progress made by ACTAS in all areas identified for attention in his initial 2010 review.

The women in emergency services strategy has also been progressing well, with a number of reviews and activities undertaken through this project. They include examining issues around ESA operational facilities and areas for improvement which will better support personal dignity and privacy for women.

Fire and Rescue NSW were invited by the ESA in January of this year to demonstrate the way their physical aptitude test is conducted in New South Wales. The New South Wales physical aptitude test has been developed to attempt, as closely as possible, to mirror the functional requirements of the role of a firefighter and at the same time focus on the physical requirements of the position in a manner that is independent of technique that in turn removes the potential for cultural or gender bias. These reviews will strengthen the capability and the effectiveness of the service across our services.

The government has also in recent years implemented a program of upgrading and building emergency services facilities to enable our ESA personnel to respond to emergency incidents more quickly and efficiently. The ESA headquarters, the ESA training centre, the SouthCare and RFS heli-bases and the new west Belconnen station are testament to what we do as a government to ensure that our emergency services are well equipped with world-class facilities that are ready to protect the ACT community from significant incidents and natural hazards.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, can you further update the Assembly about the women in emergency services strategy?

MS BURCH: I thank Ms Porter for her question. The objectives identified in the women in emergency services strategy project highlighted opportunities around the ESA's ongoing commitment to a respectful and equitable workforce, as well as a need to focus on achieving and maintaining appropriate standards to support a diverse range of employees.

Complementing the station upgrade and relocation program being undertaken by the ESA, and in alignment with the strategy's objectives, the JACS Directorate undertook a review of the ESA facilities, considering improvements which will better support the employment of women.

Staff from across the directorate, including representatives from ACT Fire & Rescue and the UFU, came together as a working group in November last year and reviewed the fire stations across the territory, with an initial focus on the upgrade of ESA facilities to support personal dignity and privacy.

This working group provided recommendations to meet the objectives of the project. I look forward to working across all agencies in our emergency services to make sure that we promote them and do our best to get more women across our services.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, how does the strategy fit into the growth and renewal of the ESA, with the south Tuggeranong fire station set to open next month and work to commence shortly on the new Aranda station in my electorate?

MS BURCH: I thank Dr Bourke for his question. In addition to supporting women, it is also about making sure we have the bricks and mortar in place. In relation to what the government has done in terms of strengthening the emergency services infrastructure, I can advise the Assembly that phase 1 of the station upgrade relocation will be completed when the co-located Fire & Rescue ambulance station at Aranda is complete and becomes operational early next year. Construction of this important project is expected to commence in March this year. In addition, the government is expecting the completion of the south Tuggeranong Fire & Rescue station. That is due for completion within the next month or so, and I look forward to inviting community members of south Tuggeranong and Lanyon to come and visit that fabulous new station on an open day.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, what are the next steps in the growth and renewal of the ESA in the ACT, particularly for attracting more women into the ESA?

MS BURCH: I thank Ms Fitzharris for her question. The women in emergency services strategy recognises that, to attract, recruit and retain more women in the ESA, the agency must be committed to addressing the barriers that come with identifying as a male-dominated workplace, including gender bias—a term which is used to describe treating everyone in the same way as if their gender or cultural background does not count in an organisation, policy or process.

In order to address the work towards removing this barrier, the ESA has started a series of communication workshops for staff and volunteers. The ESA acknowledges that an improved understanding can positively impact on the agency's productivity and culture and is eager to take these steps. The workshops are being delivered by Ms Avril Henry, who specialises in diversity and in developing collaborative leaders and building positive workplaces. She has been instrumental in providing advice and guidance to the ADF cultural reform that has occurred over the last few years.

The first of those workshops was held earlier this month and focused on communication styles generally in exploring the barriers to effective communication. The second workshop will be held, as I understand it, on 23 February, and that will focus on the differences between communication methods and how we can work through that. The third workshop is scheduled for March, and that is absolutely targeted at the women of the ESA. I look forward to working with the commissioner, Dominic Lane, to get this important strategy in place.

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

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—Brendan McAvoy, dated 23 January and 5 February 2015.

Short-term contracts:

Donald Taylor, dated 3 and 4 February 2015.

Ian Hubbard, dated 16 and 27 January 2015.

Paul Rushton, dated 4 February 2015.

Wilhelmina Blount, dated 4 and 5 February 2015.

Contract variations:

Ann Lyons Wright, dated 23 and 27 January 2015.

Bronwen Overton-Clarke, dated 2 and 4 February 2015.

David Matthews, dated 29 January 2015.

Lana Junakovic, dated 2 and 5 February 2015.

Leanne Cover, dated 19 December 2014 and 9 January 2015.

Liesl Centenera, dated 19 December 2014 and 2 February 2015.

Wilhelmina Blount, dated 4 and 5 February 2015.

Mr Corbell presented the following paper:

ACT Criminal Justice—Statistical Profile 2014—December quarter.

Ms Burch presented the following papers:

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Environment Protection Act—Environment Protection (Fees) Determination 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-15 (LR, 5 February 2015).

Public Trustee Act—Public Trustee (Fees) Determination 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-13 (LR, 2 February 2015).

Work Health and Safety Act—Work Health and Safety (Fees) Determination 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-14 (LR, 4 February 2015).

Government—policy
Discussion of matter of public importance

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

The impact of ACT Government decisions on household budgets.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (3.42): It is a pleasure to stand in the Assembly today to discuss this matter of public importance. The opposition considers the impact of ACT government decisions on household budgets to be of paramount importance. The work that we do in this place and decisions that we make in this place have a real impact on the livelihoods of over 380,000 people who live in the territory. The decisions that we have to be particularly mindful of are decisions which impact the financial capacity of those citizens. I believe, as do all my colleagues, that we have an obligation to minimise the financial burden that we, as an Assembly or a government, place on the households of the ACT. In doing that, in minimising our burden, we are maximising the capacity of families, of households and of individuals. And if we can maximise the capacity of these people, we are, in effect, maximising their freedom and maximising their choice. It is with that in mind that the opposition truly believes that the impact of ACT government decisions on household budgets is indeed a matter of public importance.

I believe that for too long this government has not been focusing on the household budgets of Canberrans. For too long the Labor-Greens government has looked at very extravagant projects as a marker for policy success. Often it seems that expenditure is a KPI for this government—rather than outputs, rather than actual, tangible deliverables. It seems that the government is far more interested in spending money than in getting value for it. In reality, the government should see that boosting the household budget is a core task of government. Shamefully, this government has failed on that account.

Over the last few years we have seen many of this government's policies increase the pressure on household budgets. Most notably, this government is tripling everybody's rates. While the Chief Minister, the Treasurer, may well be in denial about this fact, it is undeniable that households around the ACT are seeing significant annual increases in their rate notices. The increases are often well in excess of 10 per cent. In last year's budget, the Treasurer handed down an average \$153 rate increase to Canberra households. This was a 10 per cent increase and painted much the same picture as in 2013, when there was an average \$139 rate increase for the average Canberra household. That was 10 per cent too.

We have a situation whereby we are seeing rate increases of 10 per cent compounding. Combined over the last couple of budgets, Canberra households are worse off to the tune of \$292. Does any household in the ACT actually believe that they are in a better situation, that they are getting better services in exchange for this additional payment? The \$292 the average household has paid is far from an insignificant amount. Unfortunately, we have got at least two more budgets before the next election, before the people of Canberra have an opportunity to put the brakes on Mr Barr's increases.

On top of rates, ACTION bus fares have risen markedly over the last couple of years. While sometimes they can be considered minimal, they have a huge impact on the family budget. What is most insulting about these fare increases is the fact that the services are actually declining. People are paying more but getting less. In the last three years, customer satisfaction with ACTION dropped by 13 per cent. Close to a third of buses do not operate on the scheduled time. People will rightly pay for a product that they are happy with. They will rightly pay for a perception, for actual value. But to increase ACTION bus fares when services are getting worse is simply not good enough and is very hard to justify. The government must and should do better.

I would like to touch on parking charges here in the ACT. Since I have joined the Assembly, parking charges have almost doubled in the city. Whilst there will always be a charge for parking in Canberra, I do not think it is justifiable for the government to have doubled the cost of parking over the last six years. I would struggle to think of any other city or any other jurisdiction where charges have doubled over the last six years, especially in a metropolitan area. Worryingly, we know that when light rail is operational, parking charges will increase further. After all, that is in the business case for light rail. But we all know that there is an inelastic demand for parking in the ACT. We know that whenever prices go up for parking, people simply pay. It is, in effect, the government gouging Canberrans. People often do not have a choice about whether they drive, whether they ride or whether they use public transport. Often people are simply compelled to drive because of the many places they need to go either to or from work. To that end, when the government increases the cost of parking, it is simply gouging Canberrans, because Canberrans often simply must pay it; there is no other option for many Canberra families.

Early analysis of the light rail project included increased parking charges as an overall benefit for the project. Of course, people who live anywhere outside the light rail corridor, as the vast majority of Canberrans do, will be paying for light rail twice.

They will be paying in their additional parking fees; they also will be paying through their rates, taxes, fees and charges for the government to prop up the tram service, even if they are not actually using it. This is just another example of Labor-Greens policies hurting the family budget.

At the end of the day, this government continually hit household budgets, but they do it just so that they can prop up their grandiose schemes. Worryingly, this trend will only continue as the deficit increases and debt escalates. Either the government increase rates and charges or they cut services that the majority of Canberrans need. The alternative is to plunge the territory budget into further disrepair, with larger deficits and greater debt. This ensures that future governments will be limited in their options.

That is, in effect, what this government is doing by way of light rail and many of its other projects. They are creating an intergenerational burden on future Canberra residents. By tying Canberrans to light rail through a huge availability payment model, perhaps for 20 or 30 years, the Chief Minister, Minister Corbell and Minister Rattenbury are putting their own pet project, their own personal legacy, ahead of the financial freedom of generations of Canberrans. We grasp the enormity of that. We grasp just how serious it is to shackle generations of Canberrans to Mr Barr's, Mr Corbell's and Mr Rattenbury's idea of a tram.

We believe that governments should live within their means. We do not believe governments should get carried away with pet projects or get carried away with the legacy of individual politicians. That is exactly what we have here—a situation whereby the selfishness of some is getting in the way of the prosperity of many. The Canberra Liberals will continue to do all that we can to minimise the impact of ACT government decisions on household budgets. It is for that reason that I brought the matter before the Assembly today as a matter of public importance.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (3.52): I thank Mr Coe for raising household budgets as an issue today. As a starting point for his party, he might like to turn to his colleagues to discuss how putting a tax on every visit to the GP assists the household budget and how jacking up university fees for every Canberra student impacts on the household budget. How does kicking people off the dole help the household budget? How does cutting pensions help the household budget? How does making derisory pay offers to ACT-based commonwealth public servants help household budgets? How does making derisory pay offers to defence personnel who live in the ACT help household budgets?

How do the Liberal Party help household budgets? They throw people out of work. They cut pensions. They throw people off the dole. They put a tax on GP visits. They triple—

Mr Coe: Point of order.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Ms Lawder): Point of order, Mr Coe.

Mr Coe: Madam Assistant Speaker, I draw the Assembly's attention to what the matter of public importance is—the impact of ACT government decisions on household budgets. I just wondered how all these commonwealth decisions may be applicable to ACT government decisions.

Mr Gentleman: On the point of order, Madam Assistant Speaker.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: On the point of order, Mr Gentleman.

Mr Gentleman: MPIs are a wide-ranging debate, and we are allowed to comment on whatever is appropriate in relation to the matter of public importance.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you for your assistance, Mr Gentleman. Mr Barr, I am prepared to give you some leeway in your introductory comments, but we will move, perhaps very shortly, to the topic at hand.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Assistant Speaker. Household budgets are indeed an important topic, and something that is on the minds of Canberra households. When they look at the two policy alternatives between the Liberal Party and the Labor Party, and the impacts that Liberal policies have on their household budgets, they vote Labor, Madam Assistant Speaker, because they do not want the Liberal recipe of cuts, cuts and cuts. They do not want a tax on their GP visits. They do not want a tax on their education. They do not want young people thrown off the dole. They do want fair pay increases.

When it comes to household budgets, that choice is very clear. We have seen it in Queensland. We have seen it in Victoria. We have seen it federally. More than half of the Prime Minister's backbench does not want him in the job. The Liberal Party knows this. It is the absolute height of hypocrisy for Mr Coe to come into this place and talk about the Liberal Party's track record on household budgets.

The Liberal Party also knows that the single biggest impact on a household budget is whether there is someone in that household who has a job. That is Labor's priority. It is all about jobs. Again, we can contrast the approach of the political parties. Those opposite are all about cutting jobs. That is in their DNA. That is what they believe in. That is what they run for public office for—to cut public sector employment. Public sector employment is a significant economic contributor in this city. Let us be very clear. When it comes to the question of the household budget, which party is hacking into the household budget? The Liberal Party.

This government remains committed to a range of reforms to assist the most vulnerable in our community. We provide a significant range of concessions. We provide a significant range of concessions to ACT households, in the areas of general rates, the fire and emergency services levy, drivers licence and motor vehicle registration fees, public transport fares, and access to a range of concession cards. Concessions are also available from the ACT government to help meet the cost of spectacles, the energy costs of life support equipment, the taxi subsidy scheme, and a range of energy and water efficiency programs. Over 17,000 home owners in the territory benefit from the ACT government's rates rebate. Around 25,000 households benefit from our energy and utility concessions.

In the 2014-15 budget, the ACT government made a number of changes to concessions to ensure that they remain fair and well targeted. This includes the introduction of the over-60s home bonus, which allows eligible households to pay only \$20 in stamp duty when moving home. That is often saving those households up to \$20,000. We have extended the sewerage rebate for low income healthcare card holders. We have increased the taxi subsidy scheme for ordinary taxis from \$22.50 to \$24 and for wheelchair accessible taxis from \$34.50 to \$37.

But the most important area for our government is jobs. Without any question, the biggest impact on the household budget is whether there is someone, or more than one person, in a household who has a job. That is what this government is focused on. A strong economy and job growth are the key ways that the territory government can meet the needs of the Canberra community now and into the future.

One need only contrast the approach of the ACT Labor government with the Liberal governments we saw in Victoria and Queensland—the one-termers, the ones who came in with exactly the ideology that those opposite worship every day: slashing jobs, cutting back services to the community and leaving the community poor. That is what the Liberal Party are about; that is what they practised in Queensland and Victoria. The electorates threw them out in one term.

We are not like that. We never have been and we never will be. That is why we will continue to support household budgets in this city through assisting people into work. Having people in work and keeping people in work is the best way for our economy to continue to grow. That is exactly what the government are doing, through our policies and through our budgets. We are supporting economic growth and we are supporting jobs, because that is what Labor governments are about.

We are stimulating the economy and we are providing confidence by developing and growing emerging enterprises, entrepreneurs and different sectors of our economy to expand our economic base and grow local employment. We are promoting Canberra to the region, the nation and the world, to attract new investment and tourism. We are attracting foreign investment and skills through programs for foreign investors and skilled and business migrants. We are growing our city's export capabilities, including partnering with our universities, as I outlined in question time, to support their growth and their international outreach.

We are nurturing our grassroots sports and elite athletes to solidify our city's region as a centre of regional sporting excellence. We are supporting the development and presentation of the arts in the territory. We are delivering and securing major events for our city, along with managing significant sporting, cultural and event infrastructure. And we are leveraging our land advantage and our infrastructure spend to transform our city into a dynamic, creative city of the future that is the preferred location for people to work, to live and to visit. We have a fundamentally positive outlook about this city's future. The policies that we are enacting are the right policies for this time and for this city. They stand in marked contrast to what we see from those opposite.

I am very happy to have this debate in this chamber every single day. The values of this party—the Labor Party, this government—have stood the test of time. They are enduring values that the Labor movement keeps close to its heart and that guide us in making the right decisions for this community. We will always be the party of jobs. We will always be the party of social inclusion and equality. We will always be the party of growth for this city. It stands in marked contrast to what we see opposite. This afternoon, they have descended even further into the gutter.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Justice, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Transport Reform) (4.02): I rise today to speak to the matter brought forward by Mr Coe and to focus on some of the issues about real costs as opposed to some of the superficial arguments that Mr Coe put forward today. I thought I would particularly start with transport, which was an area that Mr Coe did focus on in his remarks. Transport costs are now the second highest costs for a Canberra household primarily because of the costs associated with owning and running cars. Providing quality public transport and, of course, starting to plan our city more around public transport is a way to alleviate these economic stresses that are placed on Canberra households.

The approximate average time a resident of Canberra has to work in order to pay for a car is 550 hours a year, or 1½ hours every day. This puts a very real perspective on these costs. For governments and members of this place, it underlines the fact that we need to make sure we are giving people an alternative to being locked into that level of work over a period.

A recent study also found that if an average family were able to run one less car in their household, over a 25-year period the household could accumulate more than an additional \$1 million in superannuation over their working life, repay a \$300,000 housing loan in 12 years instead of 25 years, saving \$245,000 in interest payments, or purchase a home which is \$110,000 more expensive than they would otherwise be able to at the outset. That study also concluded that governments can assist low income families through planning and infrastructure investment. This is a strategy that would create cities that are both more sustainable and more equitable. Ignoring these real cost issues simply comes at the expense of Canberrans now and into the future.

Independent research conducted at the end of 2013 looked at capital cities and potential for savings for workers in the CBD if they were to travel via public transport instead of driving. By leaving their car at home and travelling by public transport to work five days a week, the average commuter travelling to work in the Canberra CBD would save \$3,516 annually. This varies depending on what type of car the person uses and the distance they commute, from five to 25 kilometres, and the savings range between \$2,429 and \$5,449, depending on how one adjusts those variables.

The average savings a commuter can achieve by not owning a car at all or not purchasing a second car and commuting by public transport is \$7,348 annually. Again, that ranges from \$3,140 to \$15,367. If a Canberra commuter chooses to catch a taxi occasionally, he or she would expect to pay at least \$27 to travel 15 kilometres one

way to the CBD. With the frequency of taxi use to increase to an average of one or two taxis per week, the annual taxi cost would amount to \$1,263 and \$2,526 respectively. That is still saving a household several thousand dollars per year. There is a range of information on the methodology there, which I am happy to provide to members if they are interested.

Similar research was released at the beginning of this year by the Australasian Railways Association which found Canberrans could save up to \$9,000 annually by travelling by bus instead of cars. It said the introduction of light rail was expected to further increase savings. The head of the Australasian Railways Association emphasised—

Mr Coe: By replacing the Red Rapid bus?

MR RATTENBURY: You take it up with the association, Mr Coe, if you have got a problem with their methodology. The head of the association emphasised the introduction of light rail would see Canberrans provided with a second public transport alternative that would integrate into the ACTION bus network and provide greater mobility and accessibility to residents, making the ability to shift from private vehicle to public transport more feasible.

I cite these figures because they are research that people have actually bothered to do. They are not glib slogans that you come into this place with and go, “Oh, the government’s terrible; it’s doing these things.” It actually underlines the fact that we are being serious about investing in public transport and having a different vision for this city, instead of consigning people to the exclusive use of the private motor vehicle. Talking about exclusive use, people will still need cars in this city and they will continue to use them, but the figures I have cited today talk about the necessity of second or third vehicles. These are very real savings for Canberra households. That is the observation I am trying to make.

I am sure that some of my colleagues across the chamber will get up shortly and verbal the comments I have just made, but these are cited figures by people who have actually sat down and worked these things out. So the point is simply that government can make a real difference by making sure that Canberrans have alternative forms of transport.

Mr Coe made a number of remarks about ACTION, and it is worth clarifying some of the points he made. He talked about the fare increase. The 2015 fare increase at 2½ per cent was the lowest fare increase since the introduction of MyWay. The fare increase in 2015 was 2½ per cent; in 2014, 7½ per cent; in 2013, five per cent. Prior to 2013 there had been no increase since 2010. That puts these figures in context as well.

I might say, on Mr Coe’s remarks that the service is declining, that is simply not true. In the last two years, the reporting periods, the on-time running has increased from 68 per cent to 73 per cent, and it is continuing to head in the improving direction. That facet of ACTION’s performance has actually improved. Similarly, ACTION has made a series of improvements to the quality of the service that are to the benefit of customers. They include the construction of new bus stops and new bus shelters. They include the introduction of new buses that are fully air conditioned and more buses

that are disability discrimination act compliant. So there are more accessible buses in the network, with targets to further increase that.

ACTION has also, through the introduction of network 14, added 300 additional services a day to the network—300 extra runs that are available to Canberrans—to increase the frequency of the service that is available to them. ACTION has also introduced NXTBUS so that people can track their bus live through GPS trackers on their mobile device or on their computer. All of these things are about improving the customer experience for ACTION. Some of these do come at a cost, and it is appropriate that ACTION recoup some of those costs through the fares. We know full well that ACTION only ever covers a small proportion of its costs through fares. For many people, ACTION provides an excellent public transport system.

That said, ACTION also needs to improve. That is a project that I continue to work on. But it is not fair or accurate to walk into this place and say that the ACTION service has been declining when one looks at all the improvements that have been made in the last couple of years.

So I think it is important to reflect on that when we talk about the topic today, which is the impact of ACT government decisions on household budgets. The government are very conscious of these things, and doing things like providing as good a public transport system as we can is one practical way to assist people with their household budgets.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (4.10): It is very easy to claim that creating a fairer and more sustainable community has to be at the expense of household budgets, but this is, of course, a fallacy perpetuated by those who lack the capacity for imagination, who lack the evidence that demonstrates that achieving a fairer, more sustainable society is a winner for household budgets in the short term while investing in long-term prosperity and economic security.

The territory's energy and climate change policies are a good example of this. They constitute prudent, evidence-based policy that is delivering a return for the environment and helping to protect household budgets. Any objective analysis shows that the ACT's energy efficiency scheme, our ACTSmart programs, as well as national energy policy initiatives and the territory's renewable energy initiatives are delivering net cost savings to household budgets.

The government's energy programs have developed competition and are promoting efficiency. As a jurisdiction we continue to enjoy the lowest electricity prices in Australia, by a huge margin. The ACT's retail electricity prices are cheaper than the national average by almost 30 per cent and they are continuing to decline. In 2014-15, a typical Canberra customer will pay \$126 less over the year compared to the previous calendar year. Canberra households pay approximately \$1,000 less each year than a similar household in Queanbeyan—\$1,000 a year less. This is a significant margin, a big bonus for ACT household budgets. This cheaper electricity is not compromising the quality of our electricity supply. In fact, ACT consumers enjoy a very high level of supply reliability and they consistently report one of the highest rates of customer satisfaction anywhere in the national electricity market.

The government have been very focused on participating in national energy market reforms. They are providing choice to customers, providing competition, rewarding product innovation and keeping downward pressure on electricity costs. In this context the government have welcomed the entry of Origin into our retail electricity and gas markets. This is a move that is generating significant discounting in the retail electricity and gas market, to the benefit of consumers and household budgets.

In driving down the costs of electricity we also have to make sure that they are more sustainable. Renewable energy is the heavy lifter of the government's greenhouse gas reduction effort. The 90 per cent by 2020 renewable energy target will deliver around three-quarters of the emission reductions needed to meet the ACT's legislated greenhouse gas reduction target. Around two-thirds of the renewable energy generation needed to meet that target will come from large-scale renewable energy generators. The government have never hidden from the fact that buying renewable energy does cost a little more, but we have also been very clear that it is more than offset by our energy efficiency improvement and ACTSmart energy efficiency schemes.

Let me turn to those schemes. The energy efficiency improvement scheme saves, on average, just over \$4 per household per week. You would think that such a scheme would be supported by a party that says it cares about household budgets, but I regret to say, yet again, that the Liberal opposition have failed to support legislation that delivers net savings to households on their electricity and gas bills, savings of \$4 per household per week. That is extraordinary.

Mr Coe: How do you pay for it?

MR CORBELL: That is the net saving, Mr Coe. After the pass-through cost that is a net saving. I do not know how many times I will have to say that, but it shows, of course, the absolute bankruptcy of the Liberal Party on this issue of so-called professed concern, so-called confessed concern, for household budgets when they are the only party in this Assembly to vote against laws that deliver net savings on energy costs of \$4 per week to approximately 70,000 to 90,000 Canberra households. That is more than two-quarters.

Mr Coe: What about the others?

MR CORBELL: I am very happy to take Mr Coe's interjection because—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Ms Lawder): There is no need to take Mr Coe's interjection.

MR CORBELL: Madam Assistant Speaker, I would simply make the point that the more households that participate the more savings are passed through. I draw the opposition's attention to the detailed regulatory impact assessment that was tabled as part of that bill that confirmed higher participation would see even further savings delivered in net terms to households.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MR CORBELL: It is such a radical concept that it is endorsed by the Baird Liberal government in New South Wales, who are extending the application of their energy efficiency improvement scheme. The Liberals really are a complete embarrassment on this issue. They are the only Liberal Party in the country that is opposing measures that deliver net savings to households through the energy efficiency improvement scheme. I beg your pardon, there was one other: the Napthine government tried to close down their energy efficiency improvement scheme, but we all know what happened to the Napthine Liberal government.

Low income households have been the beneficiaries of the EEIS to date, with 30 per cent of savings occurring to households over and above the mandated 25 per cent target. The intent of this scheme is to provide for a market-based scheme that places an obligation on electricity retailers in the ACT to achieve energy savings. A review of the scheme tabled in the Assembly last year—unlikely to have been read by those opposite—found that it is successfully meeting these aims, helping ACT households access significant energy and cost savings. The review estimated that the net present value of energy cost savings from activities undertaken to date is \$1,614 per participating household, or \$318 in annual savings—\$318 in annual savings off those participating households' electricity and gas bills.

Based on the success of the EEIS to date and recent modelling showing ongoing net economic benefits for the economy and for households, the government is currently undertaking work to extend the scheme to 2020. I am confident, based on the preliminary modelling, that these measures will return further savings well beyond the cost of our community's renewable energy investments. What this of course highlights is that we can reduce our emissions and save on the household budget. We will be 90 per cent renewable by 2020 and we will continue to have the lowest electricity prices in the country.

Another innovative scheme worth mentioning, which again assists household budgets, is the ACT's ACTSmart program. The ACTSmart program directly benefits participating households by assisting them with household cost of living pressures. This assistance is via the outreach energy and water efficiency program, the home energy advice service, home energy action kits and other online information available through the ACTSmart website.

The program is tailored to give the vulnerable in our community—whether they are renting in private accommodation or in public housing—and pensioners on a fixed and low income assistance based on an assessment of their particular needs by an energy efficiency officer. The program provides in-home education, retrofits and appliances to help low income households manage energy cost of living pressures. This customised approach is helping those participants save money in a very direct and meaningful way.

There is no doubt that making the transition to a clean energy future, to a renewable energy future, can be done in a way that saves households money on their electricity

bills. We will continue to be the jurisdiction with the lowest annual average electricity bills of any jurisdiction in the country. We will do so in a way that delivers energy efficiency programs that reduce the energy needs of households, therefore reducing their bills as well as their emissions, and we will do so in a way that allows us to transition to a clean energy future.

MRS JONES (Molonglo) (4.20): The enormity of government debt that is being entered into by this government is one thing to grasp. However, the decisions that have been made over the last number of years are making life untenable for some families in Canberra today. The budget of a real family from Belconnen who have managed to save up for a home—the husband of the family is a teacher and the mum is at home with the children—demonstrates the situation for many Canberrans today. It does not matter whether the minister stands up and talks about having the lowest average electricity prices in the ACT when other elements of the household budget, including rates, are making it very difficult for people to survive.

The father of this family takes home an income of \$65,000 a year. The mother being at home attracts a family tax benefit of \$9,000 a year, so a total income of \$74,000. This family do not have Foxtel. They do not have holidays. They only have one car. They have purchased quite a modest home—mentioning which, they have already paid full stamp duty according to the pre-change scheme. Their annual budget is thus: they pay \$26,000 a year on their mortgage and \$7,680 a year on their car loan. The credit card interest in the last financial year, when this calculation was done, amounted to around \$787. They do not have any savings. They pay \$1,400 in rates and \$1,200 in home insurance, and \$3,640 is budgeted for home maintenance in an older house that requires a certain amount of maintenance. They pay \$1,200 for electricity, \$400 for gas, \$1,000 for water, \$600 for internet, and the phone—home and mobile—amounts to \$1,200. They pay \$3,250 in health insurance, \$2,000 in medical costs and \$15,000 in groceries, including food. They pay car insurance of \$1,000, car maintenance of \$1,000 in a good year and rego of \$1,000. Their petrol costs are \$2,600. They pay \$500 a year in parking and \$600 a year in public transport, the father often going to work on the bus. For unexpected expenses or, heaven forbid, the occasional amount of entertainment, they fork out \$2,000.

They find it is quite a tight budget, with total expenses being \$74,057. At the end of the year they are already working on minus \$57. This hardworking family is going backwards every year. This Labor government seems happy to keep putting financial pressures on families just like this one all over our city. This government has no concern as to how the increase in rates, which has already begun and continues apace, will directly impact on this family and many like them across Canberra.

When I presented this situation to Mr Barr last year and asked him how they would survive, I was shocked to hear them respond that the father would need to get a pay rise and a good union to represent him. It is truly shocking that Mr Barr, as the Treasurer and now Chief Minister, would believe that the job of the trade union movement is to protect people from high taxing Labor governments and that the union movement has become some kind of an insurance policy for families from the gouging of Labor governments.

This Labor government seems to have no understanding of the households in Canberra and has no understanding of how their constantly increasing living costs cripple their ability to cope. Family household budgets will suffer with this increase in rates. Their budget will suffer with the increase in bus fares and they will suffer because of the increase in parking costs across the city. And, because their household budget will suffer, their family will suffer. It is very easy for Minister Corbell to smile about it, but it is no smiling matter.

There are children who have not had the opportunity to play weekend sport because the household budget is so stretched, and families will have to decide if they buy winter jackets for their kids or enrol them in football, or indeed if they can afford to even stay living here. I have doorknocked plenty of families in Canberra packing up to leave because there is no way they can afford to stay here. Is that fair? Is it fair for those families?

The family budget of families of the ACT should not be treated as an ATM by the government. With a 10 per cent per annum rates increase, \$292 so far, with ACTION bus fares making a big impact while services are worsening, with parking costs nearly double over the last six years—way in advance of CPI or inflation—and with electricity going up by \$5 per week, according to this minister, I think the government have a case to answer as to why they think it is reasonable to continually take more and more from the households of the ACT, well in advance of inflation.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (4.26): In the few moments left I just want to rebut something that Mr Rattenbury said—that there has been no loss of services with the changes to the ACTION bus network. I have been written to by a constituent—I have written to the minister; he is yet to respond—who says that there are problems in Oxley, Monash and Wanniasa, where they have changed the services, and routes that used to go to the Erindale centre do not go there. This is from a gentleman who says: “As I have previously stated, I am familiar with the problems of people living in those suburbs through many years serving the needs of disadvantaged people in those areas as a member of St Vincent de Paul. And basically what happens is that if you take the weekend bus you get to go to Erindale. If you take the weekday bus, you cannot get to Erindale from the suburbs.”

He goes on to say that they changed the routes in Wanniasa to disadvantage people, particularly in the hill areas. He goes on to say, “Without any explanation, these services have been withdrawn at massive disadvantage to the elderly and disabled people who live nearby.” So there we are: the elderly, the disadvantaged and the disabled are all affected by the changes that this government made.

Discussion concluded.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Melba Copland Secondary School

MR COE (Ginninderra) (4.27): I rise tonight to talk about the Melba Copland Secondary School and, in particular, their awards night which they held for their students in December last year. Melba Copland Secondary School is a twin campus, co-educational school with a student population of around 600. The school was formed in 2008, as an amalgamation of Copland College and Melba High School.

The school held a joint awards presentation and graduation for its students last December at the University of Canberra refectory. I note that Dr Bourke and Ms Porter were also in attendance. Congratulations to the class of 2014 on their graduation, and I wish them all the best for their adult life.

I would like to take the time to congratulate all those students who received awards. The year 7 awards went to Mufidah Ihsan, Gavin Richards, Jessica Wind and Ashlee Malam. The year 8 awards went to Ryan Miller, Kassandra Stewart, Amy Gooday, Bryce Hughes, Po Way, Rani Jopling and Bailey Biden. The year 9 awards went to Victoria Nguyen, Navarone Lutui, Erin Marshall, Anthony Siharath and Salome Fangaiuiha-Jones. The year 10 awards went to Jack Gooday, Joshua Guest, Corinna Schubert, Blake Giucci, Jack Zimmer, Kailin Odlum, Reice Jopling, Kathleen Kershaw, Rebecca Brown and Bethanee Thomas. The year 11 awards went to Bonnie Li, Lara Dahlberg, Liam Doyle, John Mayer, Roxanne Miller, Elijah Kaisuva, Sarah Buchhorn, Conner Flannery and Bozhi Wu.

The sports awards for 2014 went to Melanie Irvine, Daniel Holgate, Jessika Lomas, Jayden Ginders, Taylor Holgate and Bradley Thomas. And the year 12 awards went to Emily Brayshaw, Eylish Perry, Jessica Batt, Michael de Looper, Melissa Heckenberg, Teelah Dunn, Stephanie Feltharn, Michael Fleming, Daljot Singh, Christopher Casey, Daniel Fangaiuiha, Siobhan Evans, Jessica Dillon, Marius Barnard, Jessica Batt, Stephanie Porter, Kelsey Curd, Tri Tran, Elysia Cooke and Emily Fakavamoeanga.

I would like to thank the principal of the school, Mr Michael Battenally, for inviting me to the awards night. I would also like to extend my congratulations to those that participated in the actual event itself: William McIntyre and Hanna Siiteri, the masters of ceremonies; Kaitlin Johnston, who sang the national anthem; Marius Barnard, Ash Hamilton-Smith, Elysia Cooke, Theresa Kinnane and Emily Fakavamoeanga for their musical presentations; Nick Klomp, the guest speaker; and Jessika Lomas, who gave the year 12 address.

I wish all the students and staff all the very best, and wish all those in the school community in 2015 all the best for the year ahead.

Bullying

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) (4.30): I rise tonight to reflect on the impact of bullying in our

community. It is now only one month till the national day of action against bullying, and I would like to encourage Canberra schools, workplaces, community organisations and leaders in our community to get involved and speak out against bullying behaviour.

We talk a lot with young people in our community about bullying. My kids know that it is not nice to tease; they know that when people are having a rough time, they need understanding; and they know that when they see bullying it is important to speak up. Kids are regularly reminded about the way their words make others feel. I think sometimes it is adults who need a reminder about the impact their words and actions can have.

For those in the chamber who may have forgotten, bullying is repeated verbally, physically, socially or psychologically aggressive behaviour by a person or group directed in a way that is intended to cause harm, distress or fear. In our workplaces, bullying sometimes comes out as behaviour that is unprofessional or unnecessary. It is often the case that workplace bullies inflict distress on another person under the guise of “doing their job”. It is always unacceptable.

Every day, we as parliamentarians should think about the example we are giving. We should think, when we have to do something hard, whether there is a way we could act that would cause less distress. We should hold ourselves to the highest standards. It is my hope that by engaging with young people we can grow into a community that does not need to remind its adults that bullying does not have a place in our inclusive community.

Mental health—suicide prevention

MS PORTER (Ginninderra) (4.32): I welcome the opportunity to remind members of an important initiative in the area of mental health that I believe can make a significant difference in suicide prevention in our community. Following on from what Ms Berry has just been talking about, I would like to remind people that suicide is far too prevalent in our community. Indeed, one suicide is a tragedy too many.

Recently in the *Canberra Times* we read of a family devastated by the suicide of their family member. It was reported that the man had not shared his trauma, his hurt and his overwhelming mental pain with others.

Too often we are not aware of what those we work with or spend time with are going through. We are unaware of the stress they may be experiencing or their feelings of loneliness or abandonment by those who could support them if they knew. To simply say, “Are you okay?”—three little words—can do so much to let someone know someone is there for them. It gives permission for someone to safely disclose and perhaps seek help.

As members in this place, we have a responsibility to read the signals and respond appropriately, and to make sure our staff are also equipped to do so. We need to be able to hear the pain of others, to make sure that we can ask, “Are you okay?” and to be able to hear what the person may tell us.

We all know that at any point in our lives we may find ourselves in a situation which we cannot find our way through. At any time our world may change dramatically. Sometimes we find that the relentless chipping away and undermining of our confidence can finally be too much.

“Are you okay?” Ask it of yourself today. Ask it of those around you. Let us all in this place make it our aim to care for each other in the ways we care for people in the community that have contact with us. Each of us would like to know that if we had the chance, we could help someone avoid suicide by our supportive behaviour and by just saying, “Are you okay?”

Ms Faith Bandler

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (4.34): I rise tonight to pay tribute to one of Australia’s greatest social activists, Faith Bandler, who died last week in a Sydney nursing home, aged 96.

Faith Bandler is best known as one of the most prominent activists in the 10-year campaign that culminated in the 1967 constitutional referendum for Aboriginal rights. It was the most successful of all Australian referendums, with a 90 per cent yes vote. It gave the commonwealth the right to legislate for Aboriginal people, removed some discriminatory sections and allowed Aboriginal people to be counted in future censuses. It was an important step in rights for Aborigines.

The campaign’s success was in no small part due to Faith Bandler’s poise, charm, good humour and reasonableness, which won over the Australian public and Prime Minister Bob Menzies. Ms Bandler co-founded the Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship in 1956 and joined the campaigner Jessie Street and others in 1957 to launch the campaign that led to the 1967 referendum.

In later years, she continued to take up issues dear to her heart. She was a founding member of organisations such as the Women’s Electoral Lobby and the Australian Republican Movement, and she campaigned for the rights of South Sea Islanders brought to Australia to work in the Queensland cane industry. Indeed, she refused an MBE in 1976 because it was, as she said, “from an empire that kidnapped and enslaved my father”. She later told the Australian biography project:

... he was born on the tiny island of Ambrym, which [is one of] the islands of Vanuatu and he was kidnapped and brought to Australia as a child of 13 years old and he was put to work on the canefields as a child in Mackay.

She added:

So he worked for nothing for years and years and years. It wasn’t indentured labour, he’d signed no papers, he was enslaved.

He escaped, eventually settling near Tumbulgum near Murwillumbah, running his own banana farm. That is where Faith Bandler was born in 1918. Her mother was of Scottish-Indian descent.

Faith early on understood the racial discrimination that Aboriginal people in the district experienced. She identified with their cause throughout her life.

In World War II she served in the Women's Land Army but was paid at the lower rate of pay for Aboriginal recruits. After the war, she married Hans Bandler, a Jewish refugee whom she met through the left-leaning Australian Peace Council. He had survived Nazi concentration camps and supported her subsequent campaigns against discrimination in Australian society.

Faith Bandler's legacy lives on in many areas, including the "Recognise" campaign, which seeks recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our constitution. It builds on the achievements of the 1967 referendum. It will complete the unfinished business, recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first nations of Australia, placing them at the heart of the constitution, not just as an afterthought of 1901.

While the 1967 referendum gave the commonwealth powers to legislate in relation to Aboriginal peoples, there is no guarantee that this must be used to their benefit. We would like this corrected in the next referendum. There is a better understanding now in our multicultural nation of our shared history. We need to redress the damage done. We need to recognise the special place of the first nations that nurtured this country for millennia.

I believe we can build on the goodwill in the community we found almost 50 years ago in that 1967 referendum and bring about a fairer constitution recognising our first peoples.

National Multicultural Festival—success

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (4.38): I stand today to reflect on and echo the comments made earlier today about the Multicultural Festival in Canberra. I want to say thank you to Yvette Berry, the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, and to all the organisers and volunteers at the Multicultural Festival, for their long hours, hard work and genuine commitment not only to the festival but also to the essential idea of multiculturalism.

I recall the festival in my early years in Canberra very fondly. Its growth and continuing success are a reflection of the approach this ACT Labor government has taken to the overall growth and continuing success of our community. At its heart it recognises the strengths in our diverse and tolerant community and enables that community to express itself with just the right amount of ACT government support.

One of the things I found so remarkable about the festival was the many faces, backgrounds and ages of those who participated, visited and celebrated. It celebrated our own multicultural community from second and third-generation Canberrans to recent arrivals and also involved the embassies and high commissions in Canberra, a unique and cherished part of our multicultural community.

I would particularly like to acknowledge the people and groups who so generously hosted me over the weekend. I thank the Australia India Business Council, especially Deepak Raj Gupta, whose “India in the city” is an event that has grown from a two-hour event in 2007 and is now a full-day event. The event went well into the night and, despite the brief downpour, was jam-packed with young and old. Thank you for the opportunity to recognise the leaders in your community and to enjoy a seat watching the incredible performances.

Thank you also to Sam Wong AM, Chin Wong and Andrew Yan for their warm and generous welcome and for introducing me to the many stallholders that filled Petrie Plaza on Sunday to celebrate Chinese New Year. It was an honour to meet the members of the association and to learn about the many services they provide, particularly to older Chinese Australians. Their efforts are important to build community and social capital and also take real pressure off, for example, our health system through providing translation services. I was saddened to learn that this is just another organisation suffering under the weight of the Abbott government’s cruel cuts to community organisations. I really do wonder whether they have any clue about the enormous range of organisations, large and small, and individuals in our community that these cuts will have a real impact on.

It was also an honour to meet Robert Johnson, the founder of Australia-China Youth Cooperation, an organisation linking Chinese students in Canberra to the local community. Robert’s enthusiasm, commitment and organisation—learned through his years of service to the Australian community through the Australian Defence Force—were impressive. He mentioned to me that he fondly remembered the ACT Chief Minister from his time as the ACT minister for education, for presenting him with a year 10 scholarship. That recognition and assistance clearly had an impact on Robert that stays with him to this day and has helped to inspire and drive him to found and run an organisation doing good work in our community.

I would also like to thank the Bengali Cultural Association of Canberra on their first showcase at the Multicultural Festival. Thank you to Dr Debashis Raha, Ajit Banerjee, RJ Manish and the other participants I met on the day for their wonderful welcome and very enjoyable showcase “From the streets of Bengal”. To the band, the dancers and especially the children who produced such an incredible show, thank you for your welcome, for your humour and for sharing your culture with the community. Thank you also for the history lesson that the word “shampoo” is a derivative of the Bengali word “champou”, which now informs our own English vocabulary.

Thank you to everyone that I met for all your warm support and welcome, and thank you again to the ACT government and the minister for this wonderful festival.

Book launch

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) (4.42): I rise today to speak about my recent duties in representing the Chief Minister at the launch of the book *Klibur Domin: Sharing with Love* by Mr Peter Newton at the Timor-Leste embassy in Deakin last Friday.

The book tells the amazing story of the establishment of a home in Timor-Leste by Ryder-Cheshire Australia in the year 2000. Klibur Domin is a home that Ryder-Cheshire have been operating for 15 years. In this time Klibur Domin has developed into a locally staffed and managed 70-bed healthcare facility to provide much-needed treatment to patients suffering from TB, kidney failure, malnutrition, fractures and wounds. It provides much-needed support to relieve pressure on the local hospital system.

Operating 17 kilometres from Dili, the Klibur Domin home also has two main outreach programs operating to further help the citizens of Timor-Leste. These outreach programs' main aim is to detect and treat tuberculosis in remote villages and also support children living with a disability in their villages, which are both major issues in Timor-Leste.

The day-to-day management of the house, such as caring, cooking, cleaning and security, is entrusted to local people who keep the home running, with Australian volunteers continuing to provide ongoing assistance and support.

I can proudly say that the majority of funds to run the home are raised in Australia and are sourced through public donations and various fundraising activities organised by the Ryder-Cheshire society and in association with the Canberra Friends of Dili association, which was represented on the evening by Mr Robert Altamore and his wife, Wendy.

Canberra has strong ties with Dili through the Canberra-Dili friendship agreement that was signed by former Chief Minister Stanhope and the Dili district administrator, Mr de Carvalho, in June 2004, and later re-signed by former Chief Minister Gallagher and Dili Secretary of State for Administrative Decentralisation Mr Rosario Cabral. The agreement aims to build friendship and mutual respect between Canberra and Dili, and it is my belief that this agreement has been greatly upheld by the Ryder-Cheshire society in their humanitarian acts in Dili through the Klibur Domin house.

The author of the book, Mr Peter Newton, is also the President of Ryder-Cheshire Australia. Along with their homes in Timor-Leste and northern India, they have similar establishments operating out of Melbourne, Mount Gambier and Singleton. Each of those homes has a different focus, but all are connected through the singular issue of helping those in need.

Mr Newton was in attendance on Friday evening, along with other esteemed guests, including Ms Anna Guterres, the wife of His Excellency Mr Abel Guterres, Timor-Leste Ambassador to Australia, who was represented by Natividade Vila Nova, the first secretary at the embassy, on the evening. Also in attendance on the night was His Excellency Mr Paulo Cunha-Alves, Ambassador of Portugal to Australia, who was accompanied by his wife.

I know firsthand just how important projects such as the Klibur Domin house are in countries like Timor-Leste and the support and care they bring to local communities in these areas, as well as the great difference they make to the standard of living in countries such as northern India and Timor-Leste.

In September last year I had the privilege of travelling to Timor-Leste to represent the former Chief Minister at the opening of the new national scouts activities centre in Dili, which was funded by the people of Canberra through the centenary of Canberra dollars for Dili appeal. During this visit I was able to see firsthand the difference that the donations made by the Canberra community have had on the lives of those living in Dili. These donations continue to make a difference through the Ryder-Cheshire society in helping to fund their care homes such as Klibur Domin.

In closing, I would like to inform the Assembly of my great pleasure in representing the Chief Minister at the launch of the book *Klibur Domin: Sharing with Love*. I would like to take the opportunity not only to congratulate Mr Newton on the launch of his book but also to congratulate Ryder-Cheshire Australia on setting up the Klibur Domin home and for the fantastic work they continue to provide not only at the home but abroad.

The mission of Ryder-Cheshire Australia and its foundation is to relieve suffering without discrimination, and there is no doubt that this fantastic foundation is doing just that. Everyone involved in this great project should be incredibly proud of the amazing work that they are achieving.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 4.47 pm.