



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

EIGHTH ASSEMBLY

11 AUGUST 2015

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

Petition
Ministerial response

The Clerk: The following response to a petition has been lodged by a minister:

By **Mr Gentleman**, Minister for Planning, dated 10 August 2015, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Coe on 2 June 2015 concerning Giralang shops.

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

Planning—Giralang shops—petition No 7-15

The response read as follows:

Thank you for your letter of 2 June 2015 about petition No. 7-15 lodged by Mr Coe, MLA on behalf of 192 Australian Capital Territory residents.

I understand the petition brings to the attention of the Assembly that Giralang has been without local shops for a decade, and that the petitioners request the Assembly to express their support for the completion, as soon as possible, of the full approved development of the shops currently under construction. Further, they call upon the Assembly to enact legislation, to limit further legal appeal by those opposing the development.

The redevelopment of Giralang shops is currently subject to judicial review in the ACT Court of Appeal.

This matter has been the subject of an ongoing and drawn out appeal involving the ACT Supreme Court, the ACT Court of Appeal and the High Court since its approval in 2011.

On 10 December 2014, the High Court ordered that the matter be remitted to the ACT Court of Appeal for further hearing on limited grounds.

Written submissions have been made and the matter was heard in the ACT Court of Appeal on 30 July 2015.

A decision of the Court is reserved at this time.

During the course of these proceedings, the ACT Government has made all possible efforts to emphasise the significant delays caused by the legal action, and the resultant impacts on the Giralang community.

It is open to the Assembly to “express their support for the completion, without further delay, of the full approved development of the shops currently under construction” as suggested in the petition. The timing however is subject to the decision of the Court of Appeal which is currently under consideration.

Limitations on third party appeal rights are already in place in the ACT, and would not have prevented a judicial review appeal of this matter in the ACT Supreme Court, the ACT Court of Appeal, or the High Court. Judicial review of matters before the High Court is simply beyond the statutory jurisdiction of the Assembly.

I appreciate and welcome Mr Coe’s openness to resolve this matter by other legislative means. I will consider other available legislative avenues should this matter not be resolved through the upcoming decision of the Court of Appeal.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 35

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

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 35, dated 10 August 2015, together with the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MR DOSZPOT: Scrutiny report 35 contains the committee’s comments on 127 pieces of subordinate legislation and one government response. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Reporting date—amendment

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (10.01): I seek leave to move a motion to alter the reporting date for the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety’s inquiry into the Human Rights Amendment Bill 2015.

Leave granted.

MR DOSZPOT: I move:

That the resolution of the Assembly of 7 May 2015 referring the Human Rights Amendment Bill 2015 to the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety for inquiry and report be amended by omitting the words “the last sitting day in September 2015” and substituting “the last sitting day in November 2015.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Estimates 2015-2016—Select Committee Report—government response

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (10.02): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Estimates 2015-2016—Select Committee—Report—*Appropriation Bill 2015-2016 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2015-2016*—Government response, dated August 2015.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

I present the government's response to the report of the Select Committee on Estimates 2015-2016 on the Appropriation Bill 2015-2016 and the Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2015-16, and I thank the committee for its report. The report presents 148 recommendations. These recommendations, together with the findings of the Centre for International Economics' report, cover a broad range of matters across the spectrum of ACT government service delivery.

Overall the government has agreed to or noted the vast majority of recommendations included in the committee's report. Specifically, the government has agreed to 61 recommendations, agreed in principle to 14, agreed in part to four, noted 60, and not agreed to nine recommendations.

On behalf of the government I thank the committee for its consideration of the appropriation bills and its report. I commend the government response to the Assembly and look forward to the next three days of debate.

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Standing orders—suspension

Motion (by **Ms Burch**) agreed to, with the concurrence of an absolute majority:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent order of the day, Assembly business, relating to the Government response to the report of the Select Committee on Estimates 2015-2016, being called on and debated cognately with orders of the day Nos. 1 and 2, Executive business (Appropriation Bill 2015-2016 and the Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2015-2016).

MADAM SPEAKER: The Clerk has pointed out something that crossed my mind at the time, but the script said that we were to do it in a particular way; so that is how we did it. That is the way the Chief Minister did it because I am sure that his script is the same as mine.

Mr Barr: It is the same as yours.

MADAM SPEAKER: Ideally, we should have adjourned debate on that motion. But I think that by suspending standing orders we will be agreeing that we can debate the government response at the same time, even though it has been essentially dealt with. So we will go that way, because that is the will of the Assembly.

Appropriation Bill 2015-2016

[Cognate bill:

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2015-2016

Cognate papers:

Estimates 2015-2016—Select Committee report

Estimates 2015-2016—Select Committee—government response]

Debate resumed from 4 June 2015.

Detail stage

MADAM SPEAKER: I remind members that in debating order of the day No. 1, Executive Business they may also address their remarks to executive business order of the day No. 2, and to the government response to the report of the Select Committee on Estimates.

I note that standing order 180 sets down the order in which this bill will be considered—that is, in the detail stage, any schedule expressing the services for which the appropriation is to be made must be considered before the clauses and, unless the Assembly otherwise orders, the schedules will be considered by proposed expenditure in the order shown. With the concurrence of the Assembly, I am proposing that the Assembly consider schedule 1 by each part, consisting of net cost of outputs, capital injection and payments on behalf of territory.

Is this the wish of the Assembly? That being so, schedule 1 will be considered by each part, consisting of net cost of outputs, capital injection and payments on behalf of territory, then the clauses prior to schedule 2 and the title.

ACT Executive—schedule 1, part 1.1.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.07): At the outset I will, in a sense, start where I finished off with my budget reply some weeks ago. Talking about the ACT executive highlights the real difference in approach between this executive and the executive that I would lead. Through the estimates process, this was highlighted most significantly when the issue of car parking in Civic came up. There was some questioning and conversation about the increase in parking fees and the extension late into the night.

The view that was taken by the members from this side who were questioning was about consideration of what impact that would have on a broad range of Canberrans—on people who work in retail, low paid workers going in there and working at night in retail, or perhaps in the hospitality sector—often, again, low paid workers. It is after

hours, so you are forced to take your vehicle in because there is no public transport that is adequate if you are coming in from Belconnen or coming up from Tuggeranong to get into Civic to work at a cafe, pull beers or whatever it is.

Or perhaps we had in mind a family—a family that wanted to go in and take their kids to the movies as a special treat, knowing the enormous expense of that, knowing that, when you have two or three children going to the movies and getting the popcorn, taking them for that treat is an enormous expense. It is a thing that some families do not do very often; it is a treat. Any impost on that is going to deter those families from their ability to do that.

That was what we were thinking. That is what Mr Smyth, Ms Lawder and others from the opposition on the estimates committee were thinking when we were questioning this impost on Canberra families, on low paid workers. What was the response we saw from those opposite—from Mr Barr, backed up by Ms Fitzharris? What did they say? Mr Barr's quote is this, Madam Speaker. This is what he thinks; this is where his head is at. I will quote from the *Canberra Times*:

I suspect that the idea that someone is going to be deterred from their \$100 dinner by a \$5 parking fee is certainly [wrong].

He went on to refer to the cost of some sparkling water at high-end restaurants. This is the life that Mr Barr leads. This is the prism through which he views the world—high-end restaurants, going to Civic at a fancy restaurant with his mates, ordering high-end dinners over \$100 and forgoing sparkling mineral water.

If anything highlights the difference in world view, the view about what we are doing in this place to look after Canberrans, it is that statement from this Chief Minister. He does not seem to care about low paid workers. He does not seem to care about people who are struggling, coming up in their cars from Tuggeranong or Belconnen or coming down from Gungahlin. What he cares about is his \$100 dinners in Civic with his mates and their sparkling mineral water. That is the government that this man leads, and it is a government that is out of touch.

I wonder if you could say that it has lost touch. Sometimes when Mr Barr speaks, when he makes these sorts of comments, I wonder if this man has ever been in touch. We have seen this over a number of years when he has been increasing everybody's rates—tripling them, as we now know, as has been confirmed based on what is in the budget. On average, it is 10 per cent a year. If you keep that going, as it has been going year after year, in 11.6 years your rates have tripled.

Of course, for a lot of people it has been going up more than that. As we saw at the weekend, commercial rates have gone through the roof. There are businesses all over this town who are struggling to meet their payments. I talk with these businesses, as do my colleagues. I talk to businesses across this town—in Fyshwick, Mitchell, Manuka or Phillip—who are moving out and going across the border to Queanbeyan. It is a lot cheaper to do business there. These are not swanky businesses; these are not the high rollers. These are, in many cases, the mum and dad operators, the people who have mortgaged their houses to invest in a business and are now in a position where

they cannot afford to run that business in this town because Mr Barr is more concerned with his high-end dinner, his \$100 delicious luxury cuisine and his sparkling mineral water.

It seems that when it comes to being in connection with Canberrans and understanding the issues that they are going through, the only workers that this mob talk to are their mates in the CFMEU. While we are out there talking to average Canberrans about what they need, this executive is directed by—and in many ways influenced by, shaped by and, financially and in terms of controlling policy and controlling much of the Labor Party, at the behest of—the CFMEU. As long as Mr Barr is getting his high-end dinner, perhaps occasionally forgoing his sparkling mineral water, and as long as he is getting his tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, from his mates in the CFMEU, he is happy. It allows them to pursue their ideological dreams.

Mr Rattenbury is complicit in all this, of course. They are sipping their mineral water in their high-end restaurant whilst the rest of Canberrans are struggling to think about their light rail project. If anything expresses the indulgence, the misdirection and the obsession with their own ideas rather than what matters to Canberrans, it is this light rail project. As you and I know, Madam Speaker, all across this town people are scratching their heads and wondering why a government can get so out of touch that they are pursuing a project that is going to cost, you have got to say, a billion dollars. The government is putting letters out saying that it is going to be a billion dollars. We know that there is \$50 million alone in this budget for light rail. How can that be?

We have an executive led by a Chief Minister who is grossly out of touch. As long as they are getting what they want, as long as the CFMEU are getting what they want and as long as they can get to have their swanky meals in their swanky restaurants, they do not mind. They do not really care if your rates are tripling. They do not really care if you have to pay more for parking. They do not even care, it would seem, about stamp duty. It is a bit ambiguous now whether Mr Barr is really committed to that or not; I hope that becomes clearer as this debate goes on.

The economic strategy being pursued to pay for all of this, to manage all of this, is just to put it on the credit card. We now have the most significant, biggest, record debt and deficit that this territory has ever faced. Compare our deficit with the rest of the states. Look over the border to New South Wales. Look at the Baird Liberal government and what they have been able to achieve, with budget surpluses, to turn that economy around after the disaster of New South Wales Labor. What we have in the ACT is deficit after deficit. Of course, what we do have is the magical surplus that appears at the end of the period, Wayne Swan-esque—the surplus that will never happen, we know, unless there is a change of government.

Mr Barr is backing himself in, as we know. What we have seen from the executive, the way the executive works and the way the government has been structured is that all roads now lead to the Chief Minister. We have seen this massive increase in his directorate. We have seen that his finger is in every pie. We have seen a taking away of power and control, and to some extent you can understand why, from ministers like Ms Burch, Ms Berry and others to get control into the Chief Minister's directorate.

That might be a short-term fix because your ministers are struggling, but in the long term that is no way to structure an executive or a government. We will see, I think and I fear, a continuation of the arrogance and incompetence that we have got used to. Madam Speaker, there is a genuine choice, I believe, between the sort of executive that Mr Barr would lead and the sort of executive that you would see—(*Second speaking period taken.*)

This is a difference. We will not be directed and dictated to by the CFMEU. We will not be pursuing unaffordable, unviable pet projects like light rail at enormous expense. We will not be imposing taxes on Canberrans to pay for all of this indulgence that we know is so unaffordable. I know that there will be further debate on rates and tax by Mr Smyth and others later, but if I have time I will take the opportunity to read some of the letters I have been getting from people all across this town, in both residential and commercial properties, who are feeling that squeeze.

We will not be behoven for all these minority agendas. We want to make this a place that is a great place for all Canberrans—a great place for everyone to raise a family, make a living and get ahead. Unashamedly, as part of that, we will back business. We know that it is business, particularly small business, that creates the jobs, that creates the strength in our economy. We will not be in the position of this government. This government is endeavouring, almost at every step, to squeeze every single dollar it can and regulate every bit of business in this town until many businesses are either shutting their doors or leaving town.

There is so much to talk about in this budget from this government. I have highlighted some of the most significant points—across the health system, as I have said, in business, in infrastructure. There is much to talk about. There is the ripping of the money out of the police, the people that are very much at the front line, dealing with domestic violence, ice epidemics and so on.

At the outset, let me say very clearly that we are a very different team over here. We see this budget for what it is. As we talk through the detail and we expose the failings in this government, it is always useful to keep two things in mind. Firstly, there is the bigger picture—the direction this government and this Chief Minister are taking Canberra in. But also, we need to keep the reason for us being here in mind. We are here to represent the people of Canberra—all Canberrans. That is the stark message from this budget. Be it the high-end restaurants and the sparkling mineral water that set the attitude, be it the detail in this budget of hundreds of millions of dollars that are going to be put into light rail or be it a tax regime that is punitive and unfair, it is quite clear at the outset that this is a government that is not in touch with the people of Canberra.

Let me be very clear that we will not be supporting this budget. While this government is tripling people's rates, while this government is spending hundreds of millions on light rail and while we have a Chief Minister with an arrogant attitude taking this government in the wrong direction, this will not be a budget that we will be supporting.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (10.21): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for setting the scene of opposition for opposition's sake once again. In a week in which his party has very firmly put on the public agenda the slashing of penalty rates at weekends for retail workers and hospitality workers, it is interesting that the Leader of the Opposition's opening salvo on ideology is about how his party will stand up for the rights of low paid workers. Their entire industrial relations agenda is to cut the pay of those workers at those particular times that the Leader of the Opposition has just been talking about. The rank hypocrisy of the Liberal Party on these questions is brought to bear in the first 30 seconds of the Leader of the Opposition's contribution.

That is the ideological position of the Liberal Party. We know that. They are bursting to cut people's wages—bursting to do it to retail and hospitality workers on Saturdays and Sundays and to those who have to work antisocial hours. That is their agenda—to cut the pay of those people. The Leader of the Opposition once again displays how out of touch he is with working people in this city and how out of touch his party is with working people in this country.

In relation to questions about water, better that my taste be water than that it be Bollinger, Moët or the likes of the drinks that those opposite would no doubt consume on their big nights out. If we are going to have an argument about drinks of choice, yes, I have chosen to drink water.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR BARR: There we go. Yes, a \$100 dinner for two people. I do not think a \$100 dinner for two people is considered extravagant these days. A \$100 dinner for a family of four is hardly considered extravagant. I do not know, and I do not intend to provide a commentary on, the Leader of the Opposition's tastes, but if I am to be condemned for drinking water, I think I can live with that. I can live with that condemnation that I would choose water. There we go.

Let me go to the specifics of the issues that the Leader of the Opposition raised in the context of differences between an executive that he would lead and the one that I lead. Indeed, there are many differences. This side of the chamber and this side of politics have a vision for the future of this city. This side of politics want to invest in renewable energy and public transport provision. We want to ensure that everyone in our community is included. That is why social inclusion is a priority for this side of politics. It is not on the other side.

What do we hear from the Liberal Party? That we are a country of lifters and leaners. That is what the Liberal Party is about. That is exactly the ideology and the agenda that they would pursue. We see it in our own city. We see it in the attitudes of the Liberal Party. We know that Mr Hanson would lead a government like Mr Abbott's. We know that because they are the same party. That is what they are about. That is what they are in public life for.

Mr Hanson said, “Why are we here?” We know why you are here, Mr Hanson. You are here to lead a government like Tony Abbott’s. Mr Smyth is here to be a Treasurer like Joe Hockey, the Treasurer who says poor people do not drive. That is what you would be. That is the sort of administration you would run. On social policy you would take this city back to the 1950s, because that is what you believe in. You, Madam Speaker, and your colleagues believe in a social policy derived in the 1950s and 1960s. You are welcome to that. You can stay there, Madam Speaker. You and your colleagues—

Ms Lawder: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order, Ms Lawder?

Ms Lawder: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I do not believe that Mr Barr would know what we believe. I think he is impugning our motives.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think that is a debating point rather than a point of order.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Liberal Party, the Canberra Liberals in particular, the most conservative branch of the Liberal Party in this country, believe in a 1950s and 1960s view of social policy. You are welcome to that view, but the rest of us do not have to stay in the 1950s and 1960s with you. We can move beyond that. This city can progress, and we are. We are leading the nation in many areas—social inclusion, embracing new technologies, a sustainable future for Canberra—and we are delivering on the ground.

This executive is delivering right across the areas of responsibility for the ACT government. We continue to be nation leaders in many areas of reform—in economic policy, tax policy, renewable energy, social policy, our response to housing and homelessness and domestic violence, and a range of other important social priorities. We are leading on the environment. We are leading in Indigenous reconciliation. We are leading in many areas. We were the first jurisdiction to legislate for same-sex marriage. We paved the way there.

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MR BARR: Well, there we go. That sums it up. There is the social conservatism on display. Yes, people will have a choice, Madam Speaker. Do they want a progressive government that supports them, that supports the rights of all people to be included in our society—a government that is leading in so many areas of social policy? Or do they want to take a step back to the 1960s and the 1950s? If they want to do that, they have got the Liberal Party; they have got the conservatives. That is what you are. Yes, we are happy for that contrast to be made. We are happy to contrast our approach with the contemporary approach of the Liberal Party in government nationally. Jeremy Hanson equals Tony Abbott style government.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson.

MR BARR: Mr Hanson equals a government like Prime Minister Abbott. Mr Smyth equals a Treasurer like Treasurer Hockey. If you want that, Madam Speaker, you can vote for it, and you will have that opportunity next year.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

ACT Gambling and Racing Commission—schedule 1, part 1.2.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (10.29): There was a large amount of discussion during the estimates about the Gambling and Racing Commission. As members would be aware, particularly in recent times, a number of things have happened—the live baiting scandal in greyhound racing that swept the east coast, the acquisition of the casino by Aquis, the sale of ACTTAB, the co-location of the racing codes, how we address problem gambling and reforms to the Gaming Machine Amendment Act.

The estimates committee did not make any recommendations in this area, but the issues are ongoing. In the context of the public accounts committee inquiry into the future of the gaming industry in the ACT, particularly the clubs, there are still things that need to be done. It is my view and the view of the opposition that this government does not do enough to address problem gaming in the ACT—it is either a federal issue which they fob off or they say it is up to the clubs. They actively blame the clubs instead of saying, “We get a lot of money. We get tens of millions of dollars every year from poker machines.” The spend over the last couple of years by the government on addressing problem gambling has been very, very small—less than half a million dollars—when they collect more than \$30 million from the gaming tax. That is to their shame.

We need a government that do what they are meant to do. We often collect taxes to ameliorate the impact of something that is legal in the territory. For instance, part of the money from registration goes to road safety because we know that, whilst driving a car is a good thing, driving a car poorly or badly is a bad thing because of the consequences it may cause. The same with gaming machines: most people use gaming machines as fun and they gamble within their limits. But there is a group that, for whatever reason, are unable to control their spending through the poker machines.

What you do not see from this government is a genuine commitment to ending problem gaming. In the next couple of months we will see the next report on the amount of gaming that goes on in the ACT and how many problem gamblers we have. It will be interesting to see whether over the years there is a trend and whether it is going down. For all the awareness we have got, you have to question the effectiveness of what the government does. We will see whether what is happening has been enough. It is the government that is in the position to do this and lead this, and it is the government that fails on this.

We heard during estimates about live baiting in greyhound racing. I think we all keep a watching brief on that issue. There have been no reports of live baiting in the ACT. We asked whether or not the commission had met with the RSPCA and ACT greyhounds and support network. The commissioner and chief executive confirmed

that no meetings had been held with either of those parties. I find it strange that on such a big issue the two advocate groups with most interest have not even been met with by the minister. That is perhaps something the minister should take into account.

The co-location of the racing codes seems to be an issue that is not to be proceeded with. Thoroughbred racing are adamant that they wish to stay where they are, and I think greyhounds ACT is of that view as well. The harness races are already at EPIC. We were told that appropriate accommodation for harness racing will be considered as part of the broader work around Exhibition Park in Canberra. That will be interesting to see. I hope there is liaison between the two ministers responsible—one for the harness racing and one for EPIC—and that we get some coordination to make sure harness racing grows rather than declines and that we capitalise on the sport of racing in the ACT.

Another issue that was discussed was what had happened as a consequence of the sale of ACTTAB and whether or not everything had been put in place. As to the resources to the commission as a result of the transfer of ACTTAB to Tabcorp, we were told that there was an increased workload with the initial implementation but it is expected later in the year that the level of resources will be reduced. That is certainly something we will monitor as well. With that, Madam Speaker, we will be supporting this line.

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Racing and Gaming and Minister for the Arts) (10.34): The ACT Gambling and Racing Commission is a statutory authority that regulates and monitors all gambling activities in the ACT from gaming machines to the casino to the TAB, interactive gambling and minor gaming such as lotteries. The commission's role is to promote public interest by protecting consumers and reducing the risks and costs of problem gambling.

As part of this role, the commission has an ongoing relationship with the ANU to ensure that high quality research is conducted on relevant matters. The ANU researchers are currently finalising the 2014 survey on gambling, health and wellbeing following a survey of more than 7,000 ACT residents. This government will soon be providing preliminary results of this survey to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to help inform the PAC inquiry.

The commission is also conducting a joint longitudinal study with New South Wales to inform about people's entry into gambling and counselling services and the long-term success of this form of intervention. In addition, the commission is actively involved in a community education and counselling support service in contract with Relationships Australia.

The commission has also developed and implemented an online gambling exclusion database to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the problem gambling exclusion scheme. The database is funded through the problem gambling assistance fund and is administered through the commission. The commission has been proactive in identifying and implementing areas for reduction of red tape to assist the industry and government to keep costs to a minimum.

A major focus of the commission's work this year will be to implement the gaming machine trading scheme, which is scheduled to begin later this month. This is a major piece of work from the economic development directorate officials and the commissioner, and I thank them for their efforts to bring this into being. In addition to the work of the commission, the government provides annual rolling grant funding to the local racing industries and has a provision for \$42 million in grants over the five years through to 2018-19. While not formally linked to the annual rolling grant funding provided to the industry, the four-year MOU between the government and the racing codes outlines the shared medium to longer term policy objectives.

This government is committed to supporting our local community clubs, and we have seen that by the efforts and the partnerships through the MOU that were signed a number of years ago and our continued commitment to giving them certainty. That is why the government has introduced the gaming machine trading scheme that, as I have said, will come into effect later this year.

As Mr Smyth pointed out, there are no recommendations on this line in the estimates report, but one area I would like to draw members' attention to is paragraph 5.316 concerning problem gambling and online gaming. I advised the committee that I have written to federal counterparts—that is, members of the Tony Abbott Liberal government—to raise the issue of the increasing problems with online gaming. That is a problem that sits with the federal sphere.

I also advised the estimates committee that the current commonwealth government has moved away from the recommendations of the previous review in 2012 and has established a national working group. But this working group has no state or territory representatives or officials. There has been no correspondence to my office. There has been no activity or interest to address the increasing and growing concern of online gaming. I will continue to follow that up with my federal counterparts because it is a very serious issue concerning communities across Australia.

I am pleased those opposite will support this line. Even though Mr Hanson in his opening salvo said he would not be supporting this budget, it seems the line on the Gambling and Racing Commission is, indeed, supported by those opposite.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.39): Given that the minister brought me into the debate, I will take the opportunity. Those opposite speak with great interest and try to be measured in their comments and speak seriously, of course, about this issue. But there is a stench surrounding the issue where the Labor Party shovels hundreds of thousands of dollars into their coffers. Ms Burch's political campaign is funded on the proceeds of pokies, not only from the Labor Party but from the CFMEU. You have a minister and a Chief Minister who have this faux concern about problem gambling. They are distraught about problem gambling and talk about the pokies and gaming, but we know that at the same time they are getting hundreds of thousands of dollars every year. In fact, I think this year it was it \$1.5 million. The Labor club went into debt so it could shovel more money into the coffers of the Labor Party to run their political campaigns so they can then become the minister to regulate the very industry they are benefiting from.

While they make their speeches and express concerns about problem gambling, this is the same mob that benefits. In places like Charnwood where they have their clubs and where some of the most vulnerable people in the ACT are, it is Ms Burch, Mr Barr, Mr Gentleman and their colleagues who are the direct beneficiaries of the money being put by Canberra families into poker machines that otherwise perhaps would be put into other things like food on the table, school shoes and sports fees for kids to play sport. These people are prepared to take that money to fund that political campaign.

In the words of Graham Richardson, whatever it takes. Whether it is the relationship with the CFMEU and the money they get from that organisation or whether it is the money they get from the pokies, let us not ever be lectured to by a government that is funded by the proceeds of what we have seen coming out of the royal commission and the proceeds of gambling.

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Racing and Gaming and Minister for the Arts) (10.42): A short response to Mr Hanson and his language about a stench connected to being in any way supportive of clubs: I want to remind everybody in this place that each and every year at the ClubsACT dinner there are multiple members of the opposition. They are okay to sit in a local club, drink their free booze and eat their free dinner. They have no problem doing that. The sheer hypocrisy they have started with and continue this morning is quite extraordinary.

I direct Mr Hanson and those opposite to the ClubsACT website and to every community group that benefits from our community clubs. Would Mr Hanson say to every one of those community groups that benefit from any contribution from community clubs that they also have a stench about them?

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.43): This is almost fun; I thank Ms Burch for giving me another opportunity to have a go at this. Ms Burch is trying to conflate the issues; we all saw her doing that. The issue is not whether we support clubs or not, because we do, and we have said that repeatedly in this place. Mr Smyth is a champion of the clubs in this town. We value the contribution they make across the board. We value the contribution they make to our economy and we value the contribution they make to the community—contributions across a whole range of sectors: sporting clubs, charities, any number of other worthwhile community organisations. And that is the point. That is what clubs are for—they are community clubs to support the community. The soccer club, the football club, the charity—they are for the people in this community across the board. That is what they are established for; that is what they are meant for.

They are not meant to shovel money into the pockets of Ms Burch and Mr Barr and all of their mates in the Labor Party. The millions of dollars being shovelled into the Labor Party is money that is not going into our community. It is not going to that soccer club; it is not going to that sporting club; it is not going to those important places that we want the clubs to be contributing to. No, the Labor Party have their grubby little fingers out there taking the money out of the clubs that otherwise would be going to far more valuable, purposeful, meaningful elements of our society.

The Labor Party and their CFMEU mates are taking money that would otherwise be going to far worthier causes. If Ms Burch ever wants to come into this place and talk about the ethics of what the Labor Party does with their club, if she wants to bring that debate on, if she wants to get me debating that or any of my members, we will do so with pleasure. When it comes to taking the moral high ground on this issue, let me tell you, Madam Speaker, we are there and they are somewhere down in the gutter taking money that would otherwise be used for the community.

Do not lecture us about how we need to support sporting clubs. Do not talk to us about how we need to support charities. Do not talk to me about how you need to support the disadvantaged. You don't like it either, do you?

Mr Barr: Why? Because you're too arrogant to listen, Mr Hanson, in your smug hypocrisy on this question.

Mr Gentleman: Point of order, Madam Speaker, standing orders call for members to direct their comments to the chair. Opposition member Mr Hanson is directing his comments directly at members on the front bench.

MADAM SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order and remind members of the standing order.

Mr Smyth: Point of order, Madam Speaker, the Chief Minister just accused Mr Hanson of hypocrisy, which, of course, is against the standing orders.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think "hypocrisy" is a word that has been used three or four times today on both sides. I am not inclined in the context to rule it out of order or as being unparliamentary.

MR HANSON: I am quite happy to talk about hypocrisy when it comes to those opposite. If ever there were hypocrites in this town they are those who lecture us about the light on the hill, who talk about looking after the socially disadvantaged whilst we know tens of millions of dollars over the last few years have gone to the Labor Party and the CFMEU. That is tens of millions of dollars that would have otherwise gone into the pockets of some of the most socially disadvantaged in this town. Instead, it has gone to the likes of Andrew Barr and Ms Burch and Dean Hall and the Labor Party and their CFMEU mates.

If Minister Burch and the Labor Party ever want to debate this topic, bring it on. What I say is: do not try and conflate the issues about whether we support clubs or not, because the clubs know. They know because we speak to the clubs. When you talk to a lot of the clubs you learn that they do not like the Labor Party disease that infects their industry. A lot of the clubs not associated with the Labor club do not like that disease because they are good clubs trying to support local organisations. Do you think, Madam Speaker that those good clubs like the fact that contributions made are going to a political organisation? No, they do not.

They might say one thing to the minister, and we know they have to have a relationship with the government, Madam Speaker. But let me assure you, when I talk to members from a whole range of clubs across this town, the last thing they want to see is the good club industry unfortunately put in the same bucket as an organisation that is prepared to donate millions of dollars to a political organisation instead of to the most worthy people in our community.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

ACT Local Hospital Network—schedule 1, part 1.3.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.49): Madam Speaker, I will defer my comments to later in the debate when we talk about Health.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Canberra Institute of Technology—schedule 1, part 1.4.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (10.50): Whilst we are waiting for my colleague Mr Doszpot to pop back in, I want to speak on a topic that I have spoken about several times in the past, and that is the provision of Auslan courses at the CIT. Madam Speaker, I think there is a real lack of understanding about the need for these courses at the CIT. I could refer you to an example where it was a sham, there was a lack of access and a lack of communication for deaf people. It caused worldwide outrage. I refer to the sham interpreter at the funeral of Nelson Mandela at the end of 2013. There was someone who was clearly not qualified and clearly was not able to communicate effectively with those people who are deaf.

I will give a few examples to point out just how out of touch the CIT is with the needs of the deaf community and how out of touch this government is with the needs of the deaf community. A vocational course provides you with the background to move on to an interpreting course if you so wish. If you do not wish to go to an interpreting course, it provides you with enough Auslan to be able to communicate with a deaf person. This year, 2015, the CIT is only re-enrolling students. There are no new enrolments. Of course that means that next year, magically, in 2016, they will not be able to run a certificate III course; there will be no demand for it because there will only be one or two students from this year who might be interested in going on.

Magically, next year, this government and the CIT will say, “There’s no demand for a certificate III course in Auslan.” I happened to sit with a few people from the CIT at an event just last week, and one of them in quite a senior position said to me that the results from the CIT Solutions recreational course were just as good as the outcomes from the certificate course. Madam Speaker, I absolutely beg to disagree. The recreational course, the CIT Solutions course, is 12 hours. I will give you an equivalent. It is like going to a CIT Solutions course to learn Italian or Spanish because when you go on holidays you want to be able to order a beer or a coffee in Spanish or Italian. That is what those recreational 12 hours worth of classes do for you.

A vocational course gives you a communication ability, and it covers things like deaf culture, deaf history, the syntax, the grammar and the study of linguistics—not how to order a beer, a pizza or a cup of coffee in another language. How out of touch is the CIT with the deaf community? On the CIT website they have a picture of American sign language. Not Australian sign language, not Auslan; their picture is of American sign language. They obviously do not even know the difference between American sign language and Australian sign language.

I will give another example from their own website about the CIT Solutions course. It says, “Practice your signing with a hearing impaired person.” Excuse me, Madam Speaker, but you do not actually sign with a hearing impaired person. A hearing impaired person or, as you would probably say if you were being a bit more correct, a person with a hearing impairment, probably has a hearing aid or a cochlear implant and they use their own voice and their hearing as much as they can to communicate. They do not use sign language.

My father, who has a hearing impairment through occupational noise, from working on aircraft engines and shooting, wears a hearing aid. He does not know sign language. If someone came and practiced their signing with him, he would have no idea what they were doing. It would be about as useful as that interpreter at Nelson Mandela’s funeral.

These are just a few examples of how out of touch the government are with the deaf community. They have no idea of what is required to communicate. And you should not just take my word for it. In the disability community they have a bit of a saying, which is, “Nothing about us without us.” I am not here to tell you my views about it. I am here to read a whole lot of comments that I have received from people in the deaf community in the ACT about it. I will go through a few. I probably will not get through them all in 10 minutes as there are so many. Here is one:

12 hours is not enough in my own opinion. It takes a lot of time to master a language. It is not like you are learning a French language. 12 hours of French language will get you a sentence or two. Auslan learning definitely needs more than just 12 hours. It is a language that needs a lot of investing in.

The next one:

What the? I needed more than six hours each week just to get through it. No way is a total of 12 hours enough. There would be no time to teach deaf history and linguistics, that’s for sure. Without teaching that, what’s the point? That’s my two bob.

Next:

It took me more like 60 hours to get my certificate I, and I certainly wasn’t conversationally fluent at the end of that semester. They are completely wrong. They might have the misconception that Auslan is not a real language, but it is, and 12 hours for a certificate course is not even close to enough.

I could go on and on, but I know that my colleague Mr Doszpot also wishes to speak, so I will leave it there. But I am quite happy at some further point to talk more about the need for Auslan certificate II and III courses.

The government's response to the recommendation on this matter in the estimates committee report is that it is "noted". It says that "there are two pathways", which is quite true, but as we have seen from the CIT's own website we will not have certificate II and III courses, because they are only enrolling previous students for this year in certificate II and III. So next year there will be no demand for certificate II and III courses and the CIT will be able to say, "We don't need to run the course." The ACT is a whole-of-jurisdiction rollout for the NDIS, and I think it is absolutely criminal and shameful that this government is not committed to providing communication access for people who are deaf.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (10.57): Prior to going to my comments on CIT, I would like to thank Ms Lawder for her comments regarding the specific problems that members of our hearing impaired community have with the teaching of Auslan in the ACT. Ms Lawder and I share some shadow portfolio responsibilities, and we have both been contacted by members of the community regarding the extreme difficulty they have in trying to convince the education directorate, the minister and CIT about the specific issues that Ms Lawder has already touched upon.

Again it highlights the lack of consultation for which this government are getting quite a reputation. They are certainly making it very hard for the community to get across the message where there are extreme needs that need to be addressed. Ms Lawder's comments reflect the wishes of quite a number of the hearing impaired community, and I have also received quite a lot of concerns from the community, regarding the way that CIT is addressing the requirements that are so badly needed.

Before I go to the subject matter of my remarks, I would like to place on record my appreciation for the work that the late Mr Marron did as Chief Executive of CIT and to express sadness at his passing. Mr Marron came to the organisation at a difficult time, given the issue of bullying had been quite established and was systemic in that workplace, and he was charged with the task of getting it sorted. That is not easy at any time, and certainly not for someone who was not well at that time. Notwithstanding the difficult questions that needed to be asked of and about CIT, Mr Marron always demonstrated absolute professionalism, and I very much respected him for that.

During estimates, information was sought about the planned closure of the Woden campus and about the new campus at Tuggeranong. The new Tuggeranong campus is expected to open in 2016, and Woden is supposed to be in a staged transition next year also. But with both these moves now less than five months away, very little is known. I am sure it is of great concern to parents and to students wishing to avail themselves of a CIT education. If they want to start in first semester next year, nothing much is known about when, where and what courses might be on offer in the south of Canberra. One has to ask whether this is just another example of bad planning and even poorer communication.

The government needs to do better than to have officials come to estimates with some vague time lines. It is not the officials' fault. Minister Burch was quite immodest in suggesting her announcement about a new CIT at Tuggeranong. I believe she called it a "grand announcement". But rather than gloating about announcements, how about giving families some real news, Ms Burch? It might be more useful if we now had a grander action plan.

The election promise had the commitment as being a new build, with construction to start in the 2013-14 financial year. We now see that the promise of a new build has slowly morphed into a lease of an existing building or presumably a set of buildings. But there is still no formal announcement, with leaseholders and others in the area speculating on all sorts of options. Government by rumour and news release is becoming a standard for this government, very unfortunately.

The new facility at Tuggeranong was a 2012 election promise. In this Greens-leaning government, are we recycling election promises as well? Will Tuggeranong CIT be a 2016 election promise? And as to what will be taught there, that is also still in the planning stage. But we do know that 330 students will be going there. We do not know for what courses and how many teachers they will have, but apparently a high percentage of them will be "tech savvy", in Ms Burch's words. Oh, and they will fit into 1,665 square metres; we do know that.

During estimates we heard a lot of appropriate organisational speak—mention of "distinct client groups", of attracting professionals wanting to "upskill", "to obtain full qualification" or just "skill sets". We had some vague examples like workplace health and safety and "pathways for students". You would not want to be a year 10 or year 12 student trying to plan next year's study unless you put into the equation several locations and even more possible course options.

In respect of Woden, we know there are plans to downsize it. We do not know the number of staff or students, how many will be affected and when. We were told that staff forums have been held and apparently individual conversations at departmental level have been started. Again there has been no detail. Dr Stenlake told the committee:

At the moment they—

the conversations—

are fairly broad, but ultimately they will go into the detail of where people are going and what facilities will be available for themselves ...

And for students. In other words no-one really knows much—or at least those that should know do not. Staff and students might be going to Tuggeranong, Bruce, Reid or even staying at Woden but in another place.

CIT plays an important role in Canberra. It is our leading TAFE provider and employers rely on CIT for their apprentices, for their trained workforce across a great

number of occupations. The government implores all Canberrans to get behind their CIT but it is hard for many to do so when you have so many promises delivered by government during election periods that do not get delivered on time. When you have courses like Auslan, that my colleague Ms Lawder spoke about at length, that are on again and off again almost at a whim, and when you consider the impact that that “almost at a whim” approach has on the community, on people who have enough problems to contend with, we find that they are still left in uncertainty about how they can progress areas on which they are desperately in need of further assistance.

With respect to graphic design courses that, almost overnight, go from being an affordable option to an expensive course, the only justification or explanation for hiking up the fees is that students can go on the “never-never” pay arrangement of VET FEE-HELP. From memory, the fee went from \$1,800 to in the vicinity of \$18,000—an incredible difference. No doubt the minister will clarify the exact nature of the increase but it was a huge amount, and without any reasonable explanation apart from perhaps not wanting students to take up that course. But far be it from me to suggest that anything so devious would be planned by Ms Burch.

CIT now has a new board and will soon have a new CEO. I trust the selection process is a rigorous one and that perhaps the new CIT board takes this opportunity to bring in new blood to herald the start of what I hope is a new and exciting phase in the history of CIT in Canberra.

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) (11.05): I am pleased to speak on the appropriation for CIT because it is another aspect of this budget that is delivering for Canberra both now and into the future. As the ACT’s largest training provider and the only public provider, CIT has a unique place in our community. For many years now CIT has been the provider of choice for thousands of Canberra families who are seeing to gain skills, who are re-skilling or who are upskilling through every stage of their life.

When I think of the work and outcomes of CIT I truly believe that there is no one aspect of our economy or our community that is not better because of the efforts of CIT and the training and opportunities that it provides. We need only to have, indeed, our morning shower, our morning coffee, take our car to work and switch on our power to get a glimpse of the training that CIT provides.

Everyone in this chamber who has visited Fashfest has seen firsthand the high quality training and education that CIT delivers and what it equips and inspires our students to do. CIT has a rightly deserved reputation for quality in the ACT and it enjoys the trust and respect of students and staff as well as of employers and industry groups. Indeed last year the statistics show a student satisfaction rate of 91 per cent and an employer satisfaction rate of 85 per cent. Members will also be pleased to note that CIT graduates have an employment rate post-training of 87 per cent. This is well above the national average and has been the case for some time.

If CIT, however, is to continue this success and if the community is to continue to benefit from the high quality vocational education and skills training that CIT

provides, it is essential that we look to the future. We cannot simply rest on our laurels and hope that CIT continues along as it is. We must ensure that we are best placed to provide training and skills as our city grows.

We already have, as a government, made significant changes to the governance structure of CIT. Changes to the CIT Act have created an independent board which will ensure that CIT is flexible and responsive in a marketplace that is becoming increasingly competitive and contestable. This budget will continue to support CIT by ensuring that its campuses and physical infrastructure continue to support education and training of its students.

We have made, through this budget, over a \$10 million investment into delivering a campus at Tuggeranong town centre. Mr Doszpot spoke about that. This campus is not simply to expand services to Tuggeranong but to deliver courses in a contemporary setting. We are finalising the lease arrangements. I know people are waiting to hear when that is completed and we have said that we will be ready to deliver from second semester next year. That was always our plan and that continues to be our plan.

The new CIT Tuggeranong will be a part of a long-term campus modernisation strategy to ensure that CIT maintains a contemporary and industry-relevant teaching and learning space for students and staff. To this end there is an additional investment, on top of the investment in CIT Tuggeranong, in both Reid and Bruce campuses to help them modernise as well. The purpose of these physical changes is to ensure that CIT delivers the highest quality education and training with the best outcomes for our students and this community.

To this end the ACT government will provide \$70 million to CIT to subsidise its courses and support students and this will ensure that CIT delivers over 3.4 million training hours this year. That is significant—over three million training hours delivered through CIT, our public provider. It is an important institution for the future prosperity of this city and we remain committed to this.

There have been some comments around Auslan. Many of those answers were provided to the estimates committee. There are other providers that offer Auslan training in addition to CIT. We remain committed to Auslan training at the CIT. We remain committed to having industry-relevant and competitive training offers and we remain committed to CIT. Mr Doszpot, whilst he remembers CIT, managed, I think, to forget CIT in his election commitments back in the 2012 election and I hope he does not make those same mistakes as we lead up to 2016.

I close by offering my respectful regards to all staff and providers through CIT and, again, take this opportunity to remind members here that CIT is a quality institution. It is not a place, as Mr Doszpot takes every opportunity to make claim to, of systemic bullying. That has been found and I would ask Mr Doszpot, through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to stop implying that CIT has that trouble. It is disrespectful to those there. It is not providing benefit to CIT and, indeed, is damaging to its reputation. So I just ask, through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for Mr Doszpot, should he continue with those false claims, to be aware of the reputation damage that it does to such a great institution.

In closing, even though I have made mention of this before, I join Mr Doszpot and offer recognition of Adrian Marron who led the CIT into the new environments that, through the changes to the CIT legislation, led to a new governance structure to provide an opportunity for the future development that I am greatly looking forward to.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (11.13): I want to quickly run through a few more comments that I received from members of the deaf community here in Canberra. I read out one from Jacob, from Nicole, from Megan. Marnie said:

Primary and secondary aged students take years to learn how to read, write and speak English. To expect some level of fluency and meaningful learning of Auslan from 12 hours is ridiculous and disrespectful to language learning.

Claire said:

For 12 hours study you probably only learn how to fingerspell the alphabet, say mother, father, brother, sister, learn to count, colours, animals and rooms around the house. That doesn't warrant competency in anyone's book.

Pam said:

I was at a meeting on Friday and we had two ladies there who were signing. I was amazed at the range of their signing. There is no way you could pick that up in 12 hours.

James said:

Not sure if this is helpful but bring along a student who completed the courses 1 and 2, the community courses. Also bring others who completed the Certificate II and III. Then have a deaf person signing for them and ask them what the deaf person said. That will show a big difference. Another idea is to show the Auslan curriculum at training.gov.au and it shows how many hours are required to do each certificate level. It is 450 hours for Certificate II alone.

Claire said:

12 hours study over six weeks is the equivalent of less than one week full time.

Mark said:

12 hours is not good enough for learning Auslan. I agree with Jacob about mastering the language.

Christine said:

I agree with the above comments. No way to learn Auslan in 12 hours or even 24 hours. No way.

Therese said:

It took me two years of study before I had a conversational level of Auslan. I currently teach the short courses. We cover less than what they would cover in first term of a certificate course so that should be obvious considering we are talking about hundreds of hours versus 20-odd.

Christine said:

It is impossible to learn Auslan in 12 hours. You need to learn about Auslan grammar, deaf community and their culture, et cetera. If it were me I would ask these people to enrol in Auslan themselves.

Greg said:

If I understood correctly 2 hours per session, six sessions for courses 1 and 2, 24 hours, very disappointed. Auslan is a very visual language that requires a lot of understanding and experience to get the message across. It is not like driving car lessons to get P plates in a short time frame. It is the same for all other languages such as Chinese, French or Farsi. Please consider this very carefully.

Melinda said:

I love the idea of taking in two people, preferably someone who has completed a solutions course and someone who has completed a Certificate I and II as well as level 2 interpreter. The person from CIT Solutions will have absolutely no idea what is involved in learning Auslan. How can 24 hours of teaching be anywhere near equal to the 200-plus hours that a student does in the first two years at CIT?

Ben said:

Your house needs rewiring. Would you accept someone who has had 12 hours of electrical training or would you prefer someone who is qualified? You discover a lump in your breast. Would you accept someone with 12 hours of medical training or would you prefer someone who is qualified? You are travelling overseas and find yourself under arrest. You do not speak the language and the local constabulary do not speak English. In this country there are no qualified interpreters because the highest level of language training in English is a 12-hour program. It is essentially a hobby course not leading to any kind of qualification. Remember, you are in trouble with the law. What are you going to do now?

Dave said:

It is not good to hear that CIT is unable to offer more than 12 hours.

I could go on. There is Karen, Chloe, Gary, Amanda, Claire, Matthew, Tony, Jody, Amanda, Jacob, Ida. It goes on and on and on but, as I said, these are not my words. These are the words of members of the deaf community and their family and interpreters who work in the field who are absolutely appalled at the thought that someone at CIT would think that a CIT Solutions course, a recreational course, could give you the same outcome as a vocational course.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Capital Metro Agency—schedule 1, part 1.5.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (11.17): It is disappointing that once again the opposition is in this place fighting the government on what is an ill-conceived project, fighting the government on their frivolous waste of money on a project that will carry just a few hundred more public transport users than currently ride ACTION buses on the same route. This project is apparently going to carry 3,950 people in the morning peak; however, buses on the same route carry 3,500 people. It is a lot of money to spend for just 400 more additional public transport users. And all that in a city of a mere 400,000 people as of 2021.

The budget provides almost \$24 million to the Capital Metro Agency to continue to facilitate the construction of light rail in Canberra. This is on top of the \$12 million which will be spent by TAMS this year for the Gungahlin to the city upgrades first announced in last year's budget. A \$375 million capital contribution is also speculated in the government's budget for the first time this year; however, it is beyond the outyears of this year's budget so it is, like so many promises the government makes, simply words on paper.

I should reiterate that we on this side respect the staff in the Capital Metro Agency. We respect the work that they are doing and we respect their commitment to carrying out cabinet's wish that they go ahead with this project. It is just a shame that this government did not task them, the experts, with determining the best route to start a possible light rail network in Canberra. It is a shame they were not tasked with the opportunity to comment on which is the best mode to deliver a mass transit system in Canberra. Unfortunately, these decisions were all political decisions made by the transport supremo, Minister Corbell, with his sidekick, Mr Rattenbury, the transport assistant.

Unfortunately, that is no way to spend a billion dollars of taxpayers' money. Why didn't we ask the experts what is the best mode and what is the best staging? We did not. This government simply chose something on a whim following the last election when they did not have a majority. Quite frankly, Madam Deputy Speaker, as you well know, the Labor Party even received fewer votes than did the Liberal Party.

This year's budget debate gives us the perfect opportunity to reflect on how the discussion around light rail has changed over the last year. This time last year the government wanted to spend \$614 million on a tram to carry just one per cent of Canberrans during peak hour. This year, thanks to the release of the full business case, we are talking about a \$783 million tram, which will still carry just one per cent of Canberrans during peak hour.

The full business case also increased the estimated annual operating and maintenance expenses, up from \$6.8 million to \$23 million. Most tellingly, the full business case almost halved the cost-benefit ratio from 2.34 to what is still an ambitious 1.2. Even then, pertinent questions about the assumptions which underpin the business case have been left unanswered by this minister and by this government. To quote Dr Leo Dobes, an adjunct associate professor at the ANU Crawford School of Public Policy, there is "a disturbing lack of facts on the table". He said:

We just don't know the assumptions that underpinned many of the figures put out in the public domain ... We simply don't have all the data to make judgements.

Despite that, the transport supremo says it warrants the spending of \$783 million of other people's money. Many economists agree that there is real concern about this project. What was supposed to be this government's validation for the project has left many questions unanswered and has not provided any convincing evidence to support the continuity of the project.

Even then, there is the EIS, which was recently released by the ACT government. The EIS does not bolster the case for light rail. It highlights a number of significant issues with this project, especially during construction but also once operational. Many of these issues have been previously raised by the opposition but have been further quantified, qualified or detailed by the EIS. For instance, we now know what effect light rail will have on vehicles travelling along or intersecting the light rail route. Whilst it was known that buses from Gungahlin to the city would be cancelled, the EIS also speculates that buses from other suburbs in Canberra will be cancelled if light rail becomes operational, forcing passengers to transfer from bus to rail in Gungahlin or Dickson.

Light rail is also less affordable this year. Since last year the budget deficit has grown from \$332.8 million to \$597.4 million. Even without the Mr Fluffy program, the budget deficit for 2015-16 has increased by \$231 million on last year's estimates. This is despite all the increases to fees, taxes, charges and rates that we have seen right across the board.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it has to be said from a political point of view that the government do not have a strong hand or a strong position for bargaining with the commonwealth when they cry poor regarding Mr Fluffy yet they have a billion dollars to squander on a tram project. It simply does not add up that at the same time as they are crying poor they are willing to lock future generations of Canberrans into a massive liability that will deliver suboptimal and subcurrent transport outcomes.

All in all, the arguments for light rail have been weakened over the last 12 months, not strengthened. As every new piece of information comes to light, as every new announcement or every new piece of the project is scrutinised, the case for light rail is weakened. The costs are higher; the budget position is worse; there are significant question marks over the project's business case. It almost is beyond comprehension that the government would still press on with this despite the lack of evidence on the table.

Indeed, if this was any other project area, if this was education or health, and they had this sort of damning review of the policy, I am sure they would scuttle the project. However, they do not, because light rail for them is a feel-good policy. It is not a transport solution; it is not an economic solution. We know from the bogus jobs data that it is not an economic solution. The case does not add up. The Centre for International Economics have 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.

I think most people in Canberra would acknowledge that. Given the increased cost projections I described earlier, there is no doubt that the Centre for International Economics were correct in their evaluation of capital metro last year. This year the Centre for International Economics highlighted the fact that capital metro is a contentious policy, and they raised the question of whether spending the funds received from the asset recycling initiative was delivering the greatest return to the ACT economy.

Let us not forget that this government have a choice about how they spend that reward given to them by the commonwealth government. It was this government that chose light rail, not the commonwealth government. It was this government which nominated light rail as the infrastructure project which the funds would be rolled over into. There are any number of projects the asset recycling initiative funds could be rolled over into, but they chose light rail. For that, CIE have said they wonder whether this is going to return the best investment for the territory.

The CIE also picked up the fact that over \$23 million had been cut from three programs—roads to recovery, the black spot project and the roads investment project—whilst over the same period \$37 million has been allocated in asset recycling initiative funds to capital metro. There is, of course, much more that can be said on this subject. I will reserve the opportunity to say a few words following other people's contributions to this debate.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (11.27): I thank Mr Coe for his, as usual, cogent, well-argued and thoughtful perspective on capital metro. I would like to take this opportunity to ensure that the Assembly hears from people whom the government has chosen to ignore so far during this debate on capital metro—that is, the people of Ginninderra. I am going to take this opportunity to speak on their behalf and enlighten the government with many of the comments that they have made to me. Just in case those opposite might claim some bias, I can say that I have received positive comments about light rail, but they are very few and far between and they are vastly outweighed by the disparaging cries of disdain and frustration from our constituents—yours and mine, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Here is a selection of comments from people who have indicated to my office their views on light rail. Overnight I did receive a comment on my Facebook page about light rail from a known wit, who is also a constituent, who, with apologies to Tennessee Williams, referred to the project as “The streetcar named disaster” and said this project would be “far from Stella”. Stuart from Cook said:

Everyone that I have heard from regarding the light rail proposal, including me think it is an absurd waste of funding.

Barry from Charnwood said:

They have got to be joking.

Chris from Flynn said:

Ask the locals. 99% of people I speak to don't want it.

Another Chris, this one from Florey, said:

I am not in favour of light rail because it is a solution that is too expensive for cities such as Canberra that have a low population density.

Peter from Fraser said:

This light rail would be an unmitigated disaster for the ACT, both financially and in terms of its horrific effect on Northbourne Avenue entailing the cutting down of virtually all of beautiful eucalypt trees which currently adorn this avenue. Rattenbury calls himself a Green—he should hang his head in shame.

Incidentally, I do not recall Mr Rattenbury or his colleagues in the Greens promising in 2012 to turn Northbourne Avenue into a wasteland or what the government euphemistically calls an “urban meadow”. Helen and Phillip from Scullin said:

The majority of the current community needs more funding put into existing public transport and footpath creation before outlaying considerable funding to something that will only benefit a minority of people.

Lynne from Latham said:

No, no, no. Why should we pay for something we will never use?

Linda from Deakin sent an email to all members stating:

The tram project is not feasible for Canberra. It is an outrageous financial burden, both initial and ongoing to ACT taxpayers, especially compared with bus alternatives along the corridor.

Michael of Fraser said:

Following on from yesterday's ACT budget I would only observe that a billion plus light rail project is just driving ratepayers under. I am on a fixed income and am now staring down the barrel of paying more for car registration, drivers licence and household rates for no improvement in services at all.

Leslie and Claire of Higgins said:

No, no, no—the government is not listening to the people.

James of Latham said:

I am concerned that the cost of light rail is inflating rates. I oppose light rail, it benefits a small section of the population.

Another Chris, this one from Weetangera, wrote to say the plans to close the car park opposite the Melbourne building were “unfair, unjust and very unreasonable” for small business in the area. Rex from Hawker said:

Light rail is a stupid, money vacuuming dream of someone with delusions of grandeur.

Christine and Clark said:

Light rail is our biggest concern; the cost is totally unacceptable. A rail line is very costly, very inflexible. It cannot be easily rerouted if future needs change.

Maddison of Hawker said:

Who is going to use it? Not me. Better to spend on improved health services.

Patricia of Macquarie described capital metro as a “waste of taxpayers’ money”. A Spence couple concluded:

Light rail has no mandate. The Greens want to use a weak, fiscally irresponsible Labor government to bring light rail to the ACT at great cost. Only the Liberals stand in the way.

In 2012 the people of Ginninderra kept Labor in power. Many of the people who voted Labor in 2012 are considering changing their vote in 2016 because of their enormous concern over the light rail project, coming as it does on top of massive rate increases in recent years and the lack of services.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that is what the people of Ginninderra are trying to say to this government about light rail. The government is not listening, but the Canberra Liberals are. I will speak for the people of Ginninderra even if their Labor representatives—you, Dr Bourke and Ms Berry—will not.

Let me finish with two further quotes that arrived in my office in the past week, both coming from constituents who wished to remain anonymous. The first said, “Totally opposed.” The other said, quite simply, “Don’t do it!”

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (11.33): I am going to take the opportunity to speak a couple of times in this debate today. I was going to wait till the end but I thought, given the very strong comments of Mrs Dunne, that I should perhaps remind her and her colleagues of some other views that have been expressed in relation to light rail here in Canberra.

I quote from a piece called “The Potential and Limitations of Sustainability Policy”, which was submitted to an academic journal called *Governance* in relation to sustainability matters. It was an interesting piece because it commented on the opportunities that light rail presented for Canberra. In particular it had regard to issues such as size and it had regard to issues such as finance. It would be worth, I think, starting by highlighting the views of that author in relation to light rail for our city. It starts by saying:

My suggestion for Canberra is that by taking into account the city's unique profile, we can devise an integrated urban design policy that would give meaning to the notion of a 'sustainable city', one in which the development of a light rail transit system would play a crucial part.

The article goes on to say:

This is not exceptionally ambitious. Nor is it over-optimistic. Most Canberrans enjoy driving their cars and avoid public transport. But they do not like paying more than they are used to for their petrol. And when the two come into conflict—as in so much else—the hip-pocket nerve usually prevails.

The author says:

But I believe we can build on this self-interest to put Canberrans' currently superficial ideals about sustainability into genuine practice.

That is the conclusion of this author. The author also makes some interesting observations about the suitability of Canberra as a place to build light rail and she says:

Canberra was originally designed for light rail. The idea has been resuscitated a number of times over the past 20 years, only to be discarded. Recent attempts to pursue the 'Griffin Legacy' are notable for ignoring it altogether. The claims in favour are strong.

Rail friction is seven to eight times less than that of rubber-tyred vehicles. While a road lane can carry about 2,500 an hour and a busway about 5,000, light rail can carry between 7,000 and 10,000.

The author goes on to say:

Sydney has reintroduced a tram service of sorts and Brisbane is considering trams. Despite a 'car culture' more entrenched than even ours, many North American cities centre on tramways (including San Francisco, Salt Lake City and Minneapolis). Perhaps more pertinent—

she says—

are those medium-sized cities with a comparable population to that projected for Canberra in 2030, such as Eskisehir in Turkey (with a population of 500,000); Wroclaw in Poland (700,000); Las Vegas (500,000); and Edmonton (665,000).

European cities of similar population size to Canberra with light rail systems have many more journeys a year on public transport than do cities with bus-only systems.

Prescient words! And who was the author of this very considered view about light rail? It was none other than Mrs Dunne. Mrs Dunne presented this article outlining the importance of light rail for small cities like Canberra, talked about how it could be

financed, talked about how it could be built, talked about how value capture could be achieved and talked about how light rail drives greater public transport use than bus-only systems.

I wonder if Mrs Dunne brings this matter to the attention of her constituents when she stands up in this place and rails against this project, rails against the project that she is on the record, not in some off-the-cuff comment but in a very deliberate, considered and thoughtful academic paper, as extolling the benefits of light rail. She makes it clear that this project is an opportunity for our city to see, as she quotes, “the virtues of a post-materialist way of life”, because of the increased price of oil, because it is an opportunity for value capture, because it is an opportunity to drive a higher level of public transport use. Those are her words on the public record.

It is hard for anyone with experience of government to avoid becoming a pessimist about the prospects of governments abandoning short-sighted populism for foresight and vision.

She says:

I remain a pessimist, by nature and conviction. But at least that leaves open the happy possibility of being proved wrong.

Who is adopting the short-sighted populism now? Who is adopting the position that they will remain a pessimist forever and have no foresight or vision? They are not my words but the words of Mrs Dunne.

Perhaps next time Mrs Dunne wants to stand up in this chamber and lecture this side of the chamber on why this is such an appalling project she could come out and explain why only a few short years ago she was criticising governments for having a lack of foresight and vision and she was criticising governments for not adopting what she characterised as practical and meaningful ways to drive better public transport use, improved land use value capture, improved sustainability outcomes for our city and why she asserted that a small city like Canberra could achieve good outcomes for public transport by building a light rail network and why she, as a member of this place, even advocated the use of public-private partnerships as a way of financing the delivery of that infrastructure.

The extraordinary contrast between her position that she has adopted today in this place and her previously stated views on light rail are there for all to see. I wonder when she receives representations from her constituents whether she even draws to their attention her previous advocacy for light rail, her considered and detailed analysis of the opportunities it presents and why it is so important for the future sustainability outcomes of our city.

Unlike those opposite who have adopted, in Mrs Dunne’s words, the short-term and populist view, we are adopting a long-term view that it has a vision for the growth and development of this city, a sustainable growth pattern for our city, better public transport for our city, and that is why we are pursuing this important project that will set the path towards a more sustainable, more productive, more engaged and a better-connected Canberra. That is what this budget delivers when it comes to light rail.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (11.42): You certainly know that someone is struggling to make their case when they have got to spend their whole speech quoting the opposition, that their own arguments are not stacking up, certainly not convincing us nor, would I say, convincing the people of Canberra. The reality is that light rail is not an effective transport solution.

Certainly a lot of studies have occurred. There has been a lot of conversation, discussion, about whether light rail would be the right fix for Canberra. Some of that debate has occurred before in this place from across the political divide. But the more it has been looked at, the more the facts have been on the table through business cases, through responses from Infrastructure Australia, the Productivity Commission and others, it has become clear that it is not a viable transport solution for the ACT and, indeed, the route that has been selected from Gungahlin to the city is perhaps the least viable of all.

It is not a transport solution, and Mr Coe has pointed to a number of solid arguments that demonstrate that, not the least of which is when you hear Mr Corbell quoting “European cities of our size”. The problem is that Canberra is quite unique in how spread out it is, and other cities across the world of our population size have significantly higher density, a fact that often Mr Corbell forgets to mention.

It is not an economic solution. We know that, because if you are going to spend close to a billion dollars you would expect a good economic return. We know that buses, in the government’s own business case, in the government’s own arguments, have a higher economic return. I think almost any other project conceivable would have a higher BCR than that which has been proposed for light rail even if you believe some of those optimistic assessments within the business case.

It is not a jobs creator, which is the latest endeavour to sell this project. I refer members to David Hughes’s article in the *Canberra Times* that looked at that. It looked at the long-term jobs out of light rail. When you finish the construction phase, his estimate is 75 jobs. During the construction phase there are about 1,900 jobs, I believe.

Of course, you have to then consider what are the opportunities lost. If you are spending that much money on an infrastructure project, \$783 million, on perhaps one or two or maybe a dozen infrastructure programs, what is it that you are losing in terms of jobs? His analysis is that when you do that sort of rigorous analysis, light rail is a net jobs destroyer comparative to what else could be provided.

This is where people come to me, Madam Speaker—and they probably come to you in the streets as well. They scratch their heads and say, “I just don’t get it. It does not stack up. What is the purpose of light rail? Why is the government pursuing it?” Quite clearly there are a number of reasons, but they are not good reasons. The two that I think are evident are, firstly, that it is a political fix. It is a political fix because Mr Corbell wants this and Mr Rattenbury wants this.

We know that the left factions of the Labor Party are champions of this. It gives Mr Rattenbury a chance to talk about this when he goes to Greens' party candidate meetings in Tasmania. It gives Mr Corbell a chance to talk about this when he flies around the world to Copenhagen and all the other places, including Hong Kong. You could probably look at a list of all the places Mr Corbell has gone to to spruik his light rail vision. It gives them the ability to strut their stuff, their green credentials, their environmental credentials, and it is the worst sin that I think politicians can commit. It is all about legacy. It is all about them.

Whilst you have Mr Rattenbury and Mr Corbell trying to compete with each other on legacy building on their light rail project, Mr Barr and perhaps many who would have a more sensible view of these things, one would hope, in the Labor Party—we hear from them in droves—are beholden to the left, they are beholden to the CFMEU and they are beholden to the Greens. What we know is that because they are beholden they are going to build light rail because they have got no choice. On any objective look at light rail, this project does not stack up.

The public is not convinced, Madam Deputy Speaker, and you know this. You hear from your Labor Party members. You hear from people on the street. The public is not convinced. We know that the Labor Party has called for reinforcements. They have said, "We're struggling here. We're losing this debate."

We know that Mr Alex White has been brought up to try and save the struggling Labor Party in their campaign. Indeed, I have heard back from people that Alex White has gone in and said to them, bald faced, "I've been brought up here to try and shore up the Labor Party's campaign on light rail. That's what I'm here to do." He has said that to people. People have then come back to me and said, "You won't believe what this bloke said to me."

I thought that the unions were here looking after workers' rights and wages and considering what is best for workers. But no, what Mr White has been brought here to do is try and fix the problem that Labor are not able to fix themselves, and that is to sell this lemon, this dud. He has gone around talking to various people. He has talked to his CFMEU mates and said, "Mr Hall, Deano, will you fund the campaign if we bring it out? The economics don't work. It's not a transport solution. What are we going to come up with?" They are probably there at the Dickson Tradies having a chat about how they can come up with a solution to sell this to the public. They came up with this, "Let's sell it on jobs."

We know that it has been largely debunked by economists who have looked at the evidence for this. But let us be under no illusion about what this union campaign is, bank-rolled by the CFMEU. You know that they are desperate to get their mates in the Labor Party re-elected. That is what this is about. Trust me, there are people in the union movement who have spoken to me, who have come to me and said, "We don't like light rail. We don't think it is a jobs creator. We don't think it is good for Canberra. But we have got these doctrines about being united. It is about 'united we stand, divided we fall', all of that union mantra. This is what the CFMEU tells us to do. The Labor Party have told us this is what we have to do. We have to fall in line unfortunately. Yes we agree with you about light rail. We don't think this is good for

our members. We're getting kickback from our members. We don't want to see their membership dues going to support a project that they don't support."

Ultimately people across Canberra see that there is an opportunity cost to light rail. This is not all for free. This is not pretend money. This is going to cost Canberrans one way or another. It is going to cost them close to \$1 billion. We do not know exactly how it is going to be financed, how much is going to be up-front, how much is behind and so on. But ultimately the net cost to the taxpayer is likely to be in the order of \$100 million a year either in lost revenue or in borrowings or paying the PPP the operating costs of light rail. It is going to be of that magnitude.

What is the opportunity cost? And this is the point. That could be perhaps \$20 million in health every year. Think about our struggling EDs. It could be \$20 million in education on top of that for some of our overcrowded schools that we have across the ACT. And on top of that maybe it could be \$20 million into buses to fix some of the frequency issues that we have in public transport across all of our suburbs. And perhaps on top of that we could be putting \$20 million into fixing up some of our local shops, our local shopping centres, that we go to and see are falling apart, dilapidated. That is where the people want the money to go.

On top of that maybe we could have less pressure on people's rates—\$20 million that would not be put onto people's rates. That is the order of magnitude that we are talking about every single year for the life of this project, 20 years, 30 years—how many years it is going to be? That is the opportunity cost for the people of Canberra.

That is what people are saying to us in Weston Creek, in Belconnen, in Gungahlin, in Tuggeranong, in the inner north and in the inner south. People are saying to us that the price is too high, the price of Simon Corbell's and Shane Rattenbury's vanity is too high. (*Time expired.*)

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (11.52): I stand today to support the funding in this year's budget for capital metro and to reiterate my support for this project. This is a Labor commitment being delivered by a Labor government who knows what it means to plan and deliver for the future. It is, as Minister Corbell outlined and when quoting Mrs Dunne, a vision for the future. It is a vision for an integrated public transport network for our future starting with stage 1, the light rail route from Civic to Gungahlin. It is a transport solution. It is a job solution. It is an economic solution. It is proven to drive greater public transport use, jobs growth and economic growth, particularly along the stage 1 corridor. It is a Labor commitment to address the growing needs of our city, to bring new jobs to Canberra. It will bring choice to our public transport network, more options for more people.

I note that those opposite have quoted the views of constituents. I, too, would like to quote the views of constituents from Gungahlin who have spoken on light rail in a recent Gungahlin Community Council survey conducted late last year and early this year with the results released in February this year. What the people of Gungahlin said about the capital metro project was that 75 per cent indicated they support the project. But for me the more important figure that came out of that survey was not the level of support alone but the number of people who said that they would use the light rail system when it is built in 2019-20.

Some 65 per cent of the 1,300 people that completed the survey said they will be using light rail. Members of this place know well the members of the GCC executive. Their analysis of these findings is that the results of the section on public transport combined with previous questions on how people get to work indicate that many more people are likely to use light rail than use the red rapid bus transport system. That is what the people of Gungahlin have been saying about their views on stage 1 of capital metro.

Indeed, this choice to bring light rail to our public transport network means significant growth in jobs, significant economic growth and opportunity along the corridor and significant opportunity to change our transport behaviours. We cannot keep building roads. As roads grow and as they are duplicated they inevitably fill up. There is a cost to building roads and maintaining roads. As Minister Gentleman has spoken about in this place, this government invests heavily in roads. But in the future we cannot continue to just build more roads. I note somewhat ironically that the cost of roads construction and maintenance in this city, which is necessary, does not receive the same level of critique from the opposition as a public transport network receives. But that is typical and probably to be expected from a Liberal Party.

It is also worth while to think about alternatives. I think we all agree in this place that congestion is a problem that we need to deal with. If we can agree on that premise, what is it that we do about our most congested route in the city? What is it we do particularly around the Northbourne Avenue corridor over the next five, 10, 15 and 20 years? This government put a commitment on the table at the 2012 election and was voted back into government at the 2012 election to deliver on its election platform. It committed to build light rail. The people of Canberra voted in 2012, and this Labor government is delivering on that commitment.

Certainly a debate that is about spending money and investing in the future versus a debate which provides no alternatives throws up a conversation in our community. What I am most looking forward to is an actual debate about the alternatives we need to address a problem that I think we can all agree on. People that travel the route from Gungahlin to Civic every day—whether they live in Bonner or Amaroo or Nicholls or Harrison or Downer or Watson or Lyneham—experience that daily commute every day. They understand that congestion is a problem; they understand something needs to happen. As we approach next year and the people again get to make a choice about which party presents a vision and a plan to deliver that vision for how we grow as a city and as a community, the real debate will start.

It is certainly reasonable for individuals in the community to ask: what is in this for me? What do I get out of this project? That is a question this side of the chamber is willing to answer. When we look at the Canberra Liberals' counterparts on the hill, one of their main tactics, as the Chief Minister said in starting this debate, was opposition for opposition's sake. It is coming home to roost for the federal Liberal Party in government that being involved in a community debate on opposition for opposition's sake, instilling fear in people about what options are on the table for them, and saying no and opposing something is a vastly different undertaking than it is to propose an alternative solution that people can weigh up. I look forward to that

debate over the course of the next year. I note that it has been nearly three years since the last election—nearly three years since this Labor government made a commitment to build light rail—and still there are very few alternatives on the table.

Mrs Jones: You also promised the duplication of Horse Park Drive at the shops at Gungahlin, and that hasn't happened yet.

MS FITZHARRIS: We are delivering on that promise to duplicate Horse Park Drive and Gundaroo Drive. It will be well advanced and underway as we head to next year's election.

I look forward to some alternative being put on the table so that this community is better served by the people that seek to represent them in this chamber. The opposition should provide an alternative and not do what their federal counterparts do, because certainly it appears it has come back to bite them as they take on the responsibility of governing and making decisions and investing the community's tax dollars into projects that plan for the future. Capital metro stage 1, Civic to Gungahlin, does exactly that.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (12.00): It is interesting to get the same old lines from those opposite. We had Mr Corbell's rebuke of Mrs Dunne because she might have a different opinion now than she had then or there be different circumstances now to what they were then. But in this sort of righteous attempt from Minister Corbell to come out and say, "It's wrong to change your mind," it would be wrong to not cast back our eyes to *Hansard* from a few short years ago, Minister Corbell. Who was it, I wonder, who said:

Light rail and buses can deliver exactly the same level of service. We argue, and the government's studies back this up, that buses provide a greater level of flexibility. For example, they avoid the need for interchanging. With light rail, you are predominantly required to interchange. Light rail cannot service suburban Canberra. Light rail can only service trunk routes. So, as soon as you put in place light rail, you are requiring everyone who comes out of a suburb to interchange. You must interchange to get onto light rail. You must get off a bus and get onto the light rail.

Madam Deputy Speaker, they are wise words, are they not? They are wise words from none other than Minister Corbell just a few years ago. Before he stands up in this place and casts judgement on Mrs Dunne, albeit she was simply asking for further studies in this space, Minister Corbell should have a look at his own record and at exactly what he has said in the past before the 2008 election and, indeed, what they said before the 2012 election.

Does anybody actually believe if they had a majority in their own right we would be going ahead with light rail? Does anybody in Canberra believe if Labor won nine seats at the last election this government would be spending a billion dollars on light rail right now? Of course not, because otherwise they would have put it in their election policy. The election policy was just \$30 million to progress light rail engineering studies. Instead, because of a deal done with Mr Rattenbury—a flippant deal—the people of Canberra are paying dearly. They are paying dearly through their rates, through their fees, through their charges here and now and going into the future.

Ms Fitzharris points to the Gungahlin Community Council survey. It is interesting when you go through the comments about light rail, of which there were 438. “Waste of money.” “Better spent on hospital in Gungahlin.” “I think light rail is a good idea.” “It needs to be state of the art.” “Should be looping through Nicholls, Casey and Moncrieff.” “It will be fantastic.” “Seems like a waste of money.” “Any option for bikes?” “Although many people think light rail is too expensive, it is a long-term investment.” “Adequate park and ride or massive improvements to bus networks would be needed.” “As long as it doesn’t turn into a target for vandals, it would be a good idea.” “Outer suburbs and time taken to light rail station at marketplace. Access to Braddon.” “The money spent on light rail will be wasted. It won’t take me where I need to go for work.” “Very, very strongly prefer dedicated buses from Gungahlin to the city.” “Love it.” “If light rail extended to airport and Barton it would be much more useful.” “It would be good asset. The cost is excessive. However, Gold Coast did it along the Pacific Highway and it is a great success.” “I think it is a great plan but use will not be maximised due to where the service will terminate.” “The cost is so far over the current benefits.” “Can’t wait till it’s here.” “Not sure if it’s good value.” “Excited.” “I think a bus lane from Gungahlin to the city, especially along Northbourne and potentially using electric buses on the route, would be a better choice than light rail.” “Too much money being spent on something that could be changed into bus lanes.” “We don’t need it. Waste of money, and it will ruin the beautiful tree line in Northbourne Avenue.” “It won’t be viable. It won’t make money.” “Build a hospital in Gungahlin with an emergency department instead.” “Would be perfect if it went to the airport.” “Can’t wait.” “It’s going to cost \$800 million? Why not make a city express bus?”

They are just the last comments—every single one, both for and against—and they are at best fifty-fifty. There are going to be mixed views on this project, but I firmly believe it does not stack up when you look at what else you could do with a billion dollars in Canberra, what else you could do in health, in education, in transport or in the many other areas for which we as a jurisdiction have responsibility.

I do not doubt there are some people who truly believe light rail in Canberra would work. But I believe the evidence simply does not back it up. If you look at the government’s own figures, if you look at their own BCR, if you look at their own patronage projections, if you look at their own revenue projections, where is the overwhelming case? If 3,900 users in peak hour justify this case, why did they not do it 10 or 15 years ago? If it is just 3,900, they probably could have got that years ago. The fact is, the only reason it is happening now, the only reason Minister Corbell has changed his tune, is because of a deal done with Mr Rattenbury.

In conclusion, I reiterate what I said at the start—that is, we on this side have respect for the people at the Capital Metro Agency who are undertaking the government’s work in this space. They are doing the best they can. However, the political decisions made before the agency was even established have curtailed their ability to be as professional as we would like to see them, such as determining the best mode and the best staging of such an operation.

Finally, it is worth going back to the 2008 Canberra Liberals election policy where we said we would spend \$4 million on an engineering study of light rail routes and

integrated terminals for rail and bus connections. We do not have a problem with studying light rail. We do not have a problem with seeing if it is going to be viable, as long as the information you get from those surveys determine the policies you take thereafter.

If the case stacks up, we would take a fully costed proposal to the election in 2012. That is what we said in 2008—"If it stacks up, we'll take it to the election." Why does the government not commit to doing that as well? Why does the government not say, "We think it does stack up. However, we will seek the approval of the people of Canberra to this specific \$783 million project at the 2016 election." That is what would be prudent. That is what the people of Canberra should be getting in exchange for the trust they put in governments.

As we said in 2008, we need to give the Canberrans, the Canberra public, a fully informed choice on this very significant undertaking. At this stage it has simply been a choice by Mr Rattenbury and Mr Corbell and not by the 400,000 Canberrans who are going to pay for it.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (12.08): Madam Speaker, in politics you should be defined more by what you stand for and what you want to achieve for your community than by what you stand against and what you want to say should not happen. You should have a vision for the future and you should have hopes and aspirations for the growth and development of your city which are beneficial to the citizens of the city as a whole. And, yes, you should have regard to the evidence when it comes to tackling the challenges of better transport for a better connected city in a place like Canberra.

Let us look at the evidence. Let us look at what Infrastructure Australia is telling us in its latest reviews of the most congested transport corridors in our city. Let us look at which corridor is the most costly per kilometre when it comes to economic drag as a result of poor infrastructure. It is the Federal Highway-Northbourne Avenue corridor. Let us be very clear about that. It is the most congested, the most costly, the most challenging corridor for this government—indeed any government—to respond to.

Where is the response from those opposite? Where is it from the man who says he wants to represent the community of Gungahlin, the fastest growing region in our city and one of the fastest growing in Australia? What is his response? His response is maybe—maybe—to improve traffic light prioritisation for buses on Northbourne Avenue. But that is it. There is no response to the projected delay and projected peak travel time of close to an hour for a 12 kilometre, hour journey from Gungahlin to the city centre, and longer to other parts of Canberra. There is no willingness to say that he wants to turn, for example, one of each of the lanes along Northbourne Avenue, north and south, into dedicated bus-only lanes.

There is no alternative. There is no alternative vision for better public transport. There is no alternative vision for better investment in public transport infrastructure. There is no alternative policy. The position of those opposite is about what they are against, not what they hope for. The position of those opposite is not about how we can make things better but how we can keep them the same. Their position is not about long-

term thinking for the growth and development of our city; their position is, “Let’s focus on the here,” with no view to the future.

That stands in marked contrast to this government, Madam Speaker. We are committed to the future. We are committed to taking the long-term perspective that you so passionately advocated for in your commentary in that article I quoted earlier in the debate—the long-term view over the short-term, populist position.

There is no doubt that investing hundreds of millions of dollars in a light rail project is contentious. It was contentious on the Gold Coast. It was contentious in Adelaide. It has been contentious, and is contentious, in Sydney. But we know, from the response of cities when this infrastructure is built, that controversy rapidly moves to a strong endorsement of the infrastructure investment. It sees higher levels of public transport patronage than were ever achieved using bus-only modes. And you see people wanting those pieces of infrastructure to be extended promptly in future stages.

Just in the last couple of weeks the Queensland government has announced its analysis of future extensions of Gold Coast light rail. Remember how contentious that project was? It was going to kill tourism. It was going to kill development. It was going to see no growth in public transport usage and it was going to be a waste of money.

Even today the Lord Mayor of the Gold Coast has come out and said, “I was a sceptic. I thought it was a waste of money, but I am convinced. I am convinced because it’s driving investment in my city, it’s creating jobs in my city, it’s seeing more people use public transport, and it’s creating the sort of city we need to be for the 21st century.” And that is from someone who was a sceptic. That is from someone who was not convinced at all about the investment.

Let us talk about the investment proposition here. If you listen to Mr Coe and those opposite, you would think that unless there is some sort of market rate of return that you would get from investing in an investment vehicle with a private finance institution, it does not stack up. The fact is that this project delivers nearly a billion dollars worth of economic benefits across the ACT economy. That economic benefit has been independently peer reviewed and confirmed as a very solid cost-benefit return for a piece of infrastructure like this. It has been independently peer reviewed, and the government has released that independent peer review.

This project delivers jobs. It delivers 3½ thousand jobs during construction, supporting skilled and unskilled labourers. We hear from those opposite that we could have chosen some other project. Well, which one? And where is the pipeline for it? Where is the business case for it? And how is it going to meet the time frames set out by the Abbott government for eligibility under asset recycling? There was not one, there is not one, and those across this chamber know it.

Mr Coe has said, “You could have spent it on buses.” It is actually explicitly excluded under the asset recycling. Road augmentation of that nature is explicitly excluded. So they do not know what they are talking about. It is the same when they say, “It’s a billion dollars that could be spent on something else,” as though there is a billion dollars sitting in the bottom drawer available to be spent in the next 12 to 18 months.

I know that is pretty attractive for you to say to constituents, but it is false, because we are not talking about spending a billion dollars tomorrow. Indeed those opposite know that a public-private partnership is a payment over an extended term for construction and operation. It is not a billion dollars overnight. It is not a billion dollars that can be spent in the next term of government, because this government is not proposing, if it is re-elected, to spend a billion dollars over the next term of government. That is not the way a public-private partnership works. Those opposite know it, but they are out there in the community wilfully suggesting otherwise. They know it is not true.

Let us turn to why this project is so critically important. I have talked about congestion. I have talked about the challenges of congestion along that corridor. But what we have not heard from those opposite is how they are planning for growth. Again let us turn to the evidence of independent bodies like Infrastructure Australia.

Infrastructure Australia is projecting a population of over 600,000 people in the next 30 or 40 years, and how we need to plan for that future. Let us talk about where that growth is going to be happening, which is largely on the north side of our city. And let us say to anyone who wants to be in government in this place, "What are you doing to plan for that growth and how are you going to make sure that Canberra remains a livable, accessible and connected community?"

Is the answer simply to keep building more roads? Is that going to deliver the quality of life, the accessibility and the livability, and indeed the economic productivity, that our city is going to need into the future? We know the answer to that is no. Ask any Canberran about cities that rely wholly on the private road network to connect them up when they start getting large and what that means, and everyone says, "Just look at Sydney, and look at what happened in Sydney." That is a very true answer from ordinary Canberrans.

Canberrans understand why it is important to invest in an alternative, in better public transport that gives people choice. It is not about saying, as those opposite do, that you cannot use your private motor vehicle. All the transport planning done by governments from both sides of this chamber has acknowledged that the private motor vehicle will remain the dominant mode.

The question is: how much of that dominance can be shaved, and have more people use public transport, walking and cycling? Instead of having over 90 per cent of all journeys to work, indeed all journeys in the city, by private motor vehicle, what if we were able to achieve 80 per cent? How much more effectively would our road network operate? How much would we save on reducing the need to augment existing road transport infrastructure? How much more would we see people using public transport, walking and cycling, with all of the health benefits, the connectivity benefits and the productivity benefits that come from that?

Those are the things that are quantified in the capital metro business case, and they are clear and unequivocal: over a billion dollars worth of economic benefits for our city; improved productivity, improved walkability and improved health outcomes. All of these things are tangible, meaningful and understood as being able to have an economic value based on international experience. And that is what we are bringing to this project and to this debate.

Ultimately, this project lays the foundation for a city-wide network. Right now we are assessing options as to whether or not, as part of stage 1, we should connect the city terminus through to Russell, along London Circuit and down Constitution Avenue. What an enormously attractive option this will be if it can be realised—thousands and thousands of public servants isolated in Russell right now, where they cannot connect to the city centre easily and effectively even during their lunch hour. So let us look at the opportunity that comes from connecting them now.

People like the city traders are strongly supportive of this option. They understand the economic opportunity that comes from accessible, regular, frequent public transport connections between Russell and the city. They understand that long-term opportunity and they are backing it in. They want to see it happen. The government is very keen to see this option closely examined, and that is why we have asked for it to be part of the bids for stage 1.

Longer term, of course, there is the work being done by my colleague Mr Gentleman around the light rail master planning work, because we understand this is part of a broader story for our city, about a bigger picture of how our city can be connected up with a frequent, reliable, permanent public transport infrastructure network. That is fundamentally one of the most important elements of light rail, and certainly something that has made me realise the importance of this mode. It is the permanent right of way.

Buses can come and go; services can be turned on and off. Light rail stays. It is a permanent investment. And with that permanence comes confidence—confidence to build, confidence to invest along the line and confidence to use it and know that it will be there each and every day. It is something that buses cannot deliver; it has been proven that buses cannot deliver it. Ultimately, with that confidence comes growth—growth in patronage and growth in economic development along the corridor.

Finally, as a community we have to make some decisions about the future of our city and how we want it to grow and develop. Do we want to keep chopping down increasingly rare and endangered ecosystems on our city's fringes for greenfields housing or do we instead want to consolidate growth around centres and along corridors that allows more people to live close to where they work, so that they spend less time travelling every day, so that they spend less on petrol, so that they spend less on buying cars for their household and so that they are able to enjoy greater freedom in terms of their time, their budget and their productivity?

Time with their family: people in Gungahlin understand this. They do not want to spend an hour or more every day going to and from work. They want to be able to get home quickly. They want to be able to get to work quickly. They want to be able to spend more time with their families in between. You achieve that by investing in great public transport. Everybody wins when more people use public transport, including the people who drive their cars.

Of course that is another factor that is ignored by those opposite. They say that only a small number of people will use light rail. Apart from that being factually wrong, the

fact is that the benefits of better public transport usage do not just accrue to public transport users; they accrue to motorists as well because they spend less time in traffic and have a speedier journey.

These are the benefits. These are the reasons. These are the issues that any responsible government must respond to when it considers an infrastructure project of this nature. It is easy to say that it is expensive; it is easy to say that it is the wrong choice; it is easy to frighten people about the cost. But it is hard to advance an alternative, and those opposite have chosen the easy path because they have no alternative.

This government has a plan, this government has a vision and this government has a clear election commitment it intends to implement. That is exactly what we are doing through this budget today.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (12.25): Madam Speaker, I will agree with the minister on one significant point: they are finding it hard to sell this. I think we would all agree in the community, observing this in the Assembly, that they are having a hard time getting their message out, they are having a hard time convincing the people of Canberra that this is a good idea. I think we would all agree with that.

As I pointed out in my speech—and Mr Coe in his and you in yours, Madam Speaker—it is evident that the government are struggling to get their message out there. There are a couple of significant reasons for that. One is that, based on the evidence—be it jobs, be it economic results, be it transport solutions—it is just not stacking up. They are not able to make the case. The other significant problem this government has is that the people of Canberra want to have their say. A lot of water has passed under the bridge. I would not say that we have all of the information available, and there is more that we would like to see, but the people of Canberra have a better understanding now of what light rail is.

The government still do not know exactly what phase 1 will be—whether it is going to go all the way up to Russell or not—but there is more information on the table now. There have been business cases released; there have been reviews of those business cases. There have been more experts engaged in the debate. Some of the costs have been explained. The people of Canberra are thinking, “Okay, I am in a better position now to form a view.” They are being denied the ability to do so by this government.

The people of Canberra want to say, “Okay; we have got these facts on the table. We can have a debate about light rail, about its merits, its concerns, the costs and the benefits.” This is going to be, as the minister says, something that is permanent. This is something that the minister says is going to cost a significant amount of money.

The minister says this is a vision for the future of Canberra, the first of many phases. If this is such a turning point, if this is such a substantive change for Canberra, surely the people deserve their say. That is how democracy works, isn’t it? One side put their case, put their argument; the other put their case, put their argument. The facts are presented and the people get to have their say. A big part of the problem is that this government is deliberately trying to prevent the people of Canberra from having their say. People do not like that, and rightly so.

We live in a democracy where people want the ability to be heard, to have their voice. The reckless determination that this government seem to have to try and sign contracts before the election is not playing well out there in the community. It is arrogant and it is unnecessary. If this government were so convinced of the merit of light rail, so convinced of their arguments, they would take this to the election. They would get the mandate that they would deserve. They know that if they take this to the election in its current form, they are going to lose. That is what this is all about.

That is why they think, “If we get these contracts signed, that will, hopefully, take it all off the table.” But it will not. They will go to the election not only with this dud project hanging around their neck but with the bitter taste in the electorate’s mouth that this is the government that has tried to deny them their voice, their vote. They will respond, and they will respond in spades.

The government is saying, “You do not have your alternate plan.” We have outlined many times that there is an opportunity cost. When we have the full costs, all the details, we will be able to present, as we will in the lead-up to the election, what we would do with a billion dollars.

This is the problem this government have. If they are building light rail, if that is what they are going to do, we on this side have a billion dollars of different priorities. It might not be to spend all of that money on things. It might be health; it might be education; it might be public transport. Or it simply might be to say, “No. Whilst people’s rates are tripling, we will not be spending all that money.”

The debate that we have been having has made it very clear. The debate has been about whether light rail is viable. I again commend Mr Coe for the work he has done that demonstrates quite clearly on every aspect that it is not.

We have also started to release a number of policies. There is the duplication of Gundaroo Drive—the full duplication, not the half-baked effort from the government. There is the flyover on the Barton Highway. And, just in this budget alone, there is the alternative strategy for public transport. Part of it is the non-stop super express service—50 additional buses from every suburb across town that would go direct from that suburb into the parliamentary triangle and the city. The response that we have got on that has been very positive, and you will see more of it.

We are not going to be telling people, because we are still doing the work. We have been having a lot of debates within our party room. We have been engaging experts. There are a lot of exciting ideas coming forward. You will see them come forward. You will see that the alternative presented by the opposition is an alternative that is focused on all of Canberra—all of Canberra, not just the three per cent of people who happen to live within walking distance of the government’s light rail.

The government have a choice. They can steamroll this over the top of the people and deny them their say, and they can then wear that backlash at the ballot box, or they can have the courage of their convictions and go to the electorate without having imposed some sort of penalty clause on the people of Canberra for a contract. They

can have the courage of their convictions and say, "This is our argument. This is our vision. Make your choice." The problem they have is that they are scared; they do not want to do it. Why is that? Because it does not stack up.

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

Sitting suspended from 12.33 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Canberra Hospital—alleged bullying

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, on Tuesday it was reported that the ACT government blocked the release of a damning report that resulted in urology training accreditation being withdrawn from the Canberra Hospital. The Australian College of Surgeons said that there was an environment of discrimination, bullying and harassment. Minister, what are the problems at the Canberra Hospital urology department?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Hanson for his question. I think those problems have been well outlined previously. The issues relate to poor personal relationships at a professional level between the VMOs in the urology unit, and those have led to a decision on the part of the college not to accredit them for the purposes of training of trainee doctors. That is a disappointing outcome for me as Minister for Health, and I am working closely with my directorate to take all possible steps to address the circumstances in the unit, to make sure the unit is able to seek accreditation again for training for specialists as soon as possible and to do everything possible to address the issues that have arisen in that unit.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, when will the urology department be accredited?

MR CORBELL: It is not possible to provide a firm time frame for that, but it is my commitment, and I know the commitment of my director-general and of hospital management overall, that that be achieved as soon as can be achieved.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, will you release the urology department report?

MR CORBELL: The decision on release has been made by the authorised decision-maker under the Freedom of Information Act, and I have nothing to add to that decision.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, how can that public have confidence that issues are being resolved when your directorate has a record of burying reports and falsifying data?

MR CORBELL: That is quite an outrageous slur against the staff of my directorate who work very hard to address what are often complex and difficult issues in the health portfolio. I reject the assertion from Mrs Jones.

Government—tendering arrangements

MRS JONES: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Economic Development. Minister, I refer to recent hearings of the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption. What protections are in place in the ACT government's tender process to ensure that contractors with employees who are not union members or who are not operating under a union EBA can apply for tenders on their merits?

MR BARR: All those who seek to tender for ACT government works are able to do so. There are a series of criteria in relation to certain procurements that require prequalification or access through a panel process in the first instance, but there would be no rationale for a business to be excluded on the basis of whether they have an EBA with a particular union.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, what protections are in place in the ACT government's tender process to ensure that contractors with employees who are not union members can apply for subcontracts on ACT government contracts on their merits?

MR BARR: The protections that are available are under the nation's industrial relations laws.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, have concerns been raised with you or your directorate about improper influences by the CFMEU or any other union on ACT government procurement processes?

MR BARR: Not that I am aware of, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, what processes are in place to ensure bidding for LDA subcontracts is conducted fairly and without undue influence from the CFMEU?

MR BARR: The processes and protections that are afforded under Australian industrial relations laws.

Public housing—waiting lists

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Housing. During the estimates hearing on 18 June 2015, I asked whether Northbourne Avenue public housing tenants

would be placed on the priority housing transfer list. An official from your directorate replied, “They have a different status. They are a management-initiated transfer or an out-of-turn transfer. So they do not appear on that priority count.” Minister, how many people are on the management-initiated transfer or out-of-turn waiting list, and how many people will be added to it when all Northbourne Avenue public housing tenants are relocated?

MS BERRY: As new public housing is built for public housing tenants who are in public housing dwellings that are no longer suitable, public housing tenants will be asked whereabouts in Canberra they would like to live. Housing ACT will consult with existing tenants in those buildings that are going to be part of the renewal program and they will be moved into housing that better suits their needs. There is no actual requirement for lists to change or numbers on lists to change as a result of new public housing dwellings being built across the ACT. I cannot see that there would be any movement from the current—

Ms Lawder: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms Lawder: The question was specifically about how many people are on the management-initiated transfer waiting list.

MADAM SPEAKER: I draw the minister’s attention to standing order 118(a), which states that the answer shall be concise and directly relevant to the subject matter. I know that the minister was talking around the issue of the management-initiated waiting list, but the question was specifically about how many people were on it and how many people would be added in relation to Northbourne Avenue. Could you keep that in mind when answering the question, Minister Berry?

MS BERRY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I can say that for Housing ACT waiting lists—are you talking about transfers or are you talking about waiting lists for the public housing tenants on Northbourne Avenue? I might have to come back with some information about any changes to the waiting lists that currently exist for people who are moving throughout our system. But I can inform Ms Lawder about waiting times for households who are waiting for transfers to another public housing property. As of 3 August, for the priority housing list the number of applications for transfer was 101.

Ms Lawder: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order. Can we stop the clock, please?

Ms Lawder: It goes to relevance. The question was about the third list that we heard about during estimates, not the public housing waiting list or the transfer list. This was a management-initiated or out-of-turn waiting list that I was asking about.

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister Berry, on the point of order, could you come to that?

MS BERRY: Yes, I can. I will bring some information to the chamber and provide Ms Lawder with the numbers, if there is actually a third list that she is referring to.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, when a public housing property becomes available, will it be allocated to a person on the priority housing waiting list or will it be allocated to a person on the management-initiated transfer waiting list—also referred to as the out-of-turn waiting list—that we heard about during estimates?

MADAM SPEAKER: I call the Minister for Housing.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS BERRY: On a point of order, I just heard an interjection from the Leader of the Opposition—

MADAM SPEAKER: Would you stop the clock if there is a point of order?

MS BERRY: Yes, please—referring to me as something other than the Minister for Housing.

MADAM SPEAKER: I did not hear anything but if you think—

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, I am very happy to clarify my interjection. I just note that I have been very quiet with my interjections. My interjection was: was the minister at estimates?

MADAM SPEAKER: There is no point of order. I call the minister to give an answer to Ms Lawder's supplementary question.

MS BERRY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The priority housing lists are for people who are in priority housing and people who are most in need of public housing in the ACT. People who apply for public housing—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson!

MS BERRY: and who are families who are experiencing domestic violence, people who have a number of complex issues going on in their lives, homelessness being one of them—

Ms Lawder: On a point of order, Madam Speaker—

MADAM SPEAKER: Could you stop the clock?

Ms Lawder: as to relevance. The question was specifically about whether a property that became vacant would be allocated to someone on the waiting list who is classified as priority or whether it would go to someone on the out-of-turn waiting list.

Dr Bourke: On the point of order, Madam Speaker, the minister has had barely 30 seconds into a two-minute answer and she has been constantly interrupted by the opposition. I am sure she will be getting to the point in due course.

MADAM SPEAKER: On Ms Lawder's point of order, I will remind the minister again of the provisions of standing order 118(a) to be concise and directly relevant to the question, which was, from my recollection and my notes: would a housing property be allocated to someone on the priority list or on the management-initiated list? Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: People on the priority housing list would get first preference because they are the people who are most in need.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, will your directorate publish on its website the management-initiated transfer waiting list, also referred to as the out-of-turn transfer list?

MS BERRY: I will have a look at that information and I will come back to the Assembly.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, how many days will people on the priority housing list have to wait to be allocated a priority housing property after all Northbourne Avenue public housing tenants have been relocated?

MS BERRY: People have to understand that whilst a person has applied for housing in the ACT, they are being supported through all sorts of different housing support across the ACT by our excellent housing support services. Whenever a person has applied for housing in the ACT, they will be supported by the terrific people who work out at FirstPoint at Belconnen and also by Housing ACT and the specialist housing services in the ACT. I do not think there will be any change—

Mr Coe: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order. Stop the clock. Mr Coe.

Mr Coe: The point of order is in regard to the relevance of the minister's answer. The question was: how many days will people on the priority housing list have to wait to be allocated a priority housing property after all Northbourne Avenue public housing tenants are relocated? We are looking for a number of days rather than anything but.

MADAM SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order and again draw the minister's attention to the provisions of standing order 118(a)—that the answer to the question should be concise and directly relevant to the question. Minister Berry.

MS BERRY: Madam Speaker, I am trying to explain again about the priority housing list. It is a bit hypothetical to be making an assumption about what the housing lists are going to be after the housing tenants along Northbourne Avenue, as well as in the city, are moved into housing that is being built across the ACT. I cannot see what is going to happen in the future after people have moved on—whether Housing ACT lists are going to go up or down. I cannot answer a hypothetical question, Madam Speaker.

Tourism—Canberra visitor centre

MR SMYTH: My question is to the Minister for Tourism and Events. Chief Minister, what is the future of the Canberra visitor centre on Northbourne Avenue? Has the site been sold; and if so, when will the visitor centre be relocated and where to?

MR BARR: I thank the shadow minister for the question. This was the subject of discussion in budget estimates; so I have—

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! I would like to hear Mr Barr.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson!

MR BARR: There is no new information that has arisen between today and when we last discussed this, Mr Smyth, a matter of weeks ago. As was discussed in estimates, the government is examining Regatta Point in partnership with the National Capital Authority as a potential new home for the Canberra visitor information centre.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Chief Minister, what information has been conveyed to the staff and volunteers of the visitor centre about the future of the centre?

MR BARR: The staff and volunteers are aware that a potential move for the centre from its current location to a potential new location at Regatta Point is being considered.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, given that Northbourne is the main approach route for tourists entering Canberra by car—

MADAM SPEAKER: Preamble.

MR COE: would not Regatta Point be sub-optimal for such tourists?

MR BARR: Regatta Point is, of course, the home of the national capital exhibition and provides a fantastic vista over the central national area of our city. It is on the same road; Northbourne Avenue becomes Commonwealth Avenue, and a left-hand turn as one heads south would indeed provide easy access—

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order!

MR BARR: to such a facility. It is interesting that the opposition now appear to be taking a position that they do not support such a change. But the feedback from the tourism sector is that this would be a very good location for the visitor information centre, and it will also be much more convenient for those who arrive in our city via the airport, then may hire a car and be coming in from the east.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, has the lessee at Regatta Point been given notice to vacate, and will volunteers at the business centre, if it is at Regatta Point, be given free parking at the facility?

MR BARR: Those questions of detail are in advance of where the process is at this point.

Canberra—urban renewal

MS PORTER: My question is to the Chief Minister. Why is investment in urban renewal and practical suburban improvements a central focus of the 2015-16 budget?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Porter for her question and for her ongoing advocacy of municipal improvements through the electorate of Ginninderra. There is no doubt that the focus of the 2015-16 budget is on Canberra's suburbs and on delivering more mowing, more cleaning, more weeding and other maintenance across the city. That is why, together with a range of major urban renewal projects, the government has allocated—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson!

MR BARR: an additional \$7.75 million for the more frequent mowing of 4,500 hectares of open space, for even greater efforts on weed control across our city, more regular and thorough maintenance of trees and shrubs throughout Canberra, more frequent cleaning of our lakes and ponds, and a more active graffiti prevention and clean-up program.

It is why there has also been funding provided in the budget to upgrade local playgrounds and why there is a range of practical infrastructure improvements occurring particularly in the Tuggeranong valley and Belconnen in relation to new and widened footpaths, community paths to cater for wheelchairs, scooters and other mobility devices, and the installation of new traffic islands, refuge spots and wheelchair ramps. They are just a couple of the practical examples of the suburban improvements that are part of this year's budget.

We have also provided dedicated funding for a new major park for the city to be constructed on the West Basin waterfront. That will include new park facilities, playgrounds, barbecue facilities and recreation areas, a purpose-built pavilion on the promenade and new paths and intersections to make it easier for people to access this new public park by walking, riding or driving. It is an investment in our communities, in our suburbs and in our urban parks and places.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Chief Minister, how can this focus on urban renewal improve the attractiveness and livability of our city?

MR BARR: The focus of the budget is on building the distinct character of the different local communities around our city whilst also shaping a city-wide environment to reflect a confident, bold and forward-looking city, one that this side of politics and the progressive side of politics is prepared to embrace, ready for the future—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson!

MR BARR: not going back to the 1950s and 1960s where we find the Canberra Liberals. We have lived through the 50s and 60s. You can stay there, Madam Speaker, and your colleagues but we are happy to move into the future.

That is why this budget ensures 89 local shopping centres will see improved maintenance—a \$2 million revamp to public spaces, particularly in the south of Canberra, including new pedestrian paths and landscaping at Erindale and at the Weston group centre; upgrading of street trees, landscaping and widening along Anketell Street in Tuggeranong; and improving designs to include walking and cycling access across Tuggeranong, the inner south and Kambah.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, what will the \$7.75 million additional investment deliver for Canberra suburbs?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Fitzharris for the supplementary and her interest in upgrades to urban amenity, particularly in the Gungahlin area. What this will deliver is more

frequent mowing, more frequent weed control, tree maintenance and cleaning of our public transport facilities, our lakes and our ponds.

There will be a surge mowing capacity so that high visibility and high use areas, including our major parks and arterial roads, have the capacity for additional mowing if that is needed. It includes an extra mow for the entire city each year. There will also be more weed removal on road verges, median strips and cycle paths.

A rolling cleaning program which includes 440 hectares of urban lakes and ponds will be rolled out. This includes a particular focus on Lake Tuggeranong and Lake Ginninderra. The funding will allow for the additional removal of debris from within lakes and ponds as well as litter picking around the edge of our lakes. There will be more staff hired to assist in the cleaning of our lakes and ponds, which means they will be cleaned every three months rather than the previous six-monthly cleaning process.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Chief Minister, what has already been achieved recently around our lakes and roadways?

MR BARR: I thank Dr Bourke for his ongoing interest in these important issues. We have seen, through the urban renewal program, a particular focus on upgrading facilities to make suburbs more age-friendly. There has been a particular focus in Weston Creek and in Ainslie in the inner north. We have seen new, repaired and widened footpaths, new community paths and road changes to make it easier for older Canberrans in those areas to be more mobile in their communities. The hardworking staff at TAMS have already undertaken—

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson and Dr Bourke!

MR BARR: numerous activities around our city's lakes and ponds to remove litter and larger objects, as well as removing environmental weeds such as alligator weed and ribbon weed. This 2015-16 budget that we are debating this week will continue to build on the good work that is already underway, and we will continue our focus on ensuring that Canberra remains the best place in the world to live.

Mr Hanson: The coolest little capital?

MADAM SPEAKER: Order!

MR BARR: We believe it is the best place in the world to live; those opposite do not, because they are stuck in the 1960s.

Manuka newsagency—rates

MADAM SPEAKER: I call Mr Doszpot.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson and Mr Coe, I would like to hear Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Treasurer. I refer the Treasurer to a story in the *Canberra Times* of 9 August 2015 about the rates for the building containing the Manuka newsagency rising by \$6,000 a quarter to \$24,500 a quarter in 2015. Minister, why have rates for the Manuka newsagency building increased by so much this financial year?

MR BARR: In relation to that specific property, I understand that a revaluation of the value of the property was undertaken. The valuation of other buildings within the immediate precinct led the valuation office to undertake a revaluation of that value. That value increased.

Mr Coe: Because commercial buildings are going up in value, aren't they?

MR BARR: Compared with properties in the immediate vicinity, it would appear that that particular property was undervalued in the past and is now valued at an appropriate level. It is, however, of course open to any ratepayer to seek a review of the valuation of their property.

In relation to the broader issues of tax reform, I would remind Mr Doszpot of a number of things. Firstly, as part of tax reform, commercial land tax was abolished. So previously businesses would have paid both a rates amount and a land tax amount. The other thing that has changed is that payroll tax has been cut for businesses in the ACT.

Mr Coe: Very handy for a newsagency.

MR BARR: It is well that the opposition would interject on that point. Because the ACT's payroll tax threshold is so high, newsagents do not pay payroll tax in the ACT. But were they in another Australian jurisdiction with a much lower payroll tax threshold, such as those with payroll tax thresholds—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order Mr Coe!

MR BARR: of less than half a million dollars—

Opposition members interjecting—

MR BARR: I am trying to be heard over the outrageous interjections of those opposite that you have done nothing about, Madam Speaker. You are doing nothing about that?

MADAM SPEAKER: I will deal with it at the end of the question.

MR BARR: That is an unusual approach, Madam Speaker. In concluding my answer in relation to Mr Doszpot's question, those jurisdictions that have a much lower payroll tax threshold expose small businesses to payroll tax. In the ACT we have a very high payroll tax free threshold, and one that is continuing to increase as part of tax reform.

The final point I would make in response to Mr Doszpot is that those businesses in Manuka, and indeed all businesses around the ACT, have seen their tax on all of their insurance products—all of their insurance products—cut from 10 per cent to now two per cent, and on 1 July next year it will be zero. So all of those businesses, if there had not been tax reform, would be paying 10 per cent on top of all of their insurance premiums, growing every year into the future—one of the worst taxes levied by state and territory governments.

Mr Hanson: They are really happy.

MR BARR: I know Mr Hanson is a big fan of bad taxes. He loves the unfair ones. He wants more GST; he wants more stamp duty; he wants more insurance tax. That is what Mr Hanson wants. That is the Liberal Party's position.

Mr Hanson: Show me where I said that.

MR BARR: No, you just want to keep quietly dipping into people's pockets on stamp duty, on insurance taxes, on the GST—all of those things—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members!

MR BARR: because that is the position of the Liberal opposition because you do not support tax reform.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson!

MR BARR: You support those bad taxes going up every year—

MADAM SPEAKER: Address the chair.

MR BARR: That is the position of the Liberal Party, and we see it time and time again.

Mr Gentleman: A point of order, Madam Speaker, before you give your ruling.

MADAM SPEAKER: You are anticipating that I am going to give a ruling. A point of order?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, Madam Speaker. During the interjections on Minister Barr's answer, Mr Hanson used the term that the minister was misleading the Assembly, and I think he should withdraw that term.

MADAM SPEAKER: I did not hear—there were lots of things said. It was very loud. I did not hear that. If you used the words “misleading the Assembly”, I would ask you to withdraw, Mr Hanson.

Mr Hanson: I withdraw.

MADAM SPEAKER: On the level of rowdiness, before I call any supplementary questioner, I called Mr Hanson, Mr Coe and Mr Wall to order on a number of occasions during that. The extent to which I was ignored was pretty unedifying. Mr Barr was right to draw it to attention, and I was proposing to deal with it at the end because it had started to quieten down. As I have said on a number of occasions, I do believe in free flow of debate and free flow at question time, but senseless, loud barking across the chamber does not come within that classification. When I call people to order I expect them to come to order. A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, how much have commercial rates increased by in Manuka since 2012?

MR BARR: That will vary property by property depending on the rolling three-year unimproved land value, but the point that I make, and I will repeat, is that yes, rates are increasing, but they are being offset by decreases for business in a number of other taxes, namely, the abolition of commercial land tax, the abolition on 1 July next year of all tax on insurance, reductions in payroll tax and reductions in commercial stamp duty. So we have four taxes going down, but we do not get any questions from those opposite about that, reflecting once again their economic ignorance in relation to the interaction of taxes in this economy.

The bottom line is that we may as well use the best and fairest form of taxation rather than the worst and unfairest. What the Liberal Party want—

Mr Hanson: What, so tripling people's rates is fair, is it?

MR BARR: So you want more stamp duty, more insurance tax, more payroll tax and more GST. That is the Liberal Party position. But you want to triple every other tax that people pay. That is the position of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Wall interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Wall!

MR BARR: Every other tax will just be quietly allowed to go up and up and up—the worst taxes levied by state and territory governments. That is the Jeremy Hanson way. He wants his hand in your pocket every time you transact on a property. That is what he wants. Every time you take out an insurance policy, he wants to tax it.

MADAM SPEAKER: Address the chair.

MR BARR: Every time you employ someone, he wants to tax it. That is the Liberal Party position—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson!

MR BARR: tax on insurance, tax on stamp duty, tax on employment and commercial land tax. That is their position, and he is tarred by that. He supports the worst taxes levied by state and territory governments.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Chief Minister, are you pleased that Manuka newsagency will have to sell something like 50,000 newspapers a year just to cover their rates?

MR BARR: I am pleased to have been able to have delivered a 10 per cent cut to insurance tax for the Manuka newsagency. I am pleased to have been able to ensure that the Manuka newsagency does not pay payroll tax. I am pleased to be able to ensure that everyone in business in the ACT does not get hit with a massive stamp duty bill when they buy into or seek to expand their businesses or their business premises. Yes, tax reform involves trade-offs away from bad, inefficient taxes to the fairest possible form of revenue. Of all the taxes levied by governments in Australia at a state and territory level, rates are the fairest and most efficient.

Insurance tax, stamp duty and payroll tax are relatively less efficient and relatively more unfair than municipal rates. That is why, faced with a choice between this range of taxes, the government chooses the simplest and fairest method that ensures our economy can grow, that tax is fair and that it is simple and more efficient.

That is the difference. The Liberal Party support the bad taxes. They want to be in your pocket every time you transact on property. They want to be in your pocket every time someone takes out an insurance policy. It appears they want to be in your pocket—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson!

MR BARR: to pay more GST.

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Smyth!

MR BARR: That is their position. The Liberal Party's position: more GST. We keep—

Mr Hanson: That is a lie.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, withdraw.

Mr Hanson: I withdraw, Madam Speaker, but I would ask—

MADAM SPEAKER: No, just withdraw.

Mr Hanson: that Mr Barr desists—

MADAM SPEAKER: No, just withdraw.

Mr Hanson: with this nonsense.

MADAM SPEAKER: No. Mr Hanson, I will ask you again: withdraw the comment that it was a lie.

Mr Hanson: I withdraw, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, how do you expect struggling small businesses in the ACT to find the money to pay for commercial rates increases of such magnitude as now faced by the Manuka newsagency?

MR BARR: The government is assisting small businesses by cutting insurance tax, by ensuring they do not pay payroll tax, by reducing stamp duty and by abolishing commercial land tax. So four taxes are going down. And if the position of the shadow treasurer is that he wishes to reintroduce taxes on insurance, if he wants to put stamp duty back up, if he wants to put payroll tax back onto small business, then let him say that. Otherwise he is supporting the current position which is transitioning away from these bad and inefficient taxes towards the simplest and fairest method of raising revenue. They are the choices. They are taxes by the Liberal Party; better taxes by the Labor Party, the simplest and fairest method.

We do know those opposite like a little bit of the libertarian tea party stuff. We know that.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson!

MR BARR: We know that Mr Hanson on occasion likes to share material from the US that is put together by ratbag right wing libertarian groups. We have seen that on his Twitter feed. We see him. He is there with Rand Paul and Donald Trump and a couple of the other tea party advocates. We know that they are crazy right wingers. We know that. And we are hearing it again and again today—

Mr Smyth: On a point of order—

MR BARR: stuck in the 1950s on social policy and out there with the far right.

MADAM SPEAKER: Sit down!

Mr Smyth: Under standing order 118(b) I ask you to draw the member's attention to the standing order and bring him back to the question.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think it was fair cop, really, in the context of the debate and the interjection today. Have you concluded your answer, Mr Barr?

MR BARR: Yes.

Roads—planning

MS FITZHARRIS: My question is to the minister for roads. How is the government planning the territory's roads for the future?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Gentleman, Minister for—

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Smyth! Can I get a sentence out today without somebody interjecting? It is going to be a very long week, and somebody is going to take a march fairly soon if you do not come to order. I call the Minister for Roads and Parking, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Fitzharris for her question. Planning the territory's roads is a key part of building an integrated transport network. Integrated transport networks shape the way cities grow and prosper by ensuring good mobility, generating economic opportunities and jobs and by providing vibrant and attractive social environments for residents and visitors in the territory. This government also recognises the importance of this for the ACT and is actively planning and delivering road infrastructure to meet the needs of our growing city now and into the future.

In recent years the government has done a lot of work to ensure that 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. Transport for Canberra sets the direction for planning an integrated transport network to 2031. It identifies the strategic public transport and road network, which comprise the major public transport corridors, which prioritise public transport, and major arterial corridors, which prioritise cars and freight vehicles in those corridors.

For example, the completion of the Majura Parkway will provide quick and easy access to northern, central and southern Canberra for cars and the major freight precinct for freight vehicles. This will help alleviate traffic along Northbourne

Avenue, which will support the delivery of capital metro and ongoing development of the public transport corridor. We have seen the public react to the opening of the north and southbound lanes on the part of Majura Parkway that is open now.

Transport for Canberra is complemented by the ACT planning strategy which identifies areas for future urban area development where road infrastructure needs to be planned and delivered in the future. At the national and state level, the ACT government continues to work closely with the commonwealth, state and local governments, including the Canberra Region Joint Organisation, to coordinate cross-border road infrastructure planning and potential collaboration for road infrastructure investment. Those discussions continue on a regular basis now between the councillors from Queanbeyan, the Chief Minister and me.

Roads ACT liaises with the environment, planning and Chief Minister's directorates in relation to new roads. The majority of road infrastructure associated with new development is managed by CMTEDD. This includes residential development under the direction of the Land Development Agency. The current upgrade of Horse Park Drive to allow for the development of Throsby and Taylor is an example of this. Other projects such as the Majura Parkway and Pialligo Avenue feasibility study are managed directly by Roads ACT.

The Pialligo Avenue feasibility study is one of many that the government does each year. Feasibility studies are used to assess the need for particular works and the impacts construction could have. This process is important for good planning of road works across the territory.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, you mentioned feasibility studies. What is the reasoning behind the Pialligo Avenue study?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Fitzharris for the supplementary. In recent years, the Pialligo and Canberra Airport areas have experienced considerable growth in commercial development and regional road infrastructure investments. In addition, Queanbeyan continues to grow and expand, generating an increasing number of commuter journeys to and from Canberra. All of this growth and development has drawn increased traffic volumes to use Pialligo Avenue.

The feasibility study is required to consider both current and future transport requirements along this key corridor, with particular focus on the following issues which are likely to increase demand for access along the route: the Majura Parkway, opening in 2016; the Kings Highway Queanbeyan bypass; the Brindabella business park; the Majura business park and IKEA store; future land releases; growth in the Queanbeyan area; expansions in Fyshwick, including the Fyshwick link road; and federal funding opportunities for regional investment. The output from this study may assist the ACT and Queanbeyan City Council to develop a joint submission to the federal government's stronger regions program in 2016-17.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, can you elaborate on the feasibility study being done on Horse Park Drive and associated works?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Dr Bourke for his question. Horse Park Drive plays an important role in distributing a large portion of Gungahlin traffic to the region's south-east area via the Federal Highway and the Majura Parkway. With the completion of the Majura Parkway project in 2016 the attractiveness of Horse Park Drive as a key arterial link will only continue to increase. Horse Park Drive is traditionally a single carriageway, single lane arterial road, with some localised widening at key intersections to increase capacity and manage the current traffic volumes that we see growing now. The ACT's strategic network plan for the road network identifies Horse Park Drive as a dual carriageway major arterial road in the future.

The feasibility study will determine the timing requirements, cost estimates and key design elements to accommodate the traffic generated by the growth of the Gungahlin region. The elements of the study will include the section of Horse Park Drive between the Federal Highway and Well Station Drive as well as the section between Anthony Rolfe Avenue and Gundaroo Drive. The section of Horse Park Drive between Well Station Drive and Anthony Rolfe Avenue is planned to be duplicated as part of the development of the Throsby infrastructure program. This will be delivered by the economic development directorate. Designs for the duplication of Horse Park Drive between Gundaroo Drive and Mulligans Flat Road were completed in 2013.

One of the key outcomes from the feasibility study will be the recommendations on the staging and timing requirements of the works to meet the demands of one of the fastest growing regions in the country.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, what additional pressure is Majura Parkway putting on Fairbairn Avenue and what plans are there to change the road configuration to allow free-flowing traffic?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Coe for his question. There is additional pressure on Fairbairn Avenue from the opening of Horse Park Drive until we see the completion of the bridges over Fairbairn. They will be completed, as I said, next year. So I agree, Mr Coe, that there is increased pressure on Fairbairn Avenue. That will be lightened next year once the completed bridges are in place. But there are some traffic management plans being worked through at the moment to see if we can facilitate some engagement along Fairbairn Avenue and lighten the traffic load there.

Health—services

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, new ACT Health directions require nurses to attend to some category 3, 4 and 5 patients based on time of arrival. The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation of the ACT is concerned that this direction breaches the nurses' professional responsibility to see the most

urgent patients first. Minister, how will ACT Health indemnify the individual nurse who, when working as directed by the employer, breaches their professional obligation?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Wall for the question. First of all, there has been no new direction to nurses in relation to these matters. The streaming of patients in the emergency department is unchanged and the practice is the same as it has been for close to a decade. In relation to the second part of Mr Wall's question, all ACT Health staff are indemnified for acts done in good faith and in accordance with their professional obligations.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, how is ACT Health's "streaming" method of assessing category 3, 4 and 5 patients consistent with national standards for treating emergency patients?

MR CORBELL: The approach adopted by ACT Health in its emergency department is not in any way different from the practice in many other large hospitals. This is not a new practice. It is not the result of any new direction. This has been standing practice for close to a decade and is consistent with the practice in large metropolitan hospitals around the country.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, are emergency department patients being seen other than by most urgent patient first?

MR CORBELL: They are being seen consistent with the guidelines and the framework that have been in place in the emergency department for close to a decade.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, will you instigate a review of the Canberra Hospital triage system as called for by the nurses federation?

MR CORBELL: No I will not, for the reasons I have outlined in my previous answers.

Transport—light rail

MR COE: My question is to the Minister for Capital Metro. Minister, is the ACT government currently conducting any telephone polling on light rail; if so, what is the purpose of the polling and what is the expense?

MR CORBELL: I do not believe we are. I will check but I am not aware of any polling at this time.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, how many polls and surveys has the ACT government commissioned on light rail since 1 January 2014?

MR CORBELL: I believe we have undertaken one survey during that time.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, how much money has the ACT government spent on polls and surveys on light rail since 1 January 2014?

MR CORBELL: I believe these questions have been asked previously on notice, and answered. I refer the member to those answers.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, do you accept that many Canberrans are opposed to your plans for light rail?

MR CORBELL: I accept that the project is a contentious one but there are views both in favour and against, and the polls reflect that there are a variety of views and that this is a contentious project. That is not unusual for a project like this and, indeed, it was the experience in other cities that had first implemented their light rail projects as well.

Energy—renewable

DR BOURKE: My question is to the Minister for the Environment. Minister, can you tell us about the large-scale wind auction you announced yesterday and how it will contribute to the 90 per cent by 2020 renewable energy target?

MR CORBELL: I thank Dr Bourke for his question. Yes, yesterday I was very pleased to announce a further round of reverse auction to support the development of an additional 200 megawatts of wind energy generation to provide low cost, affordable and renewable energy for our city as we head towards our 90 per cent renewable energy target.

This auction allows us to take advantage of favourable market conditions to seize the opportunity for low cost renewable energy that will help us make that shift to a low carbon future, meet our greenhouse gas emissions targets, achieve our 90 per cent renewable energy target and fundamentally see jobs and investment in our city and in our community.

This latest auction round will see the delivery of that 200 megawatts. It opened yesterday; it will close at the end of September. I look forward to seeing the results of those bids and the assessment of the preferred bidders later this year or very early next year.

As to how this auction will contribute to our 90 per cent renewable energy target, I am pleased to say that at the conclusion of the awarding of this latest auction round which I announced yesterday, we will achieve 80 per cent of our full 90 per cent renewable energy target by the year 2018. That demonstrates that you can actually get on and deliver these projects on the ground, secure the renewable energy you need and at the same time see significant investment in jobs and economic opportunity in our city.

What has been most notable from the last auction round for wind is the level of investment into our city. We saw \$50 million of direct investment pledged from the winning bidders in the last wind auction round. We know that overall the economic benefits are over \$250 million into our economy. They are supporting jobs in new industries based here in Canberra.

For example, Canberra-based company Windlab are going to grow the number of employees that they employ here in Canberra by between 40 and 60 over the term of their feed-in tariff entitlement. They are basing their global wind development headquarters here. They will be monitoring and supporting the operations of wind farms nationally and internationally right here in Canberra. It was very likely that because of the failure of the federal government to properly support renewable energy they were going to shift their operations out of Canberra and potentially out of Australia. We are now in a position where we have secured those jobs here in our city as a result of this government's commitment to renewable energy and the jobs and economic opportunities as well as the environmental benefits that it brings.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, can you tell us more about actions taken to achieve the 90 per cent by 2020 renewable energy target and how the ACT is tracking to achieve that target?

MR CORBELL: I thank Dr Bourke for his supplementary question. As I mentioned earlier, at the conclusion of the next auction round we will be at 80 per cent renewables by 2018, and that places us in a strong position to achieve our 90 per cent by 2020 target. But this process through which we are securing renewable energy from wind is only one part of a broader program to make that switch to a low carbon future. We are, of course, investing and supporting 40 megawatts of solar power generation, with 20 megawatts now operational and other projects are coming through the development pipeline. We have more than 50 megawatts of small-scale solar already operating on rooftops across the ACT, and that is also contributing towards our 90 per cent by 2020 target. Right now the government is also assessing the expressions of interest from the "next gen" solar process, which is looking at opportunities to secure 50 megawatts of large-scale solar generation with storage.

Combined, these projects are bringing significant interest to our city commercially, with companies saying this is the place to invest and grow their businesses. That means they are supporting jobs and they are investing in our city. They are investing millions of dollars into the ANU for research and development. They are investing over \$7 million into the Canberra Institute of Technology to build Australia's first dedicated renewable energy skills training centre.

I was out at the CIT in Bruce this morning talking to the people involved in that project, and they are incredibly excited about the opportunity this will bring for them to see more students come to CIT for this nation-leading skills training centre. These are the types of opportunities as well as the environmental benefits that we secure through our 90 per cent renewable energy target. *(Time expired.)*

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, can you please tell us more about the “next gen” solar expression of interest for up to 50 megawatts of solar capacity announced in May this year?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Porter for her question. The next generation solar process, as I said in my earlier answer, is one part of our broader 90 per cent renewable energy agenda. The government sought expressions of interest earlier this year from proponents who wished to put forward proposals for a 50 megawatt solar generation capability with storage. Storage, of course, is incredibly important as we shift towards higher levels of reliance on renewables—the capacity to be able to dispatch electricity generated from renewable means when required and also to provide greater grid reliability.

This proposal did attract very significant levels of interest. We saw 30 submissions come forward in the expression of interest phase, which amounts in total to around 1,000 megawatts of solar with storage capability. This is a very encouraging outcome. The initial reviews of the proposals are promising, in terms of price, in terms of innovation and in terms of local investment. Again, in the same way that was the case with renewables for wind energy auctions, we want to see not just good, affordable, well-developed proposals but we want to see how the proponents will come and invest in our city and build the renewable energy opportunities and the renewable energy jobs that will come from those projects.

The government is demonstrating what is possible in making this shift to a low carbon future, and how we can seize the opportunities based around our innovation, knowledge-based economy. The government will be making further decisions about how to proceed with next generation solar with storage when the evaluation of those EOIs is complete. *(Time expired.)*

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, how will the ACT economy benefit from continued investment in renewable energy?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Fitzharris for her question. As I have outlined earlier, we are seeing our renewable project developers not just building quality projects but investing in jobs, investing in research and investing in the ACT economy. But there are a few statistics that are worth reiterating.

First of all, local renewable energy jobs have increased by over 400 per cent over the past five years here in the ACT. That is at a time when nationally the number of renewable energy jobs has fallen. Windlab, the Canberra-based wind development company, which is developing the Coonooer Bridge wind farm project and was successful in the last wind auction round, has estimated that its salaries and on-costs for ACT-based staff over the next 20 years will exceed \$240 million and jobs growth of 65 positions. That is an extraordinary level of growth for a Canberra-based start-up. But that is the type of economic opportunity that is being realised through the government's renewable energy objectives.

Neoen, a multinational company committed to developing the 100-megawatt Hornsdale wind farm project which will also be supplying clean energy for the ACT, is investing in Canberra. It is establishing its headquarters for its Asia-Pacific wind development business right here in the ACT. And that is a really important commitment.

Overall from our wind farm developers we have seen \$50 million of direct investment, including the funding I mentioned for the CIT Renewable Energy Skills Centre of Excellence, the first of its kind in Australia. There is over a million dollars for the renewable energy innovation fund which will be supporting research and innovation in the renewable energy sector here in the ACT. There is the development of Australia's first masters course in wind power development at the ANU as well. (*Time expired.*)

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

Papers

Madam Speaker presented the following papers:

Assistant Speaker—Warrant of nomination, pursuant to standing order 8—Mr Doszpot (11 to 14 August 2015), dated 11 August 2015.

Estimates 2015-2016—Select Committee—Appropriation Bill 2015-2016 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2016-2016 (2 volumes)—Speaker's response to recommendations 25, 26, 29, 30 and 31, dated 11 August 2015.

Mr Barr presented the following papers:

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

Short-term contracts:

Jacinta Evans, dated 24 and 28 July 2015.

Leanne Power, dated 27 and 28 July 2015.

Thomas Gordon, dated 28 and 29 July 2015.

Contract variations:

Conrad Barr, dated 30 June and 28 July 2015.

Fiona Barbaro, dated 21 and 23 July 2015.

Helen Pappas, dated 21 July 2015.

Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 47—Instrument of approval of guarantee—Ararat Wind Farm Pty Ltd, dated 6 August 2015.

Domestic Violence Prevention Council report—government response

Paper and statement by minister

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (3.32): I present the following paper:

Domestic Violence Prevention Council—Report on Domestic and Family Violence including sexual assault in the Australian Capital Territory—Government response.

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

Leave granted.

MR CORBELL: I am pleased to present to the Assembly the government response to the Domestic Violence Prevention Council's report on domestic and family violence, including sexual assault, in the ACT. This response, which draws together information on initiatives from across a broad range of ACT government agencies, highlights the government's strong commitment to supporting those who have experienced domestic and family violence. It also reinforces the government's position that domestic and family violence will not be tolerated in the territory.

The impetus for the Domestic Violence Prevention Council's report was the Assembly resolution of 18 March this year which called on the government to work with the DVPC to convene an extraordinary meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to assist the DVPC to identify the key issues in the ACT relating to domestic and family violence, including sexual assault, in order to provide advice to me in my role as Attorney-General on how best to address these issues.

The Justice and Community Safety Directorate worked closely with the DVPC to organise this meeting, which was held on Thursday, 2 April this year. The meeting gave over 55 participants the opportunity to have an open and honest conversation about how the government and other stakeholders could strengthen and improve responses to this issue. A broad range of stakeholders attended, including community experts, front-line workers, first responders and, most importantly, people with lived experience of domestic violence.

It is important to note that a number of my ministerial colleagues, as well as other members of this place, attended this important meeting. The report, which I received on 16 April, includes 33 recommendations about the safety and security of victims of domestic and family violence, including sexual assault, in the ACT. It also provides an important insight into the current state of domestic and family violence responses and valuable information about how we can all continue to work towards greater levels of prevention.

Key findings outlined in the report were that eight areas warrant priority attention and action, including cultural change, integrated service delivery systems, evidence-based perpetrator interventions, and the provision of ongoing long-term supports. Importantly, the DVPC recognised that many domestic and family violence related issues are complex, and some may be contentious. This means that many identified issues will require more detailed conversations in a range of fora, and meaningful progress will take time and sustained effort.

I take this opportunity to thank the Domestic Violence Prevention Council for its work in organising the meeting and preparing the report. I would also like to express the government's appreciation for the active engagement of community agencies in the delivery of services to victims and perpetrators in the ACT, and for the engagement of people with lived experience, front-line workers, community experts and government officials in the extraordinary meeting and in previous consultations.

In particular, I want to thank the women with lived experience of domestic and family violence, including sexual assault, who attended the extraordinary meeting. Their contributions gave all attendees a reminder about the acute importance and urgency of the task at hand. I have to say that personally I found their stories the most compelling.

The government welcomes the DVPC's recommendations and acknowledges that effective responses to this type of violence require a whole-of-government response and widespread community engagement. Everyone in the community plays a role in addressing this violence by speaking out and working towards a culture that is safe, respectful and just for all.

The government intends to use the recommendations as the basis for change and continued improvement. A number of other sources of information will also assist the government to develop and improve responses to domestic and family violence, including sexual assault. Some of the responses were outlined in the ACT government budget, which included a statement on domestic violence and a paper on social inclusion and equality which highlighted the ways in which the government is working to counter violence against women and children.

For example, the government is progressing a number of legislative amendments which will strengthen responses to victims of domestic and family violence, and raise community awareness of domestic and family violence. The amendments, which I propose to introduce in the Assembly in September, include creating an additional offence of strangulation, allowing police records of interview to be admitted as evidence-in-chief for family violence and all sexual offences, expanding the special measures provisions to allow them to apply to breaches of domestic violence orders and other select offences, and creating a new class of interim domestic violence order.

In addition government reforms and initiatives have been developed to align with the government's commitments outlined in the second implementation plan for the ACT's prevention of violence against women and children strategy, which is being launched by me and the Minister for Women in August. The second implementation plan articulates the government's commitment to end violence against women and children. It also provides a whole-of-government policy framework for addressing domestic and family violence in the ACT, and reflects the territory's commitments under the national plan to reduce violence against women and children.

The governance group for the second implementation plan has recognised the importance of using the DVPC's recommendations. As a result many of the recommendations have been directly referenced, addressed and progressed in the second implementation plan. This is noted in the government's response where relevant.

The government agrees with 20 recommendations, agrees in principle with 12 and agrees in part with one. Many of the recommendations are consistent with existing practice, and the DVPC report makes a valuable contribution to ongoing work undertaken by the government to ensure that domestic and family violence is being addressed. The government response provides an important opportunity to briefly highlight and reflect on some key issues that were raised in the DVPC report and what the government is doing in response.

The first of these issues is outlined in recommendation 8 of the report, which is that the government consider establishing a high-level policy and programs unit to ensure a whole-of-government approach. The government agrees that there is a need for stronger coordination of policy and programs for domestic and family violence, including sexual assault. Therefore on 1 June this year Minister Berry and I announced the establishment of the office of Coordinator-General for Domestic and Family Violence, who takes responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the government response and ensuring that the government meets its responsibilities and actions set out under the second implementation plan.

The coordinator-general role sits with the Deputy Director-General (Justice) in the Justice and Community Safety Directorate. Although the coordinator-general is overseeing domestic and family violence work in the ACT, the current accountability and reporting models within directorates are unchanged. The governance group for the second implementation plan, which includes government and non-government officials, continues to be a key group for coordination as well. The coordinator-general has started working with directorates and key stakeholders such as the Victims of Crime Commissioner and the DVPC to ensure that responses to domestic and family violence are effective, innovative and as integrated as possible.

Another key issue identified in the report was the need to view all the supports and systems related to domestic violence along a continuum from early intervention, through crisis, to sustained safety and security. The government's position is that the first step in creating a truly integrated whole-of-service system response is to identify those areas or places where women and children are falling through the gaps and not receiving the full range of services they need.

That is why the government has commissioned an analysis of gaps in the domestic and family violence support service systems. This will be undertaken by the Community Services Directorate, with oversight by the better services task force. It is expected to be completed later this year. Using the lens of the human services blueprint and research on best practice systems in other jurisdictions, the gap analysis will explore the existing systems and resources across the continuum from early intervention, through crisis to long-term sustainable safety and security for women and children. This includes the human services system, the justice and legal system and the health and education systems.

It is clear that there are already a number of identified gaps that need to be addressed, such as access to interpreters in ACT courts, a shortage of post-crisis supports and strengthening of early intervention. It is also worth noting that some identified gaps are already being addressed by ACT government agencies. For example, ACT Policing is considering the implementation of a domestic and family violence risk assessment tool. Another example is the announcement of over \$600,000 in budget funding by my colleague Minister Burch to provide social and emotional learning programs and strengthened curriculum requirements to build respectful relationships within ACT schools.

The focus on gaps affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children who have experienced domestic and family violence will assist the government to further progress the recommendations in the *We don't shoot our wounded* report. This report highlighted that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls are significantly more likely to experience violence and less likely to report it or seek assistance.

A key issue identified in the DVPC report is the need to address the experience of victims from the Indigenous community. The Minister for Women and I have written to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, the United Ngunnawal Elders Council, and a number of key parties including the human rights commissioner and the Victims of Crime Commissioner, outlining the government's work to date and asking these bodies to work with us to progress priority measures that were identified in the *We don't shoot our wounded* report.

Another key issue raised by the DVPC relates to prevention and early intervention for children and young people. The government agrees with the position in the report and recognises the importance of children and young people having the opportunity to grow into young adults who develop healthy sexual relationships and behaviours.

More than two decades of international research definitively shows that infants, children and adolescents experience serious negative psychological, emotional, social and developmental impacts on their wellbeing from the traumatic experience of domestic and sexual violence. This is particularly marked for children up to the age of five.

On this basis the government has announced an amendment to the definitions of domestic and family violence used in the ACT to capture "behaviour by the person using violence that causes a child to be exposed to the effects of this behaviour", and to reflect the impact that this type of violence has on children and young people.

There is also a significant effort in ACT Health to address the effects of domestic and family violence on children and young people, and to implement early intervention strategies where possible. One immediate area of action is in maternity services. The National Clinical Practice Guidelines for Antenatal Care state that “domestic violence is relatively common during pregnancy” and that the “frequency and severity of violence may be higher during pregnancy” than at other times. ACT Health has indicated that in an effort to address this issue, the updated Women’s Hand Held Maternity Record will include a requirement that practitioners such as nurses or midwives screen all women presenting for antenatal care for exposure to violence.

The DVPC recommended that perpetrator programs in the Alexander Maconochie Centre and community-based programs should be mandatory. The government agrees in part with this recommendation and recognises the benefit of programs relating to domestic and family violence, including sexual assault, being delivered in these programs.

The government supports the use of sentence administration mechanisms to promote offender participation in programs deemed appropriate by Corrective Services. However, the government does not support mandatory programs for offenders who are serving a sentence of imprisonment.

There needs to be a range of efforts made to make sure that offenders are motivated when serving a sentence of imprisonment to be assessed as suitable for a program to engage with rehabilitation, and that this be done on a voluntary basis, including through case management and the availability of incentives. There is, however, evidence indicating that enforcing mandatory participation can be counter-therapeutic.

Before ACT Corrective Services recommends or offers programs, a number of complex factors need to be considered, including the nature of the offending, the length of the sentence, the results of risk assessments undertaken in relation to the offender and, most importantly, the offender’s readiness to change, their mental health status and their attitude to rehabilitation.

A number of programs are available for perpetrators where they are assessed as suitable. These include the domestic abuse program, which is targeted at men who are convicted of a domestic abuse offence against their current or recent ex-partner. The program aims to address issues within relationships, whether the victim of the offence is a current or past partner, and explores links between behaviours, thoughts and feelings in relation to offending, leading to a model of accepting responsibility and victim safety.

Where an offender serving a community-based sentence for a domestic or family violence offence is found suitable and has been directed to participate, participation in a relevant program becomes mandatory. The consequence of non-compliance is breach proceedings before either the court or the Sentence Administration Board. ACT Corrective Services also reports any domestic and family violence program participation of offenders in custody to the board to ensure that potential community rehab opportunities are carefully considered, should the offender be released on parole.

In appropriate circumstances ACT Corrective Services can direct offenders who categorically deny that they have committed sexual offences to a “denier’s” program. This program aims to help offenders understand more about the context which resulted in charges being laid, as well as to help them develop a self-management plan and to avoid situations that may lead to possible future reoffending.

Another key issue highlighted in the DVPC report is the growing prevalence of, and challenges presented by, technology-facilitated abuse. The government agrees that this is a significant issue and recognises the importance of developing a clear understanding of, and potential effective responses to, this type of abuse. The use of technology by perpetrators to facilitate abuse is a growing contributor to violence. The ubiquitous nature of online technology means abuse can be more readily perpetrated across jurisdictions and can potentially give perpetrators 24-hour access to victims.

This form of abuse needs to be recognised as an extension of the traditional power and control dynamics of domestic and family violence. This abuse encompasses a wide range of behaviours by perpetrators to control, abuse, harass, punish and humiliate their victims. It is often perpetrated alongside other forms of violence such as emotional or financial abuse.

In April this year COAG agreed to take urgent collective action to address the unacceptable level of violence against women, including strategies to tackle the increased use of technology. The government is participating in the National Cybercrime Working Group, which is preparing a report on this issue to be provided to COAG via the Law, Crime and Community Safety Council before the end of this calendar year.

While the government recognises the significant work to be done to combat domestic and family violence and sexual assault, the government’s response to this report demonstrates our continued commitment to ensuring that responses to this type of violence are evidence based, comprehensive and effective. We look forward to ongoing collaboration with the Domestic Violence Prevention Council, other key stakeholders and those who have lived experience of domestic violence. I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

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) (3.50): Today I am supporting the tabling of the ACT government’s response to the Domestic Violence Prevention Council report. I would like to acknowledge in the gallery today members of the Domestic Violence Prevention Council, including the Women’s Centre for Health Matters, the Victims of Crime Commissioner, the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and others.

Firstly, I want to thank the Domestic Violence Prevention Council for their invaluable role in undertaking this critical piece of work to inform and assist the ACT government in its response to the important issues of violence against women. The

tragic events in our community earlier this year provide everyone with a stark and tragic reminder of the seriousness of domestic violence and the impact that it has within our own community.

Women usually experience violence at the hands of men that they know, often behind closed doors. For some women, it may occur over many years. Sadly, as we have recently seen, for far too many women this has ended in their death. Domestic and family violence not only violates women and children's right to safety but impacts on their health, their sense of self, their ability to work and their ability to participate in the community.

Like many, I attended the Domestic Violence Prevention Council's extraordinary meeting in April to listen to the experts in this field about the work we still need to do to better protect women and children and improve our responses. As with Mr Corbell, what perhaps struck me most in that meeting were the personal stories that were told by young women, particularly the young woman who had lived the reality and the impacts of a system that is not seamless, a system that is still plagued by contrary rules and that does not protect and support women in the ways that it should and the way that it must.

This particular woman's bravery and honesty in addressing that meeting really does need to be honoured. We can honour her by being equally brave and honest in challenging ourselves and changing the ways we think, the ways we work individually and as a system, and the ways we respond to violence against women and children.

This may mean giving up some autonomy in order to truly work collaboratively with others. It may mean examining and changing processes we have in place that we take for granted as necessary. It may mean truly interrogating why our systems are not working or accessible for women with diverse backgrounds and experiences. But it is clear that unless we do these things bravely and honestly, our systems will fail too many women, and failure on our part can mean death on theirs.

The invaluable information provided at the Domestic Violence Prevention Council meeting was incorporated by the council into their report. Many of the actions they recommended have been agreed to and incorporated into the second implementation plan of the 2011-17 ACT prevention of violence against women and children strategy *Our responsibility: ending violence against women and children*. Thanks to the input from the council meeting and report, which reflects their extensive and combined knowledge and wisdom, I believe the second implementation plan is now an infinitely better and more effective document.

A persistent and loud message at the meeting and in the report was the need to ensure that appropriate actions in the second implementation plans are actually undertaken and that this is monitored. The new reporting framework against the second implementation plan acknowledges that message. Each directorate will be required to consider the implementation plan and identify actions that they could or should take. They will then be required to incorporate these into an action plan that will be overseen and presented to the social inclusion and equality subcommittee for consideration.

When combined with the current attention on domestic violence in our community, the reporting framework for the second implementation plan will encourage a diverse range of areas where people might not normally see domestic violence as part of their work to consider how they can contribute to creating a culture in which domestic violence is truly not acceptable and not tolerated. More importantly, it provides opportunity and support for them to take action.

The minister has referred to the action the government has already taken in recently providing an additional \$250,000 to three key community agency partners working in the area of domestic and family violence. This additional funding acknowledges the increase in their workloads as a result of community attention on domestic, family and sexual violence.

The ACT government also provided an additional \$615,000 to the ACT school system to support the valuable work that they are doing to address intervention for children and young people in relation to violence against women and children. There has also been the appointment of Ms Vicki Parker to the position of coordinator-general for domestic and family violence.

This signals the commitment of this government to putting in place systems for coordination that will improve services for women and children experiencing domestic violence. And we continue to work with the government and other jurisdictions to progress significant initiatives under the national plan that need a national response, such as introducing a national, standardised approach to domestic violence orders and creating standards for perpetrator intervention programs.

I am also pleased to announce the allocation of funds to provide training to front-line workers on how to address and combat the abuse of technology by perpetrators of domestic violence to track and continue to harass their victims. The use of technology as part of domestic violence is an issue recognised nationally and internationally as a growing and significant concern and was raised repeatedly at the Domestic Violence Prevention Council meeting. The nationally recognised training program we are funding in the ACT will be available for 100 workers and includes ongoing access to a web-based forum to share learnings and information on new technologies and tactics of perpetrators.

I am confident that these actions speak to this government's commitment to end violence against women and children by recognising that together as a community we can improve services and systems to support women and children that have experienced or been affected by domestic or family violence.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Auditor-General's report No 3 of 2015—government response Paper and statement by minister

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

Auditor-General's Act, pursuant to subsection 17(6)—Auditor-General's Report
No 3/2015—Restoration of the Lower Cotter Catchment—Government response.

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

Leave granted.

MR RATTENBURY: I am pleased to present the government response to the Auditor-General's performance audit report No 3 of 2015, which reviewed the effectiveness of management strategies employed by the ACT government and Icon Water in the lower Cotter catchment.

We are, indeed, fortunate that those who recommended a site for our national capital had front of mind the requirement for a clean, reliable water supply. The upper Cotter River catchment, which forms the western spine of the territory, collects rainfall and melting snow from our highest peaks, protected from contamination by the Namadgi national park. As the Cotter River winds its way north out of the park, it enters the lower reaches of its catchment. This part of the lower Cotter catchment is made up of 6,000 hectares of land that has undergone considerable change since the early 1900s, when it was cleared for agriculture and later planted to pines as part of the territory's commercial softwood plantation.

The 2003 bushfires completely destroyed the plantations of the lower Cotter catchment. The ACT government, in partnership with the community, has since invested heavily in rehabilitation, the central objective being maximising the value of the catchment from a water quality point of view. The decision to reactivate and enlarge the Cotter Dam added further impetus to stabilise the soils, establish vegetation cover and minimise human-induced impacts on water quality within the lower Cotter catchment.

The Auditor-General's report notes:

Since the 2003 fires, the natural regeneration of the vegetation cover and the management efforts and resources expended by Icon Water, the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate and the Environment Protection Authority, have been effective in steadily improving water quality and reducing turbidity and sedimentation.

However, the report goes on to note that considerable amounts of sediment are mobilised into the Cotter River after heavy rainfall and some of the erosion and sediment control structures in the lower Cotter catchment are in need of repair or replacement. Furthermore, the report notes the need to finalise a plan of management, improve management and coordination arrangements, and ensure the fire trail network available to land managers strikes the right balance between management access and minimisation of sediment run-off.

The government agrees with every one of the report's 12 recommendations. It considers the report a blueprint for addressing some difficult issues needed to ensure this important part of our water catchment is able to yield water of consistently good quality.

In the 2015-16 budget the government announced a total of \$7.8 million over four years to address priority on-ground works within the lower Cotter catchment. This investment will allow work to commence on the repair of erosion control structures to better protect water quality; deliver further fuel management activities such as the removal of pine tree regrowth which poses an increased fire hazard; repair fire trails; control pest plants and animals; increase staff presence in the area to ensure illegal activity is minimised, and complete a management plan for the area.

At this point I would like to outline in some detail some of the government's responses to recommendations from the Auditor-General's report. The first of three high priority recommendations addressed the need for new catchment management coordination and decision-making arrangements for the lower Cotter catchment. The aim of this is to identify senior executive staff with explicit responsibility for oversight and budget.

I can report that the Directors-General Water Group, with representation from each of the agencies with a management interest in the lower Cotter catchment—that is, TAMS, EPD and Justice and Community Safety—has determined that it will oversee all matters related to the management of the lower Cotter catchment.

The D-G water group has directed the creation of an inter-directorate working group to deliver on the relevant report recommendations and to regularly report back to the D-G water group. The working group is to be chaired by TAMS, the agency with land management responsibility for the lower Cotter catchment; it will also have representation from Icon Water, EPD and the Emergency Services Agency in JACS. I am pleased to report that this working group has commenced operation and has provided its first progress report to the D-G water group.

The report's second high priority recommendation called on the government to finalise a risk plan for the lower Cotter catchment. I have asked that this be made a particular priority, as it will in turn determine works considered to be of greatest need to ensure the integrity of the catchment. The risk plan, having input from all agencies, will be a consolidated whole-of-government document that will be reviewed and updated every year to ensure priority risks are recognised and mitigated.

The final high priority recommendation relates to the need to urgently remediate erosion and sediment control structures in the lower Cotter catchment. One of the most significant sources of pollution in a water catchment arises from the mobilisation of sediment after heavy rainfall. It is important that in a recovering environment, such as that of the lower Cotter catchment, control structures such as sedimentation dams, gabion rock structures and road culverts are deployed strategically and maintained to a minimum standard. The government has allocated \$0.7 million over four years to get this process started, with priority given to works that will yield the greatest improvement to water quality.

Improving water quality is also about strengthening the environment in other ways. For example, controlling weeds and pest animals will reduce soil disturbances and encourage natural regeneration, which serves as a very powerful driver of improved water quality. An additional \$120,000 over four years will substantially improve the land managers' capability to deliver this work.

The devastating impact of the 2003 Canberra fires on almost the entire Cotter River catchment resulted in long-lasting deterioration of water quality. Since 2003, the government has invested many millions of dollars to improve our capabilities to fight bushfire. This has included upgrades and accelerated maintenance works for a network of strategic fire trails that act as firebreaks and provide access to firefighting resources. The report recommends that the fire trail network of the lower Cotter catchment be reviewed to ensure that it provides essential access for this purpose, but also balances the need to minimise sediment run-off, noting that ill-maintained trails can contribute high sediment loads into river systems in times of heavy rainfall.

The Auditor-General has noted that TAMS and the Emergency Services Agency agree that pockets of pine tree wildlings pose a very high fire risk to the lower Cotter catchment. TAMS has produced a draft Blue Range rehabilitation plan, a working document designed to table management options that might be applied over time to address high fuel levels. More recently, TAMS has commissioned an industry consultant's report to validate management options TAMS considered in the draft Blue Range report with a view to ensuring that all possible operational responses are known to the land manager prior to taking management decisions.

A report has been completed and will soon be considered by the inter-directorate working group. What is clear is that the fuel risk posed by unmanaged pines, some on very steep slopes, needs to be managed and mitigated. The final response is likely to be a suite of actions, possibly including removal by burning, removal by mechanical means and the upgrading of support infrastructure such as access fire trails.

The 2015-16 budget includes \$936,000 towards fire fuel management works this financial year in the lower Cotter catchment, including for the Blue Range area immediately adjacent to the lower Cotter catchment. Since late 2014 TAMS has been working with colleagues in the Environment and Planning Directorate on a statutory plan of management for the lower Cotter catchment. Work is expected to be complete on a draft plan ready for public consultation by the beginning of 2016.

I consider this audit report to be an important line in the sand for the management of the lower Cotter catchment. Much has been achieved in stabilising the catchment since the 2003 fires. In a remarkable 10-year partnership between government and the community, Greening Australia has organised nearly 15,000 volunteers to plant out 500 hectares of the lower Cotter catchment with over 300,000 seedlings. I have personally witnessed hill slopes in the catchment, once completely denuded by fire, starting to once again be covered by native trees and shrubs. But this report from the Auditor-General outlines that we must do more to protect this important part of our water catchment, and the government is determined to do just that.

Appropriation Bill 2015-2016

[Cognate bill:

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2015-2016

Cognate papers:

Estimates 2015-2016—Select Committee report

Estimates 2015-2016—Select Committee—government response]

Debate resumed.

Capital Metro Agency—schedule 1, part 1.5.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (4.08): I am pleased Mr Corbell has come back to his seat; I thought he was going to leave and miss the ongoing debate. That would be a shame because Mr Corbell has put the metaphorical cart before the horse. This government picked a transport route and then fitted the studies to it without knowing the full cost, without knowing the full impact and without informing the people of the ACT what capital metro would really cost them. It was great to hear him quoting Mrs Dunne this morning. Mrs Dunne's document from 2008 was quite smart. The bit he forgot to read, of course, is where the Canberra Liberals said they will take it to the people. The Canberra Liberals would do the work, they would determine the costs and they would find out what the impact is. We said:

If the case stacks up we will take a fully costed proposal to the electorate prior to the next election in 2012 to let the Canberra public make a fully-informed choice on this very significant undertaking.

That is something Labor and the Greens have not done and will not do. If Labor and the Greens truly believed in their case, they would take it to the next election. They would let the Canberra public, as Mrs Dunne said, make a fully informed choice on this very significant undertaking. Mrs Dunne went on to say that the Canberra public should be fully informed on a range of factors, such as what light rail would cost. Remember, we did not have those costs. All they said before 2012 was, "We'll spend \$30 million." That is all they said they would spend. Remember, it started at just over \$600 million, it has gone to almost \$800 million and we have now a document floating around that says \$900 million. It will just go on. Mr Corbell's record for delivering capital works includes the GDE, which was first mooted at \$55 million and ended up at something like \$200 million. This territory cannot afford another mistake of that magnitude from this minister who fails on almost every occasion on the delivery of capital works.

The Canberra Liberals policy went on to say that the Canberra public should be fully informed on a range of factors such as what light rail would cost, how much it would cut travel times and decongest roads and what the contribution would be to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We committed \$8 million over four years to feasibility studies and forward design of a light rail system for Canberra. That is as it should be, not, "We've made a decision and we'll get some facts to fit the case."

It is interesting that we never had the debate about the future of transport in the territory. The father of modern transport economics was Mr John Meyer, who ended up being a professor at both Harvard and Yale. He wrote a book on the urban transportation problem which is still regarded somewhat as the text on this issue. What does Meyer say? I quote:

... buses are pretty much everywhere more cost-effective than urban trains.

Let me say that again:

... buses are pretty much everywhere more cost-effective than urban trains.

We know the government's own report says bus rapid transport gets a much better return than capital metro, but because they have made a decision to keep Mr Rattenbury in bed with the government they cannot afford to move away from it. That is the problem for the people of the ACT—this is about buying Mr Rattenbury's vote, not delivering full and long-term transport priority for the people of the ACT.

The current transport economist of note in the world is a gentleman called Edward Glaeser who wrote a book called *Triumph of the city: how our greatest invention makes us richer, smarter, greener, healthier and happier*. What does Glaeser say about transport? He says nobody has actually done the buses properly:

There's an old line that 40 years of transport economics at Harvard can be boiled down to four words: "Bus good, train bad." So it shouldn't be seen as being an intrinsic problem that you don't have a train system. Buses are flexible. They're cost effective. They in principle can be socially programmed ... But we tend to see buses as the ugly stepchild of American transportation. That's really unfortunate.

I think you could say the same in Australia. He goes on to say that he suggests:

... actually embracing a pro-bus agenda to make buses cool. Spend modest amounts upgrading the buses. You don't necessarily put in streetcars, just paint your buses to make them look better, figure out how to put in a little more personnel so they feel more safe, figure out if you can do social programming—chat rooms in buses. Run trivia contests for the kids, just purely experimental, low-cost interventions that attempt to make the buses exciting. That's a cheap public transport agenda that could potentially yield big returns ...

He wrote in the *Boston Globe*:

Boston needs cooler buses.

Canberra needs cooler buses. He goes on:

For decades, economists like me—and other budget nerds—have argued that buses are vastly more cost-effective than trains. Yet trains cause hearts to flutter, while buses elicit groans.

Does it all come down to we just like the sound of a train rather than hard facts? Further:

For buses to take on more of this region's transportation needs, they must please riders more and bean-counters less.

He goes on to say:

Flexibility and customization are hallmarks of our age of innovation. That should favor buses. Train routes are fixed; bus routes can change overnight. Buses can be tiny minivans or soaring crimson double-deckers. They can speed on a dedicated lane between far-flung stations, or stop at every street corner. Buses can be low-cost workhorses, but they can also be glass-encased wonders equipped with WiFi and flat screen TVs.

Unfortunately, the amiable adaptability of the bus has meant that ride quality is eaten away by penny pinchers who demand Spartan vehicles ...

The article goes on:

Yet there's another problem that transportation planners often overlook: Silver Line buses have no Wi-Fi or style within, and little design outside. Even buses need a little magic to them.

London Mayor Boris Johnson has sought to replace that city's articulated buses (which look a bit like the Silver Line buses) with a modern version of the beloved double-decker Routemaster. A design competition attracted such brand-name talent as luxury carmaker Aston Martin and architect Norman Foster. Winning designs were passed along to bus makers. Wrightbus, a firm in Northern Ireland, produced the Routemaster of the future.

The new Routemasters coolly combine tradition with sleek design. They are electricity-powered double-deckers covered with curving glass and sport an open rear platform for hop-on, hop-off access during peak times. We can't just copy that bus—it was designed for London, not Boston—but we can copy the process that produced the bus.

For better or worse, the obvious economic benefits of buses won't win hearts and minds. We need tough medicine ...

There is a lot of truth in that. But what we are being asked for from this government is more money to foster the need to keep Mr Rattenbury on the boat rather than coming up with transport solutions that match the city. This is a far-flung city. This is a city that currently has an excellent road network that is vastly underutilised for most of the day. But we are going to build another asset that has to be maintained along with the existing just to please Mr Rattenbury and Mr Corbell.

It is about time the government just said, "We're so confident what we are doing is the right thing, we'll take it to the next election." They said they would do \$30 million worth of design work. They did not talk about signing contracts. They did not talk about final costs. They did not talk about doing what they are proposing to do. Let us do the work. Let us find out if there is a route that works better than Gungahlin to Civic. Let us find out if we can improve the ACTION bus service, as has long been suggested by Mr Coe, to his credit, and make what we have already—an asset—even more productive than it is, thereby reducing the cost and the drain on the public purse.

We all know ACTION needs a huge amount of subsidisation. We all guess, because the government will not tell us, that capital metro will need equally as much

subsidisation to keep it afloat. We will have two underutilised transports systems just so Mr Corbell can have, as Mr Glaeser says, his heart flutter to hear the sound of train wheels on rails up and down Northbourne Avenue. That is not a justification for this enormous expenditure of money, and neither is keeping Mr Rattenbury in the government.

We should be looking to the long term. We should be looking for flexibility and innovation, as Edward Glaeser says. We should be upgrading the services we provide on our buses, things Mr Coe has spoken about for a long time. We should be making the most of the asset we have instead of buying and setting up another asset which will also require subsidisation, a great drain away from things like education, health, policing and urban amenity. We should have this taken to the next election if the government believe they are on the right course.

Question put:

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

Noes 8

Mr Barr
Ms Berry
Dr Bourke
Ms Burch
Mr Corbell

Ms Fitzharris
Mr Gentleman
Ms Porter
Mr Rattenbury

Mr Coe
Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne
Mr Hanson
Mrs Jones

Ms Lawder
Mr Smyth
Mr Wall

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate—schedule 1, part 1.6.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (4.22): This is an area that contains much—and I know that Mr Smyth and others will be speaking to this area—but I do want to hone back to a conversation we were having during question time about taxation and respond certainly to some of the points that were made by the Chief Minister. At one stage—and I was disorderly; I accept that—the Chief Minister was saying that the Canberra Liberals want a GST or that Jeremy Hanson wants a GST. I would invite Mr Barr, when he responds, to table his evidence of that. That would be most useful if he could do that rather than just make wild assertions.

I am aware that he has called for an increase, I believe, in the Medicare levy. That is his solution to taxation problems. But ultimately we are talking about what is in this budget. And there are a couple of things in this budget. Rates are going up, and we know that. We know that they are tripling. We know that they are going up substantially.

What we have also heard from this government is that we are getting rid of stamp duty. Andrew Barr said he is going to get rid of stamp duty every budget until it is gone. He is on the record saying that a number of times. But the problem is, when you actually look at this budget, what you find is that stamp duty revenue is going up. In fact, by the end of this budget, from the start of the reforms, it will have gone up \$39 million so that by the end of this budget period, 2018, stamp duty being collected by this government is \$259 million.

In actual fact there will be more stamp duty collected at the end of this budget, on the budget papers, than at any time in the ACT's history. The great reformer, Mr Barr, who said that he was coming here, he was going to triple your rates but do not worry, people, because he is getting rid of stamp duty, is in actual fact going to take more stamp duty out of the pockets of Canberrans than any other Treasurer in the history of the ACT. Nobody is winning out of this tax reform.

I refer now to an article written by Phillip Coorey from the *Australian Financial Review*. And it is interesting to read that article and what he said. He was referring to the last election and what has happened since:

In just three years, rates have soared in the ACT and in some cases, have nearly doubled. Rates in inner suburbs have risen from around \$1,600 a year to \$3,000 and in some cases over, \$4,000. This week's ACT budget forecast that revenue from rates will jump by \$356 million between 2010-11 and 2018-19, a 2.8-fold increase: almost a tripling in less than a decade.

This is not the Liberal Party saying this, this is not some party announcement on behalf of the Liberal Party, this is a journalist writing in the *Australian Financial Review*. I go on:

Because of the phased-in nature of the property tax, they will continue to rise at a rate many times higher than inflation for some years yet. This week's budget locked in another 9 per cent increase, as well as steep hikes in registration fees and levies. The overall impact was an impost of many hundreds of dollars a year on every household.

And then under the heading "High rates don't discriminate" he goes on:

As the owner of a bog-standard brick veneer house in a bog-standard Canberra suburb, this columnist declares a personal interest in the issue which is rapidly rendering the ACT one of the more unaffordable places in which to live.

The problem with exorbitant rates is that they do not discriminate. For people on low incomes, such as retirees living in homes they have owned for yonks, suddenly trying to find \$1,000 a quarter, when just years ago it was \$400, can be downright cruel.

So the article goes on. It is a good article and worth well the read if you have not read it. He makes many of the points that Zed Seselja has made in this place, that Brendan Smyth has made in this place, that I have made in this place and that others have made in this place: this government's tax regime is downright cruel because it imposes

penalties on people, massive cost increases on many thousands of Canberrans who simply cannot afford them—people on fixed incomes, many of them retirees sitting in a house that they probably have been in for 10, 20, 30 or 40 years, the family home—and Andrew Barr is now taxing that family home and is taxing people out of the family home.

Your income, if you are a self-funded retiree or a pensioner, is going up at CPI, perhaps two per cent a year, and your rates are going up nine or 10 or more per cent a year. How can you afford it? You simply cannot. Indeed, I have got lots of correspondence, as I know all members have, about this very issue and we hear about it a lot. I will go through some of the letters that I have received in recent times. One says:

Needless to say, I am terribly alarmed at my rates bill, which arrived yesterday. I fail to see how such a rise ... can be justified. With the cost of living rising at this rate, I will definitely end up having to go on the aged pension long before I die.

Another one says:

Hello Jeremy
Good morning!
I live in Weston and have a property in Canberra. I have seen just yesterday that the Land tax—

we will talk about that later—

has just been doubled. I used to pay 168 dollars per quarter and now it is 338 dollars. As the liberals used to say during campaign that Taxes and Rates would be doubled under Labor. It seems to be true and coming in next few years. It is huge increase and simply unsustainable for an investor to invest in property in the Canberra market ... This is highly unsustainable. We certainly need change.

With kind regards.

The point is, for investors who have seen their land tax go up and seen the rates go up, that amount of money means either they are not in a position to continue with that investment, it means that there is no profit coming out of that for many people—this is their nest egg—or they simply transfer those costs to the renter.

Another letter states:

Good Morning Jeremy
My sincere apologies if this sounds rude but I speak on behalf of the entire ACT community who is devastated and shocked by the continuous increases in Rates well above the CPI.

Rates must decrease not increase as they are a complete waste of money for ACT residents. Infrastructure Projects like Light Rail ... should not be funded by additional burden on already struggling families ... Labor will push ACT into recession due to the ridiculous increases in parking, rego and licences in addition to rates.

My family and friends were ACT Labor supporters but will never vote for them again and we will always vote for the ACT liberals due to nonsense rates.

This is a point that I think is an important one. At the last election there was a debate about rates and two things happened. Firstly there was some confusion about whether rates were tripled or not. Phillip Coorey discussed that in his article. It became a debate. "Rates are going up by this amount," or, "Won't they be going up by that amount?" We had Andrew Barr and Katy Gallagher staring down the camera saying, "Don't worry, not in your lifetime." I remember doing a debate on 666 with Mr Barr and he said, "No, no, this won't happen until the end of the century." But what we know is that in 11.6 years they are likely to have tripled. There was some confusion at the last election. The government essentially did not tell the truth about their rates program.

The second thing was that people were saying, "Even if rates are going up I don't mind. I don't mind if that money is going to be going into health, into education, into maintaining our roads. This is what we do pay our rates for. I don't mind. I've done all right. I'm prepared to do my bit, to pay my share." But what has happened is the light rail has come along, and now people are saying, "I've got my rates bill. The Libs were right. My rates are tripling. And if it were going into health, if it were going towards education, if it were going where I wanted it to go maybe even then if they are tripling I would be happy. But it is not."

The point that so many people are coming back to us with is that this money is now being ploughed into light rail, a project that is going to service three per cent of Canberrans, a project that we know from the union poll is not popular. (*Second speaking period taken.*)

Out there in the suburbs you have people who are struggling to make ends meet, not the sorts of people that go for the big, swanky dinners with Mr Barr in the city and forgo their sparkling water. We are talking about Canberrans who are retirees, hardworking mums and dads trying to raise families doing it hard. What we now know is that their rates are tripling and a lot of that money, as they see it, is now being squandered on light rail. Meanwhile they wait longer in emergency departments than anywhere else in the country and we see that this is a government that instead of focusing on the rebuild of the Canberra Hospital is cutting hospital beds at the planned University of Canberra hospital.

Here is another one:

Hi Jeremy—

there is some preamble—

Most of us are really struggling and all these increases are going to put pressure on the family budget. Maybe Andrew—

and she is referring here, of course, to Mr Barr—

should try living on \$578 a fortnight. I can assure you it is not easy.

And that is exactly the point. If you are on a big wage, like the Chief Minister, then it might be easy. But if you are out there on a low wage, on a pension, a retiree, every cent matters, every dollar matters, and ripping money out of people's pockets to put into light rail is arrogant and, as Mr Phil Coorey said, cruel.

During the question time period Mr Barr was saying, "Mr Hanson, Jeremy Hanson, is going to be in your pocket every time there is a property transaction." How often is that? I think it is about every decade. It is about every decade that people transition their properties. What we know is that it is Mr Barr who is going to be in your pocket, because Mr Barr is actually going to collect more in stamp duty than anyone else in the history of the ACT.

The point is—and this is the other side of the argument that it is once a decade—Mr Barr will be there every quarter. Every quarter he is coming along with his tax increases. If you want to talk about who has got his hands in your pocket taking your money out on a regular basis, it is Mr Barr four times a year, trying to pretend at the same time that he is getting rid of stamp duty when it is going to be the greatest amount of stamp duty collected in the history of the territory.

Here is another one:

Hi Jeremy,

We met once at my local business ...

I am writing this e-mail to you as I wish to discuss my concern of the 30+% increase to my rates over the last few years.

Unfortunately we bought our house (December 2011) before the ACT Government decided to reduce the stamp duty rates, but in the process have been hit with the double whammy. Not only did we pay the high rate of stamp duty but we are now slumped with higher yearly rates.

And that is an experience many have come to me with. Here is one that went to Chief Minister Barr and I was cc-ed into:

Myself, and I imagine others, who have bought a home in recent months seem to be caught on the wrong side of both fences (stamp duty and rates). In my own situation, I bought a home at auction in late May, hence the older (higher) stamp duty rate is payable. Yet settlement won't occur until August, so the new (higher) rates will be applicable from the outset.

That email was sent on 9 June. I notice that as at 7 August the constituent says, "I have not heard anything yet." He has written to Mr Barr saying, "I've got this concern. What are you going to do about it?" That was on 9 June. Two months later he has not heard anything yet. That is the sort of regard that we are seeing from Mr Barr when it comes to light rail. I am sure if it was one of his pet issues he would be right back to that constituent in a flash.

Rising rates are not new. I know that there are those who have raised their concerns about rising rates in this town. It is interesting, if you look at a website for a certain Katy Gallagher—it is on her website; it provides information on Katy Gallagher's campaign for the ACT electorate of Molonglo—it said:

Katy is particularly interested in hearing your views. Please take time to participate in the current process and email her with your comments or concerns.

She talked about the Liberal ACT rates saga. Katy Gallagher was railing against increased rates, because she understood before she got into this place, back when she used to talk to people, real people out there in the suburbs—

Mr Wall: Back when she was one.

MR HANSON: Yes, back when she was one.

Did you know—

she said—

that the ACT Liberal Government has increased rates by the forecast and not the actual ... CPI?

Back then the Canberra Liberals actually increased rates by the forecast CPI as opposed to the real CPI which would have probably been a fraction of a per cent. And Katy Gallagher was out there saying that was an abomination. Katy Gallagher would have been probably in touch with her community back then. When she was standing for election I am sure she was at the street corners talking to people. She probably understood the concerns that people had, the burning issues that people had trying to meet their weekly payments, their budgets. And she understood this. She said:

This means that when the real CPI comes in below the forecast the Liberals have been pocketing the balance!

Now that balance between CPI and your rates is hundreds of dollars. It is probably a seven, eight, nine per cent difference in many cases.

She said:

Under ACT Labor policy, rate increases will be capped ...

Did you hear that? It is a doozy. "Under ACT Labor policy, rate increases will be capped." That is nice, isn't it? You can see how you transition, when you are in the Labor Party, from somebody maybe who understood the impacts of rates increases to now when what you have got is Andrew Barr. Maybe he understands, maybe he just does not care. You can go back to his inaugural speech where he basically says that the family home is just a tax haven. As he said, his mentor Ted Quinlan used to say, "Tax them till they bleed but not until they die."

If you are concerned about rate rises across the ACT, the *Canberra Times* published a list of 2015-16 residential general rates by suburb and the amount they have gone up. There is another table, I think, that they produced that shows the amount that they have gone up since the tax changes occurred. But it is very interesting to see where those rates increases have been and how much they are. It is in suburbs like Rivett. I know Rivett well. It is not an affluent suburb by any stretch of the imagination. The rates there have gone up by nearly 10 per cent, 9.6 per cent, an extra \$160 a year. Across Weston Creek there are suburbs where it has gone up \$220 a year.

You can see in some of the suburbs in Tuggeranong, places like Richardson, Monash, Gowrie, Gilmore, Calwell and Bonython, again massive rate increases—hundreds of dollars. These are not affluent suburbs. In the inner north, in Turner, in Watson and in Reid, we have got some increases here of \$242 a year—year on year on year on top of what they are already paying, \$242 every year. In Belconnen—you may have some interest in this, Madam Deputy Speaker—in Aranda, it is \$261 extra every year. Rates are going up at 11.1 per cent. In Bruce, it is nine per cent; Dunlop, 9.7 per cent; Fraser, \$144; Giralang, \$151. In Charnwood, for those who have not put their money in the Labor Party pokies there, they are going up another \$114 every year. Across every suburb in this town of ours you can see where these rates increases are coming out of everybody's hip pocket.

We will not be supporting a budget which somebody who writes for the *Australian Financial Review*, somebody who is respected as a journalist, has looked at, has lived under and has come up with a verdict and made the call that these tax changes, these rates increases, implemented by this Chief Minister are cruel.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (4.42): The Chief Minister, Treasurer and Economic Development Directorate covers an enormous range of activities these days. As Mr Hanson has just said so well, taxation is covered by this portfolio. One of the interesting turns of the estimates was the twisting and turning of the Chief Minister where we went from, "We're abolishing stamp duty" to "We'd like to be the lowest stamp duty jurisdiction in the country". That is the problem with this Chief Minister and his reforms—you cannot believe him. These taxes were meant to go. They are clearly not going. We see them grow some \$40 million from an estimated outcome of \$220 million up to \$258 million this year. They grow and they grow and they grow.

As I pointed out when we had the debate when these reforms were first announced, this is a magic tax. It has been abolished and it continues to grow! That is the problem, and people are not seeing the benefits. People are seeing the downside of what is happening. You only have to look at the case we had today in question time where the Manuka newsagency's rates have gone up from something like \$70,000 to \$98,000 a year. The Chief Minister say it is on the back of a revaluation. The revaluation figures apparently were \$1.5 million revalued to \$2.5 million. I do not know any commercial property in the ACT that has seen growth in value like that in the last couple of years. They have not. We all know the market has been very, very flat. It started with Kevin Rudd's 14,473 job cuts and was unfortunately continued by the federal Liberals.

When this government cannot get enough revenue, they just go back and revalue your property and say, “Well, your property is clearly undervalued. We’ll up it.” I know of at least one business in Manuka that has taken them to court, and I know of several others that are considering their options. We have a Chief Minister and a party that is out of touch with real people and that do not understand what that increase in rates means to ordinary people, particularly those on fixed incomes and businesses.

The only way they can reduce their costs is to fire a staff member and work harder themselves. Mr Wall knows this; he has been in business. Mr Doszpot knows this; he has been in business. Mr Coe understands this. Mrs Jones understands it. Ms Lawder understands it. There are a lot of costs that small business particularly cannot get rid of. If you think you can increase your sales rapidly to pay Andrew Barr’s bill, you are fooling yourself.

The problem this compounds is the return to surplus. It is a fairytale. It is a nonsense. It is Wayne Swan-esque in its view that we are simply in 2018-19 going to return to surplus. If you look at the expense line on table 2.1.1 on page 29, you see that expenses this year went down \$69 million. We are expected to believe that in the budget year 2016-17 they will go down a further \$8 million—they will actually drop. Magically in 2017-18 they will go up \$147 million and then up by \$114 million the year after that, but, of course, we will have a surplus. It is on the never-never. It keeps drifting out because this minister cannot manage his budget and this government cannot control their spending.

We see it in the Treasurer’s advance where almost half the Treasurer’s advance was spent six days out from the end of the financial year. The Treasurer’s advance is for unexpected or urgent expenditure, and yet this government was spending money to supplement the police budget, which they gutted, and to pay for annual leave. How is annual leave unexpected? If you have not made the provisions properly you will get caught out, and this government gets caught out time and time again.

The economic adviser to the estimates committee, CIE—the Centre for International Economics—question the return to surplus and question a large number of the figures. In particular, they question the funding for capital works. Let us go back to the 2011 year where the government announced a \$432 million office block. We had debate on that. We probably had the largest single hearing of a committee in the ACT with about 25 people at the table. They coughed up about 16 reports on that project, but for capital metro, they will not deliver up all the reports.

Times have changed. CIE has constantly stated there is not enough transparency in this government’s budget under this Treasurer. We know we have this provision for capital works, but it is unclear what the infrastructure investment provision really means. Indeed, when we got the briefing, there was disquiet amongst some of the committee members about what had been explained actually meant. We are now looking at something like \$1.5 billion in capital provision, but there is no certainty on the cash flow of this provision, which CIE has also noted.

What is the government hiding? A number of large projects are to be put to tender, contracts will be signed, and this Assembly will be expected to tick off on them afterwards. That is not how government works. I think we all understand the need to protect the budget bottom line and get the best deal, but at some stage the Assembly needs to be involved, and this government does not seem to realise that.

There is a large number of areas in this portfolio, for instance, tourism. As a committee we looked at tourism and venues, and there are a number of recommendations about getting on with long-term planning for the city. Recommendation 50 is that the ACT government in conjunction with relevant stakeholders promulgate a vision for the Canberra CBD. Agreed in principle. The government's answer is that the city plan stipulates a vision for the CBD, a plan they virtually walked away from. They walked away from the city plan; they walked away from the city to the lake, and yet we are expected to believe that is their vision.

Recommendation 51 is that the government develop a vision for Canberra as a whole with a long-term plan of 50 years, a medium-term plan of 15 years and a short-term plan of five years. Noted. The government's response is that it continues to plan for the long-term growth of Canberra. I do not think that is what the committee meant. It is about a vision statement. Light rail is not a vision in and of itself. It might be a project that helps deliver a long-term vision, but if you do not know where you going and all you are doing is running from project to project, all you do is exacerbate the problem we have.

We are largely a land-based economy and we have largely a land-based budget. Until we start to realise the long-term value of certain blocks of land beyond being sold as quickly as the government can get them out the door to balance their budget and we realise the long-term value of those blocks of land and we get it right now, we will continue to be an economy that is largely land based or land-taxation based.

Recommendation 46—I have said for many years—is that the ACT government update its tourism 2020 strategy to consider 10 years to 2030 and take into account accommodation, attractions and events. Agreed. The government has finally agreed to looking at accommodation, attractions, events, which is great. The government's response is that the ACT tourism 2020 strategy is part of the national 2020 framework and will be reviewed and updated in that context. We do not even have our own identity. We are confident, bold and ready—but not really. That is the problem. Glib words, glib lines, glib slogans from a government that becomes increasingly glib in the way it treats the people of the ACT and in what it delivers.

Another portfolio in this area is the arts portfolio. You only have to look at the arts portfolio and its potential. The arts minister tabled the other day in this place a statement on the arts. It was curious because she tabled the statement but then she forgot, failed or did not want to read her own tabling statement. Perhaps that is because we might have had a bit of a debate about it because she would be forced to move that the paper be noted. But we have is a new arts strategy. It is about the same as the old arts policy framework. It has a larger font, so it has a few extra pages in it, but there really is no difference to what will come in the future. The chapter starting on page 28 that says:

What we will do and how will we know that we have succeeded

It says:

The priorities and actions which will see this Policy implemented are set out in the strategic plans of both artsACT and the CFC. Sitting alongside these strategic documents will be a number of operational plans which are to be developed by artsACT on issues such as: research and data; cultural infrastructure; communications; community arts and cultural development; and funding.

Do we have any faith that this government will do it? Absolutely not. Because in the same document put out by the same minister, there were to be plans to be developed and at annual reports last year when we asked what had been developed, the answer was a big no. They had to take it on notice. When they could not tell us what they had done, they reiterated all that was currently being done—nothing new. (*Second speaking period taken.*)

The arts are an important driver of the modern world. The recognised authority on this is a guy called David Throsby. He is an Australian. He has written what is regarded as the text book of the economics of cultural policy. Throsby says—this is a great quote because it really is about Canberra:

Once a logical sequence can be established, beginning with art and proceeding through artistic creativity, creativity in general, innovation, technological progress, competitive advantage, and leading in due course to growth in incomes, exports, employment and other indicators of economic success, government policy-makers tend to sit up and take notice. Since in many developed countries the cultural industries can indeed be shown to have grown faster than other sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture over the past decade or so when measured in terms of value of output or levels of employment, rhetoric is converted into fact, and the economic legitimacy of cultural policy is assured.

Yet we have a policy that does not talk about any of that. We have a policy that says there are some plans coming, but we know that for the last three years no plans were delivered. The good news is that we finally get a bit of a handle on the economic overview of arts in the ACT. This goes to the theme I have talked about for a long time about diversifying the economy, moving away from being a land-based economy and making sure we capitalise on what we have, which is smart people. It says in the government's own economic overview of the arts in the ACT:

The arts and culture sector directly added \$426m of value to the ACT's economy in 2012–13. This was equivalent to 1.3% of total value added by industry. Of this, \$162m was associated with the arts.

It then goes on to say under "Employment":

There were 6,456 persons employed in the arts and cultural sector in the ACT in 2011. This was equivalent to 3.1% of ACT employment.

It is interesting because if you go to the *Arts nation: an overview of Australian arts* by the Australian Council of the Arts, nationally arts and culture employ about eight per cent of the nation's workforce. In the ACT it is 3.1 per cent; around the nation it is eight per cent. It delivers 6.6 per cent of GDP around the nation. In the ACT it is about 1.3 per cent of value add. It may be that they are talking different things, but in terms of employment, according to the Arts Council document:

Australia's copyright industries have arts and cultural activity at their core. They generate over \$93 billion in economic activity (6.6% of GDP) and employ 8 percent of the nation's workforce.

It goes on to say:

The cultural sector contributes 4.0 percent of Australia's GDP, similar to levels in the United States, Canada and Spain.

In the ACT it is 3.1 per cent of employment and 1.3 per cent of total value added. You can see this is an industry that we should be good at. In fact, it is an industry at which we should excel because we have the national icons here. We have a great education system here. We have access to community arts facilities, and yet we languish. You only have to look at the international visitor figures in the year ending March 2015 to see that. It is only us and South Australia where visitor numbers go down. We had fewer international visitors in the year ending March this year than we did the previous year.

It is curious that inside the Chief Minister and economic development portfolio we are talking about business, we are talking about the economy, we are talking about industry, but one of our biggest industries is tourism and our international numbers are declining.

There is a trend. Tourism Research Australia says that continuing a trend which first emerged in 2013, visitors participating in arts and heritage activity increased strongly during the year. Remember this: arts and craft workshops and studios, up 26 per cent; heritage building sites or monuments, up 24 per cent; festivals, fairs and cultural events, up 20 per cent; botanic gardens, up 22 per cent. What does Canberra have lots of? Arts and craft workshops and studios, heritage buildings, sites and monuments, fairs, festivals and cultural events and we have the national botanic garden, but we declined. We declined because this government is not paying attention to the arts.

The document they have produced is an insult. The consultation finished in May. We asked during estimates when the consultation finished and it was in May. Most of this was already written, because it locks into the arts strategic plan. If you take the first five or six lines out of the arts strategic plan, it is what is reproduced in the arts policy framework. We have missed an opportunity, as this government misses so many opportunities. We are falling behind in an area where we should be incredibly strong because this is a government that is blind to our future and is blinkered by projects like capital metro. It cannot see the wood for the trees, and it is a shame.

It is important that these recommendations are about developing a vision for Canberra as a whole; it is not about a vision for a train. It is about a vision for the sort of city that we could be, that plays to our strengths and that allows us to unlock the potential of the people of the ACT. We need more businesses which, hopefully, we tax less, instead of fewer businesses which Andrew Barr, Treasurer and Chief Minister, simply wants to tax more. We get it every day. We hear it with compliance costs. Mr Wall as shadow minister for small business will have a number of stories, I am sure, to tell us of the businesses he speaks to, as do I.

All we have is a one-trick pony, and it is called land. They are obsessed with land. They think that unleashing capital metro on the people of the ACT will somehow mysteriously unlock the land values on Northbourne Avenue and the surrounds, but the problem with that is that they put a tax on it. “Yes, this is our tax policy. We want to unlock something, but before we unlock it we’re going to tax it.” You only have to look at the number of cranes in the CBD—I think there is one. You only have to look at projects like the Manhattan, which is finished. The old development used to give the government about \$65,000 a year in rates. The redevelopment, the Manhattan, I think now gives them something like \$750,000 a year in rates. This is what we should be looking at. Under the new lease variation charge regime, something like the Manhattan would not have gone ahead. Why? Because under this government’s high taxing regime, it is just not viable. That is the problem.

The government do not get business, and they do not understand. Up until now the lease variation charge was meant to be taking about \$28 million a year, but in this year’s budget it is down to \$16 million. That is slowing the growth of Civic, because the government are greedy. They are greedy because they are lazy because they cannot unlock the value, as I have just pointed out, for instance, of the arts community.

When you talk about the arts community and how it adds to the economic overview and the economic wellbeing of the territory, at the outer limits it is things like advertising, architecture, design, jewellery, craft, computer systems. As you move in closer to the heart it is things like music, literature, performing arts, the visual arts, sound recording, video games—we have the AIE; will they support the AIE in their bid?—radio, television, publishing, parks and zoos. Then you go to the inner circle, which is things like film, photography, museums, galleries, archives and libraries, all of which we have in spades. In many cases we have the best of those sorts of facilities in this country. But the government are so busy taxing people because they do not know how to diversify the economy. They have the glib lines and all the talk. Let’s face it, the launch of their new business policy was simply the rebadging, renaming or relaunching of old policies. There is not a great deal that is new.

It is time for a long-term vision for Canberra. It is about a long-term vision that plays to the things we are good at. It is about a vision that builds on things we either have here or could have easily here if we get the tax settings right. It is not about taxing people more; it is about spreading the burden. Many have already paid for a long time either through their service or through transactions years ago, and they are now being hit with a double whammy of getting no benefit from the government’s supposed reduction in stamp duty. It is the taxes on small businesses. It is the increased fees and

charges. This government only knows how to increase the net burden on people. There is no tax relief from this government. Tax reform for them is simply additional tax revenue into their coffers so that they can squander it as they see fit.

MRS JONES (Molonglo) (5.02): I am bringing to the attention of the Assembly today under this line number my concerns regarding the women's portfolio, and to talk about the need for transparency in how the budgeted money is spent in this area and how outcomes are accounted for. This government have continually shown that they are not willing to show transparently how money is spent on improving outcomes for women. The portfolio is now grouped with output class 3.1, along with a range of other elements in the community participation services group.

In December 2013 this government closed the Women's Information and Referral Centre, with no plan as to how, where or when the services would be delivered. They then spent the next year justifying the decision, in an effort to convince people that the services would be delivered in a better way, while cobbling together a plan. We are now told that there is a hub-and-spoke model to the government's service provision that the government continually assert is delivering the services that women want. However, there is no data to back up this claim, only an assertion. No research was conducted into what women want or need. There was no community consultation. There do not seem to be any specific outcomes that we are trying to achieve.

There is no quantifiable evidence of who is attending the sessions for women at the health centres now in Gungahlin, Belconnen and Tuggeranong, and what topics are being raised over the few days worth of visits that are being attended by Office for Women staff out in the community—someone sitting behind a desk waiting to see who might accidentally come by and discuss issues affecting women.

Minister Burch made the decision to save the rental costs for this facility, and took money out of many long-established services for women—services that were often helping the most vulnerable in our city, in a site which was well known and where at least a given clientele knew that they would be able to access what they needed when they needed it. Now we have a new minister who is yet to produce any evidence to support the change in service delivery. No actual data is kept, it seems, to show how women are being helped by this new model of delivery, and there is no evidence that the services are reaching those who actually need them.

The minister has shown she has no plan for the services for women and has no focus on actual, specific outcomes for women. This government has no outcomes to claim for the women's portfolio and services for women in Canberra. I would say that I do strongly support the rewriting of resumes which is going on at the Office for Women.

However, there is no clear budget for services for women; it is now part of a shared area. We heard the minister in estimates discuss the benefit of shared resourcing within the Office for Women and Office of Multicultural Affairs and how they gain savings by deploying the staff at the Office for Women in other areas. The government has not been up-front about what the budget for the Office for Women is, and how exactly the money is spent. Is it actually helping the women in Canberra who need it the most? That is possibly unlikely.

Additional funding of \$250,000 for three key domestic and anti-sexual violence services—the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and the Canberra Men’s Centre—has been provided. Although I am the first to say that we need to work on real and life-changing outcomes for any women living with domestic violence or being subjected to sexual or any other kind of violence, I am glad to see this commitment and I am sure it will be used to improve the lives of women.

However, the hub-and-spoke method that the previous minister has implemented for services for women has left women with no central point to get help or advice when they need it. There is a claim that in the city there is a library with resources of books for women, although it is worth mentioning that that library is behind a screen which is permanently locked and that if women want to peruse the set of books they need to ask for a key. How they know that the books are there, I am not sure. It seems to be a bit of a joke.

There is also a stand of brochures at the top of the stairs at the Theo Notaras centre but there is not so much as a chair to sit on. I do not know how many women hang around at the top of the stairs looking for the resources that they need, but I would be surprised if they knew that it was there. So it is pretty hard to recognise that it is a source of information and referral for women. It is a very basic attempt to provide the service that was provided by the Women’s Information and Referral Centre.

The Women’s Information and Referral Centre gave women a one-stop shop to seek help or referral where they knew they would see a friendly face and could seek help at any time. They now have to visit the community and child health centres and hope that they are there at a time when it is staffed.

The collection of data on phone calls into the Office for Women also does not seem to be happening; there used to be a hotline through WIRC. So we do not have a clear picture of who is accessing the services, what help or advice they are seeking and whether the office is able to provide them with what they actually want. There is not so much as a record of the number of conversations being had with women in the community or on the helpline. Without any accurate records it is difficult to know whether the government is providing appropriate services or assisting women any more than any other community group or service.

I implore the new minister to ensure that accurate data is collected on what advice is being sought and delivered and what outcomes women are achieving. I implore the minister to make clear the amount of money being spent on women in the ACT and improving their outcomes. We need to ensure that the outcomes for women are genuinely at the forefront of these services and that the services are appropriately targeted; otherwise the government are just spending taxpayers’ money to say they are doing “something” for women and it could easily be wasteful.

On the multicultural portfolio, which is also held within this output class—the Office of Multicultural Affairs—I have some concerns about the allocation of money for child care for women who are accessing English courses. Studies within my office have shown that one of the greatest reasons that women do not access English at a

younger age after having arrived in the ACT from overseas is that there is a high expectation of them to look after children. We do not have a lot of places in English classes that have child care attached. It is another hurdle for women to jump over to access these classes.

Many new migrant women are busy caring for their children and family. They are often on very limited incomes, with only the husband working to support the whole household. When they have no extended family or community ties they often do not have a support network to help them with child care. Culturally and linguistically diverse women really need the English language classes and if they cannot find childcare solutions then they will forgo their needs for those of their children.

Limited child care is a key reason why women who are not able to access English language classes then are not able to access all that Canberra and Australia have to offer them. Last year I asked Minister Burch to help these women to fully benefit from our society by providing more child care at English language courses, and I do not believe anything was done.

According to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection annual publication *Migration to Australia's states and territories*, we know that over 50 per cent of those who have been settled in Canberra, either as a refugee or as part of a special humanitarian program, are from Afghanistan, Iraq or Pakistan—cultures that place very high regard on the at-home mother.

We now have a new minister in Minister Berry, to whom I now appeal to do something about improving the number of childcare places available to women who need to learn English. We do not want them to have to wait until their children are off their hands or, as in many cases, until they are in their 60s, when all their family responsibilities are more or less over, for them to be able to learn English and engage fully in society.

There is an added element to the need to have women speaking English as soon as possible after arriving in Australia, because if they are suffering in a situation of domestic violence or an unhappy relationship they may or may not be able to access the government services that are there to support them if they need to leave.

Other areas that are of concern within the Office of Multicultural Affairs are the budget and expenditure for the Multicultural Festival and other projects and services provided by the office. I hope the festival, which was started under the last Liberal government, will continue to remain strong. That is a matter that I am sure we all agree on.

I have asked about the over-commercialisation of the festival and whether it is in fact pushing cultural groups to stalls on the edges of the festival or even pushing them out altogether. I appeal to the minister to be a bit more up-front on what budget is being spent on it and on whether it is reaching those who genuinely need it.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Planning, Minister for Roads and Parking, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations, Minister for Children and Young People and Minister for Ageing) (5.12): I will return to the area

of part 1.6—Chief Minister, Territory and Economic Development Directorate—in regard to my portfolios involving workplace relations. This year the ACT government has announced its decision to cease purchasing workers compensation insurance from the commonwealth workers compensation scheme, Comcare. Instead the government will develop a new scheme for the ACT public sector within the territory's own legislative jurisdiction. Taking this step will allow the government and stakeholders to create a scheme which appropriately reflects the diversity of our workforce and ensures a focus on improving outcomes for the benefit of the ACT public sector workforce and the wider ACT community.

To achieve this, the government has committed to ensuring that five principles underpin the design of a new scheme, namely: enhancing work safety by encouraging all parties to take responsibility for injury prevention and management; promoting recovery and return to work by raising awareness about the health benefits of work; focusing compensation payments and rehabilitation services on improved recovery times and return to work and supporting employers and workers in their mutual obligations of returning to work more quickly after injury; guaranteeing quality long-term compensation, care and support for those workers who are most seriously injured; and promoting accessibility and transparency in the scheme to make the claims process easier and less stressful for ACT public sector workers and service providers.

As soon as the announcement to leave Comcare was made we immediately sought the public and stakeholders' views on the possible design of the new scheme, in line with these key principles. To assist with the consultation process, the government circulated a draft scheme design of the key elements to stakeholders. These stakeholders included the ACT public sector workforce, public sector representative unions, the legal community and insurers. The consultation period ran from 26 February to 8 May this year.

On this point, I would like to thank all the individuals and interested groups who took the time to comment on this important reform initiative. The feedback received has since been used to inform the government and will assist us in the final design of a new workers compensation scheme design.

In saying this, the key theme coming out of the consultation process was the need to improve rehabilitation and return to work outcomes for our injured workers—better outcomes for our workforce overall. As such, this will be the focus of the new scheme. We will make this the focus by expending a larger proportion of available scheme funds in the first two years following an injury. We will also ensure we provide significant benefit to workers through early intervention initiatives and support.

As I have previously noted in the Assembly, there is extensive evidence that work is good for health and that extended absences from work have a negative impact on health and wellbeing. By focusing the scheme's resources on recovery and return to work, and emphasising mutual employer and worker obligations in the return to work process, our scheme will be able to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for our workers.

In addition, workers and employers will benefit from better integrated and more coordinated claims management and rehabilitation services, creating a more holistic approach to recovery and return to work. This benefit is able to be better achieved by creating a new scheme that is within our own jurisdiction. Furthermore, legislating a scheme within the ACT will allow for better monitoring of scheme performance. This will allow the government to ensure it continues to meet the expectations of workers and the broader ACT community and achieve positive outcomes.

When it comes to supporting our injured workers, we acknowledge that cultural change is needed at a whole-of-government level. In effect, the way we do things needs to be recalibrated so that the current practice of agency responsibility to find suitable employment is remodelled into a whole-of-service approach. We invest significantly in our public service workforce to ensure they are appropriately trained and capable of meeting the needs and demands of our community. We cannot afford, on both a social and economic level, to have our valued workers injured and then unable to return to work.

There will be a transformation in the way the ACT public sector manages the rehabilitation and support of its injured workers in the next 12 months, culturally and legislatively, with the ability to better control the outcomes for our injured workers.

The government's decision to leave Comcare is a significant social reform initiative that we are committed to and I look forward to reporting to the Assembly on the development of a new scheme in the coming months.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (5.17): I rise to talk about the government's transport reform agenda, which is contained within the Chief Minister's economic development directorate. The Chief Minister and I are leading this agenda, myself specifically in the recently created portfolio of minister assisting on transport reform.

The transport reform portfolio recognises that transport challenges and transport opportunities are integral to how our city grows and develops into the future. Our approach to transport is intertwined with city planning, with its economy, with its sustainability and with its social fabric. An integrated transport network—such as, for example, a light rail system that integrates well with buses or good pedestrian and bike networks that link people into public transport—has a vast impact on the way a city works and the way people can live in that city.

To ignore that is to condemn Canberra and Canberrans to a bleak future. Unfortunately, that is what I see from the Liberal Party in this place—an obsessive focus on short-term politics, basely trying to undermine the capital metro project and at the same time ignoring all of the actual challenges that need to be addressed for the future of Canberra.

As an example, Mr Hanson literally said these words this morning: "Any objective look at light rail shows the project does not stack up." In fact, the opposite is true. An objective look at light rail, like the business case undertaken to best practice standards by world-leading experts, shows that the project does stack up. It is only the subjective analyses that attempt to say it does not stack up. Mr Hanson is a subscriber to that approach.

The capital metro business case assessed the benefit-cost ratio of the light rail project as 1.2, meaning that \$1.20 is returned in benefits for every dollar spent on the project. That is a good BCR result for a public transport project. But that is only one part of the analysis, and it is important to note that there is a vast amount of other benefits and strategic sense in building light rail.

A few months ago in a debate Mr Coe suggested that the BCR made “a lot of bogus assumptions”, which seems to be something of a slur against the highly reputable professionals who undertook it using best practice methods. On this point I also note that Mr Coe says that the bus rapid transit BCR is 4.78. But that figure comes from an older, higher level analysis that also found light rail’s BCR to be much higher. It is misleading to compare this figure to the more up-to-date, detailed, conservative analysis later undertaken in the full capital metro business case.

Canberra continues to grow into a mature city. Current projections show the ACT population increasing by 130,000 people to 500,000 or half a million people by 2033. Without a sustainable and planned approach to growth, we are exposing ourselves to the illnesses that can cripple cities—urban sprawl, increased traffic congestion and pollution, social isolation and a weakened economy.

Interestingly, this week Perth’s Environmental Protection Authority produced a report detailing how the urban sprawl of that city was causing significant problems that without action were projected to become worse as the city grew. The report said that the sprawl was causing an urban heat island effect, a phenomenon in which the hard surfaces of the urban areas cause higher temperatures, and that heatwave-related deaths in Perth would more than double by 2050 due to this effect and climate change. This is one issue I would like to hear everyone in this chamber acknowledge, and I would like them to explain their plan to address it. With more deaths due to heatwaves contributed to by urban sprawl, how will we address urban sprawl and help prevent heat-related deaths?

The EPA also said that sprawl was destroying the natural environment and that species that were present at the time of settlement had disappeared from the Perth region, including 12 mammals such as the numbat. It said that 46 bird species were in decline and many plants were threatened with extinction. The same issues face the ACT. We just need to look across to Perth or to countless other cities to see the examples.

Transport, especially sustainable transport, is key to our transition to a bigger, more mature, sustainable city. Light rail is a transport project and a planning and development project. Just as the Perth EPA says that more compact development will help address urban sprawl issues, the capital metro project will help create a denser transport corridor of quality growth. A disproportionate investment in roads will lead to unmanageable levels of congestion, pollution, sprawl and costs.

Northbourne Avenue presents an obvious example. How will we deal with the significant growth that is expected to occur in Gungahlin and Northbourne Avenue in the coming years? There is no room on Northbourne Avenue for more road space, and in any case, is that what the community want? Is that what they really want—more

lanes in Northbourne Avenue and even bigger roads through the middle of our city that make us just that little bit more like Sydney? I think not. No; sustainable transport is the key to our future, and I am pleased to support the government's strong and forward-thinking commitment to this through the light rail project.

The government's broad strategic priority of suburban renewal and public transport includes two elements in addition to capital metro. These are the prioritisation and improvement of active travel and transport reform. I am pleased to be involved in both of these priorities as the minister for active travel and for transport reform. I will discuss some of the progress on these topics being made through the 2015-16 budget.

The government provided the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate with \$1.4 million of funding in 2015-16 and \$0.2 million in 2016-17 to support transport reform. The government's agenda for public transport, including capital metro and ACTION, will be further elaborated through the course of this year as this funding is spent to help develop that work. The funding will also be used to draw upon external expertise to support transport reform.

With the capital metro project, the government is facing a critical period for public transport. Significant effort will be required to integrate light rail and buses and to undertake the type of long-term planning that public transport and urban development require. The funding in this year's budget will support these key objectives.

The government has established the active transport office to ensure active travel is at the forefront of government priorities. Active travel is a major part of Canberra's transport future to continue to grow as a healthy and vibrant city. The government has a mandate to prioritise sustainable transport in Canberra and has invested \$23 million in the recent budget to build active infrastructure for a healthier ACT. These funds prioritise walking and cycling paths and will contribute to the vision for an ACT integrated transport network. The active transport office has already begun to drive the implementation of the active travel plan, which sets out priority actions to build, deliver, encourage and manage active travel across the various government directorate programs responsible for urban planning, transport, health, environment and education systems.

This is the ACT's first active travel plan. It aims to integrate walking, biking and road infrastructure with public transport to make it easier for Canberrans to get around and be more active. I am very pleased that that is on the table. My colleague Caroline Le Couteur produced an active transport plan in 2010 that addressed exactly these points. I am pleased the government has now formally adopted an active travel plan that reflects these very observations.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am speaking in my capacity as the minister, so I do not believe I am time limited on this speech.

The 2014-16 budget specifically supports active transport by providing \$250,000 to fund the design of new, and upgrade the existing, share paths and cycle infrastructure in and around the Woden town centre. This project will consider locations for dedicated facilities for cyclists and potential locations for shared zones to improve the priority provided for walkers and cyclists.

Some \$600,000 has been allocated to construct a new shared walking and cycle path through Bowen Park connecting to the Kingston Foreshore and making it easier to ride a loop around Lake Burley Griffin. This project will formalise the current gravel path, increasing the amenity for all users by constructing a new three-metre wide concrete path. This will improve the linkages with the developing Kingston Foreshore development area.

The budget also includes \$1.5 million to facilitate the final design and construction of new road crossings on the busy Sullivans Creek cycle path in the inner north, consistently identified as the busiest section of shared path in the city. These improvements will widen the path to provide a safer space for pedestrians and cyclists to share. Recent studies have identified that almost 40 per cent of inner north residents who live near this cycle path cycle at least once per week.

The budget also allocates \$200,000 to facilitate the design of stage 1 of the Molonglo cycle highway from the city to Acacia Inlet off Lady Denman Drive. This project will design the first stage of improvements to the key commuter link for cyclists travelling to the city from Belconnen, Woden, Weston and, in the future, the Molonglo Valley. The designs will include a wider shared path, better facilities for recreational users to stop and enjoy the environment and safer crossing points where the path intersects with the road network.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Rattenbury, if you sit down, we will stop the clock. You can have your second 10 minutes, but under the standing orders you have either got to be the minister responsible for this area, which is the Chief Minister, or the appropriation unit. Under the appropriation unit, transport is not mentioned. You can take another 10 minutes.

MR RATTENBURY: That is fine. Just to be clear, Madam Deputy Speaker, I also have portfolio responsibility for sport and recreation in this area, which I will probably need to speak to later as well. But that is fine; I am happy to work with you on this one; I only have a couple of minutes to go. *(Second speaking period taken.)*

I was speaking earlier of funding in the budget for walking and cycling infrastructure. I will add a few further ones; it is worth reflecting on these because they are making a significant difference across the city.

We will see \$150,000 to fund design improvements to increase ease of cycling and walking to and from the Kingston group centre. This project is also working with the developers of the Kingston supermarket site to consider how to improve the priority and amenity for pedestrians at the Kingston group centre. The study will also look to provide improvements to the existing paths which link the Kingston group centre with the foreshore development.

There is \$100,000 to fund feasibility studies which will identify local walking and cycling path connections in Belconnen, west Belconnen and Tuggeranong. This study will pick up and progress the Belconnen master plan recommendations for active travel improvements. The study will identify and prioritise a delivery program of

improvements to increase active travel opportunities within the town centre. The active travel office will provide guidance on the priorities and objectives of the program.

Also there is \$532,000 to design and construct upgrades of the pedestrian path connection and associated infrastructure between Woden town park and the Canberra Hospital. Improvements to the amenity and way finding between Woden and the Canberra Hospital will benefit a broad range of people who walk this circuitous route. Signage, lighting and new path connections will be provided to ensure a safe and clear route.

Finally, I mention \$230,000 for paths and signage in the first stage of the Oaks Estate heritage walk. In response to requests from the community during the master plan process, this project will improve the awareness of the heritage importance of the area. New interpretive signage and a walking track will be constructed to record and share the heritage values of the community.

Members can see that we are not there yet but through these kinds of improvements—and, hopefully, a lot more to come—we can create a city that enjoys the best walking and cycling environment in Australia. In the future we want it to grow into one of the world's best walking and cycling cities.

I will, for the benefit of members, note that there are a number of areas I have just talked about where feasibility studies are referred to. I am endeavouring to ensure that each year we have a series of projects that are being constructed but also we are doing forward studies so we have projects ready for the coming year so we do not have a stop-start program but, rather, a series of initiatives that are ready to go.

Apart from the signature capital metro project, the government is progressing other reforms to enhance the public transport network, as I touched on earlier. As the first step of this transport reform agenda, we will undertake a number of specific projects through the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate, working with partner directorates, including the active transport cross-city collaboration forum, which has helped to design an integrated bus and light rail network, a road transport corridor efficiency trial and a range of business improvement measures within ACTION. These are each small but excellent and important projects that together will really advance transport progress in our city.

In terms of the cross-city collaboration, Canberra is well recognised as a pedestrian and cycle-friendly city, but there is innovative work occurring in many cities in Australia on the active transport agenda. I am keen that Canberra has knowledge of and adopts the best of these ideas for local use and also that other communities see the benefit of new projects being put in place in Canberra, such as the Civic cycle loop and the Bunda Street shareway. I have asked TAMS to progress, in collaboration with the newly established active transport unit, an active transport forum hosted in Canberra, with invites to active transport practitioners from around Australia to share their experiences. This concept is already in place in other countries. In the US, for example, they have the NACTO forum, which has a similar purpose. I am pleased Canberra can take a lead in this space.

I would like to speak about the peak oil strategy which was funded in this budget. The ACT is taking a lead role in clean energy. I am committed to ensuring that the ACT is thinking strategically about its response to peak oil, particularly in the context of transport reform. During 2015-16 I have asked the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate to progress with the Chief Minister's directorate a cross-government scenario planning exercise to examine how well prepared we are in government for a more challenging energy future. This will be part of a peak oil strategy or energy security strategy.

When it comes to the corridor efficiency trial, as I have said, we cannot continue to expand road capacity indefinitely. Cities across the world are investing in new technology to enable and to make best use of their existing road networks, both through clever traffic signal systems and, more importantly, by providing up-to-date information to road network users on traffic conditions and delays on the road network. This is an issue that can now be progressed through this budget with funding to conduct a corridor efficiency study. This is likely to involve the use of cameras and live message signs to improve the use of our existing road network and mitigate the need for expansions.

I have spoken already about the integration of ACTION and capital metro. TAMS are working very closely with capital metro to ensure the best possible integration with light rail, including interchange locations, service and timetable integration, revenue protection and incident management planning. Funding through the budget will allow TAMS to conduct detailed timetable integration work for buses and light rail to ensure that the two modes are integrated and convenient.

Lastly, I mention the work being done on street design guidelines. The design of new suburbs and places where people live continues to evolve as city values change. Many cities provide regular updated guidance to the development industry about the sorts of innovation in street design that may be acceptable to government. I have asked TAMS to work with EPD to develop more guidance in this space, with the ultimate intention of including a new planning document in the territory plan to support the technical standards and specifications that TAMS has recently reviewed. It is my intention that these new street design guidelines will ensure that our planning keeps pace with our growing city, supports sustainable growth, supports a shift towards more sustainable transport and will facilitate growth into a healthy, sustainable, well-functioning city.

They are just a few areas where the government is moving its transport reform agenda forward. Contrary to the way the opposition seeks to portray it in this place, it is actually a very broad transport agenda that is seeking to provide improved transport services right across our city to meet the growing population, and therefore the growing congestion challenges, and the impact they have on our lives both in a social and family sense but also in an economic sense.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (5.35): It is always a privilege to address comments on sport and recreation—output class 1.4, which is what I am talking to at the moment—as I, like many Canberrans, appreciate the talent and quality of our local Canberrans and the sporting competitions that we have. It is, however, a shame that this government does not seem to appreciate local sport and the sporting community in the same way.

We are seeing an increase in participation across a number of sports in the ACT. Most of the football codes are struggling to keep up with the growth in all of their areas. I know in football it is an exceedingly sore area, as there are more and more competitors coming in across the various sectors, yet there are fewer grounds for them to compete on, and the many grounds that have been taken offline still have not been brought back online. So there is a shortage of grounds, and we will cover this in more detail later.

We are starting to see that many sports are not only having problems with the current facilities that are available but also they are finding it very hard to plan for future activities and developments because of the lack availability of other facilities. We see increases in participation in local sports. Particularly in junior sports, as I mentioned, our facilities are already being used to their capacity. Many of these facilities are under pressure as sporting bodies look to find more space for their sporting competitions, and obviously for training sessions as well. They are all having a very heavy usage rate and most of our grounds are being overtaxed. As each of these is used more and more, the quality of these facilities decreases and the strain of overuse takes its toll. Sporting teams in the ACT deserve facilities that are of a high quality, especially when you factor in the rising costs of facility hire.

You can understand the expectations of sporting clubs. They want good quality, well-maintained facilities. When you look at the nature of the rising costs involved in hiring government-managed facilities, it is much like the fast-rising cost of rates in the ACT—the sporting community is also paying more and getting less.

On a similar note, it is important in the ACT that we see good management of our top-flight sporting facilities—facilities such as the Gungahlin enclosed oval, which hosted its first FFA Cup tie last week—and other venues such as Woden park and Narrabundah ballpark. All of them host matches or competitions at high levels, and all have problems with turf, visitor facilities, spectator facilities or parking.

On a positive note, I attended last week the FFA Cup tie at Gungahlin oval for a match between Gungahlin and Sydney Olympic, and was pleased to see that the facility was well prepared for such an event, with a covered grandstand that seated, I believe, close to a thousand people, as well as providing a great view of the game. It also had reasonable amenities—a media box, toilets, canteen facilities, reasonable lighting and a scoreboard—all for around \$4 million.

Contrast this with the problems that we have seen develop at Woden park. There seems to have been issue after issue at Woden park. These include issues such as the turf, management of the turf and sustainability. We saw the surface quality deteriorate rapidly after just a handful of matches, and we can then throw in the lack of seating and parking for spectators, which are very limited. This government has built a \$7 million athletics facility while overlooking a number of essential requirements—and I will note the number of requirements that I believe are just not good enough under any circumstances, and certainly not good enough for a facility on which we have spent over \$7 million.

There is no sun shade at Woden park, no scoreboard and no grandstand. Seating has been reduced from 400 to 200 temporary seats. There are only three toilets available—one male, one female and one unisex. This is an incredible oversight for a venue that currently hosts Premier League men's and women's football matches with crowds of around 200 to 300 and a facility that was built for grand prix athletic events with crowds of around 2,000 to 3,000. School athletics carnivals are also meant to be staged at Woden, which would involve around 2,000 to 3,000 competitors and spectators.

Mr Assistant Speaker, when you look at what 200 to 300 people are somewhat managing to cope with, and if you put 3,000 people into that stadium, you have a situation that I believe will require some attention from our health inspectors and other areas, just to see how people are going to cope. How are 3,000 people going to cope with two or three toilets?

Where are people going to park? Mr Barr told us, "There's no problem with parking; people can park in the Canberra Hospital car park just across the road." That comment, Mr Barr, will come back to haunt you, because people who are using Canberra Hospital to visit family or friends are finding it very difficult to find parking. Yet the Chief Minister is now encouraging people to park in the very same car park because there are not sufficient car parks for 200 to 300 cars let alone for when crowds of 3,000 attend. These are serious issues that need to be attended to. I think there are a lot of people hiding their heads in the sand at the moment on these issues.

I could go on for ages, but I will finish by referring to what is an almost Monty Python-esque situation that exists in this whole Woden park debacle in that the planners were able to remember to include shade for the garbage bins. Imagine that: shade for the garbage bins but not for the spectators. That highlights what this government thinks of our sporting community. Athletics occurs in the summer months; it is an all-day event where children and adults, spectators and participants, are in the sun for most of the day, yet there is no sun shade whatsoever at the moment. On the positive side, I have to say that the running track is very good, and I believe that will get a lot of usage. But when you consider what we got for the \$7 million that was spent and compare it, as I did, with an oval like Gungahlin oval, you can see a lot needs to be addressed in that situation.

While \$7 million was spent on Woden park, all the other Little Athletics grounds—I believe there are about 10 around Canberra—were, and I understand still are, below the minimum standard that Little Athletics grounds are meant to conform to.

We also see government contributions towards upgrades of sporting facilities at, say, Kingston oval. This facility is used on many nights a week, as well as on weekends, for AFL and cricket all year round. There are thousands of junior and senior AFL players and cricketers who use the Kingston oval. It is difficult then to understand how this government can only contribute \$5,000 to a facility that is used week in and week out across a number of sports while it has spent, in comparison, \$750,000 on a beach volleyball facility that in reality will only be used for a few weeks a year and by beach volleyball competitors who I understand number around 200 players.

One questions the priorities of this government, the planning of this government, the commitment of this government and the consultation by this government to determine what the community really needs. The sports minister needs to take some responsibility in this area, and I am sure that will be done. But at this stage there are a lot of question marks over planning and allocation of funding.

This sort of government expenditure is confusing to a lot of the Canberra sporting community. These lumpy spending habits see large budgets on things that really do not make all that much sense, and small budgets on what seemingly is more worthy or where more priority was required. Even on the odd occasion when a good budget is set on projects that hold large potential, somehow this government still cannot get it right. *(Second speaking period taken.)*

I also note what seems to be the reluctance on the part of the government to become involved in the CBR Brave's quest for better quality ice facilities for Canberra. I say "reluctant", as I hope that it is reluctance and not disinterest. The Canberra ice skating facilities are not good, even if they were located in a small country town. For them to be the national capital's only facilities is quite appalling. Despite that, the CBR Brave continue to attract record crowds, in fairly poor conditions from spectators' point of view, and they continue to advance their way, hopefully into the finals.

I also wish to mention the Canberra Olympic pool. As most would know, the Canberra Olympic pool has been experiencing issues with leakage for quite some time. It is paramount that the future of this facility, whether it is by way of repairs or replacement, is communicated clearly in the public arena. The Olympic pool is utilised by a number of public groups, such as the ACT Diving Academy and many water polo teams. For these groups, having a clear direction from the government is important to their day-to-day activities as well as to their survival. At present our divers have to travel to Sydney, as I understand it, to fit in training. Again this is not good enough for the nation's capital.

Of course, for the many casual and recreational users of the pool, in a city that prides itself on a high recreation participation rate, having a pool that is normally open in winter closed either for a short time or permanently without a replacement is simply not good enough.

Apart from the participants and users of the pool, the other people that are being short changed quite badly are the people who we rely on to run some of these pools—the investors, the business people who invest money and expect to make some capital on their investment. There are two very sad cases where contracts have been terminated early when the problems with the leaking pool were finally discovered. These investors and businesses should be able to recoup some of the money they have spent on venues they felt were workable venues, whereas they found out, due to the poor fiscal performance of the asset they were managing, they were losing money on the venue. When the department and the government finally understood what the problems were, at that stage they also took the venues away from these people. As I understand it, these venues are under temporary management by other operators at the moment.

To make it worse, from a contractual point of view, when people respond to a tender, those tenders are quite expensive to respond to, by the time they get all the information together and do their calculations. Two such tenders were terminated or not carried through, even though the tenders were let and there were respondents to the tender. I believe some fairly questionable methodology was employed in making sure that one tender in each case was excluded, for whatever reason the government saw fit. Instead of having a tenderer running the pool who, under normal circumstances, would be contributing to the ACT's coffers, one of these pools at the moment is being run at a fairly substantial cost to the government. That is something about which we will be interested to find out more.

It is also worth noting the continuing neglect by this government of the equestrian facilities in the ACT, despite a memorandum of understanding being signed by the government with the ACTEA early last year. The ever-dwindling number of agistment paddocks is a real concern to horse owners in the territory. We have a great cross-country equestrian facility that has been actively upgraded by local club members, but it seems, once again, that there is not much interest by this government in things equestrian, other than having the Bicentennial National Trail mapped into the interactive mapping service.

The Canberra public have a great appetite for sport and recreational activities, and we have outstanding potential in this city. Local sports and local clubs are the breeding ground for the stars of the future. We have a lot of junior and senior players who deserve much better from the government, having regard to the attention it currently pays to upgrades and planning for the future development of these facilities.

We hope the government can lift its game with respect to the way it prioritises the money that is allocated to the various sports, and that it also has a look at the viability of these sports and understands the real importance as to where the money should be spent, the prioritisation that is currently missing and the planning that is also, I believe, missing to a very large extent.

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) (5.51): I am pleased to support this year's budget, a budget that reflects this government's commitment to Canberra and the people of our community.

This government is committed to supporting the arts and ensuring that Canberra remains a vibrant and thriving city. The budget supports the development of the arts and continues to encourage community participation in and across the arts. We strongly value and recognise the very tangible social and economic outcomes that the arts bring to our city.

This year will see the commencement of the implementation of the 2015 arts policy as well as the artsACT strategic plan. These documents, along with the economic overview of arts in the ACT, provide a basis to continue implementing the funding this government commits to arts organisations and to artists.

We know that in 2012-13, the direct output of the arts and the cultural sector in the ACT was estimated to be \$974 million, of which arts was responsible for \$361 million. This is a significant amount. The 2015-16 year budget has committed \$496,000 over two years for capital upgrades for artsACT-owned facilities. This builds on investment over the years.

This year's budget also sees the finalisation of stage 1 of the Ainslie and Gorman arts centres upgrades and will be the first year of operation of these arts hubs in the refurbished facilities. This government's commitment of \$2.5 million for these two heritage buildings has produced extraordinary results for the operation of these facilities. I saw firsthand the changes at Ainslie Arts Centre when they had their official opening a few weeks ago.

Total funding for arts activities through artsACT in the 2015-16 financial year continues to increase by CPI across this year and in the outyears. This includes \$5.7 million for the arts fund and \$3 million for a range of activities, including core funding for Canberra Glassworks, Belconnen Arts Centre, the ANU community outreach program and other initiatives, including arts residencies and the visual arts and craft strategy.

The budget reflects the government's commitment and belief that arts play an integral part in our culture and in our community. This budget reflects our commitment to encourage creativity, celebration, thinking and exchange. Canberra is a diverse and dynamic place thanks to our arts ecology, recognised and valued locally, nationally and globally to the benefit of all our community.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (5.54): I would like to make a few points today, firstly, about the public housing renewal program and asset recycling initiative and then about Access Canberra.

The public housing renewal program was discussed in detail during the estimates hearing. We have talked about it many times in this place as well, including discussing the new public housing developments underway in Nicholls, Chisholm and Monash. During the estimates hearings, Mr Collett, the executive coordinator of the Public Housing Renewal Taskforce, when discussing the Nicholls development, said:

I think that many of the concerns that were raised about people who are aged or have a disability represented a failure on our part to adequately communicate with the community ...

That is what we have seen several times on this government's part—a failure to adequately communicate with the community, including people in public housing properties along Northbourne Avenue.

I am pleased to see in the government's response to the estimates report that the government has made a commitment to some of the recommendations. Recommendation 52 stated:

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Housing work as closely as possible on the redevelopment of public housing to ensure that residents are provided with consistent and timely information.

Recommendation 83 was about writing to public housing tenants. Recommendation 84 was about tenants in public housing assets included in the asset sales agreement being able to be relocated to suitable replacement public housing prior to the sale of the asset. There were a number of other important recommendations, and I look forward to the government meeting their commitments on several of these recommendations.

Briefly before we break, I would like to touch on fix my street, which is part of Access Canberra. During the estimates process the Chief Minister said, and I am referring to page 135 of the estimates report:

So if people wish to engage with the government, be they residents, businesses or community organisations, they have a single point of contact for engagement.

And later on that same page:

From the perspective of a consumer, which is the perspective that I am most interested in, they do not particularly care where in government services are located. Their preference, frankly, is to be able to go to one place rather than to go to many.

I absolutely agree with the Chief Minister on that.

In the government's response to recommendation 57, the committee recommended that the ACT government closely monitor the first 12 months of Access Canberra and report to the ACT Legislative Assembly in March 2016 on its first 12 months of operation. The government agreed in principle to that. But I would like to bring to the Chief Minister's attention a couple of points that he might like to consider when trying to bring about greater consumer-centric design for Access Canberra.

I write quite a number of letters, for example, to Minister Rattenbury, as the Minister for TAMS. Previously, they included a lot about roads. Many times when Mr Rattenbury wrote back to me, and in the Assembly here as well, he talked about how we should use fix my street to lodge these types of complaints. I took Mr Rattenbury at his word, and from 28 November 2013 to early this week I lodged 64 cases on fix my street. In looking at it early this week, I saw that nine were resolved. Nine out of 64 cases were resolved on fix my street. Fifty-two were marked as escalated and three were marked as forwarded to an SME. I am sure that some of those that are marked as escalated or forwarded have been fixed or are in the process or in progress, but from a consumer perspective that is completely invisible to me. It certainly does not fit with the rhetoric that Mr Barr used during the estimates hearings.

The biggest issue with Access Canberra, and fix my street specifically, is that with the service they do not tell you what has or has not been done. When one of my staff called them last week to query it, the person they spoke to—presumably at Access

Canberra, what in other days we would have called Canberra Connect—said she was going to check her second system for this. I am not quite sure why there are two systems and why we do not have access to the second system, which would actually tell me what is happening to the requests that I have lodged. This seems to be where all the work information is stored. From a consumer perspective, it is not a good result. It means that the person who lodges the complaint has to physically go back to that site and see if the work has been done and, if not, lodge another complaint, because the Access Canberra website—

At 6 pm, in accordance with standing order 34, the motion for the adjournment of the Assembly was put and negatived.

Sitting suspended from 6 to 7.30 pm.

MS LAWDER: I will quickly recap where I was up to before we managed to escape for the dinner break. I was mentioning that since the end of November 2013 I have lodged 64 cases on fix my street. As at this week, nine are marked as resolved, 52 marked as escalated, and three marked as forwarded to an SME. I was saying that from a consumer's perspective it is quite difficult to understand where these cases are up to.

Let me pick one of these at random. It is something I submitted on 16 January this year about footpaths on Beattie Crescent in Richardson. It is marked as escalated. It says, "This incident cannot be reopened or updated. If you need further assistance, please submit a new question by clicking the feedback and complaints link." So on this particular issue, which has been sitting there for the best part of seven months, unless I go back to that footpath in Beattie Crescent, Richardson, I do not know whether it has been fixed or not—and nor do the people in that neighbourhood who asked me to do something about it.

Certainly there is more work that could be done to make fix my street more consumer friendly. The accountability and transparency of fix my street in theory and Access Canberra generally are good in principle, but if you want to have satisfaction levels from the use of Access Canberra and fix my street and you want to have a consumer-centric approach, there is a way to go. I urge the Chief Minister to look at those types of things. One should not have to make a follow-up phone call to Access Canberra to find out what is happening with these types of things.

In this instance, there would be about 55 of them that I would have to ask about. I could, on the other hand, initiate 55 new requests through fix my street on the same topic to see whether it has been fixed yet or not. I do not think that would be a good use of my time or a good use of government resources. The government should have a process in place to fix that feedback loop back to consumers, so that when they go to the effort of raising these issues via Access Canberra or fix my street, they have a way of seeing whether it has been done, not simply seeing that it is marked as escalated or forwarded to an SME.

On each occasion when I submit these reports on behalf of constituents, there is a check button where you can tick a box about communication—that you want someone to be in touch with you. So on most occasions I get a phone call. The initial auto-

acknowledgement is great. With this particular one in Richardson, I submitted it at 2.59 pm on 16 January. At 2.59 pm I got an auto-response saying, "Thank you for your correspondence." Just over an hour later I got a personalised message saying, "Dear Nicole, thank you for advising us of this issue." But since 4.05 pm on 16 January 2015 I have heard nothing more about this particular issue. And that applies to the other 52 that are marked as escalated and three that are marked as forwarded to an SME. So it is excellent in theory, but it needs a bit of work to be done to improve the feedback to consumers.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (7.34): I am going to continue with some of the commentary that has been running from those opposite. Mr Barr himself has suggested that if you look at the Canberra Liberals opposition you get a good idea of what they are going to be like by looking at the federal parliament. He suggested that Mr Hanson is going to be a leader like Tony Abbott and Mr Smyth a Treasurer like Mr Hockey. That would make me a minister like Bruce Billson. That is something that I would be quite happy to be, because the one thing that you can bank on time and time again is that Liberals understand what it means to run a business and what needs to be done to make running a business a bit simpler.

Nothing illustrates this fact more than the federal budget this year compared to the territory budget. The federal budget introduced a modest tax cut for business—for companies across the country that are turning over \$2 million a year. They introduced an instant asset write-off which means that businesses can have some confidence, go out, make a capital purchase that is going to benefit their business, and write it off in that financial year. These things boost confidence in the community and they boost confidence amongst the business sector. It is the business sector that drives wealth, opportunity and job creation. If you can boost confidence in that sector, you will boost confidence across the economy broadly.

To put that into context, let me contrast what a traditional Liberal government would deliver against what a Labor one will. This is what you get when you vote Labor. You get rates increases, as we have seen this year across the city. They are doing it very sneakily now; they are doing it in two ways. They are not just increasing the percentage that the calculations are based on, but also, as we have heard from Mr Smyth today, dramatically increasing the underlying property value—way in excess of what any real market value of that property would be. Businesses that I have dealt with locally have experienced some fairly horrendous rates. A Labor government delivers fee increases in licensing and registration. All types of licensing fees continue to increase under this government. It is a kick to confidence. That is what you get when you vote for Labor.

Let me touch on rates, which is a very important issue. It is one of the biggest revenue raisers that the territory has. Whilst we are embarking on Mr Barr's taxation reform agenda, the impact of that needs to be measured. There was quite a fiery exchange in question time today as to what the true impact of this is. Reducing taxes is good, and should be encouraged so long as the unintended consequences do not outdo the good you are trying to achieve. By very incrementally reducing stamp duty, insurance duties and payroll taxes but rapidly escalating other taxes like land tax or rates, the impact is far in excess of the benefit that is being derived by slowly reducing the rate of other taxes.

Let me point to some examples. A local business that has a modest commercial unit in Mitchell saw a rate increase from last year to this year of near on 50 per cent—a 50 per cent increase in one year. They have gone from about the \$1,800 mark to in excess of \$3,000. That is not a modest increase; that is close to price gouging. That is a fairly excessive price increase. The impact that then has on business and investment confidence is detrimental and the flow-on effect is seen throughout the entire community.

Another business has experienced some horrendous fee increases. There was an article that I helped the *Canberra Times* with at the weekend about this one. It is Shooters Wholesale, a great local business, family run for over 50 years here in the ACT. They specialise in selling new firearms and trading in second-hand ones, but they also rebuild, manufacture and do restoration for collectors, hobbyists and enthusiasts alike. One very small part of their business is selling a propellant powder which causes an explosion to fire a bullet for some enthusiasts who like to make their own ammunition. With the licences that they are required to keep under the ACT government rules, they need three separate licences. This goes to red tape as well. They need a licence to buy the product; they need a licence to store the product; and they need another licence to sell the product—three licences. Three years ago, the cost of those licences was around \$470, under \$500, per year. Fast-forward three years to 2015. When the proprietor of this business went to Access Canberra to renew their licence on another three-year basis, the fees went up from just under \$500 to—not \$600, not \$1,000, not \$2,000, not \$5,000, but in excess of \$7,000. We are talking about a 1,500 per cent increase in fees over three years.

The implications that has for a local business that does that for a very small market are exponential. When people are buying on price, as they always do in retail, when a product that is supplied locally by a business that employs nine local people is substantially dearer than a product that is bought across the border in New South Wales or on the internet, the sale leaves the territory and goes interstate. The very dangerous aspect in this instance is that when you lose that sale in the ACT you also lose the audit trail of who is buying these types of products.

There are other ways in which this government is doing wrong by business. We have seen in this budget not just the increase in pay parking rates, but the expansion of pay parking to week nights and also the introduction of pay parking on weekends. Businesses in the CBD are already doing it tough. We have seen the redevelopment on Bunda Street which saw the street closed and manipulated in a way that saw a reduction in traffic and a massive downturn in trade for those businesses. God only can imagine what light rail is going to do to the city. We have now got the increase of pay parking in the city on weekends. At the same time, we are talking about closing one of the largest open-air car parks in the city in order to build light rail. That is yet another hit to the business community at a time when they need supporting, not punishing.

Red tape reduction is always an area that gets bandied about; it is a bit of a political football. Everyone uses it, but what does it actually mean and what is this government actually delivering when it comes to reducing red tape, the administrative and

regulatory burden on business? I was very encouraged on budget day to see a very substantial red tape reduction bill tabled. But when you start reading through it, you realise that it is not reducing red tape for business; it is reducing red tape for government. It is making it easier for government to do business, not making it easier for business to do business. Yet again we have a Labor government that do not understand business, are serving themselves and are not helping the community that they are elected to represent.

Need I mention the motion that we moved here in this Assembly last week to highlight the silence from those opposite when it comes to the unruly, unscrupulous behaviour of the CFMEU on construction sites in the ACT? The silence has been deafening. For the business community, the silence has been more scary than the revelations that have come through the royal commission itself. If we are ever to tackle the problem that the union has perpetrated on construction sites in the territory, it is going to take leadership. It is going to take a government to stand up and say, "From this day forward we have zero tolerance for bullying, zero tolerance for corruption, zero tolerance for cartel behaviour on ACT construction sites." I know that those opposite stood up last week, and they will do it again, and defend the track records of the unions and say it is about work safety, about protecting workers; but I would suggest that when you are trying to do that to the detriment of the employer, in the end you will be protecting unemployed people.

Let me go to areas where I think this budget missed out. It was certainly a budget of missed opportunities. There was an opportunity to support local businesses further, include more local content in government works and include more content in government procurement. We have already discussed it today, but our lawns are now mown by the Melbourne city council. I have moved a motion in this place about that. Time and time again we see construction projects supplying all types of procurement within the territory going to out-of-town operators at the expense of local businesses. I do not think that those opposite understand that whilst they increase regulation, they increase red tape, they set a gold-plated service for all businesses in the territory and they make Canberra the pinnacle of how things could be done, they do not understand the cost implications.

When you have a business in the ACT having to comply with all the extra red tape—the burden, the tighter regulation, the tighter licensing controls and the increased fees that come with them—compared to a business in New South Wales, and when both are competing in a competitive market, you see the business in the ACT losing out because government has imposed so much additional burden on them compared to their counterpart across the border. It is about time business had a competitive advantage by being based in the ACT, not a disadvantage.

Madam Speaker, every year we get some very classic quotes from the budget. I will reflect on last year's estimates process where the Treasurer said that because of the increases—(*Second speaking period taken.*)

We saw in budget estimates last year one of the fabulous quotes that Mr Barr made in reference to how someone might be able to continue to afford living in Canberra as costs continue to increase. He suggested that they get a job and get a good union. This year we had the statement about pay parking in the city at night-time and the rebuttal was: "It is nearly the cost of a bottle of sparkling water. People can afford it." It highlights just how out of touch Andrew Barr is.

I do not know who Andrew Barr's constituency is or who he gets talking to out in the community, but I can certainly say that when I am down at Chisholm, Calwell, Lanyon shops or even at Erindale, people are not saying that they are going out to lavish dinners where they are serving sparkling water. They are struggling to make ends meet.

That is the case particularly when you get talking to self-funded retirees. These are people that have worked exceptionally hard to provide for themselves in their retirement. They have done the right thing by everyone. They are not trying to get a free ride on the taxpayer. They have looked after themselves; they have paid their taxes; they have put a bit away for a rainy day. They hit their retirement and they think, "We have got a modest income we can survive on for the rest of our days." Then they see things like tax reform and what is happening with rates. They have paid their stamp duty and the rates are a modest amount each year for the services they receive. That is okay. But as rates start to double, triple and, god forbid, continue on further, maybe even go up four times, these people are left wondering, "How on earth am I going to afford to keep my family home?" They are wondering how on earth they are going to afford to keep any home in the city in which they have spent so much of their careers and lives.

That highlights just how out of touch, how outdated this government are. They have been in office for too long. They have lost control of what the community expects. It is well and truly time that an alternative was given a chance.

Mr Doszpot: I seek leave to speak again.

Leave not granted.

Mr Doszpot: Madam Speaker, can I clarify a point? I only spoke for 10 minutes and an additional five minutes—

MADAM SPEAKER: I am sorry, Mr Doszpot—

Mr Doszpot: I intended at all times to continue. To continue for five minutes is all I am seeking.

Mr Barr interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Barr. Sit down please, Mr Doszpot. Mr Doszpot, you have been recorded as having spoken twice. If you did not take all of the time allotted at the time, I cannot do anything about that. The standing orders do not provide for that. Leave has not been granted.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (7.47): It is very disappointing to have to rise so quickly; I was looking forward to hearing Mr Doszpot's contribution. It is a shame that those opposite would be seeking to stifle debate on what should be a very open process whereby everybody can contribute all they need to in order to bring about the best possible governance for what is a \$4.5 billion budget.

Madam Speaker, there are several agencies in this area of the budget that I would like to draw to the Assembly's attention. In particular, I firstly refer to the LDA. The Land Development Agency is responsible for the release of land for development in the territory. This year the indicative residential land release program shows an increase in the number of dwelling sites to be released. This is somewhat unusual but indicative of a government that is desperate to bring in more money.

A closer look at the program shows the increase is only brought about because of the asset recycling initiative—that is, the replacement of public housing properties that the government is selling off. If the blocks from the asset recycling initiative are excluded, the number of blocks has actually decreased from the program released last year. So we are back in the same situation as every year—the government promises a certain number of blocks and then revises the target down. Of course, the government have a perverse incentive to reduce the number of blocks they bring out to the market. Not only do they not have to do the associated infrastructure, but because of limited supply the price goes up. They then get the sale revenue, they then get the stamp duty revenue and then, because it sold for a higher amount, the unimproved land value is higher as well. So they get a higher valuation by way of rates as soon as the block sells. They get a triple whammy, and because of that this government could be seen to be gouging Canberra families when it comes to the release of land in the territory.

The LDA's statement of intent states that the supply is expected to exceed demand for detached housing in greenfield estates. If this is the case, an inventory of serviced land may be established. This would certainly be a good thing. Housing affordability is seriously compromised when the LDA has no blocks for sale. When the government restricts supply and ensures that the majority of land released is by the government, home ownership is put beyond the reach of so many Canberrans. I hope the government is genuinely interested in making housing more affordable through ensuring an adequate supply of land.

I believe the government needs to complete a review of the types of blocks it releases to the market. I made this suggestion last year, but the government, of course, has not agreed to conducting such a review. I believe a review is important because housing affordability is not only affected by the number of blocks but the types of blocks which are being released as well. If the LDA continues to release lots of small blocks and blocks for apartments, this will not improve the affordability of blocks that are suitable for family homes.

As I have said many times before, the LDA should focus on its core purpose of land release. It is not appropriate to have the government competing with private developers to develop new areas. The government's continued interference in the development and construction industry is bad for Canberra's businesses. It makes

housing more expensive and it is not fair to Canberra businesses in the property sector. Property is one of the most competitive industries in the ACT, and the government should allow the market to operate free from excessive government intervention.

We have a situation whereby the Queanbeyan City Council recognises there is a shortage of affordable land within the ACT and they are picking up the slack. What is happening now is that people that I believe would prefer to be living in the territory are going over the board where New South Wales and the Queanbeyan City Council not only get the land sale but they get the stamp duty, they get the rates, they get the GST revenue et cetera, et cetera. We should be trying to harness the growth here in the ACT.

The estimates committee spent some time asking officials about the public housing developments in Nicholls, Monash and Chisholm. Members will be aware that concerns have been raised about the location of these developments and whether they have adequate access to transport and other services. In response to a question about proximity to shops and other services, Mr Collett told the committee:

There are no prescriptive controls. We need a bit of flexibility in finding those sites. But in evaluating the sites ... we look, of course, at access to services, transport and other characteristics that are important to our tenants ... Ideally, every site would be in close proximity to those sorts of services.

I am afraid that for Nicholls, Monash and Chisholm I am very concerned that those sorts of services are not within easy reach of the prospective tenants. Despite acknowledging the importance of access to these services, the LDA has planned developments for sites that are often a long way from services, medical facilities and transport. I am very concerned there will be a negative outcome for the residents in these developments as well as the broader community as we support them. There is potential for social isolation in these developments because residents may have difficulty accessing some services.

In this behemoth of an agency, I now turn to parking, which is part of Access Canberra. As you will be well aware, Madam Speaker, this government continues to punish motorists for driving their cars. There is no aspect of private vehicle ownership and operations this government is not trying to gouge. The government should accept that Canberrans using their cars is not an extravagance. They are not doing it for fun; they are doing so because of necessity. Providing adequate parking near the town centres and in the city is a requirement and an essential service of a local government. Instead, this government sees motorists as a target for extracting more money for itself.

I think there is an unintended outcome here whereby when you drive up the registration costs, which this government is doing, you are forcing people to pay that, but once they have paid for registration of a car, especially if it is an expensive registration, people will want to use that as much as they possibly can to amortise the registration cost over as many kilometres as possible. It would seem unusual to me that somebody would register a car for \$1,100 but only use it once or twice a month. If you are going to pay \$1,100 to register a car, there is a fair chance you are going to

get your money's worth out of it and use it at every opportunity. The government needs to be very careful when it comes to these price points to not create a situation where they deter people from using public transport.

In this year's budget parking fees continue to rise. For the first time the government has decided to introduce extended paid parking hours in the city. The government does not seem to care about people visiting the city who are not there for extravagant dinners. The facts are there so many people come to the city not because of choice, not because they are going to dinners, but because they have to. They have to go to a professional appointment—a physiotherapist or a doctor or a dentist. They have to go to various legal or other professional services. These people are being gouged by this government when it comes to the price and availability of parking.

The increase in the cost and the extension of the hours of paid parking is inextricably linked to light rail. Of course, this government is starved of revenue. At the time of running the territory's largest ever budget deficit, this government committed to building the territory's largest ever infrastructure project, albeit for one per cent of Canberra's population during peak hours. This government need all the revenue they can get from Canberrans so they can afford to pay for Mr Corbell and Mr Rattenbury's legacy project. However, increased parking charges are also required so light rail can record a marginal cost benefit of 1.2. The full business case released by the government last year stated:

The benefits anticipated in this business case are founded upon a number of assumptions. While such assumptions are realistic, actions shall be required by current and future Governments to ensure stated benefits are realised and maximised.

The business case continues:

A non-exhaustive list of factors wholly or partly within ACT Government's control which may influence the recognition or maximisation of light rail benefits includes ... parking charges;

The increase in hours and fees is inextricably linked to the light rail project. Of course, this government knows Canberrans are going to keep using their cars despite the fact that this government is driving up the cost of parking. Therefore, they are simply gouging Canberra motorists. (*Second speaking period taken.*) In gouging Canberra motorists, they are gouging the vast majority of Canberrans, because it is the vast majority of Canberrans that depend on parking on a daily basis.

The business case suggests that increasing parking charges will maximise the benefits of light rail. In their determination to proceed with light rail, the government is deliberately increasing parking charges well above inflation. Not only is the government increasing the paid parking hours but the recently revealed plan to close the Magistrates Court car park in the city for the construction of light rail will take away over 250 car parks in the city. People using the car park near the Magistrates Court to visit medical specialists, the courts and many other hospitality venues will be affected. The government seems to think that people can park at the Canberra Centre and walk to these places. However, Madam Speaker, as you would be well aware, this

walk could be perhaps 500 metres or even a kilometre. Many people will also be discouraged from dining in and around the Melbourne Building as they find cheaper and more accessible car parks in other parts of the city.

Finally I turn to the issue of speed cameras. The government finally released a report from the University of New South Wales into ACT speed cameras earlier this year. The release of the report was delayed for months. Despite the fact the government received the report in June 2014, it took them until 2015 to release the report. Indeed, they refused to release it even under freedom of information. The reason for that was simply so the government could have more time to understand and work out how they could justify putting more speed cameras in and leaving dysfunctional ones in and around the territory.

The release of the report was delayed for months, and when it was finally made public it became clear why. The report showed that fixed speed cameras made little difference to speeding because people soon figured out where the cameras were and often just sped up after they had gone past the cameras. Often they were located in places that saw an increase in the number of accidents following their introduction—not a decrease but an increase in the number of accidents after the cameras were installed.

Further, the UNSW review also demonstrated that the government had not been collecting data properly and had not collected data prior to the installation of the speed cameras. You had people on a whim choosing locations, not getting data from them, not getting crash data and then trying to claim they were a road safety mechanism. I fear speed cameras in the ACT are not about road safety but are simply about revenue raising. That is what this government is—it is all about revenue raising. It is not about delivering fair and reasonable services for the people that pay the bills.

The report shows that serious crashes have increased in the past five or six years despite the fact that the speed camera program has been in operation. This comes after the Auditor-General found last year that the ACT speed camera system has made no difference to speeding. It is clear the government's speed camera system is a mess, that there are no substantial plans to do anything different. All we saw was another glossy document to try and justify the UNSW's findings. In actual fact, very little is going to change on the ground as a result of this report.

People have become cynical about the purpose of speed cameras when it appears they are just being used for revenue raising. I believe it is time to implement significant changes with regard to speed cameras, changes that are based around road safety and not about trying to cover up this government's massive deficit.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (8.02): It is unfortunate and a little churlish that the contribution from Mr Doszpot was stifled, But as my father always said, "There's more than one way to skin a cat," so I will be delivering a few notes on behalf of Mr Doszpot. While I am having this discussion, please channel Mr Doszpot. I will continue to discuss the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate.

According to the digital Canberra action plan, creating a digital Canberra is a priority for this government. However judging by recent revelations, many would be forgiven for believing the opposite. As we know all too well from this government there are many promises but very few actually come to fruition. It was promised that Canberra would host Australia's largest free public wi-fi network. However, with continual delays in the rollout it seems we are still waiting for this promise to be delivered. Initially the rollout was to be completed by the end of this year. Now it seems it has been pushed back to mid-2016.

So far only Canberra city, Braddon, New Acton and EPIC have active external wi-fi transmitters. The town centres of Belconnen, Dickson, Kingston, Manuka, Tuggeranong, Gungahlin, Weston, Woden and Bruce are still all waiting to receive their promised full, free wireless network. The wi-fi rollout was to be completed one year after its launch in October 2014. At this point in time it is anticipated it will be completed nearly two years after the launch. But this government's track record, who can really be sure? Who knows, by the time the 2016 election rolls around, it may become a re-announced election commitment.

It seems that the rollout schedule for Canberra public wi-fi is not the only issue in this portfolio that is masked by a cloud of uncertainty. In 2014 during estimates Mr Doszpot asked the Chief Minister when the \$21.8 million iConnect platform would be delivered, and yet here we are again, more than a year later, still waiting for this government to deliver on its promises.

Shared Services ICT is another area where it is often difficult to be clear on the basic information, for example, the rationale given behind the allocation of \$413,000 to undertake a feasibility study on network modernisation. The reasoning behind this allocation of money is, by way of response in the estimates hearing, to ensure that the modernisation program is done in the most cost-effective and efficient way possible. Obviously spending \$413,000 on a study to outsource a project that has previously been adequately performed internally is viewed by this government as cost effective.

I now move on to discuss the role of Shared Services Human Resources and the investigation conducted by them into why a cage-like structure was erected to contain a child with autism in an ACT primary school. During the estimates process I asked for information regarding this investigation. The Chief Minister's reply was less than reassuring. He was not even aware of which directorate was undertaking the investigation. This is an incident that made national and international headlines and the Chief Minister was obviously not across the investigation at all.

The situation has been badly managed from the start and here we are, more than five months after the incident, with Minister Burch's assurances that the inquiry would be swift, and still nothing. When officers from Shared Services Human Resources were questioned during the estimates process they admitted that they had not been given a date to complete the work by. This was a matter that was described by Minister Burch as "a matter of urgency".

It has now been several months since the incident was reported and it has become clear that Minister Burch has shown no leadership or authority on this matter. Even

the terms of reference of the investigation have not been made public. The investigation details have been unclear since the beginning, not only to the Canberra community but, as it would seem, so too the government and directorate conducting the investigation.

The Canberra Liberals, like the wider community, have been asking for this issue to be properly addressed by this government since April this year. Questions need to be answered and the appropriate people need to be held to account. This investigation is obviously just another smokescreen hiding behind HR.

According to the government, this budget is a budget that delivers for Canberra. What it will actually deliver is still yet to be determined. Canberrans are supposed to trust that the government will practise what they preach and deliver what they promise but judging from its previous track record, like many others in Canberra, forgive me if I do not hold my breath.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (8.07): I would like to pick up the threads of Ms Lawder's presentation, and I want to laud Ms Lawder for her persistence in using fix my street and its offshoots as a means of getting anything done through the ACT government. I am constantly reminded when I get letters, especially from Mr Rattenbury, that I really do not need to write constituent letters on behalf of my constituents because all they need to do is contact fix my street. Mr Rattenbury stands in this place on a regular occurrence to tell us why we do not need to write constituent letters because all we need to do, all the constituent needs to do, is write to fix my street. I have now resolved that on every occasion when I take up a constituent matter where a constituent has said to me, "I have contacted fix my street and nothing has happened," I will put that in the letter so it will save Mr Rattenbury from telling me the bleeding obvious when it does not work.

My office has not been as persistent as Ms Lawder's, but from time to time we put the system to the test. From time to time I will lodge, either through my home address or my home email or through my parliament address or parliament email, an issue which I come across. I might be going for a walk and find a pothole or a break in the path or something like that. Sometimes my senior adviser does the same things. He has found some around his home suburb, so he will write to fix my street and see what happens or he will write from his parliament@act.gov.au email address and see if he can get anything to happen. Generally speaking, it does not matter whether you write from a private email or a parliament email; you do not get a response. I have not once received a response that said, "We have looked at the issue that you have raised and we have fixed it," or, "It is going to be fixed," or whatever. We do not get a response.

I have one constituent who has found that they got a prompt response from fix my street. It was on an occasion when the son of this household was involved in a very serious bicycle accident due to debris on a bicycle path. They rang and complained to fix my street and apparently somebody went out and swept the area the next day. That is laudable. But the thing is that the issue has not been followed up and this family has now said to me that they have complained again because there is debris in the same area where their son was very badly injured. He spent six days in hospital. He came headfirst off his bike as a result of debris getting stuck in the spokes of his. He was

unconscious for a long period. This family has become quite diligent about that. When they first complained it was fixed, but they have subsequently complained that there is, again, a build-up of debris in that place, but it has not been fixed the second time.

Ms Lawder has shown a thorough and scientific approach to dealing with fix my street and has had a very low rate of return. My office has been less scientific, but we do get a very low, almost non-existent, rate of return and our constituents regularly complain that they have already been to fix my street once or twice or three times already before they come to us. We are, in many cases, the approach of last resort, and it is time this government stopped kidding themselves that fix my street works and fixed fix my street.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (8.11): I thank members for their contributions in relation to the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate. The areas covered within this appropriation are quite significant, as a number of members have observed. This directorate was established on 7 July last year by combining the former Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate with the former economic development and commerce and works directorates.

Additional functions were transferred during the 2014-15 fiscal year or will come online in this current fiscal year to include artsACT and community facilities that were formerly part of the Community Services Directorate, childcare centres that were formerly part of the Education and Training Directorate, the Property Group that was formerly part of Territory and Municipal Services, the former Exhibition Park Corporation and, of course, as has been discussed, the newly established Access Canberra.

The role of the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate is to lead the ACT public service and to provide strategic advice and supports principally to me as Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events. But the directorate also provides advice and support to the Minister for Education and Training, the Minister for Racing and Gaming, the Minister for Sport and Recreation, the Minister for the Arts and the Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations, all of whom have made contributions during the debate this evening.

CMTEDD also provides advice and support to cabinet on policy development, territory budgeting and reporting, financial and economic policy, service delivery, whole-of-government programs and issues, high value and complex investment development proposals, sport and recreation policies and programs, tourism promotion, government business enterprises, taxation and revenue management and developing and guiding the land release program to ensure a sustainable return to the territory and sustainable economic growth.

There is a significant appropriation to this directorate in the 2015-16 fiscal year: \$999,101,000 that comprises \$411,730,000 for the net cost of outputs, \$513,766,000 for capital injections and \$73,605,000 for payments on behalf of the territory. A

number of initiatives in this directorate that are worth highlighting in this year's budget include: the \$132 million injection over two years to renew public housing properties under the public housing renewal program; the next phase of the city to the lake project with a \$10 million investment; the creation of the new public park at West Basin; \$7.7 million over four years towards the appointment of 13 additional inspectors to ensure the quality and safety of buildings in the territory are maintained; \$6 million over the next two years to grow the government's contribution to the ACT economy through increasing business innovation, trade development and private investment; and a \$3 million injection over two years to support additional land release in the Molonglo Valley.

In comments during this debate the Leader of the Opposition made an assertion that stamp duty collected in recent times was, in fact, the highest on record. He is wrong once again. In 2010-11 conveyance duties were \$281 million. In the most recent fiscal year we have data for, 2013-14, they were 226 million. It is worth noting that before the tax reform the projections for conveyance duty were \$281 million in 2010-11, \$294 million in 2011-12, \$298 million in 2012-13, \$305 million in 2013-14 and \$307 million in 2014-15.

As a result of stamp duty reductions the amount of stamp duty collected in 2012-13 was not the \$298 million that was projected prior to tax reform but \$230 million—a significant reduction of around 20 per cent in that instance. We were projecting \$305 million in stamp duty revenue in 2013-14 before the stamp duty cuts and instead \$226 million was collected.

It is very easy for assertions to be made in relation to revenue collection. It is worth observing that, of course, each year with inflation and increases in house values the amount of stamp duty if you did not touch the rates at all would grow every year. But because we have been reducing the rates, the amount of stamp duty that is collected is, in fact, falling and the rates that are charged on an average property in Canberra are falling considerably.

It is worth noting that were we to leave stamp duty, not reform it and follow the path of Sydney—stamp duty paid on a house in Sydney, a median value house in Sydney, is now nearly \$41,000, \$41,000 for the median house in Sydney—in Canberra now it is \$19,355 and falling.

Mr Coe: Different values.

MR BARR: That is right. There are different values but—

Mr Coe: No the purchase price is different.

MR BARR: That is correct but the point is, if you leave stamp duty untouched, if you do not cut the rates, as house prices increase the amount of stamp duty collected will continue to increase. If we had not undertaken tax reform, those purchasing properties under \$500,000 in the ACT would be paying \$7,000 more. The median house price in Sydney at this point in time is around \$1 million. In Canberra it is \$564,000.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Doszpot): Sit down for a second Mr Barr. Mr Coe, thank you! Mr Barr.

MR BARR: Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. As Canberra house prices continue to increase, if you do not reduce the stamp duty rates, the amount of stamp duty paid in Canberra will approach that \$40,000 figure, and that is the path the Liberal Party wants to take—the rate of stamp duty that is applied. As our house prices increase into the future, if you do not reduce the rate of stamp duty, then the amount of stamp duty on each transaction will increase. That is what happens—house price inflation, no adjustment to stamp duty rates, stamp duty goes up in total across the amount collected by government and on each individual property. That might be hard for Mr Coe to comprehend, but most people will understand that the reason we need to reduce stamp duty is to stop that massive hit on homebuyers.

Let us also make the observation that most people have to borrow that stamp duty money, so they pay interest on that over the life of their loan. They then pay four, 4½, five per cent, whatever the prevailing mortgage rate is at the time. They pay that over the life of that loan. That is why I am cutting stamp duty in every budget I deliver, and that is why we are committed to that path of stamp duty reduction, just as we are committed to the path of abolition of insurance taxes from 1 July next year, just as we are committed to a further increase in the payroll tax threshold, just as we have been committed to other tax reforms, to do three things: make our tax system simpler, make our tax system fairer and make our tax system more efficient.

The contrast is with those opposite, whose policies are to increase stamp duty, to increase insurance taxes and to increase payroll taxes because they have opposed every cut to those taxes. If they are determined to be true to what they have been saying, they will reverse all of those tax cuts. Or if they do not they have accepted the government's tax reform agenda. That is the question tonight. Will you be reversing those tax cuts?

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MR BARR: The shadow treasurer can harp away on the sidelines, interjecting once again after you have warned him, Mr Assistant Speaker. He can continue to do that while you sit there mute.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Barr, please address yourself to the chair. Do not take part in debate. I will keep order.

MR BARR: Really?

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Really.

MR BARR: Right. I will believe that when I see it, Mr Assistant Speaker.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: You will be very surprised, I know.

MR BARR: The point I was making was that that is the position and that is the fundamental choice for the opposition. Will you reverse those tax cuts? Will you be putting stamp duty back up? Will you be reintroducing insurance taxes? Will you be lowering the payroll tax threshold? They are the three questions that are before the opposition. They are the three key issues.

We look forward to some policy substance from those opposite on tax reform, as we are yet to see it. We see it occasionally from their colleagues interstate. Premier Baird gets it. His government is looking at these issues. He is prepared to put forward tax reform ideas. But all those opposite can do is chant a three-word mantra from years ago that has been comprehensively debunked. They have got nothing to say on tax reform, nothing whatsoever—no alternative policy, no vision for a better tax system, no vision for a fairer tax system, no vision for a simpler tax system, no vision for a more effective tax system. They stand condemned for their failure in 15 years in opposition to produce one meaningful policy that would enhance economic productivity in this city in the area of tax reform. They have nothing.

Question put:

That the proposed expenditure 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
Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne
Mr Hanson

Mr Smyth
Mr Wall

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

MADAM SPEAKER: Before I call the next item, I want to make some comments on behaviour in this place. It was particularly unedifying to hear the Chief Minister rounding on Mr Doszpot as the Assistant Speaker. It is the second time today that the Chief Minister has called into question the actions of the chair in this place because he did not like the level of interjection. Interjection did get out of hand in question time, and I took it in hand. Mr Doszpot was doing his job in this place.

I need to remind members that if they have a problem with the way the chair is behaving, there is one recourse for them, and that is to move a substantive motion. To stand or sit—I think you were probably standing at the time, Mr Barr—and round on the presiding official as you did a few minutes ago is unbecoming and I will not tolerate it. The next time it happens I will be marching somebody.

Ms Burch: Madam Speaker, just on that, in question time today, and this is no reflection on your comment just then, the Chief Minister was on his feet under an absolute barrage, and you chose—

MADAM SPEAKER: I have made a ruling on that. I made a ruling on that. I called people to order. I threatened to march people at question time today. Then the time was brought to order. I have not made a ruling; I have just spoken about my dissatisfaction about the way that members in this place have treated the chair, and it is—

Ms Burch: And that includes those opposite as well?

MADAM SPEAKER: It goes to everybody. When the chair speaks and the chair calls people to order—can you sit down, please, Minister Burch. When the chair calls people to order, I expect them to be brought to order. It is up to the person occupying the chair at the time to use their discretion within the provisions of this place.

I will not tolerate any member of this place rounding on anyone who occupies this chair. That goes for Dr Bourke, Ms Lawder or Mr Doszpot, who is assisting us today because Ms Porter is ill and I am not feeling particularly great. He has come in to assist us because we are down on numbers. I do not care who it is: if you have a problem with the presiding officer, there is one way to deal with it, and that is by a substantive motion.

Mr Barr: There are surely more ways, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: I am sorry; there are not.

Mr Barr: There are points of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: There are points of order, yes, but you did not take a point of order. You rounded—

Mr Barr: I was on my feet trying to speak, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. The way that you, as the Chief Minister, behaved, rounding on the presiding officer, was unparliamentary.

Mr Barr: On indulgence, Madam Speaker, I need to respond. I realise you are cranky; I understand that. But in relation to how this debate has been handled, the level of interjection when speakers on this side of the chamber were attempting to close a debate, having heard everyone else in silence, was unacceptable. I will accept and I will apologise to Mr Doszpot for not taking a point of order rather than just, whilst I was on my feet, making the observation that this interjection—

Mr Hanson: Apologise then.

Mr Barr: I apologise to Mr Doszpot, but this interjection and series of interjections were ongoing, and surely something could be done about it. I should have taken a point of order; I acknowledge that. But I do not think it is unreasonable for speakers, having heard everyone else in silence, to be given the opportunity to at least make their remarks with a relative degree of silence.

The odd interjection here or there, as you say, is part of a robust debate in this place. But you yourself have observed that it has got out of hand, and it has not got out of hand on this side of the chamber. I was simply making that point. I understand and accept that Mr Doszpot is volunteering in this instance, and, Mr Doszpot, I apologise if I have caused you offence.

Ms Burch: Can I just follow through on a point of order, Madam Speaker?

MADAM SPEAKER: On a point of order.

Ms Burch: If someone is withdrawing a comment, should they be on their feet or lounging in a chair—just for a point of reference?

MADAM SPEAKER: People do not speak in this place formally unless they are on their feet.

Ms Burch: Earlier today Mr Hanson withdrew sitting in a chair.

MADAM SPEAKER: Not to my recollection.

Ms Burch: Madam Speaker, I disagree with that.

MADAM SPEAKER: This is not a subject of discussion at the moment. We are talking about members' behaviour. We have—

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! I appreciate that the Chief Minister has apologised to Mr Doszpot for rounding on him before, and I thank the Chief Minister for doing that. We are here to debate the budget. I believe we were up to Community Services Directorate part 1.7.

Community Services Directorate—schedule 1, part 1.7.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (8.32): Madam Speaker, when we consider the horrendous half-billion-dollar cuts of the Abbott government to Indigenous programs, a government and characters which I hear the Liberals opposite seek to emulate, to model themselves on, we see that the strong commitment of the ACT government to Canberra's Indigenous community through continued investment in consultation and programs is essential. We have worked to ensure that Indigenous outcomes can improve in Canberra in the face of this onslaught of federal cuts. This ACT Labor government, under successive chief ministers, has made significant effort in advancing reconciliation and closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement for 2015-18, concluded between the ACT government and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, is a watershed for relations between the ACT government and Indigenous

Australians in Canberra. The agreement commits to reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous Australians, and all sides emphasise that cooperation, consensus and collective action are necessary and that the ACT government, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, service providers and the wider community all have a responsibility in meeting this vision. The 2015-16 ACT budget builds on both the goodwill and the understanding that the agreement brings, and continues the successes that ACT Indigenous policies deliver.

The ACT government is spearheading two main initiatives in this year's budget. The first is the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tobacco control strategy. Indigenous Australians are 2.6 times more likely than non-Indigenous Australians to be smokers, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. To reduce Indigenous smoking rates in the ACT, the strategy aims to prevent people from taking up smoking, reduce rates of smoking and increase quit attempts, increase access to tobacco control, and raise awareness of the health issues surrounding smoking.

The second is expanding the growing healthy families program. The program is a resource designed to provide practical advice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, carers and professionals in the ACT, to help families stay connected to culture and community and to find ways of staying strong together. This is done by providing access to culturally informed services. Some \$624,000 has already been committed for growing healthy families in the 2015-16 budget, with a further \$640,000 committed for 2016-17.

The 2015-16 ACT budget builds on the successes of previous ACT budgets. It is great news not only for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans who directly benefit, and the Indigenous organisations who rely on continued funding to deliver their superb quality of services, but also for the wider community who benefit as a whole.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (8.36): I rise to speak to the budget line items relating to the areas of disability, Indigenous affairs and youth, all falling under the Community Services Directorate. I would like first to direct my remarks to disability and the continued changes it faces in the wake of the commencement of the NDIS in the ACT.

Minister Burch, as the Minister for Disability, continues to spruik her ideology that all is well within the disability sector, and even earlier this year presented a motion on disability inclusion, on which I spoke with caution regarding the potential for overreach with the aspirational language used by the minister. Her response was, "I think we on this side want to overreach for people with a disability. We want to aim high." The minister fails to understand that there is a significant difference between aiming high and actually delivering. Failure to deliver in this sector can have huge ramifications for the quality of life of these people.

Matters considered as part of the estimates process included the progress of transition to the NDIS, and in particular issues that have arisen from that transition, such as the reimbursement for service providers regarding cash flow issues arising between the cessation of block funding and clients transitioning, including budgeted contingency, length of time that organisations are waiting for reimbursement and time frames for verification of submissions for reimbursement.

Key issues focused on staffing as the transition was undertaken and the effect that this has on staff within Disability ACT and Therapy ACT. I applaud the estimates committee's recommendation, namely:

... that the ACT Government include in its National Disability Insurance Scheme quarterly reporting to the Legislative Assembly information on the level of staffing in Disability ACT and Therapy ACT during the transition.

The committee also recommended:

... that the ACT Government continue to work with Tier 2 community service organisations on the NDIS Information, Linkages and Capacity Building to ensure a smooth transition of funding with appropriate notification periods for those organisations.

This was in order to provide more certainty around staffing and the continuation of service. The reporting of staffing is a crucial element given the government's decision to cease being a service provider. Questions still remain as to the exact make-up of the staffing profile of Disability ACT going forward, how many staff will be left, how many staff will have left of their own volition and what happens to those who choose not to move on voluntarily.

The provision of early intervention services is yet another area of major concern for families requiring services in the ACT. This minister's lack of communication with stakeholders historically has led to frustration, anxiety and fear over the continuation of service and what it looks like under the NDIS model. The committee's recommendation was:

... that the ACT Government determine the level of unmet need for early intervention services and report to the ... Assembly by the last sitting day in 2015 on the level of unmet need and how they intend to address that need.

That is much wanted reassurance that this government needs to deliver in order to maintain confidence amongst families who rely on these services.

I will move on to Indigenous affairs and the matters brought to the attention of the committee this year. The theme is much like that of the disability sector—the lack of transparent communication. Appearing before the estimates committee in June this year was the Chair of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, Mr Rod Little, who had this to say when he was asked for a response in respect of the 2015-16 ACT budget and the newly created Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement:

... I think our disappointment was that we could not see a whole lot in the budget. That may be buried within the detail. We saw a couple of things—in particular, the prevention of or decrease in smoking. We think that is just a small portion of the need in the ACT community. It did not basically reflect the commitment by the government to the recent signing of the whole-of-government agreement. That has a whole series of community priorities developed in consultation with community, but it also has some clear alignment with the COAG targets. I guess that I and my colleagues were somewhat disappointed.

There were other things in there. Economic participation was another one that we saw that was not quite clear. We felt that more of the detail should have come to the surface and more of the communication of what the government's intention is. That would give some confidence in community that this agreement, whole-of-government agreement, is taken seriously.

I ask the minister: what consultation and communication took place with the elected body to understand the needs and wants of the Indigenous community leading into the 2015-16 financial year? Is the newly implemented Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement just a matter of the government continuing to pay lip service? With this in mind the estimates committee went on to recommend:

... that the ACT Government undertake consistent monitoring of key objectives in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement to ensure milestones are being met and report to the ... Assembly on a quarterly basis.

Minister Berry advised in estimates that this agreement is a “living document” which can be adapted to suit changing needs identified by the government or the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body. Adaptability is appropriate as long as it does not lead to moving goalposts and unattainable milestones as a result.

I spoke in the debate at this time last year about Gugan Gulwan, the wonderful services that they provide and the desperate need they have for additional space as they had outgrown the facility near the Erindale shopping centre in Wanniasa. The government seemed to be in tune with this and options were being explored with Gugan for alternative premises. Fast forward 12 months and we are here again today and we still have Gugan at the same site with the same issues and still looking for assistance from the government to move to more suitable premises. In these 12 months we have received more glossy brochures from the government, but what this community needs is real change, transparency in communication and an understanding of the community's expectations.

And need I mention the Ngunnawal bush healing farm, a project that encapsulates the inept ability of those opposite to deliver capital works projects—years late, millions over budget, all to deliver only a fraction of the original project, and all this before the project has even got off the ground. That is the Labor way—off scope, late and over budget.

I will end by speaking about youth and the matters of concern current in this sector. The Youth Coalition appeared before estimates this year to provide some enlightening insight into the issues facing the youth community in the ACT. They detailed the concerns of education, the need for family engagement within the school community and also the consistent issue of racism in schools and the need to address this. Employment, mental health and education also formed part of the discussion this year, with the committee recommending:

... that the ACT Government implement a whole-of-government strategy to address issues affecting Canberra's youth such as employment and mental health support, with a focus on early intervention and prevention.

This year there was also a strong focus in the estimates hearings on Bimberi and the issues surrounding the youth detention centre. Cause for concern was created earlier this year when allegations of supply of illicit substances within the confines of the centre were brought to light. With the government acknowledging that the facility is running at less than 25 per cent of its built capacity, these circumstances should never have occurred. At a time when Bimberi is running with anywhere from nine to 11 detainees, there is no excuse for some of the types of conduct that we have seen in this facility. The last thing that we on this side of the chamber want is issues which are so readily apparent in the AMC rolling over into our youth corrections facilities. I commend this recommendation by the committee:

... that the ACT Government investigate a policy of random identifiable drug and alcohol testing for staff and detainees at Bimberi Youth Justice Centre.

I believe this is one of many ways in which the government can stem the allegations of drug supply and illicit substance abuse within the facility and ensure the safety of both staff and detainees at the same time.

I have to say that whilst these ministers and this government continue to tell all and sundry what a fantastic job they are doing for Canberrans, it is important to be honest, transparent and, more importantly, take responsibility for their shortfalls and failings. I intend to continue to hold those opposite to account and to push this government to deliver what they promise. As Ms Burch has put it, “We want to aim high.” However, with respect to looking after people in our community with a disability, our Indigenous communities and our youth, it is outcomes and not aspirations that will make a difference. It is outcomes and not aspirations that can be relied upon. That is why it is important that outcomes are the focus.

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) (8.45): Mr Assistant Speaker, as the Minister for Children and Young People, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to the Assembly today and to discuss output class 4.1, which has been renamed “Statutory services—child and youth protection services”.

We are transforming the way we support vulnerable children, young people and their families in Canberra—from the way we work in government to the way we work with families and the way we partner with community organisations. We have carried out a great deal of research and consultation into how, as a community, we can better step up to support those most in need. The 2015-16 ACT budget sees us take further steps in investing in these changes to make real differences to Canberrans.

One of the most significant developments is the integration of Care and Protection Services and Youth Justice Services from 1 July this year to provide a new single statutory service, Child and Youth Protection Services. This change will ensure that children and young people receive the right service at the right time for the right duration. Bringing together these two statutory arms means we can provide a holistic service to vulnerable children and young people, focusing on a trauma-informed response to diversion, protection, restoration and permanency.

Allied to these changes the ACT government has this year allocated significant investment to transform the way in which we support our community's most vulnerable children, young people and their families. We are investing \$38.9 million over four years in the out of home care system, including \$16 million in new services and reforms through the implementation of "A step up for our kids—one step can make a lifetime of difference".

A step up for our kids addresses the challenges that child protection and out of home care services around the country are facing, such as increasing numbers of children and young people entering care, significant overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care, poor life outcomes for young people leaving care, a need for more carers, an ageing profile of kinship carers, and the need to create more financially sustainable systems.

Through a step up for our kids we are creating a network of support that has an enhanced focus on early intervention, provides more individualised support to children, young people, families and carers and ultimately helps children and young people lead better lives. Since the strategy was announced in January we have been carrying out work to prepare for its implementation from 2016. Procurement for services and advocacy services is well underway and we have carried out extensive consultation with all those involved to discuss the service transformation we seek to achieve. The funding allocated in the 2015-16 budget to a step up for our kids will see us implement these changes.

We are undertaking a major reform of out of home care. I expect that through this reform we will begin to see significant evidence of change for children, young people and their families over the coming years.

The ACT government is also investing to support the workforce behind a step up for our kids. The government is investing \$5.3 million over four years to develop a purpose-built information and record-keeping system. This new client information system will replace the legacy systems used by Child and Youth Protection Services. This system will improve support for vulnerable children and young people by simplifying access and reporting for caseworkers and increasing information security. Additionally, the system will streamline information sharing and provide government and community sector partners with the information they need, at the right time, to appropriately support children and young people.

Sharing knowledge and improving safety for children and young people have also been a key focus of the Children and Young People Death Review Committee. The committee reviews all child deaths in the ACT, considers any trends and patterns arising and makes recommendations that may contribute to preventing future child deaths. The ACT government will continue to support the committee's vital work with funding of \$391,000 over two years.

We know Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are overrepresented in the care and protection and youth justice systems. The ACT government is stepping up to improve life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander people by investing in focused early intervention services. The 2015-16 budget will provide \$1.26 million over two years to expand the growing healthy families program at Gungahlin, west Belconnen and Tuggeranong child and family centres. Growing healthy families is a community development program delivered through the child and family centres. The program aims to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are supported to make choices that will support their children, young people and families. This additional funding will enable the three child and family centres to continue to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and community to deliver sustainable and equitable outcomes.

I am also pleased to note that we are investing further in the Bendora through-care unit. The Bendora through-care unit provides intensive and targeted programs to assist young people in the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre with moving from custody back into the community. The through-care unit has been highly effective in improving educational and health outcomes for young people within Bimberi and in reducing reoffending and returns to custody. These are improvements that we are committed to continuing.

As you can see, Mr Assistant Speaker, the ACT government is committed to stepping up to support our most vulnerable children and young people and their families. As Minister for Children and Young People, I am looking forward to the changes ahead and to updating the Assembly in 2015-16 on the implementation of a step up for our kids and the new Child and Youth Protection Services.

While mentioning Bimberi, I want to make note of a couple of comments that Mr Wall made earlier in regard to issues involving contraband and other material that he asserts occurred at Bimberi. This involved an investigation that was done earlier regarding allegations of improper use of materials at Bimberi. I can assure the Assembly, as I have done before and at the estimates hearings, that a full investigation took place at Bimberi. Nothing was found, and all of those allegations were dealt with properly and appropriately by staff and the associated investigation agency. I want to congratulate the staff at Bimberi on the work that they do. It is very difficult work with our most vulnerable children and young people. They have my full support, even though they do not have the support of Mr Wall and the opposition in this case.

I am looking forward to the next year, and I will talk now about some other measures and initiatives that are also serving to address the ACT government's commitment to investing in the people and social fabric of the ACT. We are committed to improving the life outcomes of all Canberrans regardless of age, culture or social circumstance, and to help people make the right lifestyle choices as well.

Within the ageing portfolio, for example, this government remains committed to programs and initiatives that support active and healthy ageing and to ensure that older Canberrans can keep their minds and bodies thoroughly engaged and active. The ACT government is working towards solutions that will address the issue of mature age employment. We are collaborating with a number of significant stakeholders to find innovative solutions that will address current problems in the context of mature age employment. This will provide new opportunities to increase the level of employment participation for older Canberrans.

I also look forward to the launch of our new active ageing framework and associated action plan which is scheduled to be launched later this year, which will guide and support our policies, programs and initiatives for older Canberrans over the next four years.

Staff at the Community Services Directorate support some of our most disadvantaged Canberrans—I have mentioned this a number of times—often in very complex and difficult circumstances. I say to all the CSD staff that I commend and support the valuable work you do, and thank you on behalf of the whole community.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (8:54): I am pleased to talk about the Community Services Directorate in today's budget debate. The first thing I want to touch on is the discussion we had in the estimates hearings about the community sector reform program levy of 0.34 per cent. On the first day of estimates hearings we had a number of community groups come through, and most of them expressed their concern about the extension of the community sector reform levy. They conveyed to the committee that this levy was unexpected in being reapplied for a further two years; they were under the impression that the levy would cease. We had quite a discussion about the failure of the government to communicate with the community sector about its agenda. It was concerning to hear that the community sector organisations were not made aware of the possibility of the levy being extended for a further two years and were not consulted before the extension of the levy.

It was clear to me there was also a lack of transparency from the government about how the levy had been expended to date. A number of the community sector organisations felt that the levy had not been spent and there was uncertainty about exactly what it had been spent on. Other jurisdictions do not apply a similar levy, although during the hearings the government claimed the ACT has traditionally had the highest rate of indexation of payments. However, what they did not say, which we heard about a bit later, was that when you apply the levy it drops the indexation down to below the New South Wales level of indexation.

The estimates report made a number of recommendations about the community sector reform levy. Recommendation 77 states:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government work closely with the community sector on the continuation of the Community Sector Reform Program.

I was pleased to see in the government response that that was agreed to. Recommendation 78 states:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide the Legislative Assembly with details of what is planned for the remaining funds already collected under the Community Sector Reform Program levy.

This recommendation was noted. Recommendation 79 states:

The Committee recommends that ACT Government provide the Legislative Assembly with details of what the continued Community Sector Reform Program levy will be spent on over the next two years including an outline of the cost-benefit ratio by the last sitting day in 2015.

Again, this recommendation was simply noted by the government rather than agreed to or agreed in principle. I find that quite concerning, and I am sure those in the community sector are probably a bit concerned, too, that they are not being given the detail of what the money is being spent on.

I want to talk about a step up for our kids. I am certainly not here to criticise this in any way; I am very much looking forward to the government's new out of home care strategy, a step up for our kids, which will come into effect from January 2016. We have worked quite closely with Minister Gentleman on some of the legislative changes. It is starting in January; obviously we will be watching the implementation very closely. Certainly we all agree on the aspiration and desire to get a better result for vulnerable children. I hope that will be achieved through this new strategy.

On a very much related matter, I hope the new strategy will help to perhaps speed up adoption in the ACT. I hear from quite a number of constituents about their concerns about adoption and the length of time the adoption process can take.

The recommendation in the report regarding the strategy is recommendation 70, which states:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide regular updates to the Legislative Assembly on the implementation of the Step Up for Our Kids strategy especially with relation to improving capacity and strengthening of high risk families.

I am very pleased the government has agreed to that recommendation, and Mr Gentleman referred to that earlier. Again, I am very much looking forward to those updates from Mr Gentleman.

In summary, I am a little disappointed that the government only noted and did not agree to two of the recommendations relating to the community sector reform program levy given the depth of concern that was expressed by community sector organisations during the estimates process. I am also looking forward to hearing much more about the implementation of a step up for our kids.

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) (9.00): I will speak about some issues earlier in the debate relating to sport and recreation, which, of course, are an important part of issues the Community Services Directorate is seeking to address in ensuring we have a strong community. The government continues to lead the delivery of sport and recreation policies and programs which contribute to the health and social wellbeing of the community. This includes targeted programs to support the ACT's high levels of adult and child sport participation.

We have good rates of participation in the ACT, but we should not rest on our laurels. Certainly there are people in our community who are not accessing sport and recreation as part of their lifestyles. An important factor in our community is the provision of high quality sporting and recreational facilities which encourage everyone to participate in healthy physical activity. A range of outcomes for the community will be achieved through the government's commitment of more than \$11 million in this year's budget to new initiatives in sport and recreation in 2015-16.

Mr Smyth: On a point of order, Madam Assistant Speaker, sport and rec was covered in the Chief Minister's portfolio. This is the Community Services Directorate, and I am not sure that money is covered in this line we are appropriating. Perhaps the minister could be relevant.

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

Ms Burch: Well, providing some clarity to Mr Smyth: under the Chief Minister's directorate line Mrs Jones spoke about the Office for Women and the Office of Multicultural Affairs, so I think it is fair and reasonable—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you. That is not a point of order. Do you have a point of order, Dr Bourke?

Dr Bourke: My point of order is that the minister had been speaking for two minutes and Mr Smyth has just noticed.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. Do you have a point of order, Mr Smyth?

Mr Smyth: The point of order is that if Mr Rattenbury wants to speak to sport and rec because he missed it in CMD, that is fine; we are happy to do that. But let us not go through the pretence that it is somehow within the Community Services Directorate. Unlike those opposite, we are happy to hear members speak. If you want leave to speak on sport and rec, just say so.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you. Mr Rattenbury prefaced earlier that he would be wishing to speak about sport and rec as the relevant minister.

Mr Smyth: But it is not in this—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I will take some advice about whether Mr Rattenbury should seek leave.

Members interjecting—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! We are all getting a bit tired and wanting to go home; the sooner you stop interrupting and interjecting, the sooner we can all be finished. I think when you started, Mr Rattenbury, you alluded to the fact

that there may be some connection with the Community Services Directorate. You must be relevant to the topic, so please do your best to make your discussion about sport and rec relevant to the Community Services Directorate.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I do not wish to cause consternation in the chamber; I simply was going to reflect on some matters that were not addressed before in the discussion. I did not have the opportunity to answer questions put by Mr Doszpot. I am unsure how to proceed. I do not think I can genuinely say in answering Mr Doszpot's questions I am addressing the Community Services Directorate, so I think I will just sit down and let the debate go on. I am happy to chat to Mr Doszpot in the antechamber and answer his questions there if he wishes.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Rattenbury. As a commentary, this illustrates some of the issues with this mega-directorate when people can only speak twice. Mr Doszpot bumped up against that issue in trying to speak on all of the elements within the portfolio.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (9.05): I will be addressing ageing, output class 3 within the Community Services Directorate. The ageing portfolio is an area that is often overlooked by this government. In the ACT our population is ageing at an increasingly rapid rate and the government needs to start recognising the crucial roles that seniors play in our community. We have one of the fastest growing populations of people aged over 60 years. The government needs to recognise the difficulties that current cost of living pressures are causing elderly Canberrans and start to address those very serious concerns.

Cost of living pressures are creating severe financial difficulties for all Canberrans, but particularly our seniors. These are things like the cost of rates, the cost of parking, the cost of registering a vehicle, commercial rates and land taxes, just to name a few, all of which have increased under Labor and all of which are increasing by far higher than the normal CPI. These extra fees and charges are not going back to the people of Canberra but, rather, are funding the government's extravagant light rail plans. The territory's budget is over \$700 million in deficit, and with the plans for light rail, this is set to dramatically increase.

The impact of the government's latest budget will hit Canberra's seniors hard with a nine per cent average rise across the board. I ask how pensioners are supposed to find the extra money to pay these additional increased bills. These people who have positively contributed to the workforce and community for many years and have now reached a point in their lives where they should be able to enjoy life are forced to live scraping from week to week. Rising rates are forcing Canberrans who are nearing retirement to either continue working to ensure they have sufficient funds to meet daily living expenses or selling up and moving to cheaper housing interstate. A number are doing just that. I acknowledge the small gesture that if Canberra seniors downsize, the stamp duty of the new smaller home is waived, but the point is that people should not be forced into that situation because of unreasonable rate rises.

The Labor government speaks of creating an age-friendly city, but this is not what I am hearing from the elderly constituents who are struggling to make ends meet. Many constituents in my electorate are elderly pensioners who bought their houses 40 or 50 years ago and now, in their twilight years, they face the prospect of having to sell their homes as they simply cannot afford the ever-increasing fees and charges placed on them by this government, especially the rate increases.

At a time when people should be enjoying their retirement years, they face uncertainty, fear and upheaval in their lives due to these extraordinary rate increases that all of Canberra is facing. That this government is out of touch with the elderly in our community is no surprise to those of us on this side of the chamber. As we all know, this government is not known for its community consultation. Recent events have only served to demonstrate that this government is not listening to the community. It is not listening to the seniors in Canberra and is not aware of how its actions are affecting real people.

You may well smile, Mr Gentleman, but I think this is one of the areas where you should speak up for the people for whom you are minister—

Dr Bourke: Point of order.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Ms Lawder): Point of order, Dr Bourke. Sit down, thank you, Mr Doszpot.

Dr Bourke: Madam Assistant Speaker, Mr Doszpot is not addressing his remarks to the chair; he is addressing his remarks to Mr Gentleman across the chamber, which is disorderly.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you for your assistance, Dr Bourke. Mr Doszpot, please continue.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you, Madam Assistant Speaker. Minister Gentleman should be looking at the issues that affect the people within his portfolio—the ageing who are going through all the issues I have been talking about.

During the budget submission process, National Seniors ACT highlighted access to health, access to affordable and accessible transport and housing as major issues of concern. What is this government doing to address those needs? Take transport for example—the government is going to spend an estimated \$783 million on building light rail. Only four per cent of Canberrans live within walking distance of a light rail stop. How are elderly people supposed to use a transport system that they cannot access? How will those with mobility issues using scooters and wheelchairs access light rail? Our bus network, like many other areas, will suffer to pay for a light rail system that will only serve a few. As I mentioned before, I have not heard Mr Gentleman raise these issues or concerns and speak of how this government and his own portfolio will address these issues.

Seniors are asking to see increased accessibility in our transport system, an increase in the frequency of bus services and close proximity to residences for pick-ups and drop-offs. Light rail cannot provide this. If Canberra really were an age-friendly city, this government would not be asking our elderly to walk to a bus stop, catch a bus, ride on the light rail and then, most likely, catch another bus from the city. Keep in mind, this is only one way—it has to be done all again on the way home.

This is what the government is serving up to our senior citizens, and this is where the Minister for Ageing is not standing up for his ageing constituents. Their rates are tripling and their cost of living is going up, but the government is spending millions of dollars on a light rail system that will not serve the needs of the Canberra community. The government needs to recognise the difficulties facing our ageing population and start listening to the community.

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) (9.11): I welcome the chance to talk on this line in regard to disability services in the ACT. It is absolutely understood in this place that the disability sector is undergoing significant change in the ACT. Members no doubt will be aware that that is a result of the national disability insurance scheme and that over the next 12 months all eligible people in the ACT—some 5,000 of our community members—will have transitioned to the scheme. I acknowledge Sue Chapman, Deputy Director-General of Community Services, and Ian Hubbard, who are here tonight to see this line through the budget debate. I want to thank them and their colleagues, from front-line services right through to the executive, for the fabulous work the Community Services Directorate, Disability ACT and Therapy ACT do each and every day for members of our community.

The NDIS represents an exciting opportunity for people with a disability, their families and their carers. I have heard firsthand from many of their excitement and dreams for the opportunities the national disability insurance scheme will bring for them. The commonwealth and ACT governments continue to invest in initiatives to help people to prepare for the NDIS. Over \$21 million is the value of those initiatives. From this the commonwealth has approved over \$12 million to fund the ACT and work with our community sector to build their capacity and to build the capacity of the community so that service providers, families and people with a disability can prepare and plan for the NDIS.

Currently we are investing \$6 million in projects such as a new program to work across community to reach people who may not yet be linked to formal services, to make sure that they are supported and connected through to the NDIS; a dedicated program for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members with a disability and their families, to make sure that they are supported in this transition; and a program with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations, for them to be prepared for the NDIS so they in turn can support their community. We are also providing business investment packages and governance and financial management grants into the community sector.

We are finalising our proposal to the commonwealth to invest the remaining sector development funds of close on \$2 million in building the workforce we need to deliver the services for people who will be seeking NDIS packages and, for the first time, seeking new services—not being locked into what a service provider can provide and offer but, rather, seeking what they choose across a range of providers in our community.

The ACT government will provide just over \$104 million in the 2015-16 financial year to continue to strengthen the capacity of people with disability in their families and carers to receive the services that they are desiring. The funding also includes therapy services for children, young people and adults with a disability. Therapy ACT continues to work with clients and their families as they transition to the NDIS.

The ACT government is also committing over \$3 million to the child development assessment and referral service. Just last week I spoke on the child development service in this place and provided an update to members. I noted with a level of interest that earlier in discussions Mr Wall made mention of early intervention services. As I have done a number of times in this place, I provided information that we have, through the NDIS, block funded six early intervention services and currently, if one was to look at the NDIS website, 160 registered NDIS providers. That is a growth in the provision and choice for providers and for community members in this city. I think that is a good outcome.

Mr Wall also made mention, and I do not want to verbal him, of some sort of slowness or some problems with transitioning to the NDIS. We are sitting on, I think, just over 90 per cent of our targets in the bilateral agreement. We are above the national average, but clearly we are not meeting 100 per cent of our targets. I think I have brought motions to this place or requests for us to speak as one to ask the federal government to commit to providing, as they ought, the staff within the NDIS to make sure that our transition plans are done in a timely manner. I ask those opposite, if they have a comment about the timeliness of the NDIA moving clients through, to see that it is a problem that may come, in part if not wholly, from the commonwealth government putting a freeze on employment through the NDIS so they just do not have the planners in place to have that transition support for our community.

Mr Wall also made mention of the tier 2 services. Tier 2, the local community coordination and linkages program, is a very important part of supporting people within our community. I and every disability minister across this country are waiting for a determination and information from the federal government about where their position will land on funding for T2 or the local area coordination and linkages program. We have made the decision locally that we have funded all those services for another 12 months, until June of next year, while we wait for the commonwealth government to make that determination. It is problematic. I just wish they would get on and make that determination, because it is important for our services.

To finish on Mr Wall, I refer back to his comments in October of last year. He was more than happy to provide misinformation. I quote from *Hansard*:

... if a loaded, misinformed commentary is the only way of getting answers out of you and your directorate . I will continue to do so.

I think that is an appalling statement from a member opposite for people with a disability. He is prepared to give misinformation out to the community rather than being sensible, supportive and alert to 5,000 of our community who are transitioning to the NDIS. That is what we should be concentrating on, not the political argy-bargy where Mr Wall is prepared to continue to misinform this chamber and the community for his own ends.

As I said, this government has committed funding to the child development assessment and child development service. That will provide assessments and referrals to young people with developmental delay that need a diagnosis or a platform before they go to the NDIS. This government is also investing capital and recurrent funding. I want to remind everybody of the great work we are doing with the Ricky Stuart Foundation. This budget will see additional funds for the teen respite centre that will build on Kese, which we funded in last year's budget. So that is two renewals of respite homes that will go through with the Ricky Stuart Foundation.

That builds on the work that we are doing with Glenn Keys, the ACT nominee for Australian of the Year, for project independence which will deliver new housing opportunity for people with a disability here in the ACT. There is a very strong interest in other states about that work, because it is a new and novel approach. I am very pleased that this ACT government and I and Glenn Keys, are piloting and really pushing that through. That will benefit people with a disability not only here in the ACT at Latham and Harrison but more broadly.

We have recently launched Involve, which is our next commitment to make sure people with a disability in our community are included, respected and have the regard of everyone else in this community. In 2015-16 we will focus on the priority areas of jobs and skills and housing; in 2016-17 we will focus on justice and accessible communities. I ask everybody to get involved in Involve, because it is the way we can provide a truly inclusive community across this city. I hope there would not be one person in this chamber that would speak against that absolutely high benchmark of making sure all in this community have respect and regard, have involvement, are able to live the life they choose to live and have opportunities for housing and employment. This is a good investment from this government.

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) (9.22): I rise to speak on the community services portfolio. The 2015 budget furthers the government's strong and ongoing support for a community which gives everyone the chance to live a good life, to contribute, to be valued and to have a voice on the things that are important to them.

This commitment took an added emphasis in January, when the Chief Minister announced the social inclusion and equality portfolio. It has continued since as a

theme through the community services portfolio and elsewhere, particularly through the budget, which included the first social inclusion and equality budget statement. This statement details the government's continued investment in Canberra as a community for all—for women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, multicultural communities, and families in need.

Stronger action to combat domestic and family violence has been a particular focus for this year, with a generally bipartisan and constructive approach. As part of our response, the government provides up to \$8 million per annum for a range of services and programs specifically targeted at women experiencing violence or women who are homeless. In the 2015 budget, additional funding of \$250,000 will expand the capacity of the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, the Domestic Violence Crisis Centre and the Canberra Men's Centre to support victims with crucial services. In addition, these services are receiving a one-off 10 per cent increase in funding to meet the current spike in demand for their services.

We know that one of the keys to raising awareness about family and domestic violence is to start talking about it at a young age. Through the ACT education department and the minister for education, we are helping ACT public schools to provide emotional learning for our kids, through the \$615,000 investment in the teaching of respectful relationships.

The government is also continuing to invest in the area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs. Earlier this year, we finalised the overarching framework to help guide initiatives across this portfolio. I refer to Mr Andrew Wall's comments earlier tonight about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement. It comes to my mind that the Canberra Liberals pretend to care about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the ACT, but if they really cared and if Mr Wall really cared, they would have been present at the signing of the agreement. Mr Wall was not. In fact, none of the Canberra Liberals was present at the signing of the agreement. The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement sets out the shared commitment of the government and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body to provide effective and culturally sensitive services and policies for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Across the government there are initiatives in this budget that build on the areas of focus in the agreement, including more than \$3.6 million in continuous support for peak community bodies, including Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service and the Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation; more than \$1.2 million in employment and economic initiatives to increase employment and private enterprise for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans, such as the ACT public service Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traineeship and graduate programs, enrolled nursing scholarships, and funding support for the Canberra Business Yarning Circle, Indigenous business of the year award and supply nation; and more than \$1.26 million to expand the growing healthy families program at Gungahlin, west Belconnen and Tuggeranong child and family centres.

We also recognise and embrace the great diversity of culture in Canberra today. Canberra has been long recognised for its harmonious, diverse and vibrant

multicultural character. The budget responds to the voices of the multicultural community gathered during many consultations in the past year. This financial year the government will continue to invest in a range of programs and activities designed to celebrate our cultural diversity and support members of our community to take up the opportunities that a thriving and progressive city offer.

In this context we will continue our strong support for the flagship National Multicultural Festival in 2016. In recognition of the countless smaller events which occur all year round, the government will continue to support community organisations through an allocation of \$260,000 under the multicultural participation grants program. The budget also continues funding for the vital Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services, Multicultural Youth Services and the Canberra Multicultural Community Forum.

Finally, this year we will see the government continue with major funding and reform commitments to support those who are doing it tough in our community. Throughout this work, we have a very strong focus on partnership and collaboration with the fine community organisations who deliver these services. We are improving how we work across government and, importantly, with non-government service providers. The budget continues this process. Major reforms such as the NDIS, which Minister Burch has just spoken about, and a step up for our kids demand new ways of working; the government is committing to supporting the sustainability of our sector in this time of change.

Through the 2015-16 ACT budget, we have invested \$1.2 million to continue to transform service delivery across government under the better services initiative, to reduce what can sometimes be a complex array of services for those with multiple needs or complex needs; to improve integration among the many services that we fund; and to put community needs at the centre of designing our local services system. Through the trio of better services initiatives—the one human services gateway, strengthening families, and the west Belconnen local services network—we are reshaping support for the people in our community who need a hand up.

Another piece of major work has been our work with the community sector to deliver significant reforms. I note Ms Lawder's comments about recommendation 78, about providing details of what was planned for the funds already collected. I note in the government's response that this information was provided during questions in the 2015-16 budget estimates process, which was a consolidated reconciliation of the use of the funds that had already been collected as well as planned expenditure for the remaining funds. I want to remind Ms Lawder of what happened in estimates.

Also, through the reform program to date we have achieved more than \$2.6 million of red tape savings in time and administrative effort for community organisations, through changes to procurement, contracting and reporting.

The strengths of the community sector lie in its values base, its expertise, its intimate knowledge of people's needs, and its ability to build relationships across agencies to facilitate innovation and new ideas. To support the growth and promotion of these strengths, the government has committed to work with the sector on a human services industry plan. The objective of the plan is to jointly develop a strategy that clearly

frames the value generated in the community by the sector and to support its sustainability and growth in a time of change.

All of this contributes to a budget delivering on our belief that all Canberrans should have the opportunity and the chance to enjoy the tremendous potential of people living here in the ACT. The Community Services Directorate is leading a major program of reforms in this area, not only through my own portfolios but also through those of Minister Gentleman and Minister Burch. It is something the ACT government will continue to work on through this year and coming years.

I acknowledge the work of all the officials in supporting the government to deliver the major budget and reform initiatives, and I particularly acknowledge Sue Chapman and Ian Hubbard, who are still here watching the Community Services Directorate line go through.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Cultural Facilities Corporation—schedule 1, part 1.8.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (9.31): The Cultural Facilities Corporation looks after the Canberra theatre and a number of our other museums, CMAG for instance, and places like Calthorpes' House and Lanyon. We had a brief discussion with the corporation during the estimates process. We looked at things like the success of the Cultural Facilities Corporation and the Canberra theatre throughout the year, targets and results of the customer satisfaction survey as well as the education and community programs run by the CFC. Just to start with the programs, they ran something like 700 education and community programs throughout the year, and I think, on the budget they have, they are certainly to be congratulated on that.

We looked at the success of the CFC and the Canberra theatre throughout the year. If you look at the budget for the coming year it seems to be somewhat less than the previous year. Total cost in 2014-15 was \$18,041,000. Total cost this year is \$17,354,000. And it is interesting that the decrease is because in 2014-15 the CFC was very successful. Under "user charges—non ACT Government" the notes on page 138 of budget paper B say:

the increase of \$1.760 million in ... 2014-15 ... is mainly due to higher than budgeted income at the Canberra Theatre ... from a higher volume of large commercial shows;

The decrease of \$1.025 million in 2015-16 from the outcome is, I think, because they are being a bit conservative about how much they actually make, and it might not be as high as in 2014-15. I guess it is a nice problem to have, that you have a very successful year, but the problem then is keeping those levels of success up.

I congratulate the chairman of the board, John Hindmarsh. Mr Hindmarsh came to all hearings in which the CFC was involved, whether it be annual reports or indeed the estimates. Again this year he was there in the gallery. I think John is to be congratulated on his stewardship of the Cultural Facilities Corporation, as is Ms Elvin, the CEO.

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) (9.33): The vision of the Cultural Facilities Corporation for Canberra is to be a creative capital which values arts and heritage and their contribution to building a more inclusive and resilient and indeed an innovative society. The ACT government, our government, indeed in this 2015-16 budget, recognises and values the cultural facility support for making the city an exciting place to live, an attractive destination for business and tourism, and their important role in the economy of the ACT.

The CFC is certainly a leader in the creativity of this city and the diversity and the richness they bring through the Canberra Theatre Centre, the Canberra Museum and Gallery, the historic places of Lanyon Homestead, Mugga Mugga and Calthorpes' House, and notably a number of visual arts and historic collections that they hold and maintain.

This year the Canberra Theatre Centre was able to secure some wonderful performances, and through this budget we will invest over \$4 million in the next three years upgrading the centre to ensure that it continues to be a hub of cultural activity in our city. Every year around 200,000 people attend performances, and this year the theatre had a particular focus on celebrating its 50th anniversary. This budget's new funding builds on the previous two capital funding projects at the centre, meaning that the government is investing a total of over \$9 million over a six-year period.

The government will also provide close on \$100,000 through this budget for a capital project at the Lanyon Heritage Centre, the former Nolan Gallery. I have a particularly soft spot for the Lanyon heritage area. It is in my electorate of Brindabella and it is a magnificent place and sanctuary. If people in this Assembly or elsewhere have not been to Lanyon I do encourage them to go. The funding will be used to upgrade the stormwater systems at the centre so that the centre can be supported for educational programs. The new funding this budget provides builds on the previous two years budgets but both the previous budget and the new funding support the role of Lanyon as the ACT's premier historical site, which each year attracts over 50,000 visitors and provides hundreds of education and community programs.

ACT museums and galleries do a wonderful job of engaging our community by presenting Canberra's stories and our diverse and visual cultural heritage, and this additional funding will support our cultural facilities to continue to contribute to our being a creative capital. If those opposite have not heard it, we are simply the best city in the world in which to live.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

MADAM SPEAKER: I understand that this is where we are proposing to adjourn. However, I need a question so that the staff can put it in the notice paper. I will start the next item and then somebody might like to adjourn it.

Education and Training Directorate—schedule 1, part 1.9.

MADAM SPEAKER: The question is that the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Smyth**) adjourned to the next sitting.

Adjournment

Public education awards

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) (9.37): I move:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

I rise tonight to acknowledge the many nominees and award recipients of the 2015 ACT public education awards. One of the things that make the ACT education system so great is the many dedicated and accomplished teachers who work in our system. It is an ongoing pleasure and a privilege of mine to be able to visit so many of our schools and to see each and every day the great work teachers in our public education system do to inspire our students and unlock the wonderful opportunities for these young people.

The winners of the 2015 ACT public education awards were: Ms Sarah Synnot, Isabella Plains Early Childhood School, for early childhood teacher of the year. Ms Amanda Horne of Gowrie Primary School was highly commended. Ms Leslie Carr of Maribyrnong Primary School was the winner of the primary teacher of the year. Mr Chris Kenner of Hawker College was awarded the secondary teacher of the year. Mr Daryl Galic won the award for school support person of the year. Ms Ellie Templeton of Lake Tuggeranong College won the best new educator of the year, while Mr Kyle Dishaw from Black Mountain was highly commended in this category.

The principal of Calwell High School, Mr Bruce McCourt, took out the outstanding leader of the year award, and I congratulate Bruce for what he has done not only at Calwell high but at the other schools that he has led. He is a well-deserved recipient of outstanding leader of the year.

The award for leadership in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education was won by Mr John Williams, with the Red Hill Indigenous support group being highly commended. The volunteer of the year award was given to Ms Heather Girdlestone from the Neville Bonner school. Finally, the outstanding partnership of the year was awarded to Anglicare for their work at the Southern Cross Early Childhood School.

I give heartfelt congratulations to all the winners of these awards, and the nominees also deserve recognition. To be nominated, recognised and judged by your peers is a very special privilege and honour, and I recognise all the nominees as outstanding contributors to public education in the ACT.

I also want to congratulate those that put the nominations forward to make sure we continue to recognise and value the fantastic public education teachers we have. I take this opportunity to put on record my admiration and respect for those that do that job.

Australia-India relations

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (9.40): Last Saturday I had the delight of attending the launch of the *Australia-India connections* exhibition with his Excellency Mr Navdeep Suri, the High Commissioner of India. The exhibition explores and celebrates the relationship between India and Australia, with a particular focus on the city we all call home—Canberra. Many of the educational materials on display emphasise the links between the Indian capital of New Delhi and Canberra, as both New Delhi and Canberra were created at much the same time as purpose-built, inland capital cities. The Melbourne and Sydney buildings down the block from the Assembly are similar to several buildings in the centre of New Delhi and are a testament to these connections.

Of course, the American architect, Walter Griffin, who won the design competition for Canberra, cherished ideals of Indian philosophy and architecture. He died in Lucknow in 1937 with only a few of his designs in that city realised. Indeed, his frustrations in Canberra with bureaucracy and politicians were repeated in Lucknow, apparently.

This exhibition was born out of the capital's annual celebration of our magnificent cultural diversity and connections, the National Multicultural Festival. The exhibition demonstrates the benefits of the Multicultural Festival for the ACT community that continue far after that festival ends. At this year's festival in Canberra, thousands of Canberrans had the opportunity to learn more about the historical relationship between Australia and India when they visited the stall that has now been expanded into this exhibition. It won an award for the best decorated stall at the festival.

The many months of research and compilation by members of the Australia-India United Centre should be acknowledged and lauded as this brings the exhibition to life. In particular I thank the centre's president, Mr Raj Satija, for his great contribution towards this labour of love. I hope that while the exhibition is on display at the Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre many more Canberrans, including members of the Assembly, can go along and enjoy and explore the linkages between Australia and India.

We have such a vibrant, dynamic, Indian-Australian community in Canberra, many of whom are new arrivals. As Canberra's Indian community continues to grow, I am confident that their contribution to Canberra's culture and vibrancy will also continue to grow. Talking of Indian culture, however, does not do justice to the many cultures of the Indian subcontinent. We already enjoy a variety of festivals in this city celebrating the diverse cultures of India that together form a great multicultural nation.

In Australia we are one, but we are also many cultures. As we strive to ensure our many cultures flourish in Australia, this exhibition is a timely reminder of the historic

connections between our nations and the influence India has had on Australia. The influence continues to grow as our communities and economies become further intertwined.

Members—media interviews
Transport—light rail forum

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (9.44): Last Thursday, in the dying minutes of the sitting day, Mr Coe used the adjournment debate to criticise my conduct in the public discussion about travel entitlements and accused me of seeking to gain political advantage from the debate having “done media on several occasions”. For Mr Coe’s benefit and for the benefit of other members, I spoke to the media on two occasions on the issue. I did not initiate either interview.

The first occasion was on ABC radio. When I was asked to appear on the program I was told that both Mr Hanson and Mr Barr were being asked to participate in the discussion, although obviously neither was able to subsequently. But that is hardly me seeking to gain political advantage.

On the second occasion I spoke to the media it was to the *Canberra Times*. At the time the journalist indicated he was also seeking comment from Mr Barr and Mr Hanson. Mr Barr was quoted in the subsequent article, as was I. Again these circumstances hardly point to my going out there to gain some sort of political advantage. That may be how Mr Coe operates, but it is not how I see the world.

Having made that accusation, Mr Coe then went on to attempt to smear me by misrepresenting an event I attended in Hobart. For the benefit of members, I will now provide a full account of the issue of interest to Mr Coe. In June 2013 I attended and spoke at a stakeholder roundtable on light rail in Hobart. The forum was held at Hobart Town Hall and was attended by 40 people from government, industry and the community sector as well as elected representatives from different political parties. It was certainly not a Greens candidate forum, as has been claimed by Mr Coe.

Attendees at the forum included representatives of the federal Department of Infrastructure and Transport, the Tasmanian Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources, Glenorchy City Council, the Royal Automobile Club of Tasmania, the Royal Tasmanian Botanic Gardens, Glenorchy Football Club, Northgate Shopping Centre, the Tasmanian Motorcycle Council and the Hobart Northern Suburbs Railway Action Group.

At the forum the Tasmanian Greens minister responsible for sustainable transport, Nick McKim, spoke about the Tasmanian government’s support for the Hobart to Glenorchy light rail link. Earlier that week the minister had convened the inaugural meeting of the light rail task force involving Tasmanian government ministers, the mayors of Hobart and Glenorchy and the head of the Tasmanian Planning Commission in moving forward with the proposal to develop light rail from Hobart.

Labor Party upper house member Craig Farrell MLC was also a speaker at the forum and independent federal member for Denison Andrew Wilkie MP was present at the forum. This was not a Greens party event, nor was it an election campaign event.

One of Mr Coe's key claims was that this was an attempt to boost Anna Reynolds's federal election campaign for the seat of Denison. Yet Andrew Wilkie, the sitting member for Denison, was invited to and actively participated in the event. I think most people can see that if you are trying to gain some sort of political advantage you would hardly provide a platform for your key competitor. That is the very point. It was a stakeholder roundtable convened as part of the ongoing work by people in the community and in government to advocate for the development of light rail in Hobart. One of the outcomes of the session was the establishment of the light rail forum as a permanent cross-party advocacy group.

I was invited to speak at the forum to share the experience of the ACT and to talk about progress on the light rail project. I attended the forum as a minister in the ACT government who had been actively involved in the development of light rail in Canberra. It was also an opportunity for me to learn from another jurisdiction which was also planning a light rail network. It was relatively early in the development of the project here in the ACT. At that time the Capital Metro Agency had not yet been established and there was no appointed minister responsible for the delivery of the project.

As I have said previously and in interviews I did last week, I believe it is a legitimate and important thing for politicians to travel to share skills, discuss policy and build networks across jurisdictions, and that is what this event in Hobart was all about.

Hospitality industry—awards

MR COE (Ginninderra) (9.48): I rise today to place on the record my congratulations to the winners of the 2015 AHA ACT hospitality awards. The annual awards night on 27 July was attended by more than 460 industry, hospitality and political leaders. There were a record number of entries to the awards this year. The awards were hosted by Sky News political reporter Laura Jayes and recognised the outstanding achievements of local hotels, restaurants, nightclubs, bars, cafes and their employees.

The award winners were as follows: the John Press award went to David Quinn from the Duxton. Member of the year went to Todd Handy from East Hotel. The hall of fame inductee went to Hotel Realm. Best restaurant service employee, accommodation division, went to Bryan Cronan from the Avenue Hotel Canberra. Best restaurant service employee, general division, went to Jordan Hackett from Taze. Best restaurant cookery employee went to Prasantha Giragama from Crowne Plaza Canberra. Best apprentice chef went to Tara Chainey from Walt and Burley. Best front of house employee went to Sunil Choudhary from Crowne Plaza Canberra. Best bar service employee, accommodation division, went to Kyle Papworth from Avenue Hotel Canberra. Best bar service employee, general division, went to Liam Thomson from the George Harcourt Inn.

Best bar in a hotel went to Monster Kitchen and Bar at Hotel Hotel. Best hotel restaurant went to Lilo Tang, Burbury Hotel. Best cocktail bar went to Molly. Best wine list went to Capital Bar and Grill at QT Canberra. Best cafe restaurant went to the District. Best restaurant went to Pialligo Estate. Best prestigious restaurant went to

Capital Bar and Grill at QT Canberra. Best bar presentation and service went to Hopscotch. Best meetings and events hotel, accommodation division, went to Hyatt Hotel Canberra. Best meetings and events venue, general division, went to the National Convention Centre. Best new or redeveloped venue, accommodation division, went to Avenue Hotel Canberra. Best new or redeveloped venue, general division, went to Bentspoke Brewing Company. Best marketed hotel went to the Burbury Hotel. Best environmental practice went to Crowne Plaza Canberra.

Best late night entertainment venue went to Knightsbridge Penthouse. Best live entertainment venue went to the Dock. Best TAB licensed venue went to the Statesman Hotel. Best local went to the George Harcourt Inn. Best pub bistro went to Hopscotch. Best tourism initiative went to Jamala Wildlife Lodge. Best suite or apartment hotel went to the East Hotel. Best first class accommodation in the three to four star category went to the Premier Hotel and Apartments. Best superior accommodation in the 4½ star category went to East Hotel. Best deluxe accommodation in the five star category went to Hotel Hotel.

I place on the record my congratulations to all those who were nominated for the awards and also on all the great work they do in promoting our city to both residents and visitors. I also thank the board and staff of the Australian Hotels Association ACT, including the general manager, Brad Watts, the president, Michael Capezio, the secretary treasurer and accommodation division president, Mark Sproat, and the industrial relations consultant, Joanna Minichinton.

The AHA represents and advocates on behalf of bars, taverns, accommodation hotels, restaurants, cafes, educational institutions, retail liquor outlets, nightclubs and the Convention Centre. The majority of the AHA's members are small businesses and they employ over 18,000 people in the territory. They work hard and struggle with excessive regulation. The AHA assists its members with a range of policies that affect them, including liquor licensing and regulation, tourism, responsible service of alcohol, occupational health and safety, food safety, law enforcement, gaming, industrial relations and many other small business matters. It is a complex environment in which they work, and it is an environment which is constantly changing. I think we owe it to the industry to give some certainty and to give some recognition for the great value that they give to our community.

I congratulate the AHA on their work on behalf of the hospitality and tourism sector. For more information about the AHA's work I recommend members visit their website at www.actaha.org.au.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 9.53pm.