



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

EIGHTH ASSEMBLY

13 MAY 2015

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Wednesday, 13 May 2015

The Assembly met at 10 am.

(Quorum formed.)

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

Hospitals—University of Canberra

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.03): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) in 2011 a Government report noted that current sub-acute hospital facilities are at the limit of their capacity and that the demand for sub-acute care will double by 2022;
- (b) in 2011 the Canberra Liberals and the Government worked together in an inquiry by the Legislative Assembly Committee on Health, Community and Social Services which recommended that the government build a new sub-acute hospital on Canberra’s north-side;
- (c) in 2011 the Government identified the need for a 200 bed sub-acute hospital for North Canberra in its Options Analysis report;
- (d) in January 2012 the Government announced the building of a new sub-acute hospital at the University of Canberra and released a paper “The New North Canberra Hospital” which said it would have 200 beds plus outpatient facilities;
- (e) on 3 September 2012 the Canberra Liberals made an election commitment to build a new 200 overnight bed sub-acute University of Canberra Hospital which would open in 2017;
- (f) the ACT government, its MLAs and senior officials have made repeated statements that the hospital would have 200 beds;
- (g) on 26 February 2015 the Chief Minister in an answer to a question in the Legislative Assembly said the hospital will “comprise 140 overnight inpatient ... and 75 day places”; and
- (h) the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation said that the reduction to 140 beds is a “glaring discrepancy in respect to the ACT Government commitment made in 2011”; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government not to cut 60 overnight beds from the new University of Canberra Hospital.

It gives me great pleasure to move this motion here today because this is ultimately a positive announcement by the Canberra Liberals about the future of the ACT health system. There is a lot of history to this. There will be a lot of spin put out by those opposite and we will have a barney in this place, I am sure, about how many beds there are, how many bed places or bay spaces there are and so on. But fundamentally what we in the Canberra Liberals want to see is a health system, a hospital system, that has capacity now, in the medium term and in the longer term. That is what we want to see and that is what the public wants to see.

This issue, as I articulated yesterday, has some history. There was an attempt by the ACT government in 2008-09 to acquire Calvary hospital, and that failed. Arising from that was a variety of discussions about what was going to happen with hospital beds in the ACT. And there were various documents put forward, there were discussion papers, there was a Legislative Assembly committee hearing. Arising from all of that was an Assembly bipartisan committee, in fact a tripartisan committee, that said the way forward was to build a 200-bed subacute hospital in Canberra's north. Indeed, the government agreed with that and they agreed with option E. They had an options analysis that was released by the Department of Treasury and ACT Health that was distributed widely by the health minister at the time. The analysis talked about the north side hospital of 200 beds, in black and white.

There were numerous discussions around that and the reason for that was that there was an analysis conducted by ACT Health about the number of beds that would be required. So this was not a number picked out randomly. It was not just a round number that was convenient at the time. There was analysis, there were projections of demand and so on, and that has all been tabled. That has all been discussed at length. We have gone through that in various committees. It was found that we needed a hospital with the capacity for 200 beds to meet demand, a demand that is ever-increasing, as we know, with the pressure on our public hospital system.

We did not want to repeat the errors of the past with things like the jail which were built in this territory. I have been through that in this place many times before. We have even had motions on what happened to the jail. But it is illustrative of the problems that we face. The advice to government back in 2005, 2006 and 2007 about building the jail said, "You will need at least 374 beds." And that was a sort of mid-range to low-range target. There were other numbers which were higher. In that case the government decided to build a jail with 300 beds and they counted everything as a bed. Everything was counted as a bed. The hospice spaces, the transition accommodation, everything was counted as a bed.

We know what happened. Despite the fact that in an estimates hearing Simon Corbell said, "This jail will have capacity in its current bed configuration for 25 years," we know that that jail was pretty much full the day it opened. There have been remediation works to double-bunk and try and squeeze people in when they can. And now this government is spending tens of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money to fix that problem.

Mr Wall: About 100.

MR HANSON: About \$100 million, as my colleague Mr Wall says—a lot of money.

Here we go again. We have the experts saying, “You will need 200 beds and you will need outpatient services. That is the analysis. You will need that capacity to make sure that you have got the capacity of hospital beds for the medium term, certainly for the long term.” But what we have got now, again, is the same minister cutting beds, going from 200 down to 140 and saying, “No, no, trust me; that is fine. That is all right. It was always going to be 140. Ignore all the announcements that we made about 200.”

Now what they are trying to do, in the most deceptive manner, is to say that the outpatient facilities which were always anticipated, which were always planned, are somehow hospital beds and it is actually 215 beds. There has been mixed messaging from government because they were not sure which story they were going to tell. Were they going to go with the “we can live with 140” line or were they going to pretend that the outpatient spaces were hospital beds? They seem to be bouncing around on exactly which narrative they want to tell. There was a bit of miscommunication between what Mr Barr was saying and what Mr Corbell was saying. So I look forward to hearing what they will say today.

But, ultimately, the truth is that the experts said, the committee said, the options paper said, “You need 200 beds to cover demand in the period 2020-21 and so on.” What has happened is that the government cut it to 140 and that is what the contract says. So as much as they are out there trying to say, “It is 215 beds; trust us,” the contract with the people who are doing the design says 140 beds. It is in black and white. We have got 200 in the original design, the original plans, in all the announcements, and then we have got the contract that says 140 beds.

This is not just me saying it. The media, throughout this process—the ABC, the *Canberra Times*, everybody who has reported on this—has run the narrative of 200 beds because that is what we were told. I note that Madam Deputy Speaker is leaving in a hurry. She is leaving in a hurry because she knows full well that she was in this place last year talking about how great it was that this government was going to deliver 200 beds. I remind you that we had government members in this place last year saying:

As members are aware—

and this is quoting Ms Porter—

last year the government invested \$8.3 million to complete planning and forward design of the new hospital, which, as you all know, when completed will mean an extra 200 beds—

wait for it, because this is important—

plus aged care, mental health and subacute services.

And this is the point: 200 beds, plus all those services. What the government have done now is cut it to 140 beds and, in relation to all those extra services that were always going to be there, they are now trying to say, "They are actually hospital beds. Trust us; they are beds." No-one believes this. No-one is buying this for a minute: "The experts are looking at it. The people are being consulted. The Little Company of Mary was written to." The chair wrote and said that they had been advised that there would be a 200-bed subacute hospital somewhere in the city.

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation have written to the Deputy Director-General of Health Infrastructure and Planning, Mr Paul Carmody. This is from a letter from Jenny Miragaya, who is the secretary of the nurses union:

... there appears to have been a significant departure from the original April 2011 proposal ...

A significant departure. The letter also states:

The ANMF is very concerned—

is very concerned—

that it would now appear that, rather than an additional 200 sub acute in-patient bed spaces being made available, only 140 beds will be delivered, and that, far from being additional to existing in-patient beds, they will simply provide a re-configuration of existing services ... The ANMF therefore seeks urgent clarification ...

And so on. So this is not just some political line being run out by the Canberra Liberals for political expediency. This is in black and white from the government's own document and this is the nurses, in a letter, saying, "This is what we were told: 200 beds. And now the government is delivering 140." That is in black and white because that is in the contract.

But those opposite will say anything, won't they, to cover their tracks, and that is so disappointing. I have got numerous examples of where the government has said it will be 200 beds, as I said. I want to take the opportunity to canvass a few so that it is clear to the media that this is not just an expression of a view. This is not a case of there being different views about this. This is an expression of fact. I asked Ms Gallagher in a committee of the Assembly:

And that is still in the ballpark of 200 beds?

Ms Gallagher replied:

Yes.

In an answer to a question on notice she said that we are building "a facility that can take up to 200 beds".

This is another important point, because this is something that Mr Corbell was trying to spin at me yesterday. There was an answer given in 2013 about that, and what we were told was that it was going to have the capacity to take up to 200 beds. That was very important; that was the work it was going to do. Then the government said that they were going to open 166 beds in the year 2017-18.

That sounded reasonable because, a bit like the jail, you want to have it built with the capacity to cope with the extra demand that is going to come in the short to medium and long terms, but you are not going to open all those beds on day one. That is realistic, just like the jail. We would have expected that if it had opened with 374 beds they would not have had that many prisoners. But we knew there would be growth, and that is why they build it with the capacity.

Just as here, what the government told us was that they were going to build it with a capacity for 200, but in the 2017-18 period, which is when the hospital opens, 166 beds were going to be opened straightaway, because that was the anticipated demand at that stage. But it had capacity for growth by 2019, by 2020, by 2021, by 2022. What we do know is that demand is actually outstripping what was anticipated. We know that there were demographic studies completed, and it is always difficult to quite anticipate where the growth is.

But if you do not plan for growth that is at the top end, then what happens is that you end up exactly where we were with the jail. Ms Gallagher seemed to know this, because she put out—and I showed this one yesterday—the government newsletter. It is a lovely document. It is very pretty. It almost looks like it is just advertising material. But my understanding is that it is here to inform the community. It said, next to a message from the Chief Minister—and this was mid-2013—under the heading “Expanding health and hospital services in the ACT”:

The new University of Canberra Public Hospital will provide 200 beds for sub-acute services in a purpose-built ... facility.

We are going to get spin. We are going to get denials. We are going to get, “Look at this figure; look at that figure,” to try and cover their tracks. But the grim reality is that we need to build on the north side of Canberra a hospital that has got capacity.

Mr Rattenbury, who hopefully will support this motion, is someone that should understand this. He has inherited this problem with the jail. He is living the consequence of poor planning. He is living the consequence of a government that stripped beds from what was originally designed, what was originally proposed, to meet demand. And history is repeating itself. So I implore Mr Rattenbury, through you, Madam Speaker, to learn from history and make sure that these mistakes are not repeated because, if they are, the ultimate pain will be paid by patients in the ACT who will continue to experience bed-block, who will not get treated in emergency quickly enough. As we know from a question asked of Mr Corbell yesterday, there is a direct impact on the number of subacute beds and how many beds can be freed up in the acute system.

Let us put the politics aside and say, “No, we all agreed in this place repeatedly that we need to build for the future of our health system.” We need 200 beds, plus outpatient facilities, plus those day spaces, as they call them. That was what was agreed. That was what the community was told. And that is what we will deliver.

If those opposite will not, if they are going to break their promise, if they are going to break their pledge and if they are going to prioritise light rail over the health system, that is their decision, and they will pay the price. They will pay the price at the ballot box, because I can assure you, Madam Speaker, that what the people of Canberra want is a good health system. What the people of Canberra want is a priority placed on health. What the people of Canberra want is adequate bed numbers. They do not want spin. They do not want lies. And ultimately they have to pay for it.

Mr Corbell: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, Mr Hanson accuses me directly and the government indirectly of lying. It is unparliamentary and he needs to be asked to withdraw.

MR HANSON: On the point of order, Madam Speaker, I said the community do not want lies. If Mr Corbell takes that as offensive and thinks that he has been lying, that is an assumption. What I said is that the community do not want lies.

MADAM SPEAKER: No, it is a direct implication.

MR HANSON: I did not say Mr Corbell is a liar. I simply said the community does not want lies. That is a debating point. He may think the community does want lies. I do not think they do. It was not a direct implication. It was a debating point to say the community do not want lies. If he has taken that to mean him, that is not my fault.

MADAM SPEAKER: Before Mr Corbell rose to take a point of order, I was contemplating—because I had heard the word “lies”, and I was listening to the debate—whether it was unparliamentary. I think it is a near thing. Mr Hanson, you did not directly say that Mr Corbell lied, but I think that there is an implication and I will ask you to withdraw.

MR HANSON: I withdraw, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Hanson.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (10.19): I move the amendment to Mr Hanson’s motion that has been circulated in my name:

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

“(1) notes that:

- (a) the development of the University of Canberra Public Hospital (UCPH) reflects planning processes that have extended over a five year period;

- (b) UCPH will be a new innovative approach to healthcare in the ACT focused entirely on sub-acute healthcare;
 - (c) UCPH will provide 140 inpatient beds and 75 day beds, which is in line with information provided to the Assembly on 26 February 2013 by the then Minister for Health;
 - (d) on 26 March 2013 the then Minister for Health responded to the Leader of the Opposition's question taken on notice stating that based on UCPH planning, that facility will be able to "take up to 200 beds, there will be capacity for 166 overnight inpatient beds in 2017-2018";
 - (e) key services will include general and adult mental health rehabilitation, identified aged care services and inpatient units, admitted day services and outpatient services;
 - (f) UCPH will be a teaching facility, allowing it to extend the scope of existing teaching partnerships and enabling joint clinical training, teaching and research opportunities between the University of Canberra and ACT Health; and
 - (g) the need for increased facilities for sub and non-acute health services in the ACT was concurrently identified from the development of the draft ACT Rehabilitation and Aged Care Plan, the National Partnership Agreement on Improving Public Hospital Services and the National Partnership Agreement for Hospital and Health Workforce Reform; and
- (2) calls on:
- (a) the Government to proceed with the development and construction of UCPH."

The development of the University of Canberra public hospital reflects service planning that has been extended over a five-year period. It forms part of this Labor government's response to the development of a health infrastructure program to meet projected service demand. As with any planning process over an extended period of time, the government has been diligent through its review and update of its planning, always considering the current and future context in which this facility will operate.

Let me give some history, Madam Speaker. The initial concept of a subacute hospital was first flagged in 2011. At that time, to increase overall bed numbers across the ACT, it was identified that the new facility would contribute 200 beds but it was yet to be determined what the type and make-up of those beds would be.

Further planning has since helped us to shape what this bed capacity should look like, including the assessments of Associate Professor Christopher Poulos, the Hammond Chair in Positive Ageing and Care at the University of New South Wales School of Public Health and Community Medicine, work completed with the national partnership agreement on improving public hospital services, and work undertaken as part of the national partnership agreement for hospital and health service reform.

Fast forward to 2015 and the reference design for the University of Canberra hospital has been released. Significant and transparent planning processes have occurred to get to this point which will see a facility with 140 overnight inpatient beds and 75 day beds. We have undertaken a comprehensive program of planning and review. Planning of public health services is undertaken on a territory-wide basis. It takes into account a wide range of issues, including cross-border and private industry activity.

Projects occurring under the health infrastructure program reflect this planning of a public health system inclusive of our tertiary acute hospital at Canberra Hospital, a general acute hospital at Calvary public, the planned subacute hospital at the University of Canberra, a secure mental health facility and other facilities such as hospice facilities at Clare Holland House. We have a comprehensive framework to deliver health infrastructure.

Let me turn to the issue of the University of Canberra public hospital specifically. In February 2011 the options analysis “ACT public hospital services—delivery of additional hospital beds” was conducted by the ACT Department of Treasury and ACT Health. It was released for public consultation. Following extensive community consultation and discussions with the Little Company of Mary Health Care who, of course, are responsible for the operation of Calvary public, the territory made the decision to proceed with a new subacute hospital.

This option provided for the capacity of 400 additional beds across the ACT public hospital network in total, comprising Canberra Hospital, the new UCPH and Calvary, with clear delineation of the role of each hospital to occur. It was in this early options document that the proposal of 200 beds for the subacute hospital was identified but, I reiterate, the type and mix had yet to be determined.

Hospital planning is not a dark art. Projecting the needs for health care involves looking back at previous service provision and looking forward to how health care and our health system will change. We have been robust in making these assessments. For example, we subjected our assessments on the need for beds to a review by the New South Wales Ministry of Health in 2008. Work on estimating and projecting subacute care demand was adapted from the review undertaken by New South Wales Health in 2008, in addition to the engagement of experts by the ACT directly.

Let me turn now to the planning assumptions for the University of Canberra public hospital. To progress planning for the hospital, the government engaged Associate Professor Christopher Poulos to work with key stakeholders, including clinicians, consumers and care representatives on what the best mix of beds should be. This work sought to identify services best located at the subacute facility and how these could be best networked with the acute Calvary and Canberra Hospital services and community health services.

Professor Poulos is the Hammond Chair in Positive Ageing and Care at the University of New South Wales School of Public Health and Community Medicine. He concluded in his reports that the identified service model for the University of Canberra hospital would support existing ACT Health clinical service plans and reflect commonwealth government reforms in subacute care, and he identified the role of UCPH as a subacute facility.

A strategic level model of care was developed from this process. In addition, we asked Associate Professor Poulos to review the projected service activity data for rehabilitation and care services, the model of care proposed for mental health services to be incorporated in UCPH and the outcomes of the palliative care strategy and plan that were being developed at the time. It is from this comprehensive, independent and expert review of demand and service delivery models at UCPH that the bed mix at UCPH has been determined. Having again reviewed demand predictions, type and mix of 200 beds for the subacute facility, the model of care was concluded.

Following that work, the government have gone out with public consultation on the models of care and the bed capacity numbers for the University of Canberra public hospital. Nearly a year ago we released the service delivery plan for public consultation. On page 8 of that plan the document is clear. It identifies that the new facility will comprise 140 beds, plus outpatient day and ambulatory services. That was a year ago, Madam Speaker. Where was the Leader of the Opposition a year ago?

If he is so outraged by what he alleges, falsely, is a cut in beds at the University of Canberra hospital, why did he not reply or make any comment when the service delivery plan was released a year ago, when it was made very clear what the number of beds would be? Or, Madam Speaker, why did he not make some comment when the then Chief Minister, in answering a question in February last year, indicated that the hospital will comprise 140 overnight inpatient beds and 75 day places? That was on 26 February last year, three months before the service delivery plan was released for public comment. The health minister, over a year ago, was saying 140 overnight beds and 75 day beds.

Or why was he not saying something back on 26 March 2013, when the health minister made clear that, based on current service planning, there would be up to 200 beds, with a mix of overnight and day beds. That was made clear in my predecessor's answer—Minister Gallagher's answer—to Mr Hanson's question on notice taken during the annual reports hearings way back on 26 March 2013.

So the assertion from the Leader of the Opposition is simply false; it is simply false. His argument is that there were going to be 200 overnight beds and now there are not. Go back and look at the history. Go back and have a look at what we released in the service delivery plan in June last year: 140 beds and 75 day places. Go back and see what Minister Gallagher said in February last year: 140 beds and 75 day places. Go back to 2013 and see what Minister Gallagher said to Mr Hanson directly in answer to a question he asked during annual reports hearings, which made clear that there would be a mixture of overnight beds and day places—at that point in time, 160 overnight beds and the balance being day places.

It has always been the case, Madam Speaker. It has always consistently and unequivocally been the situation that the University of Canberra public hospital will be a mix of overnight and day beds. It has always been the case and it has never been suggested otherwise. It has never been suggested otherwise. This is a complete straw man on the part of Mr Hanson. He is constructing an argument based on a falsehood. You would expect that, as shadow minister for health, he would do his research.

You would expect that, when the government released a public consultation document in the middle of last year that outlined very clearly the number of beds proposed—this is nearly 10 months ago now—he would have bothered to say something about it then. Quite clearly, now he has decided that he needs to make an argument that distracts from the ongoing damage his federal colleagues are creating in the ACT health budget, confirmed in the federal budget last night. There will be \$600 million less in projected commonwealth funding; so he has decided to make an issue based on a straw man.

The facts are clear. The facts are unequivocal. Service planning, the assessments of independent academic experts and the answers given by my predecessor over a period of two years have all made clear that the mix and type of beds will be determined, with an overall capacity of 200. We are keeping our promise. We are delivering 215 beds, with a mix of overnight and day beds in this facility. We have been clear about that from day one. We have been clear about the investment we are prepared to make at the University of Canberra hospital. My predecessor and I, as the ministers, have been consistent in our answers.

The amendment I am moving today rejects and removes the falsehoods that Mr Hanson would seek to perpetrate in this debate. The amendment that I am moving today makes clear that the University of Canberra public hospital is a subacute facility with a mixture of overnight and day beds. It makes clear that my predecessor as Minister for Health consistently, on two occasions over the past two years—including directly to Mr Hanson in response to a question on notice—stated that there will be a mix of overnight and day beds. And it makes clear that we have undertaken the planning for capacity of this facility based on independent expert academic review as well as wide-ranging public consultation.

We are getting on with investing in and developing this important facility. It is going to provide great care. For the first time there will be a dedicated subacute facility for people with mental illness needing that step-up, step-down support and for people recovering from surgery who need rehabilitation and support to get their lives back on track. There will be brand-new hydrotherapy facilities and dedicated mental health residential care. That is what this facility delivers, and more. It does it as the University of Canberra hospital, in partnership with one of our leading tertiary education institutions, which is the leading institution in the training of nurses and allied health staff here in our city and in our region.

That is the long-term plan that this government has and the long-term vision this Labor administration has for health care in our city. All we see from the opposition are straw men, false allegations. They need to be put to bed, and that is what my amendment achieves. I commend the amendment to the Assembly.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (10.33): What we appear to have before us today is the kind of debate we see and hear from time to time. It gets down to debate around definitions, people's understanding of what certain terms mean, how a press release was read. This is certainly a classic example. We have got phrases like, "up to", "about", "equivalent" and "spaces" versus "places". They are all being used liberally to make arguments. I think we can see that the result of this imperfect language is the sort of discussion we have ended up with here today.

It is not unlike the discussion about the capacity of the ACT jail. Certainly that was something I focused on very clearly when it came to announcing the expansion. Looking at the debate over the previous couple of years, there were a whole series of measures that people used to make their case publicly about whether they thought the government had done the right thing or the wrong thing and the like. It is one of the reasons why, at the time of announcing the expansion, I actually put onto the JACS website a definition of all the terms because various terms were used in corrections about various measures of capacity and the like. What we have seen over time is that people have used different versions of that in different discussions to make that case. I think we are seeing a little bit of that in this instance.

Specifically on the University of Canberra public hospital, there has been a discussion over a number of years now. As Mr Hanson notes in his remarks, the community has been told that there will be up to or about 200 beds at that facility. This has been repeated, either as extrapolation or as direct quote, in press conferences, stakeholder engagements and even in a national partnership on improving public hospital services. This was the basis of the ACT Greens and, it seems, the Canberra Liberals supporting this project as part of the 2012 ACT election commitment and acknowledging the need for a subacute hospital on the north side.

I think it was clear at the time that all the parties knew that all these beds might not be new beds as such. Some would be effectively transferred from our existing hospitals, thereby freeing up those spaces for more acute or chronic treatment. But it must be said that the actual figure of new and transferred beds discussed in those early days seemed to be subject to conjecture. Again, I am sure this is one of those places where, probably, people have a different account of what they thought was the same thing.

Be that as it may, the public very clearly heard from all of us in this place that there would be up to or about 200 beds at the new north side subacute hospital. So that is where we find ourselves. I have circulated an amendment to Mr Corbell's amendment, which I now move:

Add new paragraph (2)(b) and (c):

“(b) the Minister for Health to table by the last sitting day in June 2015:

- (i) analysis conducted on sub-acute demand in the ACT;
- (ii) a clear definition of overnight beds, day places/spaces and equivalency calculations; and
- (iii) the total number of new additional sub-acute beds (including day spaces and equivalent) proposed, alongside the transfer of existing spaces; and

(c) the Government to ensure that the ANMF ACT are engaged on future design committees.”.

I think there is the potential for this debate to go around and around in the same way the prison debate did, and the amendment is an attempt to get around some of that. One of the things it seeks is a clear definition of the terms being used in this debate. I think from there we can start to have a genuine discussion about what is actually being proposed for the University of Canberra public hospital and how that matches up to various people's commitments and expectations. Then, once we have that clarity of definition, members can take different political positions, and so be it.

To my mind—this goes to paragraph (b)(i) of my amendment—the most important thing is to understand what the need is, to understand what the analysis is and to understand what the experts tell us. None of us in this place are experts on how many beds are needed for a certain types of treatment over the coming decade in the ACT. But we have people that inform us of these things. What we need to do, I think, is to have transparency around what that analysis is.

Mr Corbell has spoken of the analysis by Professor Poulos. My amendment calls for the tabling of that in this place. Mr Hanson may choose to announce that the Liberal Party wants to support a certain number of beds. Mr Corbell will come in here and tell us his decision in respect of a certain number of beds. We can then all objectively judge that against the analysis by Professor Poulos.

Mr Corbell has argued that he has had that work done by Professor Poulos and that is the decision on which the planning is proceeding. I absolutely accept him saying that, on face value. But if that is put on the table Mr Hanson can then decide whether he agrees or disagrees with Professor Poulos's analysis. If he decides that he wants to put more beds in, that is a decision he can take. Mr Corbell's position will be clear and justified by that analysis, assuming his position matches the analysis that he has put on the table. We can all make our own judgement about that.

That is the basis of my amendment. I think it goes to ensuring that we have absolute clarity in this discussion, because right now, sitting here and listening to this debate this morning, I can hear people using terms that suit their arguments. I think that creates some of the confusion that, for example, has been expressed by the ACT branch of the ANMF. I am concerned that the ANMF—the local branch who have taken considerable interest in this and have, obviously, a level of expertise as well—feel that they are unsure of what is being proposed and how it matches some of the earlier proclamations of what was going to be provided in this space.

The third part of my proposed new paragraph (b) talks about the total number of new, additional subacute beds proposed, alongside the transfer of existing spaces. Again, I think this is important. Some of this is available in the public documentation already. I have certainly seen tables that go to explaining some of this. Again, I think the value of tabling that in this place is that we will have clarity about what is being put forward by ACT Health and by the minister. We will then have a sound basis from which to have a debate.

Again, if members then want to disagree with that, that, of course, is their position. But it will give us absolutely clarity on what the position is and provide us with an

ability to go forward with an informed debate. I would like to think there can be some agreement around what capacity is needed and how much capacity is being built. For me, that is the bottom line.

We need a clear analysis of need. Members of this place should have a line of sight on that so that we can have an informed public discussion. Once we have a clear understanding of that and clarity of the terms being used in the debate, we can then move away from the subjective arguments about who thought what references were being made. It will let us focus on what is actually needed. At the end of the day that is the thing that I am most focused on: making sure that we get a new hospital at the University of Canberra that addresses the projected need in the ACT.

I noted Mr Hanson's reference to the size of the AMC. He said that the original call was for 374 beds in the jail. Interestingly, that is basically what we have now. I acknowledge that this has been achieved through the addition of bunks and various other bits and pieces. That is actually what we have at the AMC now—374; yet we still need capacity. We are building new capacity to meet that need. I think that goes to an important point as well. We need to understand that governments can and sometimes will need to re-scope projects.

This could be based on new evidence regarding models or other complementary facilities that have been constructed to reduce the pressures or simply because since an original position was taken circumstances have changed, whether that is because of an unexpected rise in users or an unexpected fall in users. That is an important point to acknowledge here. Even somebody like Professor Poulos will be making an analysis based on his best judgement about what will happen over the next 10 years. Nonetheless, I think having those documents tabled in the Assembly gives all of us in this place a sound basis from which to have this discussion.

The second part of my amendment calls on the government to ensure that the Nursing and Midwifery Federation, as they are now known, are engaged on an ongoing basis in future design committees. I know that there has been a level of involvement but, again, I was certainly concerned to read the public comments by the nurses federation about their uncertainty about what was proposed. Also, when I saw Ms Miragaya, the head of the nurses federation, at a recent public event and had a discussion with her about this matter, she made a number of comments to me about her uncertainty about what the exact situation was.

I think the first step we have to take here is to clear up this uncertainty and work out if there is, in fact, a policy difference. Then we can move forward from there. I will be supporting Mr Corbell's amendment today but I have moved this amendment. It adds to Mr Corbell's amendment in an attempt to ensure we get clarity in this place, that we do not have a politically driven debate but that we have a fact driven debate. I commend my amendment to the Assembly.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.44): I will not oppose the amendment to the amendment. It is a very bad amendment from Mr Corbell; he is essentially attempting to rewrite history. We heard that in his speech. He is attempting to spin his way out of having cut 60 hospital beds, in my view in a most disingenuous

way, and history is repeating. Mr Rattenbury's amendment to the amendment seeks information, so it appears Mr Rattenbury is again going to support the government down this path. That does not surprise me; I am not shocked that that is the case. We will not oppose the amendment to the amendment, but we will oppose Mr Corbell's amendment because essentially it is a denial. He is saying it was always going to be 140 beds, with these fictional other beds.

Let me be very clear: Mr Rattenbury talked in his speech about the jail and the fact that it is now at about 374 beds, and this is where history repeats. About a decade ago Mr Stanhope said, in a ministerial statement to the Legislative Assembly:

The Alexander Maconochie Centre will include a new 139-bed remand centre to replace the Belconnen Remand Centre and the Symonston Temporary Remand Centre. It will include a 175-bed facility for sentenced prisoners and a 60-bed transitional release centre for low-risk prisoners in the final stages of their sentences.

That is 374 beds. At that stage that was not speculative; that was not just a number plucked out of the air by Mr Stanhope. We know that because of FOI, and I have information from questions on notice and so on. That figure of 374 was based on analysis. It was done by the Treasury, based on projected prisoner numbers. As we have seen for the University of Canberra hospital, that was based on a prudent number to plan for not just the day it opened but the short to medium term. What Mr Rattenbury is telling us is that the prison now, in 2015, has about 374 spaces, so Mr Stanhope was right when he made the original announcement. We need to build for the future. We need to build the capacity to meet demand in the short and medium term. Although that 374 figure from the advice was pretty much spot on, you never quite know where it is going to go. As with increases in health, there has been an increase in the number of sentenced prisoners. We never can quite anticipate what demand will be, so it is foolish in the extreme to then undercut. What history tells us in health and in prisons is projections are often overly conservative.

What then happened is those bed numbers were cut. There was analysis, there was advice and the government said, "We're going to do what the experts tell us." They then cut it for cost saving measures because they were blowing their budget. It had blown from \$110 million to \$130 million, and they cut it. Mr Corbell came to this place, in his Orwellian fashion, to say everything will be fine. He said:

The government chose to reduce the scale of the project—

they chose to—

and in doing so ensured that the budgeted amount would still deliver a functional, world-class prison facility that will meet the needs of our prisoner population well into the future.

He said 300 beds would serve the prisoner population well into the future, but Mr Rattenbury has just said no, it did not. We are now at 374. Mr Corbell was in this place, saying to the Assembly that the prison would have capacity at 300 to meet the needs of our prisoner population well into the future. We are now well into the future.

In fact, we are only five or six years into that future, and Mr Rattenbury tells us that that was categorically not true, because it is now 374, the magic figure that was always planned and projected.

And Mr Corbell went on:

Yes, it is less than was originally anticipated, but it still provides us with significant capacity into the future.

Well, one could argue he was not very good at foretelling the future. He said it would give us capacity, certainly for the next 20 to 25 years. This minister said it would give us capacity for the next 20 to 25 years—and five years on we know it blew out not just beyond the 300 he said would have capacity for the next 20 to 25 years but beyond the 374. As Mr Wall tells me, we are building more than that. Even 374 is not enough and we are spending tens of millions more.

Who do you trust, Madam Speaker? Do you trust the experts? Do you trust the original design? Do you trust the people who said, “Build something with the capacity for the future. Let’s have 200 beds. Let’s make sure it meets demand,” or do you trust Mr Corbell? Mr Corbell said:

The projected planning for the prison in terms of population gives us real capacity to accommodate growth into the future and certainly gives us a facility in terms of its current bedding configuration, as currently being constructed—not its potential but its current bedding configuration—to meet our needs over the next 25 years or so.

He then went on, in the debates we had in this place where this all got exposed, to change the bed names—he had “operational capacity” versus “real capacity”. In debate I said the language he was using was Orwellian in its nature because he was using all these different terms to describe beds in the prison. And here we are with exactly the same argument. We have the government saying we are going to need 200 beds. We have the minister cutting it, then we have the same minister coming in here saying, “Don’t worry, folks. It’s going to have capacity. We’ve got capacity for years and years out of this,” and then playing names with the beds. All of a sudden the outpatient facilities which were always going to be provided are now called spaces or day beds. There were 250 yesterday; there are 215 today. They are all over the shop.

We will not support this amendment. We will oppose this amendment. I am disappointed in the extreme with Mr Rattenbury, who has seen this up-front and personal with the jail and can read these debates and look at the experience of this minister, Mr Corbell, who is repeating his mistakes of the past. Why is he trimming the budget? Why is he cutting the numbers? I will tell you why: the government are hundreds of millions of dollars in deficit, but the government want to fund a tram. They know they are going to put all their money into the tram. You have a minister who is responsible for capital metro who is also responsible for health. This minister is going to put hundreds of millions into a tram while he is cutting hospital beds. That is outrageous, and we will continue to say so between now and the election and let the people judge. The people will judge whether they want this minister spending his money on a tram while he is also cutting beds or whether they would rather see an investment in health.

MADAM SPEAKER: The question is that Mr Rattenbury's amendment to Mr Corbell's proposed amendment be agreed to.

Mr Rattenbury's amendment agreed to.

Question put:

That **Mr Corbell's** amendment, as amended, be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 7

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

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

MADAM SPEAKER: The question is that the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.56): Madam Speaker, I will not belabour the point, but I will point out the glaring errors in Mr Corbell's argument. In his amendment, at paragraph (d), he refers to a question that I asked, and it is very good of him to do so. He says in his motion that the hospital will take up to 200 beds and there will be capacity for 166 overnight beds in 2017-18. That stems from questions I asked in an annual reports hearing. Let me go to that. I was asking questions in terms of the beds, and we were talking about 200 beds. Mr Cary-Ides, who ran the infrastructure program and who was sitting next to Ms Gallagher at the time, said:

We should note, though, that those figures would reflect current and past demand. We are building up a facility that can take up to 200 beds ...

Pretty categorical, was it not?

... it is very much a facility that is built for the future as well as for the current demand.

That goes to the points we made about the jail and so on. Pretty unambiguous, I would have thought. A further answer to a question on notice came back from Ms Gallagher—it was signed by Ms Gallagher—which said the government was going to build a facility that can take up to 200 beds. She said there would be capacity for 166 overnight beds in the year it opened. It is going to have capacity for 200, and in the first year it opens they are going to have 166 overnight beds. That is pretty clear, is it not?

In all of this, how does the minister answer this question about his magic hospital: how do you fit in 166 overnight beds in the first year it opens if it has only capacity for 140? That is impossible maths, is it not? We have an answer that is categorical. Mr Grant Cary-Ides, who is the expert on this, said this was based on the need for current and future demand. Perhaps that was not true. Perhaps Mr Cary-Ides and Ms Gallagher were not telling me the truth back then, when they said we are going to build it with 200 beds to meet current and future demand.

Now the minister is saying it is 215 beds. The minister is out there saying it is 215 beds and I am saying, “Well, is that true? Because I was told it was 200. That’s fantastic. The hospital’s grown. We should be rejoicing, members. We should be rejoicing that there are all these extra beds.” So I look for the proof, because we have learned that when Mr Corbell makes utterances in here about bed capacity—be it about the jail or be it about the hospital—it is prudent to check the facts. When you check the facts, when you check the contract—the smoking gun, as it were—which is for the design of the hospital, it says 140.

We have experts, the health officials and the former minister saying it needs to be built with 200 to meet current and future demand. We have this minister saying we are building it with 215, and we have the reality that it is being built with 140. That is the truth. The minister is talking about outpatient facilities and spaces that were always going to be built and is trying to say that they are beds.

It is no wonder the jail is full. It is no wonder nobody believes this minister anymore when he utters his words. I reiterate my plea for this government to reinstate the beds. If they have not got the money to do so in the budget, I know where they can get it—there is \$783 million sitting there that is better spent on health and other important local services than a tram.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

ACT Policing—budget

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (11.01): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that \$15.36 million is being stripped from ACT Policing’s budget over four years from 2013-2014;
- (b) when news of the decision broke in 2013, the Australian Federal Police Association (AFPA) said more than 40 positions could be lost;
- (c) the AFPA said the pressure on positions would be compounded in the last two years of the measure;

- (d) in September 2013 that City beat police teams were dangerously understaffed with concerns raised by a Provisional Improvement Notice (PIN) served on ACT Policing;
 - (e) that the Chief Police Officer conceded that some positions will need to be “closely examined”, saying the tight fiscal environment presented a challenge in delivering high quality police services;
 - (f) that there were reports that 18 positions could be cut in the short-term, and more could go in the last stages of the four budget cycle;
 - (g) that in answer to a QWN on 5 May 2015 the Minister of Police refused to rule out job cuts;
 - (h) the Chief Executive Officer of the AFPA said “compounding government cuts and pressure on staff numbers is that ACT Policing numbers have fallen to the lowest level of all Australian police forces at 221 per one hundred thousand”; and
 - (i) the CEO also said “The AFPA calls on the ACT Government to drop the savings measures and ensure ACT Policing staff number are not cut”; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to reinstate the cuts to ACT Policing in the coming ACT budget.

It is with great delight that I stand again to talk about the essential services that we want to see here in the ACT. Following on from what can be no greater priority—I think we would all agree on that—in providing essential health services, we move to police, to front-line policing, Madam Deputy Speaker. If that is not equal to health, it is right up there, isn't it?

Let me be very clear at the outset. Just as the Canberra Liberals want to see priority, want to see funding, given to health, we also want to see that priority given to community safety. The people who are on the front line of delivering that community safety are our police. So let us be very clear: we want to make sure that our police are supported and are properly resourced.

We all have a good understanding of what the police do in our community, be it protecting us, preventing crime or enforcing good law and order. Everybody in their time has had dealings with the police. They keep our roads safe. They are out there in Civic, they are investigating murders and they are helping out with the scourge of domestic violence. In almost every facet of life, we see our police on the front line.

But what have we seen from this government? When Mr Seselja, in this place a few years ago, tried to provide extra legislative protections for police with his police assaults legislation, the government and the Greens would not support it. We have seen them cut \$15 million from the ACT budget, over the term of the budget starting from 2013, from ACT Policing. We then have the minister saying, “It's not going to have any effect. Don't you worry about that; ACT Policing can get on with their business; no worries.” So, just as they are cutting hospital beds, they cut resources to police and say that it is not going to have any effect.

They can cut hospital beds—60 hospital beds—and say, “Don’t worry; that still has capacity.” And they are going to cut police resources and say that it is not going to have any effect. But that is not true. The Australian Federal Police Association have made that very clear. In 2013, when this was all happening, they said:

If the savings of some \$15.3 million can’t be achieved from trimming the cost of administering and equipping ACT Policing then the very real fear is that police numbers may suffer.

I think that we are seeing the impact of that flowing through. If direct police jobs are not being cut then what you will see is that those police who are at the front line, who we want out on our streets, will be dragged back into the system to do the support role and the administration that is being cut. Whichever way you do it, you either lose the police numbers or you lose the police numbers in effect because they are no longer on the street; they are back doing the admin jobs that have been cut.

In typical Labor fashion, just as we see the negotiations now with the Australian teachers union, what did the Labor Party say about the AFPA when they raised what were legitimate concerns? Mr Corbell, who was the minister then, said:

The Australian Federal Police Association are being alarmist ...

The Federal Police Association are concerned about the safety of their members and about making sure that we have adequate police numbers on the street. When they raise legitimate concerns, it is dismissed as “alarmist”. It has echoes of Ms Burch, who has described the Education Union as “just playing politics 101”. That is the sort of arrogant attitude that we have seen from the government as they cut police funding and they cut hospital beds.

Mr Gellatly from the AFPA said compounding government cuts was putting pressure on staff numbers. He talked about the fact that policing numbers have fallen to the lowest level of all Australian police forces—221 per 100,000. Per capita, we have the lowest number of police in the nation, and this government, this minister, is cutting them further. The AFPA has called on the government to drop the savings measures and ensure that ACT police staffing numbers are not cut.

We have the nurses union saying, “Don’t cut the hospital beds,” and we have the police association saying, “Don’t cut the police,” while those opposite in the government are cutting hospital beds, cutting funding to the police and spending hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars on a tram. It is just bizarre that they would be doing this.

The view that you cannot cut ACT Policing without affecting police numbers is not just my view. It is something that has been put forward by the experts—by the front-line people and those representing them. Again, Mr Gellatly is reported as saying:

... this won’t mean police or supporting staff won’t be affected elsewhere, and of course for police to do their job on the frontline we need plenty of people on the back end doing other jobs, too.

... would have a flow on effect to police on the beat.

It is not just frontline, it is a whole range of services that free police up to get out there and respond and be available to the community ...

We do know that police numbers are a problem. This is not something that is scaremongering. Let me now refer to what we found out in September 2013 when the ACT police chief was served with a provisional improvement notice by the ACT city beats police staff because of a lack of numbers. Let me quote from what that notice said:

The staffing numbers of the ACT City Beats Team have been universally acknowledged by the ACT Operations Committee ... as being inadequate to allow effective and safe deployment of personnel to those duties during the hours of darkness at times where the licensed premises of the CBD are in operation and large numbers of people are in and about the Canberra CBD.

By allowing a continuation of a situation where staffing levels are so low that members are constantly and continually being placed in situations where because of a dearth of numbers they are regularly outnumbered by intoxicated and aggressive people placing them at an unreasonable risk of serious injury due to violence.

So this mob opposite are quite happy for police numbers to be reduced to an extent in the—

Ms Burch: A point of order.

MR HANSON: Can you stop the clock?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Stop the clock, please. A point of order.

Ms Burch: Is it appropriate for us to be called the “mob opposite”? Could that be considered to be unparliamentary?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms Burch. It is unparliamentary and I was about to draw that to your attention, Mr Hanson. Could you please not refer to those opposite as a mob.

MR HANSON: I will refrain from that, Madam Deputy Speaker. So only a couple of years ago, after these budgets cuts were brought in, the police were saying:

This lack of staffing levels has allowed a culture to develop where it is apparently accepted that Police can be confronted and face abusive and aggressive behaviour again elevating the likelihood of our members being the subject of unnecessary violence.

As a result of that, the much touted new group of police that were going to do the liquor licensing checks—and that was announced with great fanfare in the budget before—were then canned and rolled into the city beat. What happened essentially

was that they robbed Peter to pay Paul. Instead of having that proactive group that was announced with fanfare by Mr Corbell, they got rid of it and rolled it into the city beat, rather than providing any additional resources. So it was basically robbing Peter to pay Paul.

What have we seen since then? We had that appalling situation then. We have seen two things. The \$15 million in cuts are biting deep. We have also seen an escalation in what ACT Policing needs to do in this town. We know we have seen an increase in domestic violence, and we know that this is a real issue for our community. There is a strong desire for us to take action on this, and police are at the forefront. It is the police who need to respond to these events, and respond quickly, in a timely way, when mostly women are in fear of aggression and violence.

We have seen the scourge of ice increase in this town and throughout Australia. Again, when people are taking ice and are out of control, it is police who are at the forefront, putting their lives at risk to confront those people affected by ice. Of course, it is not just about confronting the people who are taking the ice; it is the police that have to go out there and break the ice dealers and go looking for the labs that are making the ice in the first place.

We have seen the advent of new outlaw motorcycle gangs. Whereas previously we had one gang, we have seen the emergence of others. That is a worrying sign. I think it speaks to the fact that again police resources are stretched. We have the advent of increased motorcycle gang activity in this town. We have seen king hits; we have seen problems continuing in various areas of Civic and beyond.

We are cutting police numbers when they are already stretched in our community, when we are experiencing such an increase in demand for their services that we are saying, “We need the police to respond to domestic violence; we need the police to respond to ice; we need the police to respond to outlaw motorcycle gangs.”

While the government are agreeing to all of that and are pushing an agenda—and in some cases we certainly agree with their agenda, with respect to domestic violence and so on—they are not adequately resourcing the people who are responsible for doing that.

I would like to take a little time to commend our police, because there are few more difficult and dangerous tasks that any member of the community can do. I reflect on this as someone who has served in the armed services. It is a different scenario because you go away, maybe for weeks or months at a time, and you deal with difficult situations while you are away.

I find it extraordinary that members of our police force have days when they are dealing with traffic accidents that can be horrendous, dealing with domestic violence issues, dealing with drug addicts, dealing with some of the most difficult, complex and dangerous issues in our society, and then they go home to their loved ones. I cannot imagine how difficult that would be. They are facing pressures because they are stretched. They are being placed under extra pressure because support services are being ripped out by this government. That is an extraordinarily mean thing for this

government to do, because it has an effect not just on the citizenry, on the people of the ACT and on law and order; it has a real effect on those that are charged with keeping our community safe.

I commend our police, who, despite facing these cuts, salute and carry on, and continue to go out into our streets knowing that this government, rather than supporting them, is cutting them. Rather than providing extra support for administrative services, it is cutting that. I commend them for continuing to do their job.

We asked the minister, in a question on notice last week, how many jobs were going to be cut, and she would not give us a straight answer. There are rumours going around. There is analysis being done. I think the AFPA have said it will be in the order of 40 jobs. It may be less; it may be more. We need to know what the effect of this is going to be, because every single job that is lost by this government in ACT Policing, whether it is sworn uniformed officers or support staff, will have a twofold effect. Number one is that it will reduce the proactive and effective nature of policing on the street, and number two is that it will put our uniformed members under additional strain.

The AFPA's members, the front-line police, have a right to know how many police or support staff will be cut from their ranks. And I think the community has a right to know how many support staff are going to be cut from ACT Policing.

I hope we get some straight answers from the minister today. I hope this is not just blown off as being hysterical. I hope we do not see an attack on the AFPA in the same way that the minister has attacked the Education Union. The previous minister dismissed the AFPA's concerns. I hope we get a genuine response here. I call on this government to put that funding back in the budget. This is not the time to be ripping money out of our police in the ACT. If we want the police out there doing what we want them to do, let us make sure they are resourced adequately and restore the money to ACT Policing.

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) (11.17): I will start—this is probably one of the few areas that Mr Hanson and I will agree on—by paying tribute to ACT Policing and saying thank you for the service that they do for our community. Our community has high expectations and high trust levels in our policing service, the men and women of our force, and rightly so. They are first-rate first responders, but they also have good commitment to making sure that each and every person in our community is safe and cared for. I want to thank them personally—from the most junior officer right through to the senior executive in ACT Policing.

The ACT government is committed to ensuring that ACT residents live in a fair and safe community with the confidence to participate fully in community life without the fear of crime. For 2013-14 the progress report on the ACT property crime reduction strategy that the Attorney-General tabled here last November presented continuing evidence of this government's strong commitment to and success in reducing property

crime across our community. That report showed a 51.2 per cent decrease in burglaries and a 49.3 per cent decrease in motor vehicle theft. Further, last year we saw a five per cent decrease in all reported offences across the ACT, with offences against people decreasing by 14 per cent and property crimes decreasing by four per cent.

The overall trend continues on a downward trajectory. In the December 2014 quarter, the criminal justice statistical profile continued to report consistent decreases across a broad range of reported property and personal crimes in the ACT in the 12 months to December 2014. These included sexual assaults down 33 per cent; abduction, harassment and other offences down 18 per cent; property damage and environmental pollution down 17 per cent; and acts intended to cause injury such as assault down 11 per cent.

Mr Hanson's motion covers a range of issues relating to policing, but does not, I believe, paint an accurate picture of the outcomes and the high performance that our police continue to deliver for our community. I will say up-front that we will be opposing this motion, and I move the amendment circulated in my name:

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

"(1) notes that:

- (a) ACT Policing (ACTP) continues to deliver services that keep the ACT community safe, with crime rates declining over the past six years;
- (b) the Australian Federal Police has been subject to Federal Government efficiency dividends since the early 1990s but ACTP has been exempt from these saving measures;
- (c) as part of the 2013-2014 ACT Budget, a range of saving initiatives was applied across the ACT Government, including a General Savings Measure of 1 per cent to the Territorial appropriation for ACTP for the first time;
- (d) this General Savings Measure requires ACTP to achieve a total of \$15.362 million of savings over four years, with a remaining budget of about \$610 million;
- (e) ACTP has met the General Savings Measure from within existing resources;
- (f) ACTP is in the process of identifying \$1.567 million of savings for 2015-2016 and \$1.606 million of savings for 2016-2017;
- (g) ACTP and the Chief Police Officer are committed to reducing costs wherever possible and to ensure ACTP has a sustainable business model which will continue to serve the community in line with the Purchase Agreement and the Ministerial Direction; and
- (h) frontline services, including general patrol duties, operations centre and crime teams, will continue to be the priority for ACTP; and

- (2) calls on the Government to support ACTP to continue to be a well-resourced, highly trained and dedicated community policing organisation whose intelligence-led operation serves the Canberra community well.”.

Mr Hanson made mention of the PIN notice. There was a PIN notice provided in April 2013. The PIN was around evidence of operational capacity, but I am pleased to say that ACT Policing implemented immediate strategies, including the redeployment of the intelligence-led alcohol crime targeting team and the assignment of an AFP specialist response group to provide ongoing support to the city beats team until a permanent solution was implemented in September of that year.

Policing formally amalgamated the city beats and the alcohol and crime targeting team to form the regional targeting team. The regional targeting team consists of three sworn team leaders, 20 sworn team members and a dedicated intelligence officer. The minimum strength on night shift is one team leader and nine members. The PIN notice was not related to overall policing numbers, nor does it really have any relevance to the general saving measures; rather, it is related to operational decisions around a unit. Those have all been addressed with the new regional targeting team in place.

I would like also to acknowledge again the professional and robust relationship that the government, the Australian Federal Police and ACT Policing share, which results in high quality policing being provided to our community. The Australian National Audit Office noted in its 2012 audit in relation to the provision of policing services to the ACT by the AFP that the AFP’s relationship is mature and operating well.

Our government has committed more than \$600 million over the four years from July 2014 for the provision of policing services. Our longstanding commitment to increasing the operational capacity of ACT Policing is demonstrated in the funding that we have provided for an additional 136 full-time equivalents over the period from 2005 to 2014. This has increased ACT Policing full-time equivalents from 796 to 932. ACT Policing’s budget has grown by approximately \$88 million—a 130 per cent rise—in annual recurrent funding, from \$64 million in 2000-01 to \$152 million in the 2014 budget.

The 2014-15 budget also provided \$450,000 over two financial years for the Gungahlin emergency service centre future use study, a further \$232,000 of direct funding from JACS for crime prevention, and \$246,000 for capital upgrades. In addition, over \$5 million over four years was provided in the 2013-14 budget to expand ACT Policing’s road safety operations team. This additional funding assists in the prevention of fatalities and serious crashes on our roads.

There is no doubt that this continued investment clearly demonstrates our government’s commitment in providing a safe and secure community.

The 2013-14 budget introduced a range of savings measures across government which totalled \$146 million over the four years. For the first time, as part of these savings, a general savings measure of one per cent was applied to the territory appropriation for

ACT Policing. I believe that these are moderate savings that equate to around \$1.5 million of new savings each year. The savings to date have been found, and the Chief Police Officer is currently working through \$1.56 million in 2015-16 and \$1.606 million for the 2016-17 year.

ACT Policing's operating budget remains above \$150 million annually. The most recent ROGS, in January of this year, indicated that ACT Policing has consistently had the highest percentage of non-operational staff of any jurisdiction, at 12.9 per cent, compared to the national average of 9.4 per cent. This has allowed ACT Policing to realise their savings for 2013-14 and 2014-15 by targeted non-operational functions.

ACT Policing is not unique in having to ensure that it focuses its resources on front-line policing. ROGS shows that police in the majority of other jurisdictions have also worked to considerably reduce the size of their non-operational staff as a percentage of total numbers over the past seven years to maintain front-line services.

I am assured by the CPO, the Chief Police Officer, that he is able, again, to meet these savings required. I have asked the Chief Police Office to give consideration to ACT Policing's operating model and priorities to achieve the efficiencies and to meet the savings required in the outyears. The Chief Police Officer and I can assure the community that these savings will not see a negative impact on front-line policing.

In discussing police resourcing, it is important to note that the 2014-15 police purchase agreement provides for a notional full-time equivalent count of 932. This number will remain the same for the 2015-16 purchase agreement. While its actual full-time equivalent numbers will change, ACT Policing has historically operated above the notional full-time equivalent number in the purchase agreement. The actual full-time equivalent for ACT Policing at the end of March of this year was 968. This is 36 above the figure in our purchasing agreement.

ACT Policing has consistently demonstrated its capacity to surge and manage a range of situations and operational activities within its resourcing levels. This includes responding to major crimes, undertaking targeted traffic operations during peak periods, and creating task forces to deal with more specific issues—such as Taskforce Nemesis, responding to outlaw motorcycle gangs.

Our ACT police do a fantastic job. As I have made my way around the stations here in Canberra, I have had the opportunity to thank individuals for their hard work, dedication and commitment to the community. I speak for all in this place, I am sure, when I voice my appreciation of the men and women in the ACT police force.

These general savings are not new. There are no surprises being experienced by ACT Policing. I expect the Chief Police Officer to continue to manage ACT Policing resources in response to operational needs and within the scope of the purchase agreement. I am meeting with the Australian Federal Police Association tomorrow, so it is a timely meeting, and I look forward to continuing discussions around supporting our police force.

This government remains committed to ensuring the operational capacity of ACT Policing and the safety of all ACT residents. I have every confidence that the level of service experienced in our community by our highly trained and competent workforce will remain.

Madam Speaker, I think I will end there because my voice is slowly disappearing, but, as I have moved the amendment in my name, let me say that there is no doubt, and I think we speak with one voice, about the respect and regard that both sides of the chamber have for our police force.

I am confident that the CPO and ACT Policing can manage these savings. I also think it is reasonable that all agencies, not only in this government and this jurisdiction but in governments across our country, are looking for efficiencies and savings across. It is worth noting that my amendment says that the Australian Federal Police have been subject to federal government efficiency dividends since the early 1990s but ACT Policing has been exempt from those saving measures. Since 2013-14, a one per cent saving measure has been applied. Those savings have been found in house. I am confident that will continue and I am also confident that front-line services to our community will be maintained.

Legislative Assembly—disorderly behaviour Ruling by Deputy Speaker

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before I go to call any other members, I want to talk about some table thumping or desk thumping that happened yesterday in this place. I checked with the Clerk about it because I was concerned that it may be unparliamentary. On page 160 of *House of Representatives Practice* it says that the chair has ruled that, whilst a member is speaking.

... the beating of hands on ... or kicking ... of Chamber desks is disorderly ...

So could members refrain from thumping their tables when they are emphasising a point. I know that people are trying to emphasise a point and make sure that everybody understands that this is very important to the speaker, but I would imagine that it might be difficult for *Hansard*, apart from anything else. So could we just remember that: we are not to beat our desks when we are emphasising a point.

ACT Policing—budget

Debate resumed.

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) (11.30): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker; I will see if I can restrain myself from thumping the desk as I make my remarks.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

MR RATTENBURY: I do appreciate and agree with the general thrust of what Mr Hanson is saying—that is, that the police perform a very important role in our city and that they need to be adequately resourced. We need to put this motion into perspective, in its proper context, when we reflect on that, which I think is a point of general agreement.

Firstly, I am advised that ACT police funding does continue to grow year by year. What changed in the 2013-14 budget was that the rate of growth in ACT Policing was reduced. It is worth clarifying that the change is not so much a slashing of funding, as Mr Hanson has referenced in his motion, but rather a change in the rate of growth of funding for ACT Policing.

The second point to make is that ACT Policing, as is expected of all other agencies in the ACT government, is expected to find reasonable savings over time. Like other ACT agencies, ACT Policing has had a general savings measure applied—as it is more colloquially known, an efficiency dividend. It was applied over four years, starting in 2013-14. The intention of the measure is to improve the efficiency of structures and operations within ACT Policing.

Just as agencies for which I am responsible have been subject to savings over time, I think it is reasonable that the police, as a government agency, also undergo an exercise to find efficiencies. I do not think there is any reason to expect that the police cannot make efforts to find efficiencies. We heard the Prime Minister on radio this morning saying that within health budgets efficiencies can be found. I think it is entirely inappropriate to say that certain agencies are not expected to look at their own operations and find ways to improve.

In some obvious ways, police are different from other agencies, with their front-line enforcement and protection role. But like other agencies they run offices, management strategies, training, travel and a whole host of functions typical of government or government-funded agencies. And of course other ACT government agencies also have front-line services, whether it be health or—sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Sorry; I was making some signs to my staff. I apologise.

MR RATTENBURY: That is all right. As I was saying, other—

Mr Hanson: Is that parliamentary?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, probably not parliamentary. I apologise.

MR RATTENBURY: He was behind me, so I was confused. Some other ACT government agencies have front-line functions—Health, Territory and Municipal Services, Education and Training. All of these areas have front-line roles that are different but, nonetheless, public facing—just like the police. All of those agencies are expected to find ways to make sure that they are delivering the best possible value for money for the taxpayer, and I do not think ACT Policing is exempt from that approach.

It is also worth noting that efficiency dividends apply at the federal level as well, as members would know. And it is worth noting that they also apply to agencies that receive government appropriations, such as the Australian Federal Police. There is a process currently underway within ACT Policing where I understand ACT police are reviewing their structures and operations. Also, the government is currently negotiating a service-level agreement with the federal government. I think it is fair enough in this context to let those processes continue to roll out.

I am not aware that there have been or will be any front-line police services cut in the ACT. I understand that no staff have been lost at this point in time either. I know that during ongoing discussions police have raised this as a possibility. I do acknowledge that, like Mr Hanson, I would not like to see this occur.

I point out, though, as Ms Burch has already done in her remarks, that ACT Policing has made it clear that general patrol duties, operations centre and crime teams will remain its priority. I believe ACT Policing has been functioning very well in the past two years that the savings measure has applied. Ms Burch also noted that the Chief Police Officer has assured her that ACT Policing will meet the savings required for the 2015-16 year from non-operational functions.

There has been some discussion of the ability of the police to do their job, whether they have enough staff and resources. I would like to acknowledge that ACT Policing have been doing a very good job. One of the indicators of the good job the police are doing is the recent crime statistics in the ACT. There have been some good outcomes in key areas.

For example, the 2014 crime statistics show a decrease in the number of reported crimes in Canberra from the previous year: 28,105 crimes were reported in Canberra in 2014, compared to 29,695 in 2013. There has been a trend of crime reduction over the last six years. And, as we see with the quarterly police statistics that are presented in this place, a range of key indicators have seen downward trends. That that is both very positive for the community and a positive reflection on the work of ACT Policing.

This is occurring at the same time that Canberra has continued to grow, which I believe makes the statistics even more impressive. As ACT police said at the time these 2014 statistics were released—the ones I cited earlier—Canberra has a reputation as one of Australia's safest cities.

I did look carefully at the issue that Mr Hanson raised in his motion about the provisional improvement notice. Again, I think it is worth reflecting on the context for that. The notice is not an indication of staff numbers or funding. It is about the way ACT Policing organised its operations in a particular area, and it responded to the improvement notice. As I said, it is important to acknowledge these issues for what they are, and to put them in context and reflect on the actual detail of them rather than engage in hyperbole or scare tactics.

It is worth repeating some of the facts pointed out by the Australian Institute of Criminology: the ACT recurrent expenditure on police services per head of adult

population is about the same level as the national average; the ACT had the highest proportion of civilian staff of any police service in Australia and the highest density of police officers per 1,000 kilometres square. Being a small jurisdiction, that last one in particular is a good achievement.

To conclude, I do not agree to support Mr Hanson's motion today. I do not think it accurately reflects what is occurring through the budget, or the ongoing discussions between ACT Policing and other parts of government about the best way to structure the organisation and realise savings and efficiencies. Just as other agencies must seek to operate as efficiently as possible, it is appropriate that ACT Policing also be asked to measure up by the same standards and to make sure that we are providing the best value for money for ACT taxpayers, as the government is striving to do right across the budget process.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (11.38): I will speak to the amendment and then close. We will not be supporting the amendment. There have been a lot of words, rhetoric and fuzzy warm platitudes made by those opposite, but the reality is that they are ripping \$15 million out of ACT Policing. It is incompatible to say that they have our every support in this place when in reality they are ripping funding out. It will have an effect on front-line staff. Whether front-line staff are removed or not is subject to some debate, but we know that we will see a reduction in support and administrative staff that will impact on those front-line staff and the services that they provide in our community.

The number seems to be pretty flat—the 932 for sworn officers. But what we again did not get from the minister was the explanation of how many other staff will be cut. How many jobs will be cut? I would certainly grant leave—I am sure we would in this place, Madam Deputy Speaker—for the minister to clarify that point, to explain to this place how many jobs will be cut.

If the figure is zero, I am sure we would welcome that. I am sure the minister can stand up in this place and say, “I assure the community, I assure ACT Policing, I assure those people that work so hard for ACT Policing that we are not going to cut their jobs.” The minister's refusal to do so, in questions asked of her in this place last week and in this debate today when invited to do so, suggests that the conclusion is that the AFPA are on the money—that this minister is going to cut jobs, that the plan of this minister, Ms Burch, is to cut jobs.

In two debates today, I find it ironic, because we have this whingeing, whining response out of this mob opposite—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: My apologies, Madam Deputy Speaker.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR HANSON: Out of the Greens-Labor coalition, constantly. But behind closed doors the reality is that the Greens-Labor coalition are cutting hospital beds and cutting front-line or support staff in ACT Policing. Don't come into this place with

complaints about what other governments are doing in other jurisdictions when you are doing it yourself.

We want to see adequate resourcing in budgets, be they federal or ACT, but we have a government here that talks jobs and hospital beds. What we see in reality is that this is the very same government that is cutting jobs and cutting hospital beds. If the minister is not cutting jobs, I invite her to stand up and say so. If I have got it wrong, I will apologise. I will apologise for being in error. I invite her to stand up and do it. If she refuses to do so, she has to accept that what the AFPA is saying has the ring of truth—that there will be jobs lost.

It is a shame that we again have a government cutting front-line services. It is a shame that we have a government that is out there ripping resources out of policing, just as Minister Corbell is ripping beds out of our hospital system. It is the same group of people out there. They will be the first out there to talk about jobs and hospital beds. It is just ironic.

We will not support this amendment. Just as with hospital beds, I will make the point—and make it repeatedly, make it in this place, make it in the media, make it out in the community, all the way from now to the election—this is the government that is cutting jobs. This is the government that is taking resources out of our police force. This is the government that is cutting hospital beds. And this is the government that is spending hundreds of millions of dollars on a tram.

I will say it repeatedly, and you will hear all the members of the Liberal Party saying it. This is a government that cannot provide clarity and funding for nurses in special schools. This is a government that wants to cut police funding. This is a government that cuts hospital numbers. This is a government that is spending hundreds of millions of dollars on a tram. That is the reality. That is the proof.

If you think that I am not telling the truth, look at the budget line—\$15.3 million. Shame on those opposite. I look forward to, I hope, a change of heart from those opposite. I look forward to the day when Mr Rattenbury moves from the motherhood statements and the warm, fuzzy platitudes and actually recognises that continually apologising and supporting the Labor government on a whole range of cuts and wrong initiatives simply because they are giving him the tram is not sustainable.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 7

Ms Berry
Dr Bourke
Ms Burch
Mr Corbell

Ms Fitzharris
Mr Gentleman
Ms Porter
Mr Rattenbury

Mr Coe
Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne
Mr Hanson

Ms Lawder
Mr Smyth
Mr Wall

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Transport—light rail

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (11.48): I move

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the importance of public transport infrastructure to meet the needs of a growing city;
- (b) the importance of the Capital Metro project in tackling congestion and improving land use along Northbourne Avenue;
- (c) the importance of industry confidence in the ACT's infrastructure investment environment;
- (d) the concerns raised by the Prime Minister over the threat to the infrastructure investment environment caused by the Canberra Liberals' position on the Capital Metro project; and
- (e) the serious concerns of the infrastructure investment community, in particular the views of Infrastructure Partnerships Australia, who have stated "the Canberra Liberals are the only political party in Australia still supporting sovereign risk," and "the Canberra Liberals should listen to their Liberal colleagues across Federal and State parliaments, who are all opposed to sovereign risk and reverse their position"; and

(2) calls on the Canberra Liberals to reverse their position on Capital Metro and create a stable investment environment to meet the needs of a growing city.

I am very pleased to move this motion today to highlight once again the benefits to the Canberra community of this government's commitment to outlining and delivering a plan for our city and our community's future. That commitment includes, as it has always done and will continue to do for this Labor government, record investment in health and education, front-line services—doctors, nurses, teachers—and in the vital health and education infrastructure our community needs—schools, hospitals, community health centres—located close to where people live, where they can best access the service—in Tuggeranong and Belconnen—and a new subacute hospital, a new innovative model of care.

In last year's budget \$2.5 billion was spent on health and education—over 50 per cent of our annual budget. This commitment also supports, strengthens and diversifies our economy. It encourages growth and innovation in our unique non-government sectors—tourism, higher education, our smart and innovative technology sector and our emerging renewable technology sector. This is a commitment that generates jobs across our city and for our future. It is a commitment that also, vitally, includes a modern, sustainable transport system, a transport system that meets the needs of our growing city, now and into the future.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you are either for a modern, growing, sustainable city or you are not. If you are for these things, you have to do something. You have to make decisions, a range of decisions, that when taken together deliver the future that Canberra needs, decisions that this year alone invest over \$2.5 billion in health and education, \$328 million in our economy, \$693 million in our municipal services in upgrading and renewing our urban environment and investing in a modern sustainable roads and transport network, and \$968 million in supporting our most vulnerable and providing more opportunities to more people.

If you are against these things, what do you stand for? Standing by and hoping our city recovers on its own from the brutal job cuts that have been inflicted on us in the past two years in particular? Standing by when the commonwealth government cuts \$600 million in health funding over the long term? Just saying no and taking the easy path of opposition?

If you are for these things but do not have a plan and will not make decisions, what will you do? That brings me to the Canberra Liberals. What plan do they have and what decisions will they make? So far, all we have heard are vague promises from the opposition to at some point this year—over 2½ years into a term—outline a plan for a modern and sustainable transport system. So far, other than outright opposition, all we have seen is a picture of Mr Coe happily showcasing Audis in a rather odd stunt, as if all Canberrans knew the average cost of an Audi as opposed to a Mazda or a Holden.

As far as the decisions they will make are concerned we know one thing: we know they have already signalled their intention to do serious damage to the investment environment in Canberra and to Canberra's emerging reputation as a city of choice for investors—investors that look for a smart workforce, an open government, less red tape and a government willing and able to partner with global infrastructure companies. We know they seem willing to support sovereign risk and do great damage to the ACT's economic reputation, but I will return to this point later.

The ACT Labor government have a clear plan for this city and its future. We understand the importance of public transport infrastructure when it comes to meeting the needs of our growing city. As a representative of the fastest growing region in Canberra and Australia—Gungahlin—I know the pressures on our roads and bus network are not sustainable in the long term. In Gungahlin, rapid population growth is undeniable, with an increase from just over 300 people to over 50,000 in the past 25 years. This growth must be directed by a vision that includes high quality transport connections, more active lifestyles and a revitalisation of our city's major gateway—the Northbourne Avenue corridor.

Investing in public transport is something Labor believe in wholeheartedly, and we will continue to invest in a better, more integrated public transport system for this city. That system must include light rail. The Gungahlin Community Council recently conducted a comprehensive survey of over 1,300 residents about a range of issues, including transport. The survey found 90 per cent of Gungahlin commuters use their cars to travel into the city and to the north side of Canberra.

With increasing traffic congestion and travel times from Gungahlin to the city blowing out to more than an hour, light rail offers a solution that 70 per cent of respondents said they would use for their daily commute. These results demonstrate the need for light rail, which will provide an improved, integrated, high quality mode of transport for Canberrans and visitors alike. Most importantly, it will help ease congestion and take pressure off the whole road network, benefiting thousands every day.

Over the next 15 years the average peak hour commute from Gungahlin to the city is estimated to take nearly an hour—but that is just the average. Many commuters find they spend that long in their cars now. But, as the population grows, the answer is not simply more roads. Roads are, of course, a vital part of our transport system, but the future lies in an integrated transport system that includes roads but must also include public transport, buses and light rail, as well as good walking and cycling options. These options will reduce our travel times, but this is just the beginning of their benefit. They will increase productivity as less time in transit means more people being productive for more of the time. They will increase family and leisure time as less time in transit means more people able to spend time with their family, help with homework, volunteer for local sporting clubs or get some exercise.

If you believe there is an increasing congestion problem along our major gateway—Northbourne Avenue—and for residents of Gungahlin and east Belconnen, you must have a solution. Investing in light rail will provide our city with an attractive, modern, sustainable public transport system.

We all know Canberra has a love affair with the car, based on our urban sprawl, the original planning of our city and probably in no small part the past reluctance, still present in some parts of our community, to embrace medium and high density living. As more people live in higher density communities, they are starting to have a say in how important and enjoyable higher density living can be. In the last decade the territory has spent over \$1.2 billion on road infrastructure alone. Our car dependency is now becoming an issue, with increasing congestion, health and environmental impacts. In fact, congestion is already costing Canberra more than \$100 million every year. This is something we must address sooner rather than later.

One of the main objectives of the capital metro project is to offer people a convenient alternative to the car, encouraging Canberrans to get more active and use public transport. Light rail will help ease congestion and reduce pollution as our city grows. It will reinvigorate the wider transport network by providing a high frequency and highly attractive spine service between the city and Gungahlin. It will integrate with the existing bus network, which is absolutely critical to the success of the project. It will help to revitalise the Northbourne Avenue corridor.

Over the next 20 years our city centre will house 10 per cent of the territory's population growth. To accommodate this growth, our city needs housing, community and recreation facilities, together with retail, lifestyle and other services. Capital metro will help the city centre realise its full potential as a vibrant, lively and attractive region. It will be pivotal to the much-needed rejuvenation of our gateway to Canberra—Northbourne Avenue.

I believe this avenue has the potential to be the country's premier address, already hosting over 40 per cent of the city's larger hotels, many businesses and vibrant surrounding precincts. Through Labor's plan for urban renewal and transformation along the corridor we can drive new opportunities for Canberra as a whole, such as employment opportunities and new investment.

While the Northbourne Avenue corridor is currently characterised by low densities and relatively slow rates of development, it has great potential to be an active urban boulevard. There is room for at least another 45,000 residents along the light rail corridor, with room for another 10,000 in the city. This highlights an existing opportunity for densification and urban renewal, helping to protect our green spaces and bush capital character.

We intend to use light rail to unlock the potential of the city centre and this important avenue, generating urban renewal and creating livable and accessible communities. Improvements in the transport network will expand economic productivity and growth, creating more jobs and increasing the diversity and sustainability of the local economy. Capital metro will provide a range of wider economic benefits for Canberra, including \$1 billion of benefits to the community and up to 3,560 jobs during the construction phase alone.

But the Canberra Liberals would have you believe more buses are the answer to our city's transport challenges. At least I think that is their plan—that and the Audis. While light rail will encourage urban transformation and revitalisation along the Northbourne Avenue corridor, more buses would only lead to more concrete and more congestion. On the other hand, light rail has the ability to transform and revitalise the corridor and provide business and investment certainty.

Threats made by the Canberra Liberals to tear up contracts associated with the light rail project put at risk the numerous benefits and opportunities that will be delivered through the capital metro project, such as a better public transport network; a much-needed boost to the local economy; decreased congestion and emissions, leading to improved environmental outcomes; jobs for local people; and jobs that will further stimulate our economy.

Following the announcement from the Victorian government to cancel the East West Link project and to pay the consortium \$339 million, Prime Minister Tony Abbott publicly stated that it is the position of his government that all contracts should be honoured. The Prime Minister also described the East West cancellation as bad for Australia and terrible for Victoria. The Prime Minister's federal Liberal government has also shown its support for the light rail project through their asset recycling initiative, and the ACT government was the first jurisdiction to sign up. The criterion for that initiative was clear: the incentive payments to states and territories had to be for productive infrastructure.

This initiative will see \$60 million invested in stage 1 of the capital metro project, clearly identified by the federal Liberal government as productive infrastructure. Compare this with the Canberra Liberals' plan to spend potentially up to hundreds of

millions of dollars to tear up a contract for a project that will deliver \$1 billion in economic benefits to the territory, a project that will deliver more than 3,500 jobs in the construction phase and a project that will help transform our city.

But it is not just the federal Liberals raising concerns about the Canberra Liberals' policy. Infrastructure Partnerships Australia has also voiced its concern for the infrastructure investment environment here in the ACT and nationally, stating that the opposition's desire to stop the project could unnerve international investors. It is worried about the Canberra Liberals' position.

Shortlisted consortia for the capital metro project include companies from Germany, Japan, Spain and Britain. Infrastructure Partnerships Australia Chief Executive Brendan Lyon said:

While we respect the Opposition's resistance to this project, it is very important that politicians don't debase the infrastructure program with discussions around sovereign risk.

In an opinion piece published in the *Canberra Times* on 20 April 2015, Mr Lyon went on to say:

Canberra Liberals have ended up on the wrong side of the light rail debate because they have let their opposition to the project morph quickly into active support for sovereign risk.

Australia has a hard-earned reputation as a stable and safe investment destination. Successive governments and oppositions in all jurisdictions across the country have been committed to promoting Australia as a smart, modern and efficient economy by recognising and respecting our valuable international brand. Senior political leaders from any Australian jurisdiction speak of precedents for cancelling contracts at the entire nation's peril. The Canberra Liberals' plan would cost Canberra its reputation as a good place for private investment in public projects—projects like a national convention centre. They should heed the words of their federal and state colleagues as well as independent organisations such as Infrastructure Partnerships Australia and reverse their position on the capital metro project. This will help to ensure Canberra remains an attractive and prosperous investment environment. It will ensure they are on the right side of history and capable of working constructively to create a stable investment environment to meet the needs of our growing city.

I remind those opposite that a light rail line from the city to Gungahlin delivered as a public-private partnership was an election commitment of ACT Labor in 2012. We promised to build a light rail line from the city to Gungahlin, and we are delivering on that promise. Our plan will provide business and investment certainty along the corridor, stimulating significant economic activity as the land surrounding the network increases in value and is used more efficiently. It will ensure that light rail integrates effectively with other modes of transport and contributes to a public transport network that puts people first. It will be a key economic stimulus project that supports more than 3,500 jobs in Canberra, creates investment and local business opportunity and delivers more than \$1 billion in economic benefits. I urge the Canberra Liberals to get on board today.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (12.03): I am delighted to be in this place debating light rail. It seems that whenever I move a motion it is another light rail motion and Mr Rattenbury laments the fact that so much of our time gets soaked up by this billion dollar project. But here we have another opportunity to discuss light rail, and I hope Mr Rattenbury will once again lament the fact that this Assembly is talking about the biggest infrastructure project ever embarked upon by an ACT government.

Whilst the motion may not be out of order, I think it is peculiar because it calls on a political party to make a call—not the opposition; it calls on a political party. I am a member of that party, but really it is up to the party president to respond to this sort of motion. It should be calling on the party president to, in effect, reverse the position, because this is party policy.

The Liberal Party have a policy that the government's decision to go ahead with capital metro without the business case to support such an investment is bogus. Their decision to spend a billion dollars of taxpayers' money when the benefits are so marginal is not only unwise but the ACT Liberal Party believes the project is indeed wasting taxpayers' money which could be spent better elsewhere.

The opposition will continue to do everything we can to make sure this project does not go ahead. We, of course, will not be supporting this motion. We, of course, will not be changing our position. We will continue to represent the interests of the taxpayers of Canberra. Our position is quite simple. We do not believe it is in Canberra's best interests to proceed with light rail. We do not think it is wise to spend \$783 million on a tram which will carry less than one per cent of Canberra's population in peak hour.

It is interesting that Ms Fitzharris's motion today quotes Infrastructure Partnerships Australia. IPA are of course doing their job. They are advocating for infrastructure. They are a lobby group. They get paid to make comments just like the one that Ms Fitzharris raised. So it is really no surprise that a lobby group in favour of infrastructure should come out in support of infrastructure. It is not particularly objective. It seems to me that the independent observers of this debate have made their fair share of commentary and I will be referring to that later.

Going back to Infrastructure Partnerships Australia, comments were made by the CEO on 24 September that cancelling the contracts for the East West Link "would be a very expensive error for Victoria" and that "Victoria had a hard-won reputation as one of the best infrastructure jurisdictions in the world, a reputation that would be dented if the project were to be cancelled". Is Ms Fitzharris or the minister or the Chief Minister or anybody opposite going to criticise the Labor government in Victoria for what they have done? \$339 million was the cost of cancelling that contract by the Labor Party. Is anybody opposite, anyone at all, going to say that that was a problem? Cancelling that \$10.7 billion contract has cost a lot of money, but the Labor government will say that it was what they were elected to do; they were elected to cancel that contract.

Unlike the Labor Party, the Canberra Liberals will listen to what the independent analysts have to say when it comes to light rail. Unlike the Labor Party, we will not necessarily take all the advice spruiked by lobby groups. I think this is an appropriate time to remind the Assembly of just what the independent analysts have had to say about light rail.

Let us start with the statutory, non-partisan commonwealth government organisation Infrastructure Australia. The organisation was established by the Labor government in 2008, by Kevin Rudd, and its primary function was the provision of advice to commonwealth, state and territory governments about the future needs and priorities relating to nationally significant infrastructure. When Infrastructure Australia had a look at the ACT government's proposal for light rail, what did they say? They said:

The case for favouring light rail over Bus Rapid Transit has not been strongly made, especially when the submission itself points to the stronger economic performance of a bus rapid transit option.

That is what the commonwealth Labor government told this Labor government. The commonwealth Labor government told the territory Labor government that they had not made the case.

It is interesting that Ms Fitzharris should mention Labor Party policy. The Labor Party policy also states that they will seek \$15 million, half of their election commitment, from the commonwealth. The commonwealth said no. The commonwealth did not agree to going halves on the research, did not agree to going halves on the engineering study, let alone funding a \$783 million project or \$614 million as it was purported to cost back then.

The submission referred to by Infrastructure Australia was the ACT government's 2012 submission relating to public transport options for the city to Gungahlin. As we all know, the report showed that investment in bus rapid transit produced almost double the benefits of a light rail system. I remind members opposite that the report completed by the ACT government under the auspices of the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate said:

Of the transport options, Bus Rapid Transit is projected to deliver higher economic returns.

This is the ACT government report in 2012:

... Bus Rapid Transit is projected to deliver higher economic returns.

The ACT government report goes on:

On the other hand, the economic returns that can be delivered through Light Rail investment alone are likely to be economically marginal and the net economic outcome for Light Rail under even minor adverse circumstances is likely to result in negative economic returns.

This is the ACT government report of 2012, when the cost was \$614 million. Now the cost has escalated to \$783 million. They are the very marginal, poor outcomes of the minor adverse circumstances that the ACT government flagged in the same year that they committed to light rail following the election.

It is for this reason that Infrastructure Australia refused to provide the ACT government \$15 million to conduct a further feasibility study into light rail. Why? Because the ACT government sent a report to the commonwealth government saying, "Buses are better but give us money for light rail," and, not surprisingly, Julia Gillard said, "No, I am not giving you money when your own report says that buses are better."

Of course we know that it is not just Infrastructure Australia that thinks that light rail is not the best option for the ACT. The Centre for International Economics, commenting after the ACT budget last year, said:

The cost of Capital Metro is subject to a high degree of uncertainty and is a source of risk for the fiscal position of the ACT.

It is all very well for those opposite to talk about sovereign risk. Let us hear what the Centre for International Economics said:

The cost of Capital Metro is subject to a high degree of uncertainty and is a source of risk for the fiscal position of the ACT.

That was the Centre for International Economics on a contract by the ACT Legislative Assembly to provide independent advice, a contract which was supported by those opposite.

The list goes on, with the Productivity Commission taking the time to comment on the ACT government's light rail proposal:

The ACT Government's decision to proceed with a light rail project appears to be another example of where the results of cost-benefit analysis have been ignored without a valid explanation.

Writing in the *Canberra Times* last year, respected economist David Hughes, who had previously worked as an ACT Treasury official, was highly critical of the ACT government's light rail proposal. In that piece Mr Hughes said:

The Gungahlin tram will greatly increase the cost of public transport but make little difference to patronage or, therefore, to anything else. It is folly.

Mr Hughes is, of course, not alone among economists who look critically upon this light rail proposal. Mr Phil Lewis, the head of economics at the University of Canberra, said:

From a purely economic point of view, it's silly. If anyone was advising them sensibly this is one of the last projects they should put on the list. It's a lot of

money and most of the estimates from people in the know say it will be about a billion dollars. For a small place like the ACT, which already has a debt problem, it's going to be a huge burden to add to it.

Yet the government has the gall to accuse us of taking sovereign risk. Mr Cameron Gordon, Associate Professor of Economics at the University of Canberra, also chimed in:

I'm concerned what might happen is we build this thing, it will be very expensive to operate and we might end up cutting bus services to keep it going.

Finally I remind members opposite that Dr Leo Dobes, Adjunct Associate Professor at the ANU's Crawford School of Public Policy, has said, "There's a disturbing lack of facts on the table," when it comes to light rail.

It is highly comical that the Labor Party walks into the chamber and waves around a quote from Infrastructure Partnerships Australia when there are numerous other quotes that also give an objective view on exactly what this proposal is. If the government were to simply listen to lobby groups and not take any independent advice from now on, we would be in a very worrying position in the future.

What Ms Fitzharris's motion actually calls on us to do today is ignore the advice of independent analysts. It calls on the Canberra Liberals to put our heads in the sand, just like the government, and sign up to a partisan deal done between Labor and the Greens to form a government in November 2012. By moving this motion today Ms Fitzharris and the government are explicitly rejecting the expert advice when it comes to light rail.

My colleagues and I will continue to advocate in this place that the ACT government should not sign contracts before the next election. This is the best way to ensure that taxpayers' money is spent wisely and also the best way to ensure that the voters of Canberra, the taxpayers of Canberra who will be paying for the light rail project, actually have a say on this proposal.

The policy that was sent to Treasury for costing before the 2012 election was a \$30 million commitment which the government stuffed up. Treasury said that actually it was a \$34 million commitment because they had not factored in staff costs. It was a \$34 million commitment. You go down the Treasury costings list and you do not see \$783 million for a light rail system. You do not see \$614 million for a light rail system. All you see is \$34 million for studies and of that \$34 million they wanted to get \$15 million from the commonwealth under a Labor government. And the Labor government said no.

This government does not have a mandate for light rail. It simply does not. I think the more they talk about having a mandate for light rail, the more they risk angering Canberrans who know that they have been deceived by government when it comes to this project. Canberrans know that they did not vote on light rail at the last election. And the more this government goes around telling them that they did, the more it is likely to anger Canberrans, the more it is likely to anger the taxpayers who are going to be footing the bill for this project. As I said when speaking to my motion last week, the ACT government has no mandate to go ahead with light rail.

I remind Mr Corbell of what he said in a committee meeting last year:

But in general terms, the key decision point for government at this time is consideration of the final business case, which will go to the government in the next one to two months. Following the government's consideration and decision on that final business case, we will be in a position to indicate, firstly, whether or not we are proceeding with the project and, if we are, what steps will then be taken.

That does not seem like a government with a mandate from 2012. That seems like a government that was waiting on a business case before they decided whether to do it or not. It is not a government with a mandate and, as I have said time and again and will continue to say, the Canberra Liberals, the opposition, will do everything we can to stop this project going ahead.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (12.18): I thank Ms Fitzharris for bringing this important motion before the Assembly today. We heard from Ms Fitzharris the broader context in which the government's planning for this important project is proceeding. Of course, it is the circumstance that Mr Coe and the Liberal Party continue to ignore in all of this debate. We are a growing city. By the middle of this century we will have an extra 220,000 residents. That is effectively a one-third increase on the number of residents we have today. Where are those people going to live?

We know what the land supply situation is. We know that greenfields land supply is extremely limited. There is only about 17 years worth of yield left. This means so many more of the people who live in our city in the next 35 years will need to live in established urban areas. And as Ms Fitzharris properly pointed out, they will live in high-density development and they will expect governments to have had the foresight to invest in the rapid transit solutions they need to move from point A to point B. We know that, as our city grows, relying on the car or, dare I say, relying on the Audi, is not going to cut it. And that is why this project is so important.

I am very pleased that Ms Fitzharris has brought forward and highlighted the recent threats made by the Canberra Liberals—and we heard this obfuscation from Mr Coe that “that was not us; that was the administrative wing of the party.” I do not think so; it was a decision made in the party room, I am sure—to tear up a signed and commenced light rail construction and operation contract. Such a decision is going to risk the thousands of jobs that will be delivered by this project—3½ thousand during the delivery stage alone. It is going to negatively impact on the local economy.

Where do the Liberals think these jobs are going to come from? They are local jobs. They are electrical jobs. They are construction jobs. They are formwork jobs. They are concreting jobs. They are landscaping jobs. They are metalworking jobs. That is where those jobs are, and those jobs are so important for the future of our city right now, when we continue to see the impact of the federal Liberal government's cuts to and restrictions on public sector expenditure in the commonwealth.

So it is going to cost local Canberrans their jobs. It is not just some budget figure. It is not just some abstract budget figure that Mr Coe thinks he can get away with politically. It is people's jobs. He seems to ignore that. Of course, he also ignores that it is local businesses. Yes, we have got some very large international global companies wanting to come in and invest in our city, but they are going to engage many local Canberra businesses. Small businesses, medium businesses, subcontractors, sole operator businesses, the bloke who drives the tip truck, the company that provides landscaping services, the company that does formwork, local Canberra businesses—he is happy to turf them out too.

The local Liberals believe that the decision by the Victorian government to pay a “mere” \$340 million to get out of Melbourne's East West Link project is a great precedent for them to do the same here in the ACT. They seem to think it is acceptable to spend millions of dollars—tens of millions, hundreds of millions, possibly—to buy nothing.

But there are, of course, some very big differences between the circumstances in Victoria and those here in the ACT. We all know that one of the big issues hanging over the heads of the consortia in Victoria was the risk that the Victorian parliament would simply legislate to make the contract void and allow the state government to escape without paying any compensation at all. That is a pretty good bargaining position if you have it.

But what Mr Coe also knows, or perhaps he has not told his colleagues in the party room, is that here in the ACT the Legislative Assembly has no such power. We have no power to void a contract. It is explicitly prohibited in the relevant provisions of the self-government act. So we are not going to be in that bargaining position. If, heaven forbid, the Liberal Party form government at the next election, they are not going to be able to say to the consortia, “We will just legislate to void the contract; you had better agree to our terms.” That is not possible. And the consortia know it.

So let us be really clear. This is going to cost Canberrans a lot of money, a lot of money to buy nothing. But it is going to cost Canberrans their jobs and it is going to cost local businesses opportunities to grow their businesses right here in Canberra.

There are some very sensible people who understand this and understand the importance of investment in infrastructure. The current executive director, the new executive director, of the Master Builders Association here in the ACT is very clear in his support for the project. He has said that light rail “was an essential part of becoming a city state” and would help us “get ahead of projected population”. Mr Coningham has also recognised the long-term productivity gains that infrastructure projects like capital metro will deliver.

But it is not just the ACT government who are concerned by Mr Coe's reckless position, and it is not just local businesses and local Canberrans who have their jobs put at risk by that position; it is also their federal counterparts. The federal Liberal government recognise light rail as an important infrastructure project. They have demonstrated this through their decision to inject \$60 million into this project as part of the commonwealth's asset recycling initiative.

The Treasurer, Mr Hockey, recently affirmed his support for the project when he spoke at the recent Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce lunch. He discussed the importance of infrastructure for Australia's future and spoke about the ACT government's involvement in the asset recycling program. He said, "If it is productive infrastructure, we will back it and we will fund it." And they are.

Of course, we have other federal Liberals nationally who strongly support investment in light rail infrastructure. Malcolm Turnbull recently posted on social media a picture of himself riding on the Gold Coast light rail. His one word to describe it? "Excellent." These are the views and the commitments of Mr Coe's federal colleagues.

I love how Mr Coe always dismisses anyone who is paid to do a job. It is an interesting debating point. But what he cannot dismiss is the fact that the industry body here in Australia that represents global, national and local businesses who have an interest in a safe and secure environment for investment in infrastructure, Infrastructure Partnerships Australia, have come out and said that we can ill afford a reputation as Australia's sovereign risk capital. They are the people who know. They deal in these markets for investment and infrastructure every day, and they know what a reckless and dangerous precedent Mr Coe and his colleagues hope to set by threatening to tear up the capital metro contract.

In this increasingly competitive world, cities can either be seen as safe, secure places to invest or they can be seen as risky and not worth people's time or money. Mr Coe wants to achieve the latter. We, this Labor government, want to achieve the former because we know, as our city grows and develops, we must leverage investment from the private sector to complement the money that the taxpayer can bring to the table to deliver the infrastructure our city needs.

We will have over 600,000 people by the middle of the century. We are investing in infrastructure to meet that growth. And that growth overwhelmingly is occurring in the Gungahlin and inner north districts. I commend Ms Fitzharris's motion to the Assembly.

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

Sitting suspended from 12.29 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Health—staff

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Health and it is regarding the strike action by ACT staff doctors. Minister, the *Canberra Times*, on 27 April, stated that you have failed to convince striking doctors that they will be protected in their salary negotiations. You have previously said that this is a matter for the ACT Health Directorate. Minister, how many doctors are planning to strike, what is the dispute and what is the nature of the strike action?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Hanson for his question. The number of doctors engaged in limited protected action is approximately 30 to 40-odd. They are largely specialists in emergency, intensive care and a range of other areas. The nature of the dispute is in relation to their concern that special employment entitlements will be arbitrarily removed due to a failure to commence review prior to the commencement of the new enterprise bargaining arrangement.

This is despite the fact that I have sought to reassure doctors and provide them with written assurance that there will not be arbitrary removal of special employment arrangements and that reviews will be commenced to ensure that their existing entitlements continue and do not automatically cease when the new EBA comes into effect.

I have met with the legal representative of this small group of doctors, recognising that we have over 500, indeed close to 1,000, doctors covered by the current EBA. So that puts the dispute into some perspective. I have advised her that I am willing to give those assurances. Regrettably, she has advised that that is not sufficient. I am not quite sure why that is the case, but that is her position and her clients' position.

As a result of that, I have advised the legal representative of the doctors who are taking this protected action that we will be commencing reviews of their special employment arrangements to ensure that they do not arbitrarily cease when the new EBA takes effect. I think that makes very clear the government's intention that there will be no arbitrary removal of SEA provisions without review. Therefore, we have commenced the review, to provide doctors with that reassurance. I am yet to hear back from the doctors' representative whether or not this addresses that concern.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, why don't the doctors trust your word?

MR CORBELL: That is not something for me to answer, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, what impact will the strike have on training junior staff doctors?

MR CORBELL: Very limited; doctors are prohibited from taking any protected action that will have any clinical impact on patients. They are, I think, similarly of the view that they do not wish in any way to do that.

There will be some minor impact on the training of staff but not so as to impact on clinical safety. My advice to date is that the impact of the protected action, whether it is in relation to training or whether it is in relation to administrative action, is extremely limited. Indeed, it would be fair to say that it is, in effect, negligible.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, what is the impact of a doctors' strike on morale and peace of mind of nurses, other staff and patients?

MR CORBELL: I am aware that other doctors are keen to see the EBA resolved. The major unions and staff associations that represent salaried doctors at the Canberra Hospital and at Calvary do not support this protected action and they want to see the EBA finalised so that doctors can receive their back pay and receive the increases they will be awarded under the negotiated EBA. The overwhelming majority of doctors, their staff association and their union support resolution of this matter. They support the EBA as it currently stands. They have not supported the striking doctors' action in the Fair Work Commission.

Let us be very clear: the AMA and ASMOF—the Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation—have not supported the applications made by this small group of striking doctors, and that indicates that most medical staff at the Canberra Hospital are keen for this matter to be resolved. Whilst I recognise the right of this small group of doctors to take this action, we will be working very hard to see it resolved as promptly as possible so that all the other doctors at the Canberra Hospital can get the back pay and the increases in wages that they have successfully bargained for.

Alexander Maconochie Centre—detainees

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Justice, regarding the Alexander Maconochie Centre. I refer to the pictures published recently of an unsentenced inmate posing with a sentenced prisoner. Minister, how common is it for unsentenced inmates and sentenced prisoners at the AMC to be kept in the same area?

MR RATTENBURY: It is not possible to put a specific number on Mr Wall's question, but I can indicate that at the AMC there are times when sentenced and unsentenced prisoners are housed together. The basis for this is that, in the centre, the focus is on the individual's safety. It is about finding the most appropriate place and the most appropriate associations for individuals that come into the AMC.

This being a small town, many of the detainees do have associations from their time outside the AMC. So the most important thing is to ensure that the detainees are housed in a place that is safe, that seeks to minimise the risk of somebody associating with people that represent a danger to them.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, have there been incidents in Canberra's jail where the mixing of sentenced and unsentenced inmates has resulted in bashings or other types of bullying of prisoners?

MR RATTENBURY: As members would be aware, there was recently an incident where a detainee was assaulted shortly after arriving at the centre. That has been well covered in the *Canberra Times*. As to whether there have been further incidents, I would need to seek advice on that.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, why has the government continued to mix sentenced and unsentenced inmates despite being warned of the consequences?

MR RATTENBURY: I refer Mr Hanson to my first answer to Mr Wall, which was that the primary focus is on ensuring detainees' safety and seeking to minimise the risk of incidents taking place in the jail. Unlike New South Wales, where there are different facilities where detainees can be transferred, as members would be fully aware, we only have one facility in the ACT where all our detainees are housed. We have a significant number of different types of classifications in terms of low, medium and high security, sentenced and unsentenced, and various types of prisoners need particular types of separation and protection. That makes for a complex myriad of placement decisions for Corrective Services staff. As I say, the number one factor—and I support this—is about placing people in a space that is most suitable for their personal security.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, what level of risk do we have of the mixing of sentenced and unsentenced inmates and a lack of rehab programs resulting in the AMC becoming what has been described as “a college of crime”?

MR RATTENBURY: I reject Mr Hanson's assertion—his colourful description of the AMC. But in respect of the actual question, what measure we have, there is no way to measure such a thing. There is risk at the AMC every single day. Corrective Services staff are highly skilled in seeking to identify and then manage those risks. It is absolutely a core part of their job. The key thing that they are dealing with on a constant basis is security, risks to that security and risks to the good order of the jail. That is what Corrective Services staff are focused on.

ACT Emergency Services Agency—alleged bullying

MR SMYTH: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, regarding the investigation to inquire into bullying allegations against the ESA Commissioner, it has been reported that due process was not carried out. Minister, how was the independence of the investigations maintained when the investigator had an association with the directorate?

MADAM SPEAKER: Could you just repeat the question. Your voice seems to be fading away this week, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: I am terribly sorry. Minister, how was the independence of the investigation maintained when the investigator has an association with the directorate?

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! I call the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

MS BURCH: I thank Mr Smyth for his question; he has obviously read the *Canberra Times* this morning. Those allegations were independently and fully investigated and there was no substance to them. I also understand that, certainly from what I have seen on this, the review was independent. The process followed was rigorous, independent and proper.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, what was the nature of the relationship between the investigator and the directorate, and are you satisfied that there is sufficient independence to ensure the integrity of the inquiry?

MS BURCH: Yes, I am satisfied with the independence of the inquiry.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, how much time was devoted to investigating this case, and do you believe that the time spent on this investigation is satisfactory?

MS BURCH: It was adequately investigated and resolved.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, how many bullying complaints have been made against the ESA Commissioner to date?

MS BURCH: As we are all aware, this allegation was made. That was thoroughly investigated and it was found to have no substance. The review was independent and the process was found to be appropriate.

Mr Coe: A point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Can we stop the clock, please. Mr Coe, on a point of order.

Mr Coe: The specific question by Mr Doszpot was: how many complaints have been made? So it is going beyond the specific complaint that was in the main question.

MADAM SPEAKER: My notes confirm what Mr Coe has said. I will remind the minister, in accordance with standing order 118(a), to be directly relevant and concise in her answer.

MS BURCH: I have answered the question, Madam Speaker.

Federal government—budget

MS FITZHARRIS: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, can you please tell the Assembly how the commonwealth budget issued on Tuesday will impact the ACT?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Fitzharris for the question. Undoubtedly, last night's budget was eagerly anticipated by Canberrans, with an eye to their job—their business prospects or their entitlements and transfer payments from the commonwealth all being matters of concern for Canberrans.

Canberrans also expressed a great deal of concern about the future of health funding, and that undoubtedly was resolved in a negative way from the announcements last night. We are in a position now where the commonwealth have stopped kicking Canberrans but they have left us battered and bruised by the side of the road, and there is nothing really in the budget that will dramatically impact upon the territory's economic fortunes.

There are a number of positive measures contained within the budget that will assist small business in the territory, and I welcome, acknowledge and support those initiatives. I do note that these issues are ones that are restored and that were previously offered under the former government. But I welcome their restoration and expansion in certain areas. And that will be a positive for small business.

From the public sector side, there was an expectation in the territory of largely the same staffing profile. About 65 jobs are expected to be lost, which is not good but it is certainly a better situation than the many thousands that were stripped out in last year's budget.

Perhaps disappointingly in the detail, whilst the commonwealth are looking to save money and have smaller government, they are spending money on the fit-out and leasing of a new commonwealth office building in Gosford. There are plenty of high quality, empty commonwealth office buildings in this city that were formerly occupied by the commonwealth and that they are paying rent on. It is beyond me why they would be fitting out a building in Gosford when there is plenty of opportunity here in Canberra.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members!

MR BARR: From the perspective of health funding, the real sleeper is the significant reduction in health funding for the states and territories from 2017-18 onwards and the particular impact that that has will have in the ACT. We will be hearing a lot more about that between now and the next federal election. This will undoubtedly be a significant election issue. It will not just be me making this point; it will be the Liberal premiers and chief minister who will be standing side by side with the Labor premiers and chief minister against this health funding cut.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Chief Minister, what are some of the specific effects of the commonwealth budget on the ACT budget?

MR BARR: The most significant impact outside of the health funding reductions clearly is the level of GST revenue that will flow to the territory. As a result of the Commonwealth Grants Commission process and some adjustments the commonwealth have made to appease Western Australia, the ACT's share of GST revenue, together with that of a number of other jurisdictions, takes a hit. It will have an impact on the territory budget, undoubtedly, as this is a major source of revenue that flows through our accounts.

On the positive side, there are some small adjustments upwards in national partnership funding that we were not anticipating continuing which have been kicked along for another couple of years. That is good to see. I particularly welcome the continuation of the early childhood education national partnership that will see the territory able to continue to offer 15 hours of early childhood education for at least another couple of years. That is a positive as well.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Chief Minister, how does this year's commonwealth budget add to the impact on the ACT from the 2014-15 commonwealth budget?

MR BARR: It certainly goes to reinforce what the states and territories identified in last year's budget as an \$80 billion hole in health and education funding over the coming decade. That is an issue of serious concern. Premier Baird describes it as the biggest challenge facing his state and the nation. I agree. It is the biggest challenge facing state and territory governments. It is a big challenge for the ACT and it is a big challenge for the nation.

The health minister has outlined in some detail the impacts that this will have on the ACT health budget. It is very disappointing, but I cannot say I was surprised, because we do know the Liberal Party's attitude to public health. We have seen it time and again. And it is reinforced by the denial of the Leader of the Opposition of this massive health funding cut and the continued denial of the Prime Minister and the Treasurer.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Chief Minister, what will be the government's priorities in light of the impact of the commonwealth budget?

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson!

MR BARR: I thank Ms Porter for the question. The ACT government will again need to stimulate economic activity in the territory. So we will be focusing on areas of high growth potential for the ACT economy: higher education, our knowledge-based industries and ICT. The small business sector will also have a series of significant infrastructure investments that will stimulate the construction sector, particularly in housing and public transport.

Our focus will be on jobs, on getting our economy moving forward. The commonwealth have stopped kicking us, but it will be the efforts of the territory government, working in partnership with the Canberra business community and the—

Mr Wall interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Wall!

MR BARR: community sector, that ensures our economy moves forward. Our budget will be for Canberra.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition, I call you to order.

MR BARR: Our budget will be for Canberra. There was nothing much for Canberra from the Liberal Party last night.

Alexander Maconochie Centre—governance

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Minister for Justice. Minister, I refer to the recent Auditor-General's report on the rehabilitation of male detainees at the Alexander Maconochie Centre. The Auditor-General found:

AMC planning for rehabilitation is ineffective as there is no rehabilitation planning framework, no evaluation framework and no finalised case management policy framework.

Minister, why is the AMC's planning for rehabilitation ineffective?

MR RATTENBURY: I thank Mr Doszpot for the question. I note that the formal government response to the Auditor-General's report will be presented to the Assembly within three months of the presentation of the Auditor-General's report. I will be taking that response to cabinet shortly for presentation during the next sitting period. So I will not go into the full response at this point in time.

What I can say is that I actually welcome the Auditor-General's report. I welcome it in the spirit that the AMC is still a relatively new facility. It has been open in the order of six years. There have been a series of learnings that have been going on in that period of time. The AMC is continuing to improve its service. The Auditor-General has taken the opportunity to give the AMC feedback. I and the Corrective Services staff are open enough to see that as a contribution to improving the conduct of the AMC.

It is worth noting the acknowledgement from the Auditor-General that there have been improvements in management practice that have contributed to improved rehabilitation services in the AMC. So whilst Mr Doszpot has pulled out the quote that suits his agenda, the full report indicates that there has been significant improvement in the delivery of these services at the AMC.

The report also recognises the complexities in providing rehabilitative services, particularly within the AMC, given its combination of both male and female detainees, as well as remand and sentenced detainees, and the mix of classifications. I can assure Mr Doszpot that I am taking the Auditor-General's report seriously. I will be presenting a government response to the Assembly in due course, and we will be taking on board the findings of the Auditor-General in that response.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, why is there no planning rehabilitation framework, no evaluation framework and no finalised case management policy after six years?

MR RATTENBURY: What I can assure Mr Doszpot is that the AMC has the highest rate of participation in programs of any jail in the country. There has been a very strong emphasis by Corrective Services on ensuring access to programs for our detainees to give them as many skills as possible so that when they finish their time in detention they have learnt new skills while inside the AMC to maximise the chances of them not coming back.

That said, yes, there is room for improvement; the Auditor-General has clearly identified that. But the Auditor-General's report is not the be-all and end-all. For example, the Auditor-General's report did not examine at all alcohol and other drug programs in the AMC, yet if you think about the cohort that comes into the AMC, more often than not their biggest single problem is alcohol and other drug issues.

It is important to recognise the scope of what the Auditor-General has looked at. There is a lot more going on in the AMC than just this. We must take seriously what the Auditor-General has found. When I present the government's response, members will see that we are taking those matters seriously and seeking to address and take on board the findings that the Auditor-General has made.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, why has the AMC failed to meet the high standards that were promised before the prison opened?

MR RATTENBURY: I do not know what specific standards Mr Wall might be referring to. People have made all sorts of comments about the jail over time, including our colleagues on the other side of the table, who have taken every possible chance to try and talk it down and highlight the weaknesses in the place. The jail does have its share of problems, but it is about working through those, it is about continuous improvement and it is about providing the best possible services to the detainees so that when they come out of jail we have minimised the prospect of them coming back as much as we can.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, why has the AMC failed to meet its objectives as a human rights compliant prison?

MR RATTENBURY: I reject the suggestion by Mr Wall. I think that the AMC meets very high standards when it comes to meeting its human rights objectives. I think it would be fair to say that the AMC has a very significant level of external scrutiny. There have been a significant number of external examinations of the AMC, and each of them, as is the nature of any review, has found areas for improvement. Those have been acted upon. I think there is a very strong culture in the AMC. There is a strong culture amongst the staff about being a human rights compliant jail. There is a strong culture of minimising the use of force. There is a strong culture of seeking to support the detainees to improve their lot in life. I think those are the sorts of things that are the measure of a jail. On those measures I am confident that the AMC is an outstanding facility and it is continuing to improve.

Federal government—budget

DR BOURKE: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, following Tuesday's commonwealth budget, what are the impacts on health service delivery in the ACT?

MR CORBELL: I thank Dr Bourke for his question. Regrettably, this year's federal Liberal government budget confirms that the ACT will continue to take a big hit when it comes to funding for our hospitals and healthcare services. This is happening now as the result of loss of funding guarantees promised in the national health reform agreement which the federal Liberals unilaterally walked away from—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order!

MR CORBELL: in their unfair 2014-15 budget. This national health reform agreement was negotiated in good faith between all Liberal and Labor governments. But the federal Liberals have just torn it up. They again confirmed their decision, in their budget last night, to rip \$57 billion from public hospital services across Australia, affecting all states and territories, including the ACT. They have done nothing in their latest budget to rectify these massive cuts to our local hospitals.

Last night's budget confirms their plans to move away from activity-based funding for our public hospital system to population-based specific purpose payment funding from 2017-18. The analysis undertaken by the government to date shows that this will rip hundreds of millions of dollars out of the health budget over the next decade. The number, in fact, is staggering: over \$600 million of revenue forgone that would have otherwise been provided, based on projections around growth and activity and the commitments entered into by the commonwealth when they signed up to the national health partnership agreement.

Hundreds of millions of dollars pays for a lot of hospital services. This federal Liberal government is ripping hundreds of millions of dollars off Canberra's health services, which will now have to be dealt with by the ACT government budget. This is clearly not sustainable. We will need to consider how we prioritise hospital services or consider other options.

We know that there are similar stories across Australia. We know, for example, that the Liberal New South Wales Premier and his treasurer, Ms Berejiklian, have made comments this morning saying that the cuts to health and education remain and that they are the most significant concerns held by the New South Wales government, the largest state in the commonwealth. What has Mr Baird said about this? He said:

The states do not have the capacity to meet those health costs on their own. The commonwealth has a critical role to play. It's not sustainable, to pass that health cost, which is the biggest cost to every state budget, down—that is the number one issue, we need to ensure the federal government deals with.

Last night Joe Hockey—I beg your pardon; Treasurer Hockey—and Prime Minister Abbott failed to do so. They failed to do so. Instead, they passed the buck to the ACT. They passed the buck to everyone who is going to need hospital services over the next decade and they said, “You are on your own.” Well, that is not good enough. It is not good enough. Those commitments should be honoured.

The federal government should make a fair contribution to the funding of public hospitals here in the ACT and right across the country. The Chief Minister and I will be advocating at all of the forums where we have the opportunity to do so to have this issue addressed. We will stand up for Canberra. We will not be apologists for the cuts to hospitals—

MADAM SPEAKER: The member's time has expired.

MR CORBELL: that we see from those opposite.

MADAM SPEAKER: Sit down, Mr Corbell. A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, can you tell the Assembly what the government is doing to protect the health of ACT residents as a result of the commonwealth budget?

MR CORBELL: I thank Dr Bourke for his supplementary. The first thing we will do to stand up and protect the health of ACT residents is that we will not be apologists for the Abbott government's cuts. Unlike those opposite, unlike Mr Hanson, who likes to insist that these cuts actually did not ever happen, that they had no impact on ACT hospitals, we will not be apologists for these cuts. We will stand up to the federal government, along with Mike Baird, along with the Premier of Queensland, the Premier of Victoria, the Premier of South Australia, the Premier of Western Australia, the Premier of Tasmania and the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory—and, of course, our Chief Minister. We will stand up, and we will say to the federal government that these cuts cannot stand.

We will also continue to make the very significant investments that we are making in the health service here in the ACT. We will continue to invest in additional beds in our public hospital system. We have, as a government, grown beds from the paltry number that we inherited when we first came to government to over 1,100 beds. Compared to the 670 that were being cut back under the former Liberal government,

1,100 beds have now been funded by this government. So we will continue to make those investments. We will continue to invest in better infrastructure, such as the University of Canberra public hospital. We will continue to invest in new adult mental health facilities. We will continue to invest in new services in the community. We will continue in the way we have in relation to maternity services and cancer care. That is this government's commitment. (*Time expired.*)

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, how does the commonwealth budget specifically affect ACT public hospitals?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Porter for the supplementary. These cuts have a direct impact on Canberra's public hospital services. Specifically, a decision to move away from activity-based funding to population-based funding will mean we do not get properly compensated from the commonwealth. Let us remember why we are compensated from the commonwealth—because it is a Medicare commitment, because each and every one of us is paying our Medicare levy and we are not getting the support that we should in return for those payments.

The Commonwealth is shifting away from activity-based funding to population-based funding. As our population ages—and we know how rapidly it is ageing—older Canberrans will need, on average, more occasions of care and more expensive occasions of care. Population-based funding does not account for that growth in demand in relation to activity. So it will have a direct impact on the capacity of our hospital budgets to meet increases in demand.

If there are going to be delays in our hospitals and if there are going to be longer waiting lists going out beyond 2017-18, over the rest of the decade, we need to be very clear that that will be due to the failure of the federal government to properly fund our hospital services by cutting out \$600 million of projected funding for our public hospital services. They need to be held to account for their wanton failure to properly fund public hospital services here in the ACT.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, how will you progress health priorities in mental health, overweight and obesity, and the health infrastructure program in the face of the commonwealth budget?

MR CORBELL: We remain committed to continuing to make the big investments that are needed in our public hospitals because, as a Labor administration, we care about public hospital services. We recognise they need to be invested in. We do not cut \$600 million out of the health budget in the same way that Tony Abbott confirmed in his budget last night.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: I call the Leader of the Opposition to order again.

MR CORBELL: We have invested in mental health funding through \$1 million for growth in community mental health services in our most recent budget—over half a million dollars for dedicated suicide prevention, half a million dollars for new mental health legislation to guide and give greater control for people with mental illness when it comes to how their care is provided. We have invested significantly in health infrastructure. There was \$122 million alone announced in the 2014-15 budget. We are expanding the new Canberra Hospital emergency department by a third. We are investing in the critically important University of Canberra public hospital. We are building the secure mental health unit and we are building the Ngunnawal bush healing farm.

So that is this Labor government's commitment to better health services. We need to see the same from the federal government and we need them to recognise that their cuts cannot stand.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: I warn the Leader of the Opposition!

Energy—solar

MS LAWDER: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for the Environment. Minister, I recently contacted the Australian Energy Market Operator to ask why the figures for the output of the Royalla solar farm did not appear on AEMO's website along with the figures of every other electricity generator in Australia. AEMO initially advised me that it was an IT glitch and posted the figures online. However, they subsequently wrote to advise me that the "data is provided voluntarily and subject to confidentiality and not pursuant to a National Electricity Rules obligation" and would be removed from their website. Minister, why is the output data of the Royalla solar farm being hidden from the taxpayers of Canberra and labelled as confidential?

MR CORBELL: I am very happy to look more closely at the issues that Ms Lawder is raising, but the one observation I would make is that AEMO reports output, as I understand it, that aggregates ACT and New South Wales generation. So I believe that may be a factor there. But in relation to the specifics of Ms Lawder's question, I am very happy to provide her with a more detailed answer on notice.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, did you or your directorate request AEMO take these figures down from their website or know in advance that they were going to take the figures down?

MR CORBELL: I have sought no such action.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, where is your government's commitment to transparency and openness, given the output of Royalla is being hidden?

MR CORBELL: It is not, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, will you order Royalla to release this data so that taxpayers can view it, as they can for generators in every other state?

MR CORBELL: I refer Mr Smyth to my earlier answer to Ms Lawder's original question.

Roads—Barton Highway

MR COE: My question is to the Minister for Roads and Parking. Minister, can you please update the Assembly on what progress there has been with regard to the Barton Highway roundabout signalisation tender?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Coe for his question. Yes, the Barton Highway roundabout at Gungahlin Drive is being worked on as we speak. The directorate has been putting in place surveying measures and we will be looking at the results from the surveying measures with a view to implementing traffic calming measures at the roundabout.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, have there been any delays with the tender, and when will the contract be issued?

MR GENTLEMAN: I do not think there are any delays. We are just working through the process. As soon as the results come forward, we will be issuing contracts.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, when will these works be finished?

MR GENTLEMAN: That will be subject to the contractual arrangements and the price that comes back.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, why was a signalised roundabout chosen over other upgrade options?

MR GENTLEMAN: We found that engineers have reported that signalised roundabouts provide better and safer operational values for those particular areas. We have looked at the evidence that has been provided from the work that we have done in similar circumstances—down in Tuggeranong, for example—and found that signalisation at the appropriate times is the best way of managing the traffic through the roundabouts.

Community sector—reforms

MS PORTER: My question is to the Minister for Community Services. Minister, can you provide the Assembly with an update on the progress the government is making under the community sector reform program?

MS BERRY: Thank you for the question, Ms Porter. I am happy to talk about the reforms the ACT government is making in the community sector and what this means for standing up for and supporting the vulnerable, the marginalised and the excluded in our community. It means investing in people who provide vital services to do this work. So much work is being done by both the government and workers and by the community organisations we partner with to deliver vital community services. Just today we are hosting a round of 40 of these workers at a community practice in Belconnen to help them with their work with families who are doing it tough.

The community sector is a vital partner in achieving real fairness, and the community sector reform program is about supporting the sector through the long term. In this period of major change for the human services sector, brought on by multiple factors, the program is working collaboratively to support a community services system through elements such as support for employers, as part of the government's ongoing commitment to equal pay for community sector workers. The ACT government recognises that having community sector workers who are valued and well paid is an important and key part of providing supports through the community services sector. Reductions in red tape, assistance for organisations to build skills and capability, creating new opportunities for collaboration and best practice—all of these elements are geared to support our community sector organisations and workers in planning for a sustainable future.

I am pleased to say the government is making progress against the goals of the reform program, resulting in savings for both the government and the sector, but, most importantly, better outcomes for the people of Canberra. Whether it is helping people out of homelessness and providing the supports that they need to keep a roof over their heads or strengthening vulnerable families so that kids can stay with their parents in safe and happy homes, ensuring these services are here for the long term is this government's priority.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, how does this program benefit Canberra's community sector workforce of more than 2,500 workers?

MS BERRY: A key piece of the work of the community sector reform is the additional payments to meet the Fair Work Commission's 2012 equal remuneration order or equal pay case. As a result of this landmark equity decision, salaries under the social, community, home care and disability services award are increasing each year out to 2020. The ACT government is supporting this with payments to the sector.

Members may remember that in 2012 the ACT government was one of the first jurisdictions to announce its support for the equal pay case, something we are immensely proud of. Our longstanding support goes back to getting behind the claim of the Australian Services Union when the case was before Fair Work Australia. We were the only government which can make that claim.

The pay increases happening now are closing the pay gap that exists in the sector, and our support for this equal pay case will total some \$60 million over the transition period. The current plan for this year alone has seen the provision of \$2.1 million in support to community organisations, with a further \$3.4 million projected for 2015-16.

I am relieved to note that, at least on this commitment, the commonwealth government looks like it will be honouring its side of the deal. Fair wages to vulnerable organisations are crucial to the sustainability of the community services in our city and we will continue to support these key priorities.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, how are community organisations being supported in the changing environment of the human services sector?

MS BERRY: The human and community services industry is undergoing significant change, and our government is working to support it through these challenges as they emerge. In addition to support for wage rises, a number of organisations are able to access transition support for the shift to client-centred funding in the NDIS. However, the government's cuts to grant funding through the Department of Social Services, the push towards more competitive funding arrangements and also the local service demand being driven through ongoing cuts to public service jobs are adding to the pressure on local organisations.

The government's reform program is supporting individual community sector organisations to be as agile and as resilient as possible. The program, delivered together with the community sector leaders, has led capability development and practical support to improve the governance, financial management and planning ability of organisations in the sector. So far, 300 or so leaders across 60 organisations have participated in some way in the sector development initiative. Upcoming activities will provide professional support to organisations seeking to improve their capacity to collaborate effectively with peer organisations across the community services system.

It is vitally important to support organisations in the changing environment of the human services sector, not just set them against each other, because in the end we need the best possible community sector to provide the best possible community services.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, how does the reform program reduce red tape for community sector organisations?

MS BERRY: Importantly, the community sector reform program also involves us looking at where improvements can be made inside government. We recognise that one of the best ways to support the community sector is to ensure that our relationship with the sector is as simple and as effective as it can be.

In December 2013, the government embarked on a program of red tape reduction reforms for the procurement, contracting and reporting of community services. Since commencing this red tape reduction program, we have simplified audit requirements to reduce the cost of audits for small and medium-sized community sector organisations; reduced financial reporting requirements from twice to once a year; extended the maximum term of funding agreements from three to five years; transferred a number of low risk service funding agreements to simpler recurrent grants; and introduced a single point of contact in the Community Services Directorate.

Total annual efficiency savings to the sector from the measures now implemented under this program are valued at more than \$2.5 million. Further savings from red tape reduction are underway through the more simple standard community sector contract and the review of the community services procurement pre-qualification process.

I look forward to providing the Assembly with further updates on future progress, as part of the government's community sector reform program. I assure members that real fairness will always be the thing that guides us.

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

Supplementary answers to questions without notice Roads—Barton Highway

MR GENTLEMAN: In answer to Mr Coe's question earlier, I have updated details for him in regard to the Barton Highway roundabout. The project will be retendered this month. The two tenders received were well above the original estimate for the project delivery, and the project will be retendered this month. Construction of the Barton Highway roundabout signalisation project will be advertised this month. Construction is planned to commence in July this year, and is likely to take approximately 12 months to complete.

Hospitals—University of Canberra

MR CORBELL: Yesterday in question time, in answer to a question from Dr Bourke, I note that the draft *Hansard* refers to me making comment of 250 beds at the University of Canberra hospital. This is not accurate, and my comments may have been misspeaking on my part. 215 became 250. I want to make it very clear that I was intending and attempting to say 215.

Transport—light rail

Debate resumed.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Planning, Minister for Roads and Parking, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations, Minister for Children and Young People and Minister for Ageing) (3.20): I thank Ms Fitzharris for bringing this important motion forward today. Cities across Australia and around the world are coming to recognise the importance of well-planned and integrated transport infrastructure to meet the needs of growing cities. They know and have experienced the benefits of investment in integrated transport infrastructure to connect their cities, stimulate growth and development and transform how cities operate to meet their changing needs. The government also recognises the importance of this for the ACT and is actively planning and delivering transport infrastructure to meet the needs of our growing city now and into the future.

Canberra is growing and maturing as a city. With an expected population of 550,000 by 2050 the ACT will continue to experience growth and change. This will present significant opportunities for growing our city and its economy, but it also presents challenges, such as high levels of road congestion and greater demands on our public transport infrastructure.

In recent years the government has done a lot of work to ensure we have the right transport and planning strategies to guide the development of our city. Transport for Canberra and the ACT planning strategy work together to ensure that over time we build an integrated transport network.

We are also delivering planning outcomes that will make this vision a reality through projects such as capital metro, the light rail master plan and the city and Northbourne Avenue urban design framework, supported by other complementary policy measures in the areas of active travel, parking, freight and low emission vehicles, for example.

The government is building an integrated transport network by ensuring our continuing significant investment in roads infrastructure—\$162 million in this year alone—together with long-term investments in light rail corridors requiring high capacity, high frequency rapid transit services and connecting key centres by well-integrated buses and better walking and cycling connections. Our current transport planning work is all contributing to building the integrated transport network capacity.

We know from the experience of other cities that improved public transport networks are a proven catalyst for urban transformation, providing significant economic opportunities to government and the private sector. Transformation along other transport corridors is expected to drive new opportunities for other parts of the city, including employment and investment opportunities.

Analysis by global firm Ernst & Young indicates that the government's light rail investment will create over 3,500 jobs during construction, and many more jobs over the longer term.

Northbourne Avenue is a nationally significant boulevard that is often visitors' first experience of Canberra. In addition to the ceremonial role as a key entrance to Canberra, it provides access from our fast-growing northern districts to the city and the parliamentary triangle, where many Canberrans work.

Northbourne Avenue is an important example of where planning is delivering transport investment and urban renewal. Planning policies that deliver more homes close to high quality public transport services have been successful over the past decade and are critical in delivering the government's vision of a compact city.

The development of Northbourne Avenue and its surrounding corridor has protected the character of the inner north while focusing development opportunities on the corridor to take advantage of its high frequency transport services. Capital metro represents the next step in public transport investment for Canberra and will deliver urban renewal in north Canberra.

Urban renewal itself is about making where people live better. It is also about making the most of opportunities, such as those created through the construction of light rail and the integration of this high capacity mode of public transport with other forms of transport, like active transport, road systems and of course buses, to create an integrated transport system.

Lessons from around the world show that land use benefits are greatest when transport investments occur just before an upswing in growth. Forecasts and experience tell us that the Northbourne corridor is set for rapid growth over the coming decades. Building rail in advance of marked demand and in conjunction with land use planning can bring about positive economic rewards. This is what the government is doing by planning for the development of precincts along transport corridors.

The rejuvenation of transport corridors and provision of light rail will reinforce the identity of precincts such as Gungahlin town centre, Dickson centre and city centre. It will create more opportunities for social interaction, bring more passing trade for local businesses and improve the public realm that supports active travel. It will also build on the urban renewal already taking place in existing precincts such as Braddon.

We need to capitalise on the opportunities for urban renewal that government investment in an integrated transport network offers. We are already looking to our other major centres and transport corridors, whether it is between Gungahlin and the city or—closer to my home—between Tuggeranong, Woden and the city, through centre master plans and the light rail master plan to leverage our investments in those corridors to deliver the integrated transport outcomes that the territory needs.

All our major transport corridors in Canberra can progressively renew and deliver the transformational benefits we are shortly to see along the Northbourne corridor. The effort being put into the planning of our transport infrastructure now will pay large dividends for this city in the future.

In cities around the world evidence shows that improved public transport networks increase the amount of exercise in which the community is able to partake on a day-to-day basis. Public transport investment promotes the participation of the community in active travel by providing the connections which enable people to walk or cycle short distances before taking motorised transport. This provides for a healthier population and removes distance barriers to cycling and walking during commutes. This in turn reduces the cost to the health system and also promotes wellbeing and social inclusion among the community.

There is strong evidence from multiple cities around the world in recent years showing that construction of high density housing along transport corridors has a direct, positive impact on property values in those areas. Various private sector developer and investor publications have directly linked the new Gold Coast light rail to a rise in property value along its route.

The *Urban Developer* is a highly read online publication in Australia providing information to property investors, developers and other interested parties. In July last year the publication released an article which stated there had already been an upsurge in development proposals and plans for development along the route of the Gold Coast light rail, and that the convenience factor would be a significant value-add and provide extra incentive for investors.

In Dublin in 2004, properties along the newly constructed tramline had seen an increase of 15 per cent in value over the two years following the line's installation, according to a report from the property agency Douglas Newman Good which was released in 2005. This same uplift has been seen in other cities around the world, from Edinburgh to Portland to Vancouver. In the city of Bordeaux in southern France the construction of a new line of their tramway in 2010 saw increases of 15 to 20 per cent in property value before construction was even completed.

This is just one facet of the economic uplift that will be seen through the integration of this infrastructure into the city's transport network. This investment will do marvellous things for our city.

It is this foresight that only we, the government, have. This is why we took light rail to the last election as a key policy, because we recognise, like they have in major cities around the world, the opportunity for economic growth it brings to Canberra. Sadly, creating opportunity and driving economic growth are clearly not important to the opposition.

Investment in integrated transport networks provides many positive outcomes for cities and, indeed, helps to deliver key government policies. The development of this network works towards delivering on government policies, including transport for Canberra, the ACT planning strategy, the ACT climate change strategy and the healthy weight action plan.

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) (3.30): I welcome this opportunity to talk again about some of the benefits of light rail to our growing city and at the same time rebut some of the spurious arguments being put against it.

Many of the benefits of light rail, of course, are already listed in the full business case for capital metro, which has been released to the community. To remind the Assembly of some of these, the business case lists \$222 million in transport time savings, \$140 million in infrastructure efficiency savings, \$196 million in wider economic benefits, \$240 million in land use benefits, \$13 million in environmental and other benefits, \$5 million in walking and cycling health benefits, and over 3,500 jobs supported during construction.

These are the clear and concrete benefits, the kind that can be easily monetised for the purposes of a business case. But of course there are other extensive further benefits that are less easily refined into numbers and dollars.

Last week I talked a little about the tourism benefits of light rail. I pointed out that the national tourism and transport forum was urging all levels of government to look at light rail as a potential policy and infrastructure solution to the problems of congestion and urban mobility. It said that light rail was a good way to meet future challenges and had an important part to play in delivering urban productivity, livability and sustainability. It also talked about the branding benefits of light rail for cities and its ability to attract visitors and events.

To continue that theme of light rail being beneficial for tourism, I note the recent article in the *Brisbane Times* quoting the chief executive of Gold Coast Tourism. He said that the light rail project has been “an unmitigated success”. He talked about the benefits of extending the Gold Coast light rail on to its second stage. This second stage would take the light rail from the Gold Coast hospital at Southport out to the main passenger line at Helensvale. The first stage travelled from the Gold Coast hospital at Southport to Broadbeach. Since opening in July 2014, it has already carried five million customers. The head of Gold Coast Tourism said that the Gold Coast is booming and that the light rail is key to its long-term growth. His quote is that light rail “is critical for the ongoing success”.

I think building a quality public transport spine that will support our city well into the future is also critical to the ongoing success of Canberra. Light rail is going to be a defining feature of our city in the future. We have the opportunity to make our city one that is sustainable, more compact and livable, powered by renewable energy, and increasingly resilient to threats of climate change, sprawl, congestion, peak oil and pollution. Light rail is not just a policy for this year or for the next election; it is a policy to ensure the ongoing success of our city well into the future.

This is one of the clear differences in the approach of the Greens and the approach of the Liberal Party. I can describe what the Greens’ vision is for Canberra for the next 10, 20 and 50 years. I challenge the Canberra Liberals, with all their focus on negativity and oppositional politics, to describe to the Assembly, and the Canberra community, what Northbourne Avenue will look like in 20 years from now under their approach. Will it be congested? How will people be travelling? Will it have new development? And what will the air pollution status be like?

And what about other parts of Canberra? What will they look like? Will they have light rail in 20 years from now? Presumably, if the Canberra Liberals are intent on killing light rail from Gungahlin to the city, people living in Tuggeranong, Weston Creek or Belconnen should not be expecting light rail under a Liberal government at any time in the future.

The inconvenient truth is that the Liberal Party do not have policies for a vision for this city in the future, and that is simply negligent. The approach is to construct an identity by opposing the visions or policies of others. Canberrans are smarter than that. They care about the future. They will see past the nebulous, oppositional smokescreen; they will see that there is nothing behind it.

One thing that continues to amaze me is that the Canberra Liberals—apparently the friend of the Canberra taxpayer—are promising to tear up light rail contracts and dismantle light rail if they are elected. Every Canberra taxpayer should know that the Liberal Party is committed to wasting their money in this fashion. Canberrans will pay millions of dollars and they will see nothing for that money if the Liberals have their way. That is how much the Liberals are committed to their blinkered political campaign to oppose light rail for our city. What a terrible, expensive and thoughtless piece of politics.

Light rail is a project with clear benefits for our city. And don't forget that the majority of Canberrans actually support light rail. To throw away their money like this would not only be embarrassing for a Liberal government; it would be unconscionable.

Not surprisingly, the announcement of this approach has quickly attracted criticism. Infrastructure Partnerships Australia is obviously in strong opposition to the Liberals' approach and is imploring them to stop debasing the infrastructure program. Tony Abbott, the self-styled "infrastructure Prime Minister", despite the contents of last night's budget, did not seem too happy with the approach of his local counterparts. As more and more Canberrans discover what the Liberals are promising, you can bet they will be unhappy at this backwards thinking approach.

This leads me to a couple of other points. I have to note the line thrown around that the government is apparently "choosing light rail" over some other policy. Mr Hanson said that the government is choosing light rail over hospital beds or that the government is choosing light rail over police. Mr Doszpot implies that the government is choosing light rail over some particular footpath or other, depending on which week it is. It is a constant refrain.

This is a completely spurious position. The government invests across the policy spectrum. I could just choose any election policy of the Liberals—like a third bin for tens of millions of dollars—and say, "The Liberals are choosing bins over hospital beds. Why are they so obsessed with bins when they could pay for more police?" Or there is their commitment to spending \$700 million on roads. I could say, "The Canberra Liberals are choosing roads instead of hospital beds." It is clearly a silly approach: obviously a government invests in a range of areas, and to pick one and pit it against another is cheap and misleading.

All that is made clear with these arguments is that the Canberra Liberals hate public transport, they do not understand it or value it, and they are unable to think of long-term prosperity for our growing city.

In any case, light rail is an investment that will save the government from extra costs in the future. I have talked plenty before about the costs of sprawl, pollution, congestion and accidents, which all result from a car-dependent city.

I want to note as well that last week I talked about the capital metro business case and the benefits it listed. I pointed out that the benefit to cost ratio was 1.2, meaning that \$1.20 was returned in benefits for every dollar spent on the project. I noted that Mr Coe responded to this by suggesting that the BCR made “a lot of bogus assumptions”. I do want to note this point, because if Mr Coe is questioning the validity of the BCR, which was undertaken by highly reputable professionals in the area of transport economics, using best practice methods, this debate has taken a particularly strange and conspiratorial turn. I have previously heard people question the surveys undertaken by professional surveying companies on behalf of capital metro, as if they have been deliberately distorted to be biased. I find this questioning of reputable professionals quite troubling and it is one that will come back to haunt those that take that position.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Rattenbury, resume your seat, please, for a minute. Stop the clock, please. Mr Coe, I believe you have already had an opportunity to talk to this motion, so I would ask you to be quiet for the rest of Mr Rattenbury’s presentation. Mr Rattenbury, you can resume.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is as if people refuse to believe that people can support light rail, or that it is a beneficial project, so they start to invent conspiracies and corruption. The facts are, though, that light rail is a beneficial project and it is supported by the majority of the Canberra community.

Mr Coe also responds to any talk of benefit-cost ratios by saying, “Bus rapid transit has a BCR of 4.78, so why don’t you build that?” There are two problems with this. Firstly, the 4.78 figure comes from an older, higher level analysis. That analysis also found that light rail had a BCR of 2.34, almost double the BCR found by the more up-to-date, detailed and conservative analysis later undertaken in the full capital metro business case. We could assume that such an analysis on bus rapid transit would also reduce its BCR.

Secondly, and more importantly, the BCR is one factor only. The government should consider the whole project in context and decide what is the best solution for our city. In this case light rail does cost more but it also brings more benefits to the city, and a different type of benefit that bus rapid transit simply cannot bring. Essentially, the government is paying a higher initial cost but getting more benefits for the city and delivering benefits that buses would simply never deliver.

We cannot just look at the BCRs of projects. If we were to make a list of projects ranked in order of priority by their BCR number, and then only build them in order, we would end up with a fairly terrible outcome for this city, because one does need to look at broader agendas and at what is most beneficial for the city overall in light of where the city is going, population growth and making sure that we actually plan for the future of this city and are not just thinking about the next 12 months or the next couple of years.

I thank Ms Fitzharris for bringing this motion forward today. Once again it does provide some opportunity. I know we will come to Mr Coe's motion later in the day, and I look forward to discussing the points that he has raised there as well.

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (3.40), in reply: I would like to thank my colleagues for speaking to this motion. I thank Mr Corbell, Mr Gentleman and Mr Rattenbury for support and again Mr Coe for the opportunity to debate the merits of this project—of course, which he did not. It reiterates for us on the government benches that there is no plan from the Canberra Liberals on what to do about our future, on what to do about our sustainable transport future. There is simply a plan to rip up a contract and cost jobs and millions of dollars to the ACT community.

I will just recap some of the arguments that were put forward. Mr Coe is correct that this is the biggest infrastructure project that the territory will undertake. But it is certainly by no means the only infrastructure project. For example, there is currently under construction the \$288 million project to upgrade Majura Parkway. There is the nearly \$2 billion health infrastructure project that will roll out over the course of the next few years. And in this financial year alone the ACT government is investing \$735 million in capital infrastructure—and a total of \$2.5 billion over the next year. Those opposite seem only capable of focusing on one project at a time.

I certainly do agree with Mr Coe that this is worth debating. It is a topic most worthy of debate. But debate usually involves an informed view from both sides. Unfortunately, this continues to be lacking.

Mr Coe also has, as Mr Corbell and Mr Rattenbury noted, a rather disturbing view of independent analysis, ignoring some and accepting others. Certainly he is ignoring the views of the globally respected firm EY in their assessment, their business case, but they are also ignoring the view of Professor Derek Scrafton from the University of South Australia, with 50 years experience in the public transportation field. He provided independent advice on the appropriateness of the methodology in the capital metro business case. He found that the business case was sound and used the appropriate methodology.

He also calls into question Infrastructure Partnerships Australia. They are no marginal group. They are a “public policy partnership between Australia's federal and state governments, and the private sector”. They “operate as a think tank on infrastructure market reform opportunities; as a source of data on the Australian market; and as a network and meeting place for senior practitioners from across the national and global infrastructure markets”. They are a “not for profit, non-government organisation” whose membership is “deliberately balanced between central and line agencies across the Australian and state governments, and the private sector”.

He also, perhaps wilfully, ignores some of the most independent advice that we see around the country and around the world—commuters on light rail. We see that where light rail is built—as Mr Rattenbury noted, along the Gold Coast, with nearly five million travellers on the Gold Coast light rail in just a short space of time. In some ways they are some of the most independent advisers on a light rail project because they are the commuters that will catch light rail.

I want to elaborate a bit on this later. It is concerning that the Canberra Liberals cannot outline an alternative policy for our future transport system but can say they will do everything they can to stop it. I think it is reasonable to ask what the limits of this position are and whether they will tell the Canberra community what those limits are. It is not clear at all, and I am not sure the community wants to know that there is a potential government in the wings that will do whatever it takes. That really is unclear.

Mr Rattenbury asked a very good question around what Northbourne Avenue and the rest of the city will look like in the future. What will the Canberra Liberals be saying when there are thousands more cars coming along the first stage of the light rail route—coming into the city and competing for parking with commuters from other parts of the city?

In the end, Mr Coe and the Canberra Liberals are promising to spend up to hundreds of millions of dollars, potentially, to tear up a contract for a project that will deliver \$1 billion in economic benefits to the ACT—a project that will deliver 3,500 jobs in the construction phase; a project that will transform our city; a project that will help negate the traffic and congestion issues that will accompany our growth to a city of more 600,000. What does Mr Coe plan on getting in return for preventing Canberrans from receiving all of the benefits that this major transformative infrastructure project will deliver them? Absolutely nothing—nothing but a bill for potentially hundreds of millions of dollars.

As for the claims that congestion in Canberra is not so bad as to warrant light rail, what is the alternative? Again we ask: what is the alternative? Do we just sit around and wait until congestion gets too bad and then decide to invest in public transport options? I think not.

The Canberra Liberals also seem to completely miss the point that the Liberal Treasurer, Joe Hockey, has signed a deal with our Chief Minister, a deal that will see the territory receive \$60 million in incentives to put into this project.

Again I thank the members on this side of the chamber for their support of the motion. I look forward to continuing to debate the merits of this project for our city. I end on this question: if the Canberra Liberals say they will do whatever it takes and everything they possibly can to stop this project, what does that actually mean? We saw in the last election their willingness to diminish the future of our city to a three-word slogan. It did not work then. I see that they may have one in their minds for next year—another three-word slogan. It did not work last time and I do not think it is going to work next time. They need to stump up to the Canberra community and tell the Canberra community what their alternative is.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 7

Mr Barr	Ms Fitzharris	Mr Coe	Ms Lawder
Ms Berry	Mr Gentleman	Mr Doszpot	Mr Smyth
Ms Burch	Ms Porter	Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall
Mr Corbell	Mr Rattenbury	Mr Hanson	

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Tourism—government support

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (3.51): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the ACT Government failed to capitalise on Canberra's Centenary celebrations in 2013; and
- (b) the ACT tourism sector experienced decreases in:
 - (i) overnight trips;
 - (ii) overnight trip expenditure;
 - (iii) trips to the ACT;
 - (iv) domestic overnight visitations;
 - (v) average per night expenditure; and
 - (vi) tourism investment; and

(2) calls on the Minister for Tourism and Events to report to this Assembly its plan on restoring tourism sector confidence in the ACT by the end of first sitting week in August 2015.

As we all know, tourism is a very important part of modern economies. Particularly for the ACT, it is one of those areas that are important to our future. Of course, the source of quality information about our tourist industry comes from Tourism Research Australia. They issue bulletins on a regular basis. Tourism Research Australia's international visitor quarterly results recently noted that the ACT has the second lowest number of international visitors, at 181,000 people, ahead of only Tasmania, with 168,000 people. We have had the lowest international visitor growth, at only

two per cent, and in 2013-14 there was zero per cent growth in international visitor nights spent in the ACT. The ACT had the third lowest international visitor expenditure, at five per cent, and the second lowest in actual spend, at \$373 million.

The picture with domestic visitors was no better. Tourism Research Australia domestic visitor quarterly results noted that the ACT had the second lowest number of national visitors, at 1.9 million people, ahead only of the Northern Territory, at 1.07 million people. However, whereas the Northern Territory had a smaller number of domestic visitors, the year-on-year visitor numbers grew by 20 per cent, the largest in the country, unlike the ACT, which saw a five per cent decrease in domestic visitor numbers. We are the only jurisdiction that had negative growth between 2013 and 2014. The ACT also had the lowest number of domestic visitor nights. In 2014 we were overtaken by the Northern Territory.

The theme of being overtaken by the Northern Territory continues. We were last in 2014 domestic visitor expenditure, having been overtaken by the Northern Territory. Also, from 2013 to 2014 domestic expenditure slipped by a whopping 13 per cent, the largest drop in the country. You have to question what is behind this. If you look at Tourism Research Australia's *Visitor perceptions of the ACT*, a document from August last year, it identified the following: impressions of Canberra by repeat leisure visitors—the sprawling layout can result in an empty feeling and it was a “been there, done that” destination.

For those who have never visited Canberra before, here is what they had to say: it had a reputation for expensive travel, which deters spontaneous leisure trips and it lacks excitement. There were perceptions of limited activity. In the arts and culture, it was ranked second to last when compared with Melbourne, Hobart, Sydney and Adelaide. There was a big gap between those who had visited the ACT and those who had not. It shows the low awareness of what Canberra has to offer by way of arts and culture.

In food and wine, we were ranked last when compared with Tasmania, Melbourne, Adelaide and even the Orange-Mudgee region. Tourism Research Australia found that Canberra's food and wine offerings were not considered unique or compelling enough to drive visitation, that some recent visitors felt that local knowledge was required to find the best venues and these were often located in the suburbs.

There is a continued perception that Canberra lacks vibrancy, energy and night life and that the Canberra wine region lacks a brand with impact. I do not necessarily agree with these perceptions. Indeed, they are perceptions, as the report points out. But if that is the perception then there is much work to be done.

Family fun was ranked last when compared to the Gold Coast, tropical northern Queensland, Sydney and Melbourne. General awareness of Canberra's family experience was low for those who have not visited. Canberra was rated higher for family experience by those who had visited before, leading to the conclusion that if people knew more about what is on offer they may feel more likely to visit.

In the category of outdoor and adventure, when compared overall with tropical Far North Queensland, Tasmania, the Great Ocean Road and Sydney, Canberra was not

perceived as a competitor for a genuine adventure experience. The TRA's conclusion was that aspiration and access posed the most significant barriers to Canberra demand. In terms of aspiration, while some consumers were simply not interested in the destination, many had other destinations higher on their list. Alternatively, they may have been before and do not feel the need to return.

This implies a lack of unique and compelling experiences to drive repeat visitation. For those consumers more interested in visiting Canberra, many were deterred by the high cost of flights. This has an impact on those considering Canberra as a short break destination, as other destinations are more competitive in terms of cost.

Just this week the TRA released their tourism investment pipeline. At the end of 2014 the tourism investment pipeline was \$53.7 billion across the country. Yet the total tourism investment pipeline in the ACT was \$130 million or about 0.4 of one per cent. The Chief Minister is very keen on the "We are two per cent of the population; we should have two per cent of the cake" measure. At that rate, we are at about a fifth of what we should have. Given what we have and the potential that we all know exists—

Mr Barr: We are 1.6 per cent of the national population.

MR SMYTH: Okay, 1.6; therefore we are only down by 75 per cent. It is interesting to see how the measure changes. When you are preaching something good you use the higher number; when it is not so good you attempt to go straight to the lower number. But that is okay.

The tourism investment monitor has a number of interesting points to it. It says that almost two-thirds—100 or 63 per cent—of the non-fleet projects in the tourism investment pipeline for 2014 were in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. There is a chart that looks at investment by sectors. There are three sectors and we appear in only one of those sectors.

In terms of aviation, there is no investment in the pipeline. Of course, the airport has just finished an enormous upgrade, which is acknowledged in the report. But in arts, recreation and business services, investment is listed as zero and for accommodation it has listed projects worth \$130 million. We are lagging on that critical investment. Everyone is refreshing their product and we are competing for the experience market. It would appear in that regard that we are lagging greatly.

In terms of infrastructure, you simply have to look at one project, the convention centre. Business tourism, events tourism, is very important. Yet one of the qualifiers for us is that we have an out-of-date and inadequate convention centre. We know last year from the Canberra Convention Bureau that something like 90 conventions that would have come to the ACT did not come because we could not accommodate them. I note that on 7 May this year Melbourne announced another expansion to their facility down there. The announcement is headed: "Melbourne Convention Centre tops list of upgrades". It states:

A planned major Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre expansion is tipped to draw tens of thousands of extra international visitors and create

hundreds of jobs. The project is expected to cost \$190 million to \$210 million and starts within the next 10 to 18 months, subject to negotiations. Tourism and Major Events Minister John Eren said the upgrade would add thousands of square metres of space and lure 74,000 more big-spending visitors annually in a \$167 million economic boost.

Taxpayers will also shell out more than an extra \$80 million over four years to bid for, and sponsor, major events. Regional tourism initiatives include \$19 million for the Grampians Peak Trail and \$11 million to upgrade national parks tracks and facilities.

That is coming from the Victorian budget, where, in the time that we have been talking about a new facility for the ACT, they have built a new facility. They have doubled the size of it and now they are going to add to it more. It is little wonder that we lag in the tourism investment pipeline in that regard.

In the context of a couple of the other debates we are having today, I can see people from Europe, North America and other lands saying, “Yes, I’m getting on that plane. I’m going to travel and land at the Canberra International Airport. I’m going to get that cab into town to go to a convention at the new Canberra international convention centre.” I do not see them saying, “Hey, mate, I’m flying to Canberra so that I can jump on that tram.” They are not going to do that. That is why we should be building infrastructure that drives the economy in a real way.

Again, you need only look at the document produced by the then business council in which 54 of elite business and academic institutions in the town said, “Our number one priority is that we get a new convention centre.”

The motion notes that the ACT government has failed to capitalise on Canberra’s centenary celebrations in 2013. I think we are still to see the reviews of what happened and how the government has followed that up. It is a shame that the government did not follow it up. Yes, we had lots of enormous events that got us prestige and they got us media coverage. But nothing was built on it, in effect, as an economic driver in the long term.

Let us face it; these opportunities do not come along very often. The government has failed to capitalise. Indeed, until December 2012 the government did not even have a review process to determine what would be the likely effects until, under pressure from the Canberra Liberals, they announced their task force to look at it.

From the data that I have presented, the ACT tourism sector has experienced decreases in overnight trips—overnight expenditure trips—to the ACT, domestic overnight visitation, average per night expenditure and tourism investment. What we are calling on is for the Minister for Tourism and Events to report to the Assembly the government’s plan for restoring the tourism sector’s confidence in the ACT by the end of the first sitting week in August 2015.

It is important that we have a long-term plan for tourism in the ACT. If we go to the TRA’s conclusions, it is quite clear that people’s perceptions of the ACT are still clouded. Canberra for a long time has been a victim of other people’s perceptions of

us as a city. I think all of us have met people who said, “We came here under sufferance for a couple of years and 30 years later we’re still here because we love the place.” We have all met people who came and were surprised.

But what we need to do is make sure that everyone that we can get does come here and that they are constantly surprised by the changes. Yes, there have been some changes. Well done to the Efkarpidis family, the Molonglo Group, for what they did at New Acton. But my understanding is that from concept to delivery it took 15 years.

Of course, the things that are happening in Braddon are happening almost despite the government, because often it is too hard. For instance, when somebody wanted to have a pop-up in the old motor mechanics shop, it was almost too hard. Recently I think it was the Chief Minister who had to intervene so that one of the clubs could have—what was it called?—tranny bingo. This was so people could play some interesting games a little outside the norm. But it was too difficult initially until somebody had to intervene.

We have to develop in this city an attitude that says we value tourism and, I think more importantly, that we value the contribution that small business makes in the tourism sphere, whether it be family-owned businesses like Cockington Green, whether it be the lone bus operator or the ferry operator on the lake. There are a large number of small businesses in the ACT that contribute, whether it be through B&Bs or services that they provide. We have to give them the backup they need. I do not get a sense from the sector that they think the government has a plan to make this happen.

I will finish by going back to the TRA’s conclusion and read it again. After 13 or 14 years in government, nothing has really been done to change the perception. I accept there has been some movement recently, but there is still a lot of work to do. I will read the TRA’s conclusion about how the rest of the nation sees us:

Aspiration and access pose the most significant barriers to Canberra demand.

In terms of aspiration, while some consumers were simply not interested in the destination, many had other destinations higher on their list.

We have to change that. We have to have substance to change that, we have to have a strategy to change that and we have to have actions to change that. The report goes on to say:

Alternatively, they may have been before and don’t feel the need to return.

That is why, as we have said in many reports, we need a program for new attractions, new events and new accommodation. It goes on to say:

This implies a lack of unique and compelling experiences to drive repeat visitation.

We must concentrate on that and address the issues as outlined in this Tourism Research Australia report. (*Time expired.*)

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (4.06): I move the amendment circulated in my name:

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

“(1) notes that:

- (a) with significant investments from both the Commonwealth and ACT Governments, Canberra’s Centenary celebrations in 2013 were an outstanding success drawing historically high numbers of visitors to the ACT;
- (b) the 2012-2013 tourism figures were heavily influenced by the core Centenary activities in the first six months of 2013. A direct comparison between the 2012-2013 tourism figures and subsequent figures does not provide an accurate reflection of the ACT’s longer term tourism performance;
- (c) the Federal Government’s contraction of the Commonwealth Public Service has been a significant cause of the recent decrease in business travel to the ACT;
- (d) specific programs like the second phase of the Australian Tourism Award winning *Human Brochure* campaign and cooperative industry and media partnerships are examples of how the ACT Government is helping stimulate demand from interstate and international markets;
- (e) major events supported by the ACT Government including Floriade, Enlighten, Blockbuster Exhibitions, the T20 Cricket Big Bash Final, ICC Cricket World Cup 2015 matches and AFC 2015 Asian Cup football matches continue to attract interstate and international visitors; and
- (f) the local tourism industry is now well placed to leverage the significant tourism opportunities that come from being the national capital; and

(2) calls on the Government to continue to work towards the goals of the Tourism 2020 Strategy.”.

Our centenary year was indeed a very big year for Canberra, with our tourism industry playing a very big part in bringing visitors to the capital. Over two million domestic overnight visitors came to Canberra in the year to December 2013. This increase was driven largely by the outstanding performance of our leisure sector, with the ACT’s domestic overnight holiday visitors up by 39 per cent in the centenary year. Visitor nights associated with these holiday visitors were also up by 26 per cent for the corresponding period. Australians visiting Canberra in 2013 contributed an estimated \$1.2 billion to the territory economy, an increase of \$131 million on the 2012 result.

The concentration of event activity in our city during the centenary year clearly provided a range of compelling reasons to visit the city. Highlights included the city hosting the Australian cricket team in a one-day international match for the very first

time under lights—a centenary infrastructure legacy—at Manuka oval, the British and Irish Lions tour match, the women’s Australian golf open and an Anzac rugby league test match.

Through the ACT government’s special event fund, a total of \$1.84 million was invested in four blockbuster cultural exhibitions across the centenary year. An unprecedented three were held at the National Gallery of Australia. This investment leveraged an additional \$2.74 million in destination marketing and attracted a combined 600,000 visitors, with two-thirds coming from interstate. This generated over \$124 million in economic value for the territory economy.

The centenary year was indeed a bumper year for tourism, with a year-long calendar of events, a significant amount of media and advertising coverage and major blockbuster events at the National Gallery. It was always going to be challenging to maintain those centenary year visitor levels in the years immediately following. The overall drop in visitor night numbers in 2014, though, can largely be attributed to a reduction in business travel as a result of the federal government’s commonwealth public service contractions. The 2014 calendar year saw business visitor nights decrease compared to 2013, and they fell significantly in the final quarter of 2014.

Despite this downturn in business travel, the story in the leisure sector was very different. Visitor nights in the leisure sector in 2014 grew by 8.8 per cent, to a total of 334,000 visitor nights. This is undoubtedly a reflection of the ongoing investment being made in the staging of events and the delivery of innovative marketing campaigns, including the Australian tourism award-winning human brochure campaign. This was a world-first tourism advocacy program utilising social media as a communications platform to promote the region’s attractions and experiences.

The human brochure campaign was then backed up by the 101 local humans campaign that built advocacy amongst Canberrans for the broad range of experiences available in our city and in the region. The campaign encouraged the community to share their experiences via social media and, importantly, to invite their friends and relatives from elsewhere in Australia to come to Canberra. Since this campaign was delivered, growth in the visiting friends and relatives component of our market has continued. For the year ending December 2014, visitor nights increased by 506,000 in the visiting friends and relatives market compared to the previous year.

Major events are also proven drivers of visitors, and fantastic major events over the past six to nine months have cemented Canberra’s place on the global sporting and festival stage. Floriade recorded its largest ever attendance figure and a record \$47 million in direct visitor expenditure. The final attendance figure of 481,854 represented a seven per cent increase on the previous year and included 103,000 interstate and international visitors who came to Canberra specifically for the event.

It is worth noting that one of the legacies of the centenary year was investment in Manuka oval. This led to Canberra’s biggest ever summer of cricket fixtures over the summer just past. We saw the Australian team return to Manuka, taking on South Africa in a one-day international, the Prime Minister’s XI match on 14 January, and a sell-out crowd for the KFC T20 Big Bash final at the end of January. These fixtures demonstrated that there is a strong appetite across the Canberra region for high quality

cricket, and this has only been made possible by the legacy of our centenary year infrastructure investment.

The big bash final provided the city with substantial national and international television coverage and was the perfect lead-in to our city being a host city for the cricket world cup—again, another legacy of our centenary year. This was one of two international sporting events staged in Canberra over the summer period. A further legacy of our success in hosting major international events in 2013 was that we were selected as a host city for the Asian Cup, one of the most successful football tournaments ever held in this country and which kicked off locally in January this year.

The event's widespread appeal saw all five host cities achieve sell-out crowds. Canberra's seven matches as part of the tournament achieved a combined attendance of 82,500 people. This was an outstanding result that exceeded expectations, particularly considering that these seven matches were staged across a 13-day period and did not feature an appearance by the Socceroos.

The cricket world cup helped to wrap up a huge summer of sport in Canberra. Manuka oval played host to three matches that generated a combined attendance of nearly 25,500—nearly 8,500 per match. This demonstrates our capacity to host these sorts of major events. The feedback from tournament organisers, both for the Asian Cup and for the cricket world cup, related to how well prepared the Canberra venues were for these fixtures, that they were up to international standard and that they were very impressed with the level of support and engagement from the community here in Canberra and the surrounding region.

Industry confidence in Canberra continues to be strong. This is demonstrated by a range of new infrastructure investments in our tourism sector that have recently opened, including Jamala Lodge at the zoo, the five-star Avenue Hotel on Northbourne Avenue, and the refurbished Kurrajong Hotel in Barton, which the Prime Minister and I opened earlier in the year. Other hotels due to open this year include the Vibe at Canberra Airport, and the Little National Hotel in Barton, which is part of the Doma Group's hotel chain.

Looking forward, the ACT government will continue to invest in major events for the territory through the special event fund. We will continue to work closely with the Canberra Airport Group to grow aviation capacity at Canberra Airport domestically and internationally. It was very pleasing to see QantasLink's announcement in relation to engineering jobs at the airport. That is an important marker of future prospects for aviation industry growth in Canberra. Investment is also being made in programs that are contributing to economic self-reliance and the broadening of our city's economic base.

Experts such as Deloitte are predicting that tourism will be one of the five key industries to grow faster than average over the next 20 years. That is why federal, state and territory governments have, with respective tourism industry partners, signed up to the national strategy for tourism—tourism 2020. The target is to grow the national visitor economy to between \$115 billion and \$140 billion by 2020. The industry is indeed on track to meet the lower end of the target that was set.

The ACT has developed its own tourism 2020 strategy which aligns with the national strategy and aims to grow the value of tourism in the territory to \$2.5 billion by 2020. The key areas of focus for the territory include investment in destination marketing activities that drive visitation from domestic and international markets, supporting increased international aviation access and also focusing on low cost domestic carriers, growing the digital capability of the industry, supporting major events, business events and education tourism, encouraging investment in infrastructure and reducing regulatory burdens, and encouraging new product and experience development.

These are the right policy settings and the right program settings. There is a cooperative approach amongst tourism industry partners in the ACT visitor economy. We certainly expect to see continued growth in the tourism sector. We note the impact of public sector cuts has certainly been felt by the airport, and indeed by those engaged in business travel, but there is some hope now that the worst is behind us in relation to public sector travel.

The airport group are certainly continuing to invest and are partnering with the territory government in relation to expanding the aviation sector of our economy. I was very pleased to sign a new MOU with the airport. We will continue to work closely with them to develop our tourism sector. That is an encouraging part of future tourism growth for the territory.

We also note the importance of our higher education sector and its growth in continuing to attract international students to our city. There is a very strong indication that there is a correlation between the number of international students in our city and visits from parents, siblings, family and friends to those students whilst they are studying in Canberra. The visiting friends and relatives market is indeed very important for us, and the evidence is there that our campaigns are working to grow that sector of our tourism business.

Overall it is a very positive outlook for our city. The announcement on Monday of the 12 surrounding New South Wales councils signing up to the Canberra region brand is a very strong vote of confidence in the direction, the marketing approach and the regional opportunities that present themselves for tourism. So, despite the scepticism, the negativity and the carping of the longest serving shadow treasurer in the history of the commonwealth, we are seeing very strong engagement from the region, and a great deal of excitement and interest in the tourism sector to partner with the territory government.

I note there was even a small initiative or two contained within the regional development document in the federal budget last night to further support the development of our wine industry. That is welcomed, and we look forward to working with the Canberra District Wine Industry Association to further promote their excellent product as part of a very strong regional food and wine offering.

There is reason to be optimistic, Madam Deputy Speaker. Those of us who have a view on and a passion for this city will continue to talk it up. Those opposite seem to be interested only in tearing down the good work that is occurring and casting a very negative pall over what is a very positive sector for the ACT economy, one that will

continue to grow and one that we have every reason to be optimistic about. This week's announcement that the 12 surrounding New South Wales councils are now part of the Canberra brand is a very good endorsement of the government's rebranding of the city, the approach we are taking and our vision for the future. I commend my amendment to the Assembly.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (4.20): I thank Mr Smyth for the motion he has brought forward today, which is not unlike the one we debated in September last year comparing current tourism rates with the centenary year. I do not think it is possible to look at a couple of years to pick up long-term trends when it comes to things like tourism. Obviously we had a very big spike in visitors in 2013, when we had many additional visitors come to our city to be part of the centenary celebrations. That, of course, is not at all surprising, given the range of special events that were on. Many people took an opportunity to say to their families and relatives in other parts of Australia, "This is a great time to come to Canberra." We had a clear and obvious spike in the 2013 calendar, with over two million domestic overnight visitors to the ACT, a 1.8 per cent increase from the 2012 calendar year. This increase came from the leisure sector, with the ACT's domestic overnight holiday visitor numbers up by 39 per cent. Visitor nights associated with these holiday visitors were also up by 26 per cent for the corresponding period. Many of the people were staying longer than in the previous year.

In the 2014 calendar year there was an adjustment, with overnight visitor numbers dropping back by five per cent from the previous year. However, visitor nights increased by nine per cent compared with previous years, meaning those that visited stayed longer. For me they are interesting things worth thinking about when we start to talk about the future of Canberra's tourism industry. One needs to look at the fact that the nature of the visit is changing and think about what is behind that. To me, that speaks to the fact that Canberra is getting a reputation as somewhere that is worth staying and that there is more here to see than perhaps people previously perceived. That is, of course, one of the challenges we face because research from Tourism Research Australia last year shows that Canberra is not perceived as a priority holiday destination when compared with other regions.

This is an opportunity to address that by presenting a fresh image of our city, which is what the brand Canberra campaign has been doing. Part of that was the successful human brochure campaign. That research clearly shows that, compared to some other destinations with their brand, beaches, warmer weather and the like, Canberra needs to define a niche for itself. We need to find a way to define ourselves in that very competitive domestic tourism market.

I believe our image is changing. In June last year the *New York Times* championed the natural beauty and hipster underbelly of our city, and visitors are coming to understand the great diversity of experiences on offer. That sort of coverage is priceless. What I noticed as a result of that particular article was that a lot of people in Canberra noticed it and really promoted it and started talking about Canberra in a different way. It is about changing the image of our city, and we need to do that ourselves. We need to own that changing image, because we are often the best ambassadors for our own city as we travel, but also promote the spread of that word through social media or traditional media.

The launch of the Canberra region brand is a good step forward and something I certainly support. The development of a single brand for our region gives us a platform on which to promote our products and services to potential visitors and investors. The partnership between the ACT government and surrounding councils will no doubt bring new collaborations and opportunities. One of the things I am particularly interested in is the opportunity to promote our Canberra region produce. For our future food security we need to develop our region's food production, and there is a growing understanding within the community of the value of locally produced food. This is one of the things raised with me at a roundtable on food production in the ACT that I hosted as the ACT minister for primary industries. To pardon a terrible pun, there is a real appetite by consumers to know where their food is coming from, and the Canberra region brand provides a way to develop the regional market.

I am keen for our local producers to define very clearly that their produce comes from our region. I think there are real opportunities for the food and wine industry more broadly to develop this niche in the tourism market. It is certainly an area identified in the report produced by Tourism Research Australia as needing development. Having something like a Canberra brand that we can apply to our local food produce was an idea put forward to me at that food roundtable, and through the partnership with the regional councils we are starting to get towards that place. There is a bit more work to do there, but it presents an opportunity.

As Mr Barr notes in his amendment, the government has supported a number of big ticket events in the last year which have attracted visitors to our city, including, of course, Floriade. Enlighten is growing in its reputation and the crowds each year are increasing. It is very pleasing to see so many out having a good time. We have had the blockbuster exhibitions, the T20 cricket big bash final, the cricket world cup matches and, of course, the Asian Cup football matches. This is quite a diverse list. I cannot imagine that the people coming to Floriade were necessarily the same people we saw at the Iran-Iraq quarterfinal at Bruce stadium. We see different activities or different options appealing to different sectors of the tourism market, and that is part of broadening our city's image as well—having people who perhaps would not otherwise visit coming for events for a particular reason. They then get to discover all the many other attractions and tourism opportunities Canberra has.

Many factors determine visitation rates and it would be remiss not to mention the fiscal situation at a commonwealth level, where tightening federal budgets have certainly had an impact on the number of people coming to Canberra—in the business space particularly. That plays out for our local business and tourism sectors as well. I have been clear in putting on the public record my support for a new convention centre. I think it would be an important asset for our city to drive business tourism. That is why there is an item in the parliamentary agreement to progress this.

Progress is being made and we are getting very close to the point where we need to find a serious commitment to investment in that project. That will need to be a partnership that involves the ACT government, the federal government and the private sector. All of us need to work together on this project. I see universal support for it in

Canberra across the political spectrum and also in the business community. We see it in a range of areas, and we need to collaborate in order to deliver that project and convince the federal government to partner with us to deliver this important piece of infrastructure for our city.

As I touched on in the earlier light rail discussion, light rail will benefit the city from a tourism point of view. I noted Mr Smyth's snide comment earlier in the debate that people are not going to come to Canberra to catch a train. No, but the image of a city is contained in many facets, and having a light rail system and the easy ability for people to get around gives the sense that this is a modern city that is moving forward. That is part of branding our city as a place that people are interested in going to. My personal experiences of travelling are that these systems make a difference to the visitor experience.

I will be supporting the amendment put forward by Mr Barr today. It is a fair reflection of where the city is at. The approach that Mr Smyth has taken in homing in on our centenary year and trying to ascribe some great failure by government out the other end of it is not an accurate account of where Canberra is going from a tourism point of view. As a city we need to be cognisant of our niche. We are never going to have the same offering as somewhere like the Gold Coast, and that is fine. That is clearly the case, but we have an excellent tourism offering, and there is a range of ways in which we can continue to promote that.

I support government initiatives such as the Enlighten festival, which has been very successful, and the fund that has been put forward to partner with some of the national institutions to draw significant exhibitions to the city. People tend to focus on the National Gallery, but the couple of exhibitions we have at the National Library—the mapping the world exhibition and the forthcoming Chinese exhibition the Chief Minister announced on his recent overseas tour—are equally valuable to our city. I am very optimistic about the future of Canberra's tourism sector, and for me that is tied to optimism about the future of Canberra.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (4.30): I thank members for their contributions. It has been a nice debate where different views have been put. I will start with Mr Rattenbury. He talked about my snide remark about the light rail and that it will help people get around. It will help them get up and down; it will go past a couple of hotels. If you had said to me the route you had chosen was airport, Civic, parliamentary triangle, Manuka, and Kingston, which encompasses the bulk of our major tourist attractions, you could actually believe it. When some of the business groups are saying it needs to get to the convention site and up Constitution Avenue, it shows the lack of foresight in what is happening and how you maximise the leverage off such an endeavour. That is part of our opposition to it.

Both members who spoke are quite happy to list events and achievements, and we did have a high in the centenary year. I have said on several occasions that that was a great thing. I note the Chief Minister's comments that somehow I was tearing it down. I do not think I did that. We said in the lead-up to the centenary that we had to have a plan to capitalise on it and extend the value from it, otherwise it was just a year—and that would be a good thing—and you would not get the full benefit from it. I am not

convinced we have. The government has not been able to produce any assessment to say there is a change in the perception of Canberra. Indeed, the TRA's document from August 2014 indicates that, for all the endeavour—most of it excellent; I could argue at the perimeter on the things like the *Skywhale* and some of the events—we did not capitalise on it. Did people come and enjoy themselves? Yes, they did. Did we capitalise on that? I do not think so.

Some of the recent numbers from the TRA indicate significant downturn. The peak year still seems to be about 2003. I am not sure we are back to the 2003 numbers yet. For that period—2003 to 2014—the Labor Party have been in control and the numbers have declined or not grown in real terms. They must accept responsibility for that. When I suggest, as I do in the motion, that the minister tell us what the government will do to restore tourism sector confidence, it is a genuine endeavour to say, “Let's work out how we capitalise on what we all know to be the excellent assets of the ACT.”

Mr Rattenbury finished with a reference to the Gold Coast. He is right; we are not the Gold Coast, and that is great. If I want to go to the Gold Coast, I will go to the Gold Coast. If I want to go to New York, I will go to New York. I want people to come to Canberra because it is Canberra. It is the home of the Australian story. Our treasures are here. Our memories are here. Our places of pilgrimage are here. With that in mind, I commend Brendan Nelson and the commonwealth government for the excellent work they have done in refurbishing the World War I gallery. It is sensational. The Australian War Memorial is the number one building of its kind in the world—I do not believe anybody would dispute that—in its sensitivity, in its telling of the story, its preservation, its memorialisation and its honouring of more than 100,000 Australians who gave their lives. It is excellent. We need to capitalise on that to make sure our own people, our own children, know their story and their history and we use it to mark our place in the world. We can do that through our art and culture. Art and culture are very important as part of the cycle of future economic development, part of Toffler's third wave—agriculture, industry, intelligence.

We have an ability to capitalise on that, if we have a plan to do so and the courage to do so. We can ask others to do it for us or we can do it ourselves. That is the point of this motion. If you look honestly at the numbers, yes, there were big numbers in the centenary year. There was always going to be a bump, but it was about minimising the decline and having a plan to make sure you capitalise on it. Have the tourism body done some smart things? Yes, they have. Have they won some awards? Yes, they have. I acknowledge that, and well done to them, as we have said before. But what we did not do is capitalise. What we did not do is take full advantage of the opportunities the centenary year presented.

The Chief Minister says I am tearing everything down. He says how well he is doing; he has got the region to accept the CBR logo. That is after more than a decade of ignoring the region. Many of the mayors, when they came and saw us in the regional development inquiry, said, “At least Kate Carnell kept her word. She'd ring; she'd talk to us. She'd find out what we wanted. If Jon Stanhope or if the ACT Labor government bothered to even talk to us it was to tell us what we were doing wrong. They didn't listen.”

Congratulations, Chief Minister Gallagher, in finding the region two years ago. Congratulations, Chief Minister, on lending them the logo. It is great you have done that, but why was that not part of your initial strategy? Why was that not something that was done right from the start? Why did it take you 15 years to find the region? They are the questions that need answering. You can read your list—I have heard the list. I saw you at some of the events, you saw me at some of the events and we enjoyed the events, Chief Minister. But it is about how we capitalise on it and use it as a springboard to the future and how we use what is embodied in our cultural institutions and art and culture. David Throsby, an Australian who is recognised as the world expert on the cultural economy, says it starts with art, artistic creativity and creativity in general. You need those elements before you get to innovation and before you get to technological advancement.

We have in this city the sacred places, the holding places of our art and cultural heritage in this country, whether it be the War Memorial or the National Gallery, the Portrait Gallery, the National Library, the Museum or the Film and Sound Archive. The question I pose is: are we leveraging enough off them to our benefit and to the nation's benefit, which a capital should do? At the same time that you get the dividend, it actually improves your tourist economy and, from that, governments make some revenue out of tourism. Cities get prestige. They improve their reputations. They develop an identity. They break the very thing, the cycle, that Tourism Research Australia says in their visitor perceptions of the ACT that we suffer from.

If you want ecotourism, there are numerous things around the territory that we could look to. If you want Indigenous tourism we have everything from Yankee Hat to Rendezvous Creek to the grooves up behind Calwell. I do not know whether Burley Griffin did it by design or whether he had intimate knowledge of Aboriginal history, but as a theophanist Burley Griffin believed man met the divine in the environment. He has gifted us a great legacy not only in protecting that environment and allowing that environment in our backyards—I have had an echidna and a snake and lots of little field mice and rats in my backyard because I have got a big block and it is lovely—but also in protecting our Indigenous culture and our Indigenous heritage. We need to play to that as well: (1) to protect it and honour it, (2) to enjoy it and (3) to promote it and create jobs in that sector as well.

We have the keeping houses of the country here, and below that we have significant levels of local tourism through art and culture as well. I am not sure we play to those in the way we should. Yet again the Chief Minister has failed to produce any evidence of the benefit of the centenary. He says, “Yes, we had a legacy. We got some lights and we had more events.” Fantastic. I do not think any of us doubt that events under the lights at Manuka are fantastic. But let us look at the numbers and the way they have declined, and the way the return and the spend have declined. How will we arrest that? We now know there is potential in what we did in the 2013 year. We should be able to get back to the 2003 numbers and benefit all of us.

There is dividend in this activity to the ordinary community, because this is the money that helps balance the budget, gets rid of deficits, provides the resources for the teachers and the nurses and the police officers so that all can have improved wellbeing

and a better life in the territory. I believe it is a real asset that we have not played to. I know there are members of the community who believe it is a real asset and that we have never filled up the tank and taken it for a drive. Until we have a minister who takes tourism seriously and who has a real plan to restore confidence and get the sector up and running to its actual capacity, we will— (*Time expired.*)

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 7

Noes 6

Mr Barr
Ms Berry
Dr Bourke
Ms Burch

Ms Fitzharris
Mr Gentleman
Mr Rattenbury

Mr Coe
Mrs Dunne
Mr Hanson
Ms Lawder

Mr Smyth
Mr Wall

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Transport—light rail

MR COE (Ginninderra) (4.44): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the Capital Metro Full Business Case ('the Business Case') estimates the construction cost of Capital Metro at \$783 million;
- (b) the Business Case confirms the ACT Government will proceed with light rail via an Availability Public-Private Partnership;
- (c) the Business Case contemplates the ability for the ACT Government to make an upfront capital contribution towards the project;
- (d) on 19 February this year, the Chief Minister speculated that an upfront capital contribution to Capital Metro may be made from the proceeds of the ACT Government's selling of ACTTAB as well as public housing stock;
- (e) the Availability Public-Private Partnership will require the ACT Government to make periodic payments to a private consortium for the immediate 20 years after light rail is constructed (the annual availability payment); and
- (f) the ACT Government has continuously refused to detail the expected value or timing of the availability payment; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) reveal whether they will make an upfront capital contribution to Capital Metro; and
- (b) disclose the revised annual availability payment if such a contribution is made.

I have moved this motion today because it is critically important that Canberra taxpayers understand the full ramifications of this government's decision to go ahead with the ill-conceived light rail project.

My motion today calls on the ACT government to disclose the expected value of the availability payment. For reference, the availability payment will be a periodic payment made by the ACT government to the successful consortium. It is a creature of the public-private partnership, which is, of course, the ACT government's preferred model for procuring the ACT light rail system.

The payment reimburses the consortium for the \$783 million outlay they will use to build the project as well as compensating the consortium for the operation, maintenance and any finance costs they will incur in constructing and operating light rail. It will, of course, also include a profit margin.

The first payment is due to be made after the trams become operational, sometime in 2019 or 2020. From that point, the ACT government will make an annual payment from budget appropriations to the successful light rail consortium for the next 20 years. On the ACT government's own timetable, we will not stop paying for light rail until June 2039, some 23 years from now.

The contract term of 20 years is a very important period to remember. It is not just today's taxpayers who will be footing the bill for light rail; it is the first homebuyers in 2035 who will also be paying for light rail—that is, people who are perhaps not even born will be paying for light rail. Make no mistake: light rail is a taxpayer bill which will transgress generations. It is an intergenerational cost that many future Canberrans will be paying.

The annual availability payment gives us the true cost of light rail. Respected economist David Hughes believes the value of this payment could be approximately \$80 million to \$100 million every year. Of course, if the government proceeds with an extension to Russell, as has been widely speculated, the value of the payment increases, potentially to \$120 million or \$130 million every single year.

This, of course, is a significant impediment to future opportunities in the ACT budget. With so many competing priorities, it is hard to believe any future ACT government will be able to balance the budget and pay for light rail at the same time. Somewhere in the future, service delivery will have to drop, taxes will have to be raised or both. In fact, we are already seeing this. Just over the last couple of years we have seen our city's urban amenity degrade even further, with \$15 million being stripped from ACT Policing. Rates have been significantly increasing since Labor came to power, especially since 2012.

With this impact, it would not be surprising if the government opted for a contract term of 30 years, or perhaps even greater, in order to try and reduce the annual burden of the availability payment, albeit locking even more people into this agreement in the future. This extension to 30 years is contemplated by the Capital Metro Agency. In the full business case, the Capital Metro Agency advises the ACT government:

Should affordability concerns be centred upon annual budget impacts, the proposed operation term may legitimately be lengthened with an attendant reduction in annual availability payments (albeit with an impact on whole of life costs).

In effect, if the mortgage is too big, don't worry about addressing the capital; just extend the loan term.

Still, then, with an availability payment of \$50 million, \$60 million, \$70 million or \$80 million a year, service delivery would surely drop, taxes would be raised or both. This is simply an expense the ACT cannot afford.

Mr Assistant Speaker, \$80 million to \$130 million is a lot of money to spend each and every year on one light rail line. At its highest estimate, the availability payment closes in on the annual payment the ACT government makes to operate ACTION each year. However, whilst ACTION carries over 50,000 people each day, this light rail project will carry only about 15,000 people each day in 2021. Of course, the vast majority of those are coming from the 50,000 people who are currently riding ACTION buses, which is something the full business case and all other studies have shown. Capital metro is, in effect, competing with ACTION more than it is competing with private motor vehicles. It is a huge amount of money to spend on a project which does little to benefit public transport.

My colleagues and I will continue to point out that on the ACT government's own figures, only approximately one per cent of Canberrans will use light rail in the morning peak. In 2021 this government will spend \$80 million to \$100 million for just one per cent of Canberrans to get to work or school. They will be doing that each year for 20 or 30 years.

Sadly, these figures hardly improve for the decades following 2020. In 2021 and 2031, light rail passengers in the morning peak will remain at approximately one per cent of Canberrans, while the availability payment will remain between \$80 million and \$100 million annually. What we are doing is spending up to \$1 billion between 2021 and 2031 so that just one per cent of Canberrans can catch light rail to work or school. These are extremely low figures, perhaps even abysmal, and they prove that this project does not stack up.

Once it is constructed, ACTION buses will clearly be running in competition with light rail. This is specifically mentioned on page 44 of the capital metro full business case, which states:

The proposed restructuring of bus routes will result in no bus routes operating along Flemington Road between Manning Clarke Crescent (North) and Sandford Street, or along Northbourne Avenue between City and Dickson.

This means the red rapid service between Gungahlin and the city will be cancelled. The red rapid service is, as we all know, the best patronised bus service in the ACT. The ACT government's proposal to spend between \$80 million and \$100 million a year in order to remove the best bus in the network is quite flabbergasting.

On the topic of buses, again I remind the government that their own report completed in 2012 argued in favour of a bus lane instead of light rail. As we all know, the report found that a bus lane produced double the benefit-cost ratio of light rail. The beauty of the bus lane is that after construction it would not require availability payments to be made to keep it operating. Maintenance works would pale in comparison with the availability payment, and the road would be used by the ACT government's existing stock of ACTION buses. Why then are the government throwing away \$80 million to \$100 million per year on a project that their own report does not even support? Why is it that the government continue to spend so much money when they have their own report in 2012 suggesting there is a better alternative?

I know that the government are reluctant to release their estimated availability payment. I have moved similar motions before and, of course, have been stonewalled by this government. Such is the level of secrecy surrounding the project that earlier this year I submitted an FOI request to the Capital Metro Agency. I asked the agency to provide any information they had on the availability payment. The response I received was underwhelming. Of the 239 documents held by the agency in regard to the payment, three documents were fully released and seven documents were partially released; 230-odd were withheld.

The 230 documents comprise 10,675 pages. On receipt of the information under FOI, I was provided with 62 pages. There were 10,600 pages that were cited, and I was provided with 62. There were 10,600 pages withheld. And the government talk about transparency and open government! The government expect the opposition to support them in this project when they withhold 10,600 pages in an FOI request. This is the sort of thing that Mr Rattenbury has signed up to.

Somewhere in those 10,675 pages there must have been the government's estimate for the availability payment. The ACT government must surely have a working estimate for the value of the availability payment. To commit to this project without that figure would simply be foolish.

I think it is important to let the minister know that the community is aware of what this liability is. The minister's rhetoric that we do not pay for light rail until it has been built has fooled no-one. It is not an argument that he is going to win. Canberrans know that you do not get things for free. They understand that what the government is proposing is going to cost a huge amount of money, and it is going to be the taxpayers of Canberra that will be paying for it. Eventually the time comes when you have to pay. Unfortunately, under this project, we are going to be paying interest and profit as well.

The opposition is simply asking the government to tell us how much we will be paying. It will be interesting to see what Mr Rattenbury does with regard to this

motion. I do not think there is anything in part (1) which is particularly objectionable. In fact, the government has repeated the vast majority of it. For some reason they did not like (1)(d) or (1)(e), but otherwise it is, in effect, the same. Part (2) calls on the government to “reveal whether they will make an up-front capital contribution to capital metro”. Is there a problem with that? Is there a problem with the ACT Legislative Assembly seeking from the government an answer to whether they will be putting in an up-front capital contribution to light rail? Does Mr Rattenbury or anybody else in the Assembly have a problem with calling on the government to “disclose the revised annual availability payment if such a contribution is made”?

In effect, we are saying: if the government are going to put up capital in 2019 or 2020 and that is going to revise downwards what the availability payment is, according to the business case, how about they let us know. How about they let the people who are going to be paying for this know. Instead, the government have circulated an amendment which is pretty much going to say, “We’ll let Canberrans know how much it’s going to cost after we’ve committed them to it.” That is not good enough. I think it is right and proper that the government tell Canberrans—tell them as early as possible, tell them now, in fact—what will be the annual availability payment for 20 or 30 years.

I firmly believe that Canberrans have not voted for \$80 million to \$100 million every year for 20 or 30 years to pay for light rail. Canberrans deserve the opportunity to have the full cost of this project disclosed to them before giving them the chance to vote on whether they want to take on this liability. That having been said, I call on the ACT government to release their cost estimates for the annual availability payment so that Canberrans can know the real cost of light rail.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (4.58): I move the amendment circulated in my name:

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

“(1) notes:

- (a) the Capital Metro Full Business Case (‘the Business Case’) estimates the construction cost of Capital Metro at \$783 million;
- (b) the Business Case confirms the ACT Government will proceed with procuring the light rail via a Public Private Partnership;
- (c) the Business Case contemplates the ability of the ACT Government to make a capital contribution toward the project;
- (d) the Public Private Partnership will require the ACT Government to make periodic payments to a private consortium for a 20 year period after light rail is constructed and operational; and
- (e) the ACT Government has been transparent and has released the full Business Case of Capital Metro, unlike many other jurisdictions for similar projects; and

(2) notes:

- (a) the ACT Government will outline its position regarding a potential capital contribution to Capital Metro in due course; and
- (b) once the contract is signed and details are able to be released the ACT Government will reveal a contract summary, including project costs.”.

I take the opportunity this evening to talk about the delivery model for light rail stage 1 and the government’s position on making a capital contribution. As members would be aware, the capital metro project is being delivered using an availability public-private partnership model, also referred to as a PPP. Through this model the government is appointing a private sector consortium to design, build, finance, maintain and operate capital metro stage 1 for a 20-year operating period post construction.

The project provides a unique opportunity for organisations to partner with the government in shaping the future of the nation’s capital and delivering the first stage of a new light rail network.

Following an expression of interest process we have two world-leading consortia short-listed to deliver the first stage of Canberra’s light rail network. The two consortia, ACTivate and Canberra Metro, contain some of the world’s largest companies when it comes to delivering major infrastructure projects and operating successful public transport networks. The make-up of each consortium is reflective of the high level of interest and strong market appetite for the project. Both ACTivate and Canberra Metro have a high level of international and national experience in delivering transport projects.

It is often forgotten that capital metro is actually the second major infrastructure project in the ACT to be delivered by a public-private partnership. By delivering this project through a PPP, we can capitalise on the skills and knowledge of the private sector to deliver a world-class light rail system befitting one of the world’s most livable cities.

Under the ACT partnerships framework for public-private partnerships, the ACT can consider making a capital contribution to a PPP if it represents value for money to the territory. The capital metro business case, publicly released last year, identified the potential for a capital contribution to the project. Following approval of the business case, the Capital Metro Agency and Treasury have further investigated the merits of a capital contribution and how this might best be structured.

Recognising light rail as an important infrastructure project for Canberra’s future, the Australian government—that is, the federal Liberal Australian government—has committed to injecting \$60 million to the first stage of capital metro as part of its asset recycling initiative. Under this initiative the Australian government’s contribution, as well as identifying asset sale proceeds, is specifically to be applied to the capital metro project.

Announcements about how these funds will be applied to the capital metro project will be made by the government in due course. However, a capital contribution made once construction is complete and the service is in operation would be an opportunity to ensure the best return on investment. Much like paying a bigger deposit on a house or a car, making a capital contribution to the project is beneficial as it reduces the ongoing payments the government will make for the light rail system once it is fully operational.

To provide meaningful value-for-money benefits for the territory, a contribution would need to be significant but at the same time moderate enough to leave sufficient private finance in the transaction to ensure it attracts competitive financing while ensuring our project delivery partner is continually incentivised to operate the system at a very high standard for our community. Making a contribution at the conclusion of the construction phase ensures the private sector continues to take the construction phase risks, and this is a very important feature of a PPP project.

Importantly, it is worth noting that any capital contribution the government makes will be fully funded, noting the commonwealth's contribution to the project of \$60 million under the asset recycling initiative.

Mr Coe has called, in his motion, for the government to provide details on the cost of the availability payments to be made for the project. The government will not disclose the details of project costs, including any possible level of availability payment, while we are going through a competitive, market-driven procurement process. We will not precondition the bidding process that we are currently engaged in.

The government is committed to being open and transparent. To further demonstrate this commitment, once the light rail contract is signed and details are able to be released, the government will reveal a contract summary, including project costs. Of course, that is in addition to the full release of the business case for this project, something which is rarely done by governments around the country.

The ACT has made unprecedented releases, as I mentioned, such as the capital metro business case, which includes the estimated capital cost of the project, as well as other information on the benefit-cost ratio, operating cost estimates, the public sector comparator for the project, the PPP proxy for the project, and economic analysis. It is highly unusual for any government across Australia to release this level of information in relation to a major infrastructure project.

The business case provides an in-depth analysis of the costs and benefits associated with the project, as well as the procurement and funding options. It also demonstrates that investing in light rail generates a positive economic return for the territory.

As outlined in the business case, the capital metro project delivers nearly \$1 billion worth of benefits to our community. The benefit-cost ratio of 1.2 demonstrates that the project will deliver a net benefit to our community. For every dollar spent, the community receives \$1.20 back in benefits. These include transport, land use, environment, infrastructure and wider economic benefits.

This return was recently confirmed by an independent review undertaken by Professor Derek Scrafton from South Australia, an economist and a former head of the South Australian transport department. He considered that the economic return was as good as it gets.

I have said before, and I will say it again, that the introduction of light rail to the city's transport infrastructure will fundamentally change the way our city grows and Canberrans live. It is a city-shaping project. It recognises that we have to plan and invest in infrastructure for an enormous level of growth over the next 35 years—600,000 residents by the middle of this century.

Light rail is an essential project that our city needs. It is the right thing to do for our community. It is the right thing to do for public transport users, it is the right thing to do for commuters and it is the right thing to do for our future. Capital metro stage 1 is the start of a light rail network that will play a vital role in ensuring Canberra's future as a vibrant, sustainable and livable city.

The government's decision to look closely at a capital contribution to the project is an important consideration in securing the best possible outcome for our city and ensuring the \$1 billion worth of benefits from capital metro are realised for our community. I commend the amendment to the Assembly.

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) (5.06): I will speak briefly to this motion today. The motion asks the government to declare whether it is making a capital contribution to the project via the PPP arrangements, and it also asks for details of availability payments.

This has been discussed in this place several times before, and the answer to it has been explained several times before, particularly with regard to the availability payments. It would be imprudent to talk about availability payments before negotiations are finalised with the successful bidder for the project. It is simply not the way that sophisticated commercial arrangements between government and private entities are undertaken—unless, of course, we want to jeopardise the negotiations and therefore possibly fail to secure the best possible price for the ACT government.

The government have gone with an approach that is a competitive process. We want the consortia to be competitive, to be innovative and we invite them to come to government with a range of possible options. So, rather than simply spelling out what the government wants, there is a deliberate approach here to allow for the brilliance of competitive processes, to allow for the government to get the best possible outcome on behalf of the Canberra community.

I would usually never believe that anyone would want the outcome for Canberrans where we essentially lead with our chin and remove that competitive component. That is obviously what the government is seeking here. Perhaps I should be more open minded about that, because I know Mr Coe has indicated he will do

anything he can to stop this project going ahead. This is just another example of where he wants the government to give up any commercial advantage it might have by putting out in the first place what it expects.

I will be supporting Mr Corbell's amendment today. In many parts it simply reframes Mr Coe's motion. In the first part it picks up the factual statements that Mr Coe has made and it then indicates that the government will provide information at the appropriate time. This has been the approach of the government so far. I believe the government has been highly transparent. Mr Corbell spoke about the public release of the business case and how unusual that is. I certainly congratulate Mr Corbell on undertaking such a transparent approach on a document like that. It is important that we are as up-front as possible with the community without giving away the commercial advantage that the government might have. The flipside of that is that it does allow determined opponents more opportunities to run down the project, which we have clearly seen.

I felt there was a level of internal inconsistency in Mr Coe's motion, because in paragraph (1)(e) he talks about the government being required to make periodic payments over a 20-year period after light rail is constructed—the annual availability payment. He goes on to say that the government has continuously refused to detail the timing of the availability payment. It does seem to be a somewhat inconsistent approach, in that the government has been perfectly up-front that there will be an availability payment over 20 years. Mr Coe talked about dates in his speech today, and yet he made that observation in his motion. Perhaps I have misunderstood it but it does seem to me to be internally inconsistent.

I will be supporting Mr Corbell's amendment. It makes it quite clear that the government will make the information available—once it is available. You cannot give something you do not have. That is, I think, the point of Mr Corbell's amendment—that once the information is available it will be provided.

I will conclude by reiterating the sum of my earlier speech today when we discussed light rail—that it is an excellent project for our city. As a Green, I strongly believe in prioritising public transport, infrastructure that uses renewable energy, livable and sustainable cities, and policies that plan for the future. This project helps to achieve all of these.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 7

Noes 6

Ms Berry
Dr Bourke
Ms Burch
Mr Corbell

Ms Fitzharris
Mr Gentleman
Mr Rattenbury

Mr Coe
Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne
Ms Lawder

Mr Smyth
Mr Wall

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Dr Bourke): The question is that the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (5.14): I thank Mr Corbell and Mr Rattenbury for their contributions to this debate. I am, of course, disappointed that the government once again is refusing to reveal exactly what the impact is going to be on taxpayers with regard to this light rail project.

It is interesting that Mr Rattenbury should say that, in effect, we need competitive tension in this project; therefore, we cannot say what the cost is going to be. In effect, the business case reveals the cost. The business case reveals the cost as \$783 million. Pages 85 and 86 of the business case go into some detail about the risk associated with the project, the life cycle costs, operating costs et cetera. So we already have those costs in the business case. That is how we got to \$783 million. It is that figure which is the figure which would have led to the most enterprise with regard to submissions.

They actually disclose in that cost, which I think was the right thing to do, a lot of the other costs which are subsets of that and which are secondary. Therefore, I do not know why the government would go to the extent of publishing the \$783 million figure but not be in a position where they can disclose whether they can make an up-front capital contribution as contemplated in the report and, if they do make an up-front capital contribution, what the impact will be on the availability payment. The business case talks about this as a scenario. This is not a new situation. This is something which is spelt out in some detail in that report. Therefore, it is right and proper that the government say exactly what the availability payment will be.

Of course, this year's budget and the outyears should give us a pretty good indication as to whether there will be a capital contribution or not. However, as has been the case with past budgets, the government has been unwilling to stipulate what the actual cost of light rail is. I would not be at all surprised if we see nothing other than staff costs for future years, for the outyears, in this year's budget, because that is, in effect, what we have seen in the last couple of years as well. The government are concerned about the cost of light rail. They must be. That is why they continually refuse to outline what the 20 or 30-year cost of light rail is going to be.

Once again I am disappointed that the government, including Mr Rattenbury, refuse to tell the people of Canberra, the people who will be paying for light rail—not using it but paying for it—exactly what the cost will be. I urge members to continually put pressure on the government to do what they can to make this government publish the cost of this light rail project so that all Canberrans can make an informed decision about whether or not it is in our best interests.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Economy—innovation

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (5.17): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) Canberra's concentration of outstanding education and research institutions, entrepreneurs, innovative high growth businesses and large multinationals is positioning our city as a globally recognised hub of entrepreneurial success—a clever, connected and creative city that attracts companies, ideas and talent through its innovation and entrepreneurial excellence;
- (b) the CBR Innovation Network has been established to provide a network linking businesses and entrepreneurs to services, facilities and stakeholders that will accelerate their innovation and growth;
- (c) by integrating, aligning and further developing Canberra's diverse innovation activities, the Innovation Network will play a major role in accelerating innovation and growth to maximise wealth creation and the transformation of the ACT economy;
- (d) twelve regional NSW local councils across the Alpine, Coastal and Southern Tablelands have joined forces with the ACT Government as part of the Canberra Region brand;
- (e) the new regional brand will provide an exciting platform upon which local areas can promote their competitive strengths to potential visitors, investors, students, residents and businesses;
- (f) the passage of the University of Canberra Amendment Bill 2015 has given the University greater clarity of purpose and authority in creating and pursuing commercial opportunities; and
- (g) the expansion of UC's functions to include cultural, sporting, professional, technical and vocational services to the community; and the commercial development or exploitation of its property, will create a greater range of economic opportunities for the UC, effectively broadening its revenue base and lessening its dependence on Government funding and support; and

(2) calls on the Legislative Assembly to continue to promote economic development in the Canberra region by supporting innovation, regional development opportunities and growth in the higher education sector.

This motion highlights how Canberra's outstanding education and research institutions, entrepreneurs, innovative high-growth businesses and large multinationals are positioning our city as a globally recognised hub of entrepreneurial success, a clever, connected and creative city that attracts companies, ideas and talent through its innovation and entrepreneurial excellence. I call on all members of the Assembly to promote the dynamic economy of Canberra. Confidence in our economy breeds more confidence and economic success. I will show how this Labor government is investing in our diversified economy and promoting confidence in the ACT economy. Meanwhile, the federal Liberal government's economic twists, turns and total reverses are making them a laughing stock.

In 2012 the ACT government launched growth, diversification and jobs, a business development strategy for the ACT. We outlined a vision for growing Canberra's economy, building on a commitment to public sector growth and jobs. The three strategic imperatives are fostering the right business environment, supporting business investment and accelerating business innovation.

Under these three themes, the ACT government has undertaken a range of actions to successfully stimulate the economy and provide confidence in the face of sustained federal cuts to spending and jobs. Our actions have included developing and growing emerging enterprises, entrepreneurs and sectors to expand our economic base and grow local employment; promoting Canberra to the region, the nation and the world to attract tourism and business investment; continuing the development of the CBR brand; conducting ongoing regulatory reform and red tape reduction; and progressing our payroll tax reform agenda. We are also attracting foreign investment and skills through the niche programs for foreign investors and skilled and business migrants; growing our export capabilities, including partnering with our universities to support their growth and international outreach; nurturing grassroots sports and elite athletes to solidify our reputation as a centre of sporting excellence; supporting events and activities that maximise the value of the visitor economy in the ACT; and supporting development and presentation of the arts in the ACT.

Despite the recent Commonwealth of Australia public service job cuts, the unemployment rate stands at 4.3 per cent, 1.8 percentage points below the national rate of 6.1 per cent. We continue to attract people to the world's most livable city, with 4,400 people moving to Canberra in the last year. Our participation rate of 70.2 per cent is still 5.4 percentage points higher than the national average of 64.8 per cent. GDP growth has averaged 2.6 per cent per year since 2008, and in 2014 the economy continued to expand, albeit by 0.7 per cent—a good outcome, given the ongoing commonwealth job cuts.

An important component of our growth has been our ability to consistently grow our service exports. Over the last five years growth in our service exports has averaged approximately 8½ per cent per annum. We have maintained these strong results because the government's strategy has been to make targeted investments in activities that maximise opportunities for diversifying our economic base.

One of our greatest steps in accelerating business innovation is the creation of the CBR Innovation Network. The network brings together our world-class research institutions—ANU, NICTA, CSIRO, the University of Canberra and the University of New South Wales Canberra—as foundation members, along with a substantial amount of business expertise from a broad range of industries. The vision for the network is to link businesses and entrepreneurs to accelerate innovation and growth to maximise wealth creation. It will create an innovation ecosystem where young companies can grow, innovate and reach their potential, overcoming the barriers that may have stifled growth and innovation.

Of course, the ACT is not an economic island on its own. We are part of a regional economy and community. To bolster our attractiveness as a destination for visitors,

trade and investment, both the ACT government and the business community have been working with our cross-border counterparts. On Monday in Queanbeyan the Chief Minister launched the Canberra region brand—a single brand for the combined south-eastern New South Wales and ACT region. He was joined by the Hon John Barilaro, New South Wales Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Skills and Minister for Small Business, and Councillor John Shaw, chair of the Canberra Region Joint Organisation, along with a host of regional champions displaying the rich diversity of our region.

The Canberra region includes the New South Wales councils of Bombala, Boorowa, Cooma-Monaro, Eurobodalla, Goulburn Mulwaree, Harden, Palerang, Queanbeyan, Snowy River, Upper Lachlan, Yass Valley, Young, and the ACT government. It showcases the city, the coast, the alpine region and the tablelands.

The Canberra region is growing in importance to all of us. Our economic fortunes are increasingly shared. If the region is doing well, so is Canberra—and vice versa. Cooperation in health is helping to deliver high quality, efficient services for our communities. Snowy Hydro SouthCare is emblematic of that high quality service across the Canberra region. By working together, we have a stronger collective voice to push for investment in important transport infrastructure and other priorities, particularly investment in the Barton, Kings, Monaro and Princes highways, the Lachlan Valley Way and Kosciusko Road, as well as digital infrastructure capability. Each investment enables greater economic development opportunities across the whole Canberra region.

The Canberra region is greater than the sum of its parts. That diversity which I spoke about—coast, alpine, tablelands, city—is a major asset for us. In marketing terms, our diversity is our unique selling point. This diversity of our Canberra region provides countless stories to be told under the Canberra region brand.

The tablelands, an agriculturally rich area that supports traditional and alternative farming and horticultural industries of the Canberra region, leads the Canberra region's investment in renewable energy, supported by new technologies being developed in our own region. The natural resources of the alpine area underpin the economic activity in the area, greatly contributing to the Canberra region's tourism offerings. The coast, a wonderful place that many Canberrans often enjoy visiting, has a strong focus on tourism, agriculture and fisheries, and the port of Eden's growth will support the advancement of other key transport centres in the Canberra region, including Canberra airport.

The city of Canberra provides employment, services, retail and commercial activities, along with major sporting and cultural events for Canberra region residents and visitors. Our educational institutions provide opportunities to retain the youth within our region. Importantly, the Canberra region brand provides a strong platform upon which we can promote our competitive strengths to potential visitors, investors, students, residents and businesses.

As a combined Canberra region, we are forecast to grow to over 800,000 by 2030. Our economic prosperity will continue to be closely linked. Collectively, we need to

enhance our economic development opportunities. The Canberra region's critical population mass can be used to our advantage. We have already seen this with Costco and IKEA taking into account the regional population in their decisions to establish a presence in the Canberra region. Similarly, our advocacy for direct international flights into Canberra is based on the Canberra region population and beyond.

The Canberra region brand provides opportunities to promote the region's identity in national and international markets. The partnership between the ACT government and the Canberra Region Joint Organisation, representing those 12 councils of south-eastern New South Wales, will use the Canberra region brand to demonstrate the importance and significance of the collective regional footprint. This will be done nationally and internationally, profiling those tourism, export and economic diversities. The Canberra region brand provides a solid platform upon which the region can promote its competitive strengths to potential visitors, investors, students, residents and businesses.

Our higher education and research sectors together can play a valuable role in our economy. Together they currently add \$2.75 billion to our economy each year and support almost 16,000 jobs. Canberra is one of the world's top student cities. We have more than 44,000 students across the five universities and the Institute of Technology here. Growth in this city can help drive innovation and commercialisation, foster more employment opportunities and help us attract more of the best and brightest to Canberra and our region.

One in nine of our residents works or studies at a university in the ACT. This indicates one reason why we have such a well-qualified and skilled labour market and why we are well placed to become a hub for entrepreneurial and innovation excellence. Whilst the government is keen to foster growth and investment across all higher education and research institutions in the ACT, it has recently driven reforms to get the University of Canberra onto a stronger path of growth and prosperity.

The passage of the University of Canberra Amendment Bill means UC is now able to provide cultural, sporting, professional and commercial services to the community. It is able to generate even more economic activity and expand its services for people living and working in Belconnen, in my electorate, as well as the wider ACT and Canberra region. The university is helping to build Canberra's reputation as a smart, connected and creative city. The introduction later this week of a further set of amendments to planning and unit title arrangements for the University of Canberra will better place the university to attract and invest up to a billion dollars in new facilities and services on its campus.

As each higher education institution in the ACT is expanding and building in areas of excellence, the overall winners are the community, our community of Canberra, and the businesses that set up here to capitalise on the steady stream of graduates and our well-educated workforce in fields as diverse as engineering, defence and cyber security at UNSW; theology at Charles Sturt University; education and health services at the Catholic University; supercomputing, law, medicine, public policy and other fields at ANU; or even government, business, construction and health services at UC; and of course renewable energy at the CIT, just to name a sample from each of those institutions.

These examples show the importance of this government and this Assembly continuing to promote economic development in the Canberra region by supporting innovation, regional development opportunities and growth in the higher education sector.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (5.31): I thank Dr Bourke for moving this motion today. I welcome the opportunity to speak to it and to outline the action the government is taking to foster a diverse and resilient territory economy. Continuing to grow and diversify our economy is more important now than it has ever been, particularly given the circumstances we find ourselves in, due in no large part to some pretty poor decisions taken by the Abbott government, some of which, pleasingly, were reversed last night.

Growing the economy has long been our major objective in government. This is demonstrated through the business development strategy that I released a number of years ago. Earlier this year I was pleased to report to the Assembly that we have completed all 26 actions that were set out in that first phase of the strategy. The relatively strong position of our economy in 2015 compared to the mid-1990s, even with the loss of jobs as a result of the commonwealth job cuts, is testament to the foresight of the ACT government in fostering a resilient and adaptable private sector.

Over the three years that the business development strategy has been in place our city has gone through a transformation. It has come together and worked together in a time of unprecedented constraint to strategically work towards our shared goals for economic development and growth. We are doing more with less and achieving some incredible results that are putting the city on a path to a very prosperous future.

Industry partnerships have been at the heart of the government's approach to economic development. This approach has shaped our policy and program responses to reflect local needs and issues. It has been a model that has led to the delivery of a number of programs in partnership with the private sector. We have successfully worked together to deliver programs across a diverse spectrum of the territory economy, including ScreenACT, Canberra BusinessPoint, the ACT Exporters Network, ANU Connect Ventures, the Digital Canberra Challenge and CollabIT.

These programs have been delivered in partnership with a range of organisations: the ACT Screen Industry Association, the ANU, the Canberra Business Chamber and the Australian Information Industries Association. More recently, we have worked with Canberra's leading research and higher education institutions, including the ANU, UC, UNSW Canberra, NICTA and the CSIRO to create the CBR Innovation Network. This type of partnership is unprecedented in Australia. It is a sign of the commitment and confidence we all have in Canberra's innovation system, with each of these institutions in the network as well as the government having contributed funding to support the venture.

While the contribution of funding by participants to the initiative has been an important part of the innovation network, the ability to leverage the depth and breadth

of expertise and trusted relationships that exist within the business community has also been significant. Although it is less than a year old, there are already strong signs that the CBR Innovation Network is having a very positive effect on local enterprise.

The Griffin accelerator program, a group of seasoned local entrepreneurs that invest and guide innovative start-ups, has just closed its 2015 application round. It received 84 applications, more than double the number received in the previous round. We have also worked closely with industry and the various trade and investment missions that we have conducted internationally, including to China, Singapore, Indonesia, New Zealand and the United States.

We are in the final phase of developing the next stage of our business development strategy that will guide us over the next few years. We are committed to building on and utilising the innovation structures and arrangements that we have been developing over the last three years.

The next phase of the strategy will be focused on supporting activities that facilitate innovation and achieve the development potential of high growth companies through the CBR Innovation Network, promoting Canberra as a destination for investment through Invest Canberra, realising the goals of the tourism 2020 strategy, and further work to reduce red tape and business costs through the red tape reduction task force and the excellent work of Access Canberra.

The next phase of our business development strategy will facilitate government working even more closely with our research institutions, businesses and the broader community with a shared vision of optimism but one also of determination. Along with our increased industry partnerships, the government is strengthening our collaboration with regional councils to enhance economic development opportunities.

Just this Monday, the ACT government and 12 regional and New South Wales councils came together to form the single brand, the Canberra region. Regional councils that are joining the ACT government in this partnership include Young, Boorowa, Yass Valley, Harden, Goulburn Mulwaree, the Upper Lachlan, Palerang, Queanbeyan, Cooma-Monaro, Snowy River, Bombala and Eurobodalla shires.

The Canberra region brand will adopt the use of the CBR logo, which will be integrated into existing branding used by all of those local councils. The diversity of this region—coast, alpine, tablelands and Canberra city—is a major asset for the region. In marketing terms, our diversity is our unique selling point. There are few other places in Australia, or indeed the world, where you can spend the morning skiing in the mountains and then dine on oysters by the ocean in the evening.

Canberra is much stronger because of its region. As a region our population is forecast to grow to over 800,000, and up to a million people, over the next generation—within the lifetime of people in this chamber. This critical population mass can certainly be used to everyone's economic advantage. There is no doubt that without the strength of the region we would not have been able to attract businesses like Costco and IKEA, major international players, into our region. Our region is big enough, diverse enough and powerful enough to support these sorts of global businesses.

Similarly, our advocacy for direct international flights into Canberra is based on the region's population and beyond. I certainly look forward to the ACT government's ongoing participation in the Canberra region initiative and continuing to develop the Canberra brand. These initiatives truly reflect the collective identity of our region.

I commend Dr Bourke for explicitly linking entrepreneurship and business with our higher education sector and in particular the actions that the ACT government is taking to allow our world-class higher education providers to create partnerships with commercial enterprises. It is of great regret that the desire for these collaborative partnerships is not supported in a bipartisan way in this place.

Nevertheless, the government will forge ahead, because it is the right thing to do for Canberra. The first stage of this collaboration and the work that we are encouraging was through the University of Canberra Amendment Bill that was passed earlier this year. It certainly clarifies the university's governance arrangements and also, importantly, puts it on a much more assertive footing when commercial partnership opportunities arise. The government will bring forward the next stage of reforms as early as tomorrow to facilitate \$1 billion in new investment, development, expansion and job creation on the University of Canberra campus and in the surrounding community.

Let me be very clear about our intent: we want our universities to be able to aggressively compete with their competitors in Australia and around the world for investment, for new students, for the best academics, the best researchers and the strongest possible commercial partners.

In an emerging global knowledge economy, standing still, shuffling our feet, looking down on Canberra's development and blocking sustainable revenue streams for our university sector, as some have proposed, simply means stagnation, leaving their future in the hands of Christopher Pyne. That, I am sure, is something no-one in this place wants to see happen. Other universities will pass our universities on world rankings. We simply cannot allow this to happen. We will work with our universities. We will make our campuses attractive and vibrant.

We have seen a very practical example of this occur in partnership with the ANU in city west, just across from this place. It has made our city better, it has made the university stronger, it has attracted more students and it has been a very positive outcome for Canberra. Now it is time to support the University of Canberra in their next phase of development—the development of their sporting commons, their health precinct, their innovation precinct—and to provide more residential options on the campus.

Together, this suite of initiatives and reforms provides the right business environment and plays to our key competitive strengths to accelerate innovation and investment in the territory. Government, our business partners and universities will come together to build a stronger and more resilient Canberra economy. (*Time expired.*)

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (5.41): I thank Dr Bourke for putting the motion on the notice paper. It is another very interesting motion from Dr Bourke. It is interesting

that we call on the ACT Legislative Assembly to continue to promote economic development in the Canberra region by supporting innovation, regional development opportunities and growth in the higher education sector. Why do we not just call on the Assembly to continue to promote economic development in the Canberra region? Why limit it? We have a Minister for Economic Development who has found education, who latterly came to the game on diversification, and who in reality very rarely delivers.

We had some glib lines and phrases. We had a little bit of blame, a little bit of finger pointing and some mud throwing. But at the heart of it was the word “bipartisan”. The Chief Minister says, “How dare those Canberra Liberals not be bipartisan on everything I announce?” It is because you are not bipartisan, Chief Minister. “Bipartisan” means both groups working together. But your idea of bipartisanship is that you make an announcement and we tug our forelocks at your graciousness and fall at your feet and say, “Oh, wonderful Chief Minister, yes, you’ve hit the nail on the head again.”

We have seen it several times. Just this year the Chief Minister announced a bipartisan inquiry into gay men, except that he forgot to tell the other partner. This is so typical of the way this Chief Minister and this government behave. On the issue of regional development and regional cooperation and on assisting business, they come late to the game.

It is interesting that it was the former Liberal government that got EPIC up and running. We scooped the pool on funding from the then Howard government and then we scooped the pool on the NICTA funding and got NICTA here, because we understand innovation and its connection to higher education. But this lot opposite are late to the game. It is not until 2012 that I think we actually heard a member talk about diversification from that side. It was not until 2012 that they actually had a document that looked at diversification. That document was a rehash, a relaunch, a rename, a rebadge of all the things they got rid of from the previous Liberal government. Mr Barr signed up to this with a single capricious stroke of a pen. He signed away and gutted them all in the government business programs in 2006.

He says that we should all be supporting his endeavours at UC. Minister, why are you not supporting all business by creating a level playing field and giving them all a fair go? You have to question why UC needs special treatment under the planning laws to reach their potential so that—what is it that Dr Bourke says?—they can “exploit their property”. Yes, in his motion, he refers to:

... the expansion of UC’s functions to include cultural, sporting, professional, technical and vocational services to the community; and the commercial development or exploitation of its property ...

Why should UC get a special consideration in that regard? Why should not all of Canberra’s business be able to work on the same playing field as all of the special cases that the government is now putting in place? Mr Rattenbury talked about the party of equity and fairness for all. Yet we now have a different planning regime for capital metro, for the Mr Fluffy houses and for UC through very different

circumstances, but all of which indicate that Mr Barr's time in planning was a disaster and prove that his time as the economic development minister is an ongoing disaster, because to get things going we have to cut special deals or change the law for special groups.

Why should not all of those small business people in the ACT—and, where we can, in the region that Bruce Billson and Tony Abbott supported last night by giving them a fair go and urging them to get on—be given the same fair go by this minister? He fails to answer that question. His planning regime and his business support regime are a disaster, and that is why you have to have special zones.

Are we in support of UC? Absolutely we are in support of UC. But, in effect, what the changes to the UC act do is to give them the equivalent of almost two suburbs. UC has plans for 3,300 units on its site. Call it two suburbs. This is two suburbs worth of development in Belconnen at a time when the government has sold blocks to other potential developers who do not have the same set of rules. We are yet to be told the tax arrangements and how that will occur. We are yet to be told what the variation to the territory plan will be and what that will mean.

The Labor Party say that they are here for everybody—equality for all!—except where they play favourites. They are playing favourites here. Why not give every business in the ACT that opportunity? It is a question the minister ignores and the minister never answers. I do not know why. I do not know why he would not do that. Your own legislative amendments prove your planning system is failing. You only have to look at some of the case studies. The business community has talked about commence and complete. In one quick breath at a Property Council luncheon, the minister got rid of that. He said that all the fees were going—until he could not get it through cabinet.

Of course, then we have the lease variation charge, which is an absolute disaster. You only have to look at some of the examples. For instance, the Manhattan apartments would not have gone ahead under the lease variation arrangements. They would have cost the territory some \$27 million on the loss of stamp duty, on the change-of-use charge, on the GST payable, the increase in rating revenue and on the stamp duty. It is \$27 million they would have lost because it could not possibly happen under LVC. That was before approximately \$80 million went into the cost of refurbishment. That is before you add in removalists, furniture sales, curtain packages et cetera that come with that sort of development. Why should not everybody have the opportunity to do that?

Look at property, for instance, on Northbourne Avenue. The government are touting that they are going to get all this return from capital metro coming down Northbourne Avenue. We are told that all that return is coming. But that could happen now. In respect of Northbourne Avenue, we did the planning, the rezoning for that, in, I think, 2000 or 2001. But it is the government's regimes in place that stop this happening.

Take the example of a block on Northbourne Avenue. Let us call it a reasonably large three-storey block of some 5,705 square metres. If it was ripe for redevelopment, would it go ahead under the current scheme? No, it cannot. The lease variation charge

for the redevelopment of a project of that sort if you put in, say, 180 units at \$60,000 per unit is \$10.8 million. The value of existing land is \$3 million. That brings it down to \$7.8 million. The LVC at 75 per cent is \$5,000,850.

If we make some assumptions and if it does not go ahead, the government lose stamp duty at approximately \$4 million; GST under the marginal scheme pay back when it comes back via the Grants Commission at, say, \$7 million; increasing rate revenue, \$2.85 million; and stamp duty on the resale of units in the first five years—call it \$1 million. It comes to \$14.85 million, plus the amenity they are trying to create and all the things—

Mr Barr: What is the developer profit?

MR SMYTH: There he goes, “What’s the developer profit?” The man who hates profit; the man who hates the creation of wealth and assets; the man who does not believe people should get ahead so they can re-employ and invest. This is the old Labor Party view: “You rich developers, you have all got bad backs because you are lying on those rolls of \$1,500 notes in your mattresses because you are hoarding it away.” The government gets a fair cut but it is what is lost that is the problem.

Mr Barr: So you’re committing to abolishing all of these taxes, are you?

MR SMYTH: There you go: you interrupt; you throw assertions across the chamber. I have not said anything of that kind, and you know it.

Mr Barr interjecting—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Ms Lawder): Order, Mr Barr!

MR SMYTH: I am just showing you—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Through the chair, thank you, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: We have still got some time to put our policies in the field. We will release them progressively, as you know.

Mr Barr: You have had 15 years.

MR SMYTH: I have had 15 years of agony watching you screw up the economy. But these are examples. I did not put these examples together; these are put together by professionals in the field that show your regime is failing. That is why you are now giving the University of Canberra a fair go. Nobody else gets a fair go, because it cannot happen under that which you have foisted on this city, in cahoots with your Greens colleagues. That is the problem. Why aren’t we supporting all, with one planning system for all? Why do we have different sectors in this way?

Minister, what you have done has failed. You signed away all those programs in 2006. It is the very same government that this year promised \$4.4 million to ACT businesses but really only about \$600,000 goes to direct support. The CBR network that

Dr Bourke talks about—where is that money coming from? What has been forgone to allow that to happen? You should not make those implications, Dr Bourke. You are simply parroting Mr Barr’s economic delusions.

Time and again, the government, when they talk about economic development, are pushing nothing more than extreme partisanship couched as fiscal policy, supplemented by the Treasurer’s touristic comprehension of economics. How can we state this any more clearly? The Greens-Labor mob across the floor is not the fountain of innovation and new business thinking, and we have proved that.

From 1995 to 2001 the then Carnell Liberal government changed the face of this city by going after IT development, EPIC and NICTA.

Mr Barr interjecting—

MR SMYTH: Yes, we got some things wrong, and we have never shied away from that, but we were trying. At least we tried.

Mr Barr: That’s the first time you’ve ever admitted that.

MR SMYTH: No; I have said that many times to you. You just do not listen. That is your problem. What we have is this: a decade after these guys came to government—

Mr Barr interjecting—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Barr, you have had your opportunity to speak.

MR SMYTH: It is simply 12 years too late. They talk about it, but let us look at the list. You need to look at what Dr Bourke’s Treasurer has said about business thus far. When it comes to jobs, Mr Barr said he does not care where the employment comes from, regardless of whether they are in the public sector or the private sector. He said:

We will continue to pursue a set of tax policies that encourage private sector employment growth.

Yet we know that many are complaining about his tax policy and the extra impost it is putting on—not just on tripling rates for private dwellings but in the business community as well. What did the Property Council say in South Australia? “Yes, let’s have tax reform—anything but what they did in the ACT.”

Now we have his budget spending:

The higher borrowings in the forward years are partly due to the future works provision for capital projects, which has been increased to account for some high value projects for which budgets are either yet to be settled ...

Read “capital metro”. With that, we have a deficit that has blown out from \$332.8 million to \$770 million, with net debt skyrocketing by 30 per cent. Yes, Mr Fluffy is in there, but if you take the Mr Fluffy effect out, the budget got blown anyway.

When it comes to spending on vital infrastructure that our economy needs and the business community say they need—if you listened to the business community, you would get this—like a new convention centre, Mr Barr says:

We have not taken ownership of the project. Nor do I believe we should.

When it comes to the government's attitude to ACT businesses, Mr Barr had this to offer: "The private sector are not exactly stepping up to the plate at the moment. We are going overseas for that, because we don't think we're going to get that locally." Why aren't you getting it locally? Because you ignore them. Local firms are investing interstate because they cannot get opportunities to invest in the ACT, because your planning system and the way you run business in the ACT is failing them.

Apart from accusing ACT businesses of not stepping up to the plate, where is the government's head space at? Mr Barr is addressing it through a 20 per cent increase in regulatory fees, a \$40 million increase in land tax, a \$40 million increase in payroll tax, a 35 per cent increase in the fire and emergency levy—and it just goes on. The truth is that ACT businesses are bankrolling this government and the government does not respect them. That is the problem.

I look forward to the tabling of the quarterly reports tomorrow, and we will see how that dreadful lease variation charge is really doing.

What is going on? The results are pretty clear. This government's policies are not working for ACT business—for any of them. We only need to look at the last Sensis business index report, which found that the ACT is the least confident state among small and medium enterprises. Although small and medium enterprise attitudes towards the federal government decreased by 11 points, confidence in the ACT government's policies plummeted by 42 points.

Recall almost this time last year when the Frontier Centre for Public Policy released its entrepreneurial index results comparing state, territory and provincial government business policies in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Overall the ACT government's policies were ranked last amongst jurisdictions in Australia—this is your government, Dr Bourke, that you laud and you praise—and last against all jurisdictions across the three countries. This centre's key considerations included whether government policies encourage or diminish the capacity for individuals to start up business.

There is the litmus test. This government has failed. What we have is a shepherd who should be caring for his flock. A good shepherd does that: he shears his sheep. Mr Barr simply skins them alive.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (5.56), in reply: I thank the Chief Minister for his contribution to this debate listing the many and varied business development programs supported by this ACT government.

As a former member of the Capital Region Area Consultative Committee and the succeeding Regional Development Australia ACT Committee, I am delighted by the recent development of the Canberra region brand that strongly works on our relationship with our surrounding local councils to share our ideas and to exploit the synergy of our different strengths, working together to build more opportunity for all.

Mr Smyth's diatribe—that is the only word I have to describe it—does not have much to say on this motion about the CBR Innovation Network, which is disappointing. He does not have much to say about the Canberra region brand, which I am sure anybody in the region who is particularly interested in regional development, as I am, also finds disappointing. He reserves most of his vitriol for an attack on the University of Canberra, which, as it is a major employer and grower of our local economy, supporting local jobs and providing local business with education and training, is astonishingly disappointing.

I am going to talk a bit more about something a little more positive. I am going to talk about more of what the ACT government have been doing, in particular the close work we have been doing with community-focused enterprises to harness the growth opportunities presented to us by being one of the first sites in Australia to implement the national disability insurance scheme. In order to support that sector and realise those opportunities, the government have earmarked \$12.5 million in funding for community sector development.

Canberra leads the nation in experience with the NDIS, as one of the first trial sites and the first site to transition all eligible people to the scheme. This translates to a valuable first-mover advantage for Canberra-based businesses, including training institutions such as the CIT, which I have talked about before, which is already a leading national provider of NDIS-related training skills and development. This competitive edge, combined with Canberra's existing strengths in health industries, can become a driver of our growth in years to come.

In addition, ongoing implementation of the NDIS will better support people with a disability to participate in the workforce, while demand for new goods and services and the workers needed to deliver them will drive investment in skills and training for a changing workforce.

Another area we are benefitting from is being early adopters of renewable energy. A fortnight ago the Minister for the Environment launched our new strategy to bring together industry and research sectors to accelerate the development of a renewable energy industry in the ACT. The strategy will support industry to develop the next generation of renewable energy technologies, including the creation of a renewable energy precinct and test berth facilities. This is a major opportunity to create jobs and build a stronger, cleaner and more robust economy.

I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to.

At 6.00 pm, in accordance with standing order 34, the motion for the adjournment of the Assembly was put.

Adjournment

Karinya House—Mother's Day ball

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (6.00): Mr Gentleman spoke last night about Karinya House, home for mothers and babies, and their successful fundraising event last weekend. I would like to add my voice of appreciation to Karinya House for the work they do and for the extraordinary success of their fundraising event. As members would know, I have been closely associated with Karinya House since before it was established. When the proposal was put to raise the \$300,000 that was needed to establish Karinya House in the late 1990s, I was sceptical that the community could raise the funds and I was very pleasantly proven wrong. I often am proven wrong, and on this occasion I was pleased to be proven wrong.

The event on Friday night was at the Canberra Southern Cross Club, a long-time supporter of Karinya House, and their generosity over the years to Karinya House and their fundraising activities are greatly appreciated. Many members of the public were there, and you could almost have held a meeting of the ACT Legislative Assembly, with Mr Gentleman, Mr Rattenbury, Ms Fitzharris and Mr Smyth all present and very willing supporters on the night. This was a fundraising event and many people generously donated. There is a mystery wine sale every year. It used to be a wine auction, but it has become so popular and there have been so many donations of wine that it has been streamlined. The wines were sourced and donated by Tim Kirk, David Pike, Clonakilla wines, Eden Road Wines, Four Winds Vineyard, Ravensworth wines, Brindabella Hills Winery, Grant Burge Wines and Summerhill Wines.

There were an extraordinarily number of donors on the night: Erica Walker, Susie Kneebone, Teatro Vivaldi Restaurant, Dendy Cinemas, Catholic Church Insurance, Mel Hill Photography, Premier Hotel and Apartments, HotelHotel, Just Cuts, Meagan Wilson, Forrest Hotel and Apartments, Momento Deziens, Peli and Co, gatbi, Madam Assistant Speaker Ms Nicole Lawder MLA, the National Press Club of Australia, Wolfie, the Canberra Southern Cross Club, Electric Firefly Design, Seg Glide Ride, Catherine Bandle, Robyn Rowe Chocolates, Handmade, Poetry in Flowers, and Luisa Lopes. Tim Kirk and Clonakilla wines generously donated a signature magnum of their extraordinary 2013 shiraz viognier. An original artwork by Elizabeth Corkhill-Knight was part of the live auction. Marilyn Fenner donated a surfboard; Helen Cathles donated an extraordinarily beautiful hat, which I did not buy; and Mr Lyle Dunne is going to cook a dinner for a large number of people who paid handsomely for that. Other donors were the UC Brumbies, Corkhill Engineering, Clarke Keller, Christine Waring Designer Millinery, the National Gallery of Australia shop, Annie Pritchard and Big W.

This is a who's who of the community and people who are prepared to support this organisation. I compliment Sara Kelly and her committee, Marie-Louise Corkhill and her staff, for the work they did on the night. The night was ably emceed by Michael Cooney, author, and he also did most of the auctioneering, with the able assistance of Tim Kirk.

I take this time to thank the government and successive ministers for the work they have done in supporting Karinya House over a long time. I am very pleased we have now got to the stage where Karinya House is about to have new purpose-built facilities, but it has been a long time coming. Karinya House was one of the first organisations in the ACT to get money under the stimulus package back in 2008-09, and it has been a long time getting plans approved and getting things drawn. I compliment Mr Rattenbury; when he was the minister I went to him and said, "Minister, this process has been bogged down." He was surprised to discover it was bogged down, but he took the initiative and worked very hard to get it unbogged when it was bogged down in bureaucracy. It has been brought to fruition by Mr Gentleman. I wanted to take the opportunity at the Karinya House function last week to compliment the government, but there were to be no political speeches, so I am doing it here today. Congratulations to Karinya House for the many tens of thousands of dollars they raised for vulnerable women and girls in the community.

Workplace relations

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (6.05): The draft report of the Productivity Commission's workplace relations framework inquiry is due soon. The inquiry, requested by the federal Liberal government, appears to be laying the ground for another attack on workers' rights and raises the spectre of new WorkChoices-like legislation.

Tonight I want to talk about the risks to workers in precarious employment. Precarious employment is generally characterised by indeterminate work hours or being employed as a casual or on a contract basis. Workers in precarious employment are protected by our current system of workers' rights, not only within the ACT but in Australia as a whole. These include the protection of penalty rates in industry awards and protections of workers from unfair dismissal.

Workers in precarious employment are in a unique situation. Their often unstable hours and conditions make them more vulnerable to unemployment and damage to their mental health. This mental health threat to workers in precarious employment is well documented. Having the guarantee of not being unfairly dismissed or having it used as a threat against them gives workers in precarious employment occupations more job security and better mental health as a result. It also ensures less pressure on public health and welfare services, as well as greater social harmony.

The importance that worker protections have for mental wellbeing is shown time and again in academic literature on workplace relations, both in Australia and across the world. For instance, a Victorian study found that workers in precarious employment have greater exposure to psychosocial risks such as low job control, multiple job holding and shiftwork.

Another example is a large study conducted in Australia by Richardson, Lester and Zhang. Using panel data, the study explored the determinants of mental health among participants with varying workplace contracts. The study concluded that it was unclear if workers in precarious employment have better mental health outcomes but that workplace relations protections mitigate negative impacts of those risks on mental health.

Lastly, within countries that have comprehensive employment protections, such as the Scandinavian states, the health of precarious and permanent workers was equivalent. In other words, a supportive labour market in those countries protects precarious workers. While there is a lack of consensus on the causal links of precarious employment on mental health outcomes, the academic studies do not dispute that government policy which protects precarious workers' control over work and job security leads to far better mental health outcomes.

In Australia the range of worker protections that workers are entitled to under Fair Work Australia ensures that people in precarious employment are not threatened by the low job security that removing unfair dismissal protections would result in. The protections this system gives mean that workers are less vulnerable to bullying, exploitation and other forms of workplace mistreatment. If anything, worker protection needs to be more stringent so that psychosocial stress affects as few workers as realistically possible.

The workplace relations framework is a stalking-horse inquiry that the Abbott government will use to try and bring back WorkChoices and strip workers of their rights. Repealing these rights will worsen the mental health of workers in precarious employment, in particular, and put more pressure on welfare and health spending, just as it did when WorkChoices was previously implemented. The current system of workers' rights ensures that workers in precarious employment are happier and less prone to experiencing the higher risks of bullying, work stress and mental illness that workers without these rights suffer.

Motorcycle Riders Association

MR COE (Ginninderra) (6.09): I rise tonight speak about the Motorcycle Riders Association of the ACT, MRA ACT—in particular, their blanket run. The organisation was established in the 1970s to represent motorcycle riders. Its objectives are to represent all riders, irrespective of gender, age, club affiliation or type of powered two-wheeled vehicle they ride, to raise the profile of motorcycling in the broader community, to ensure equal rights to the use of roads and regions of the ACT, to improve road safety for riders and not at the expense of undermining a rider's right to choose, and to engender motorcycling as a safe, efficient and greener alternative form of sustainable transport.

The MRA has been actively involved in lobbying the government on a number of issues relating to motorcycle riding over the years. This includes new and upgraded parking facilities for motorcyclists. The MRA provides advice to government and the community about ways to improve safety for riders, including through upgrades to road signs and training for returning riders.

On Saturday I was pleased to take part in the annual MRA blanket run. For over 30 years the MRA has been bringing together motorcyclists and the community to provide donations of cash, new warm blankets, non-perishable foods and second-hand motorcycle jackets. The donated items are given to the Salvation Army for distribution to people who are homeless or in particular need during the winter months. The funds and donated items provide a good kick-off for the Red Shield Appeal, which is due in just a few weeks time, as I mentioned in the Assembly last week.

The blanket run starts and finishes at Old Parliament House. This year more than 200 riders took part, on what was a particularly cold morning. The generosity of riders was clear, with a large number of items donated and nearly \$4,000 raised. I note that the minister, Mick Gentleman, was also in attendance. The blanket run is not only an opportunity for riders to show their generosity but also an opportunity for them to share with the general public that motorcyclists can ride safely and be a positive part of the community.

I would like to extend my thanks to the police who provided an escort for the ride that day. I would like to place on the record my congratulations and thanks to all those involved in the MRA blanket run, in particular: the executive of the organisation, including the president, Jen Woods; secretary, Nicky Hussey; treasurer, Leanne Patterson; and committee, Trish Holdsworth, Leen Parsons, Leo Farrelly and Sylvia Sinfield. For more information about the Motorcycle Riders Association of the ACT, I recommend that members visit their website at mraact.org.au.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait islanders—youth

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Community Services, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Women and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Social Inclusion and Equality) (6.12): I want to share a speech provided to me by one of the speakers who attended the Just sayin' forum which was hosted by me and Mr Gentleman during Youth Week. It reads:

My name is Klair Carney. I'm a proud Wiradjuri woman. Currently I am working at Northside Community Service as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program Coordinator.

Firstly, I wish to acknowledge the Ngunnawal people, the traditional owners of the land on which this event is taking place. I would like to pay my respects to the elders and custodians both past and present, to the Indigenous and non-Indigenous people here before me and also to the youth of today who I am certain will be our future leaders.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak to you all today, opportunities like this are rare; it is an honour to stand here amongst you all.

The oxford dictionary describes identity as "The fact of being who or what a person or thing is".

I want to ask you all a question, where would you be today without knowing your identity? Think about this for a moment: how would you feel not knowing who you are, where you come from, your heritage or your culture. How would that affect your future?

A fear amongst modern Aboriginal society is that the children will lose their cultural beliefs and not identify strongly enough with Aboriginal society. As in other societies children are vitally important. For us they are the future and hope. We cannot afford to lose our most precious resource. It is necessary that we instil in them a sense of pride in their history and culture so that they too have the chance, like other Australians, of knowing who they are.

Many Indigenous people, not only youth, suffer from a loss of identity and loss of culture. In the Indigenous community the loss of culture, not knowing what land you come from, has a major impact on their lives. Everything about the Indigenous community comes from culture, you learn from your elders, your cousins are all the friends you need, your parents aren't the only one who raise you, but how do you learn and grow if you don't know who your elders are where your family is from, what community you belong to. The damages of this can be seen in today's society with the lack of community and the lack of respect and protocol which comes from these young people not being taught and not knowing their identity.

The intergenerational trauma from the stolen generation is still present in today's society and has many impacts on the way Indigenous people relate to service providers, which causes increases in unemployment, lack of education, issues with authorities and government agencies.

Real change starts with the next generation; education is the foundation for the future, instilling a pride in people to accept who they are, to move closer to closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is where it starts. I believe that teaching Indigenous culture, history, dream time stories and language will educate not only the Indigenous children but all children as the Aboriginal culture is Australia's culture. Having a strong identity and sense of self will help empower the next generation to make the changes in society to move forward to a positive future. It all starts with education.

We are your future, we are our future, and we are the future.

I would like to thank Klair for giving me the opportunity to share her story with members today.

Top Secret Showcase

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (6.15): I would like to talk about an event I attended recently at the Australian War Memorial. It was called the Top Secret Showcase. It was a tourism-related event. Some of my colleagues were there. Mr Doszpot was there, as were Mr Smyth and Mr Barr. They are the members that I am aware of that were there, so if anyone else attended, I apologise.

The event brought people from all over Australia to Canberra to help them consider using Canberra for a convention or a conference purpose. It took them to a range of different tourism venues around Canberra and to a number of dinners, lunches et cetera.

By all accounts it was enormously popular, but for me the highlight was the dinner I attended at the War Memorial. There were maybe 150 people there, and the keynote speech was from Dr Brendan Nelson, who really seems to have adjusted enormously well to his role at the Australian War Memorial.

Dr Nelson gave a speech which covered everything from a bit of his time as a politician to his work overseas as a representative of the Australian government. He told a very funny story about a cat called Nelson and a small boy, ending up with

Dr Nelson on a poster in this small boy's bedroom. He then moved on to talk about the War Memorial and gave a very moving speech about the centenary of Anzac.

When I say "very moving", there was not a murmur or a movement in the room while Dr Nelson was speaking. At the point when he spoke about the sacrifice of the Anzac digger at Gallipoli, towards the end of his speech, there were about 20 people in the room with tears in their eyes. As I have said to some of my colleagues, it was one of the best speeches I have ever heard in my life, and it really gave those visitors to Canberra a great idea of what the War Memorial is all about. It is not about celebrating war; it is about commemorating those who served, and the way that it forged our values as a nation—about mateship, about courage, about sacrifice and lots of other values.

There were of course a number of sponsors of the event. I would like to make special mention of Robyn Hendry and all the board and staff of the Canberra Convention Bureau who did a great job in bringing those people to Canberra. Well done to all those who were involved. This program runs every year, and it attracts a lot of business to Canberra—people who choose to come here for conferences and conventions. I say to my colleagues that you have probably been to your fair share of these events in the past, but I certainly encourage you to attend because it is a good way of encouraging people to come to Canberra. By meeting some of our local politicians, federal politicians as well, it shows them that by coming to Canberra for their conference they really can talk with decision makers. It really influences their decision.

Once again, well done to the convention and visitor bureau and to the War Memorial for hosting the Top Secret Showcase dinner.

Nepal earthquake

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (6.19): I rise tonight to speak about the tragic events that occurred in Nepal on 25 April, when a 7.8 magnitude earthquake took the lives of 8,000 people and left more than 19,000 with serious injuries. Countless villages were destroyed. Then, just yesterday, 12 May, while disaster recovery and emergency volunteers were still trying to cope with this human tragedy, there was another earthquake, this time of 7.3 magnitude, which took another 65 lives and injured an additional 2,000 people.

In our Assembly yesterday a bipartisan condolence motion was passed. All Canberrans' thoughts are with the millions of people in Nepal who have been affected in one way or another by this tragic event. This was Nepal's deadliest earthquake in more than 80 years, and it was with shock that Australians heard the news of the massive devastation in that beautiful country, slightly larger than the size of Tasmania but with a population larger than ours of 27 million.

There is a small Nepalese community in Canberra and they have sprung into action to assist with fundraising and have been working hard to involve all Canberrans. I had the pleasure of meeting some of the Nepalese community and His Excellency Rudra Kumar Nepal, the Ambassador of Nepal, a few weeks ago at one of these fundraisers, which I will talk about later.

The Nepal earthquake relief coordination team was formed and comprises Dr Binod Nepal, President of the Australia Nepal Friendship Society; Dr Sita Ram Ghimire, President, NRNA ACT/Queanbeyan; Mr Keshav Goutam, President, ANU Nepalese Student Association; Mr Chudamani Sapkota, President, Canberra Nepalese Football Club; Mr Bikram Subedi, Vice-President, Australia Nepal Friendship Society; Mr Bivek Palikhey, Secretary, Australia Nepal Friendship Society; Mr Yubaraj Khaniya, Secretary, NRNA ACT/Queanbeyan; Mr Abhinaya Rana, Secretary, Canberra Nepalese Football Club; Ms Savitri Gurung, Secretary, ANU Nepalese Student Association; Mr Avishesh Shrestha, Secretary, Community Collective Bargaining, CCB; Mr Jeevan Rana, Treasurer, Australia Nepal Friendship Society; along with Dr Krishna Hamal, ex-president and adviser, Australia Nepal Friendship Society and Dr Durga Kandel, ex-president and adviser, Australia Nepal Friendship Society and Founding Director of Community Collective Bargaining.

There are also a number of Nepalese community volunteers: Mr Kumar KC, Mr Raju Adhikrai, Mr Tenji Sherpa, Mr Surya Maharjan, Mr Srijan Munankarmi, Mr Sudeep Acharya, Mr Krishna Subedi, Ms Anupama Mahat, Dr Keshav Bhattari and Ms Punam Panta.

The Canberra volunteers already in Nepal are Mr Suddep Chhetri, Ms Suni Karki and Mr Ishwor Karki. Mr Adarsh Jung Pande and Ms Srijana Basnet are leaving for Nepal from Canberra this week.

They have raised about \$40,000 so far and have distributed relief packages in five districts: Gorkha, 200 tents, plus food and an additional \$10,000 for locally produced ABARI shelter tents; Dhading, 500 tents and plastic mattresses and food; Kavre, 65 tents and 65 blankets and food for 65 families; Rasuwa, 100 tents and food; and Nuwakot, 110 tents and food. There have also been medication, sleeping bags, blankets and tents collected in Canberra to be dispatched to Nepal soon.

We commend all the people who have taken part in all this work. Dr Durga Kandel asked that we pass on everyone's thanks to the Canberra community that has supported their activities so well. There have been a number of fundraisers which have been well supported by the people of Canberra, including one held last Sunday, 10 May, by Australia-China Youth Cooperation in collaboration with the Red Cross. Mr Sam Wong, Chair of the Australian Red Cross ACT Division, informed us that the event raised over \$10,000 to add to the Australian Red Cross Nepal region earthquake appeal.

There have been a number of supporters and sponsors: the Australia Nepal Friendship Society; Community Collective Bargaining, CCB; the Blu Ginger Indian Restaurant, Civic; Chomulungma Nepalese Restaurant; Annapurna Cafe, Belconnen; and NRNA ACT/Queanbeyan. For all of their support, we thank them. (*Time expired.*)

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.24 pm.