



Debates

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Wednesday, 12 August 2015

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

Members—withdrawal of comments

Statement by Speaker

MADAM SPEAKER: Before we commence today, members, I would like to reflect on a point of order that was raised yesterday evening by the manager of government business. Minister Burch asked me whether it was appropriate for a member to withdraw whilst sitting. I said that I had not seen it. I realised on reflecting last night that there was an occasion yesterday when I asked a member to withdraw but I was busily writing and I did not actually raise my head, so I only heard that the member had withdrawn.

I want to refresh members' memories: if they are asked to withdraw, they are required to stand and withdraw; members should only speak when they are on their feet. I thank Minister Burch for drawing it to my attention. It would have been better if it had been brought to my attention at the time; then it would have been a valid point of order. If you come back later on, it is not a point of order; it has to be something that arises at the time. But I thank Minister Burch for bringing that matter to my attention.

Manuka precinct—redevelopment

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (10.03): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the recent protest outside the Manuka Oval by members and supporters of the Telopea Park School community objecting to the decision of the Barr Government to resume land from the school to construct a child care centre;
- (b) that this protest followed months of unrest about the decision from local residents, child care centre operators and clients and the Telopea Park School community who objected to the lack of transparency and consultation;
- (c) comments made by the Minister for Territories and Municipal Services, and Molonglo MLA, Shane Rattenbury, following an "I love MOCCA" event on Sunday, 14 June, in which he said that "there has been little if any public transparency around this" and "nor has there been a discussion with the community about possible approaches which could have been provided the space for additional ideas to come forward"; and
- (d) comments made by Chief Minister Barr on ABC 666 talkback radio on 26 June and last week in the Assembly in which he said that the Government was actively looking at another site; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

- (a) explain clearly to MOCCA clients and operators and the wider southside Canberra community whether MOCCA will be removed from its existing site and if so, to where;
- (b) explain to the Telopea Park School community whether the bulldozing of tennis courts on Montgomery Oval will proceed in December, irrespective of whether a child care centre is located there or not; and
- (c) commit to genuine and meaningful consultation with the wider Manuka community over future plans for development of the old Services Club site and plans for multi-storey apartment housing within the Manuka commercial precinct.

The motion I present to the Assembly today brings together a number of disenfranchised, disappointed and frustrated communities who cannot understand why a government is sacrificing a childcare centre and a school and compromising a returned services club membership, all in a vague apparent quest for better oval facilities.

Before I go further, I would like to welcome some of those communities here this morning—the parents from Telopea Park School and Mocca individuals and supporters of Mocca and the inner south councils who have been very supportive of Mocca and Telopea Park School issues.

The motion that I bring to the Assembly today probably had its genesis in the 2002 Manuka Oval master plan. The 2002 plan, prepared by dsb Landscape Architects, set out a vision for Manuka Oval. Thirteen years later, that plan is strangely, and embarrassingly for this government, clairvoyant. Much of what was outlined 13 years ago forms part of what the government is trying to foist on the Manuka precinct today.

For example, in respect of the Services Club site, the plan says, “In the longer term the site may be developed further, for example as high quality hotel accommodation.” Remember that this was 2002, when the site was occupied by a heritage protected building. The same plan also alluded to a multistorey car park on Montgomery Oval.

Is it any wonder that Chief Minister Barr was quick to suggest that the 2002 plan was now superseded? Superseded it might be, but outdated and out of touch it is not. Fast-forward to 2015. The Land Development Agency’s website says that the 2009 master plan is about guiding “future development of Manuka Oval over the next 25 years”. It says:

The Government undertook community consultation on the master plan in 2013.

The master plan 2015 version is now all about relocation of a childcare centre, a new Services Club and the seizing—and that is what it is—of land from a very popular and growing school.

Where to begin? Let me start with how Telopea Park School have been involved, resulting in their very successful recent protest at Manuka Oval. I was first made aware of this issue when parents from Telopea Park School contacted me very early in the new year to advise that they had heard that the school might be losing some or all of their oval, the same oval that had been deeded to the school for education purposes only a few years before. I quickly requested a briefing from the minister's office, but no date was agreed and a briefing has still not taken place—a hallmark of this whole issue and this minister, might I suggest.

On 20 January the Telopea Park School principal was briefed by a school network leader in the Education and Training Directorate on the plans for the tennis courts and the relocation of Mocca. Two other officers met the principal on 9 February to advise that the land had been transferred from the school and the school was to be given \$800,000 hush money—that is my term. The principal was told that the matter was confidential and that she was not permitted to tell the board or the P&C until the ACT government had prepared their communication strategy. The education minister should take note. She denied any knowledge of such a direction last Thursday.

The school learnt in more detail about what was happening via an article in the *Canberra Times* on 13 February. As the P&C president commented at the time, and no doubt would reiterate today, the *Canberra Times* is proving a much more reliable source of information than this ACT government.

I first asked about this issue in the Assembly on 17 March. The question was directed to Minister Burch, but the Chief Minister was quick to intervene to ensure the right spin was delivered. He talked about the scarcity of land and the need to work with a range of stakeholders to find a new home for the Services Club. He accepted that the decisions were not to everyone's liking. He also suggested that the school was more than happy with the \$800,000 and that the fact a childcare centre would be built was the best outcome for everyone.

We asked more questions in May, we asked questions at estimates in June, and we asked a series of questions in question time last week—back and forth, questions and answers of varying hue and with mixed messages. In February, the school land was gone and the childcare centre was coming. The only issue to be determined was what the school wanted to do with the \$800,000 on offer. Consultation on that, I understood, concluded just last week.

Yet last Thursday Chief Minister Barr told the Assembly that Montgomery Oval was merely one possible site that was considered suitable for a childcare centre and the oval was not lost to the school. His words were:

There has been no loss ...

Mr Barr, through you, Madam Speaker, tell that to the parents. Tell that to the parents, whose name I shall suppress, who wrote in furious terms saying: "This is a totally misleading statement by the Chief Minister; in fact, it is completely untrue. The Telopea Park School via the ETD no longer has its legitimate 99-year lease over Block 5." That is a point well made.

Of course, all this flies in the face of the education directorate advice last November that said: “Preliminary advice indicates that it”—the oval—“may not be a viable option”. This was discovered under FOI, the only way anyone these days has any hope of getting anything out of this government. And even then, the process is very slow, the information is limited and the black pen runs freely in redacting most of what is supplied.

This issue is fast becoming a pea and thimble con trick that has backfired. I am sure the government hoped in the early days that the schools would huff and puff initially but ultimately be lured by the promise of much-needed funds and go quietly into the corner—that Mocca, as a not for profit with little means of affording any sort of move or expansion on its own, would be forced to stay quiet for fear of not getting first offer of occupancy at the new site. What the government did not count on was the passion and the tenacity of Telopea school parents; the fierce determination of the Mocca community to cling to what they have and what they do best; and the fierce support of the inner south community, which has backed both entities.

As mentioned, a number of FOI requests were lodged. While they were limited in what they released, the first FOI, lodged by my colleague Alistair Coe in March this year, showed that the ETD had, indeed, been considering land seizures well before they admitted that to the school. In November the land was thought not suitable. Many would agree that the site would be hard to pass in a traffic study given the number of primary and high school students already in the location.

Another FOI, lodged on 7 May by the Telopea Park P&C president, was still unanswered when I raised the matter in the Assembly last week. Maybe it was a coincidence, but yesterday, just five days after I drew this illegality to the attention of the Assembly, the P&C president received a schedule and a limp apology for its lateness. A quick perusal of the schedule of this latest FOI suggests a serious number of refusals to supply on very spurious grounds. Reasons provided, such as “internal work in progress” or “personal information”, are limp at best, arrogant at worst. What are they hiding? What is the secrecy?

The Telopea school community know the Montgomery Oval land has been rezoned. They know it may house a childcare centre and the school may have \$800,000 to spend. They do not know when it might happen other than Bulldozer Burch’s clear desire to get the machines moving in the December quarter—

Mr Gentleman: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! It is all right, Mr Gentleman. Can you withdraw, Mr Doszpot. I remind you to refer to members by their name or their title—no epithets, please.

MR DOSZPOT: I withdraw, Madam Speaker. Other than Minister Burch’s clear desire to get the machines moving in December. That is certainly the message the school is getting from the education directorate.

Since last Thursday my office has been deluged with emails outraged at the answers provided by Minister Burch and Minister Barr. None of their answers is regarded as believable. It may not matter to Minister Burch. Perhaps she keeps her best answers and outcomes for those in her electorate, although CIT Tuggeranong students may disagree. But the Chief Minister ought to remember that these are, above all, also his constituents, and they are not happy or impressed at the lack of clarity and consistency in the answers he has given.

As for Minister Burch's scornful responses about how often or how little the tennis courts are used, I would be surprised if she did not hear the gasps of disbelief from the gallery last Thursday. In case she failed to notice, let me assure the Assembly that, like other claims Minister Burch makes about how well she knows her schools, Telopea indeed does have more than a handful of students using the tennis courts. In an email received yesterday I was told by a parent:

I have just spoken to PE dept—with all lessons and after school care ... (there) is a minimum of 14 lessons per week and up to 24. The other fact ... is that the tennis courts include a change room ... used every time a whole year group in high school practice sport (tennis or something else) as there is insufficient change room space on the school without it.

When we move to how Mocca have been treated, one cannot be certain whether they have fared better or worse than Telopea Park School—better in that at least they were told, with no real explanation, last September that they would have to move because their land was wanted for “other purposes”. We know now that discussions were well underway with the Services Club, because they were telling their members in the middle of last year that a move was on to the Mocca site.

Of course, the government would have reasonably known all along that Mocca, as a not-for-profit organisation, had no way of affording another facility—and, indeed, they do not. After rumours started flowing early this year and they started to lose clients because parents were nervous they would not have a place for their children, Mocca started to rally. At their June “I love Mocca” rally, the minister and local MLA Mr Rattenbury turned up. At that rally, centre director Robby McGarvey was quite clear with what she wanted from government. As she pointed out, Mocca had been in the community for 88 years; they have students who are there from eight to 5.30 five days a week; dozens and dozens of working parents depend on them to provide professional care to their children.

At the rally, Mr Rattenbury accepted that Mocca had been caught by surprise. He, unlike his cabinet colleagues, was prepared to admit that they had been caught up in a process that is very much about solving the rebuilding of the Canberra Services Club. Mr Rattenbury went on to say that he thought the government needed to think more about it and come up with a better solution than what was currently proposed. In a communication with the Telopea Park P&C president in June, Mr Rattenbury said he had written to the Chief Minister to express some concerns, as I have outlined in the notes that form part of the motion.

But confusion still reigns, because Mr Rattenbury, I am reliably informed, has told at least two people that the issue had not been discussed at cabinet level. Mr Barr, on the other hand, during questioning at estimates, suggested that the removal of land from Telopea had been a cabinet issue. In any event, in recent weeks there has clearly been a change in the tone of conversation. Minister Barr said in the Assembly in March:

But let us be clear: the tennis courts are to become a childcare centre and new courts will be built.

By June, headlines in the *Canberra Times* talked about Mr Barr offering to consider alternative sites, with land behind the Griffith centre identified as a possible alternative for a childcare centre. Last week, it had merged into the government working with the board of Mocca to look at a variety of different options. We also know that the firm of KPMG have been engaged by the government to draft options for moving; Mocca are to receive a final copy of their report today, as I understand.

What started as rhetoric from Minister Burch and Minister Barr that nothing would stop Mocca from moving and tennis courts being bulldozed has now come back to what is, hopefully, a more reasoned approach. The one outstanding issue about which little is known is why there is the big push to get the Services Club off their own land and the role that DHA has been claimed to play in this matter.

I am aware that Mr Rattenbury plans to move an amendment to my motion, and I welcome his interest in this issue. If ever there was an issue on which Mr Rattenbury should agree with this side of the chamber, this is the one. It deeply affects his constituents. It goes to the heart of the matter; it goes to the heart of the important role that not-for-profit organisations play in the Canberra community; and it impacts on the need for playing areas for Canberra's young people.

I said last week that for the constituents in Molonglo there could be no better example of how this government rates the importance of public consultation. We have poor planning and even worse consultation affecting a school, a childcare centre, a community organisation and Canberra's veterans, resulting in a virtually secret decision by this government to take land from a school that ultimately only benefits a hotel chain.

Before I move the amendment, I should stress that I have seen Mr Rattenbury's amendments and I was rather heartened by some of the things Mr Rattenbury had to say. Mr Rattenbury has informed me that he is more inclined to look at the amendments that Minister Barr is about to move. I have not seen that in detail, but I am somewhat disappointed firsthand from what Mr Rattenbury told me.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (10.19): I move the amendment circulated in my name:

Omit all words after "notes", substitute:

"(a) the Canberra Services Club cannot rebuild a sustainable club that provides services to the community on the site of their former building;

- (b) that, after a number of years of examination, the Economic Development Directorate identified Griffith Blocks 2 and 5, Section 41, which is currently partially occupied by a building rented by the Manuka Occasional Childcare Centre Association (MOCCA), as the most suitable replacement site;
 - (c) demand for childcare places in the inner south exceeds supply;
 - (d) the importance of ongoing community-based, not-for-profit childcare provision in Canberra;
 - (e) the Government is considering the best location for a new, larger, replacement childcare centre for MOCCA in the inner south;
 - (f) the need for community involvement in urban renewal of the Manuka business precinct;
 - (g) that, in response to the community's concern about placing a childcare centre near to Telopea Park School land, the Government has re-examined a range of sites and is actively considering whether Section 78 Griffith may also be appropriate; and
 - (h) that there are a variety of views in the community about changes to land use in Griffith relating to childcare; and
- (2) calls on the Government to:
- (a) continue to engage with the wider Canberra community over future development of the Manuka precinct;
 - (b) decide as quickly as possible on any replacement site for MOCCA, noting the mix of community concern and support about possible sites;
 - (c) ensure that MOCCA will not move from its current site until new facilities are constructed; and
 - (d) ensure that the lease for the site of the Telopea Park tennis courts is returned to school and community use."

I am moving the amendment to provide clarity in relation to the path forward on these issues, and I will now talk to a number of these points. Firstly, as I have stated on a number of occasions, evidenced by the fact that four years on there is no redevelopment on the Canberra Services Club site, the Services Club have advised government that they cannot rebuild a sustainable club on the site of their former building. They made that clear to the government via the economic development directorate, which then went about a task of identifying potential alternate sites. That examination looked at a range of sites and identified those sites in Griffith, blocks 2 and 5 of section 41, which are currently occupied in part by Mocca.

It is clear that demand for childcare places is exceeding supply. As I have said on a number of occasions, additional childcare places are required. The government

acknowledges and wishes to put on the public record this morning the importance of ongoing community-based not-for-profit childcare provision in Canberra. We are looking at a range of options, but the preferred option for a new larger replacement childcare centre for Mocca following further investigations, as I was asked to undertake and agreed to undertake, is the site in Griffith, section 78, which may be appropriate. Further work is needed on that site, and that process will take a number of years.

I want to be clear that if this amendment is accepted by the Assembly today, the land that has been identified as a potential new childcare site behind the Griffith shops will need to go through a further series of processes. The preliminary investigation indicates it would be feasible, but there is a long way to go on that journey if that land is to be made available for a new childcare centre. The advice I have is that that process will take some time—a number of years would be the expectation. It would then take a number of years to construct new facilities. It would be reasonable to conclude that, should this amendment pass this morning, Mocca, if it were to move at all, would not be moving until towards the end of this decade.

Conversations in relation to future development in Manuka are largely around what happens from the 2020s onwards. The process of community discussion with any changes to the territory plan and the like takes a number of years. Any development that might flow from those changes consequentially happen after any planning changes and, therefore, add further years to any process. In terms of any change to the built form in Manuka, we would be looking at probably 2020 and beyond before there would be any.

In relation to the Telopea Park School, particularly the tennis courts, I have received a number of representations—I acknowledge the strength and passion of those representations—for those tennis courts to be retained. I have also received a number of innovative representations—I thank people for bringing them forward—suggesting putting tennis courts on top of a childcare centre. That is an innovative response to the issue. I thank people for thinking laterally, but I am not necessarily sure that would be the best way forward in relation to this site.

I have also received numerous representations from people complaining that the tennis courts on that site are not publicly accessible and that there are locks on the gates. My determination and announcement today is that the locks come off those gates, that the tennis courts are retained for school and community use, and that these facilities will be available for the general public to utilise outside of school hours when the Telopea school does not require those facilities.

Most other tennis courts associated with public schools in this city are available for wider community use. I received numerous representations over the last few months calling on the government to do more to promote physical activity and community engagement in sport and recreation. A fair and reasonable position to take in relation to access to these facilities is that they be retained and their use be expanded to the entire community.

In relation to the Services Club, if accepted by the Assembly, this amendment will undoubtedly delay any process of rebuilding on the site identified in the Manuka precinct, and the Services Club will need to look for some short-term temporary accommodation should they wish to reopen before that time, which I understand is their desire. The government will seek to assist them in their task but, in large part, it is a responsibility of the Services Club to identify alternate sites where they may wish to open on a temporary basis.

In conclusion, I acknowledge that this issue and the lack of definitive answers at various points in the process has caused grief, and I apologise for that. It was necessary for the government to seek preliminary advice on alternate sites. I hope the information provided today and made clear through this amendment to the Assembly provides clarity both in terms of sites the government will consider for future childcare provision and a time frame that people can understand.

Change will not happen quickly; this is a number of years into the future. The Services Club will obviously need to respond and adjust to these circumstances, but in the context of all of the issues and different representations that have been raised with government and seeking to balance the interests of a number of different groups, I felt it was important today in response to Mr Doszpot's motion to provide the clarity people are seeking on the various issues.

To summarise, from here the government will continue an engagement with the wider community over the future development at the Manuka precinct. That process will take four years minimum. A decision on a replacement site for Mocca will be taken as soon as possible, but my expectation in relation to community consultation on the Griffith site is that that process will be probably 12 to 18 months if not two years. Mocca will remain on its current site until new facilities are constructed. A realistic time frame is towards the end of the decade at the earliest, if they move at all. The lease for the site of the Telopea Park tennis courts will be returned to school and will have an additional community use. The locks will be taken off those tennis courts and they will be opened to the broader community. With that, I commend my amendment to the Assembly.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (10.29): I welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue in the Assembly today. There has of course been a lot of discussion in the community, and it has been a source of some considerable angst for many members of the community. I welcome the fact that, particularly in light of the Chief Minister's comments that he has just made, there will be a lot more certainty and clarity about where things are going.

I have certainly received a considerable amount of representation from constituents regarding what might be loosely called the Manuka land swap, which involves the Canberra Services Club, the Manuka occasional childcare centre, or Mocca, and the Telopea Park School playing fields. I have had meetings with a number of concerned stakeholders and observed the public meeting at Telopea Park School on 13 May. I also attended the public meeting at Mocca on 14 June.

I must state at the outset that although I am a minister in the government, none of the issues fall within my ministerial responsibilities and I certainly do not recall this matter being brought before cabinet. They are technical matters. I am not going to get into the issues Mr Doszpot raised about the timing of those things but these are matters that, as a local member in Molonglo, have certainly come to my attention. I have discussed this matter with the Chief Minister a number of times, as well as writing to him.

What is quite clear is that the destruction of the Canberra Services Club by fire presented a challenge in terms of finding a new and more appropriate home for the club, but also an opportunity to think about what could be possible in the Manuka Oval precinct. However, in seeking to address this fairly defined issue of helping the Canberra Services Club, it seems that other pieces of public land have been drawn into the scenario, bringing a level of change and upheaval that does seem to have got out of proportion having regard to the initial issue that we faced.

Whilst a range of scenarios have perhaps been contemplated, it is clear that the community has not been privy to the amount of thinking that has gone on inside government. That has led to the situation where I think many people were caught by surprise by the proposal. There has not been a discussion with the community about possible approaches, which could have been provided, and it also would have allowed for community ideas to come forward, of which there are many, and I will come back to that point.

Certainly, with regard to Mocca, it is unclear whether there is a specific government policy to move away from community-based not-for-profit childcare facilities or whether this was simply a case of Mocca being caught up in this broader issue. Again, I welcome the comments that I have just heard from the Chief Minister about the importance of community-based not-for-profit child care. Certainly the ACT Greens firmly support community-based not-for-profit childcare facilities. So if there were to be any change in the ACT government's position around that, we would want to have a very considerable discussion about policy direction and why any change might be necessary—not that we think that it is a necessity, but that is a debate that would need to be had more broadly if there were to be some change there.

Similarly, with regard to Telopea school, it is unclear whether the land upon which the tennis courts are located was considered superfluous to the school's current and projected future needs or whether it was just opportunistically identified through what was seemingly a desktop-based effort to solve this issue.

The Greens support urban renewal and a more compact city. However, it is essential that we take the community with us on this journey. I believe that early and open community consultation is essential if we are to make some changes to our city that will mean it is different from how it has been in the past. If the trust of the community is broken this makes it much harder for that transition to occur in our city.

In reflecting on this issue I have thought of a number of other possible solutions. Certainly, at the meeting at Telopea, members of the community raised a number of

ideas that at face value had merit. There is an opportunity to have a more open discussion with the key stakeholders on possible alternative options to address the key issue, which is to provide a home for the Canberra Services Club, and ideas on how the community might be engaged to assist in solving this set of issues.

I am not convinced of the need for the Manuka occasional childcare centre to move in the first place, which led to the proposed loss of the school land and is now leading to concerns from some residents of Griffith as another alternative site for Mocca is sought. I believe that Mocca is currently ideally situated in its current location close to retail, commercial and employment opportunities, and transport.

That said, having spent time talking to the community involved in Mocca, I also know that there are opportunities for Mocca, if it were to move under the right circumstances, to have a new building that would last for another 50 years—to perhaps create a new economic model for Mocca that will in fact improve their sustainability. But there are a whole lot of “ifs” in that equation and some really careful work needs to be done to make sure that if Mocca does move it is done in a way that is advantageous to Mocca and actually strengthens that very valued community organisation in the long run. So there is still some important work to be done there.

Returning to the catalyst to this issue, we do need to find a home for the Canberra Services Club. Several options to address this issue without needing to involve Mocca have been suggested to me, including rebuilding the Services Club on its current site. I have heard the Chief Minister’s comments on this and I understand it to be the case that there are questions about the financial viability of the Canberra Services Club. One can imagine that being the case given that their previous building was a fibro shed, on the whole. I cannot imagine that its insurance value was particularly fabulous, and to build a building to today’s modern standards would presumably be rather more expensive.

However, I also understand that there are prospects of a hotel being built on the site. It would be worth considering, if there is to be a hotel on that site, whether the Services Club might be incorporated into a new development. One could easily imagine a club being incorporated on the first floor in some way, as part of having normal bar facilities, as one often does in a multistorey hotel, for example.

Another idea was to identify a site for the Services Club on an appropriately zoned site somewhere else in the inner south—for example, a site in the sports and entertainment precinct next to the Harmonie German Club on Jerrabomberra Avenue in Narrabundah. This club is an important live music venue. I recently visited the club and they raised concerns with me that the spare block of land next door to them could be zoned to allow residential development, which clearly would then have a very detrimental impact on them because of the inevitable noise complaints that would come when people move in and then say, “Hang on, we don’t like the noise coming from next door.” So having a club next door to the Harmonie German Club would in fact be very compatible. Certainly members of the club indicated to me that they would welcome another club as a neighbour.

Failing that, and if expectations have been raised with development partners such as the DHA of development on the larger site within which Mocca sits, the site could be planned in such a way that Mocca could be incorporated within the development. With three street frontages, adequate separation and privacy could be achieved between childcare facilities, a club and entrances to apartments. This could either involve leaving the current Mocca facility where it is, with the parts of the larger site being developed, or include a new Mocca facility as part of the redevelopment, with a staging plan to ensure Mocca's operations are not disrupted. Alternatively, if commitments have been made to DHA for development in this area, redevelopment of the Stuart flats site could provide an opportunity for either DHA and/or Mocca.

I have not investigated the detailed merits of each of these opportunities, and each of them will have their pluses and minuses. The observation I am seeking to make is that there are a number of scenarios here that do warrant further discussion and present a range of opportunities.

I note that a planning report was commissioned by the Telopea Park P&C that also identifies a range of alternative sites for Mocca throughout the inner south. Again each of those will have its issues but I think there is an opportunity to assess the viability of those sites. I certainly welcome the fact that an investigation has begun into one of the alternative sites in Griffith. I was at Griffith shops for a community engagement morning recently and got a range of feedback. The Chief Minister in his amendment has noted there are some diverse views on the merits of that site. Some see it as a very positive option; others are concerned by the loss of open space.

Having made those general remarks, I turn to Mr Doszpot's motion and to the amendment moved by the Chief Minister. The fact that Mr Doszpot has brought this matter to the Assembly is a good outcome. It has given us a chance to discuss it in this place, despite a lot of the discussion that has gone on in other venues. I had considered putting forward my own amendment to Mr Doszpot's motion, and I had circulated that amendment to my colleagues in the Assembly. Mr Barr has since come forward with his amendment, and I will be supporting Mr Barr's amendment today because I have—

Mr Doszpot: Surprise, surprise!

MR RATTENBURY: Mr Doszpot, if you are going to take that sort of attitude—through you, Madam Speaker—I will explain exactly why. It is because Mr Doszpot's motion calls on the government to explain clearly to Mocca, to explain to Telopea Park School and to commit to genuine and meaningful consultation. They are all fine ideas and I do not disagree with them per se, but what we have in Mr Barr's amendment—and it reflects some of the ideas that I was discussing with my colleagues yesterday—are clear commitments to ensure that the lease for the site of the Telopea Park tennis courts is returned to school and community use.

Presumably Mr Doszpot agrees with that as well. He did not think to put it in his motion but it is actually a really clear and strong commitment. So I will not take cheap shots about just backing the Labor Party because this is a much more concrete

outcome than Mr Doszpot put forward in his motion. I welcome the fact that the Chief Minister has put some considerable thought into this and has come up with some options that provide greater clarity to the community and answer some of the questions that are out there.

I think it goes further than the original motion, and that is a good outcome. I would like to think that we can all agree today with Mr Barr's amendment, because it certainly goes a long way to delivering the outcomes that the community are seeking, which is the protection of the tennis courts, greater clarity for Mocca and a commitment to further discussion with the community.

If I were to canvass a range of people who have spoken to me about this, they are the key points that they have raised with me. Minister Barr has made clear commitments and undertakings, both in his amendment today and in his remarks this morning. For me it is all about getting outcomes for the community. I do not care whose amendment gets up in this place as long as we get the right outcome. That is why I will be voting to support Mr Barr's amendment today, because it delivers the outcome that the people I have been talking to—

Mr Hanson: If you don't care, vote for Steve's.

MR RATTENBURY: I said that I do not care whose amendment gets up in this place as long as we get the right outcomes. I will clarify that because again the cheap shots coming from across the chamber are seeking to twist my words. I do not care whose words go into the record as long as it is the right outcome for the community. That is what it is about. That is what the community expects us to deliver and that is what I am here to do as part of my job as a Greens member in this place.

So I will be supporting Mr Barr's amendment today. I thank him for the discussions that have gone on, particularly in the last 24 hours. I would like to thank the community members who I was in discussion with through my office last night. I think those conversations went on until about 10 o'clock or so. It was a late night. Fortunately, we were sitting, but I appreciate that community members had a late night as well in giving my office feedback on the best way to proceed with this.

Today, hopefully when we leave this place, members of the community will have a clear sense that a lot of things they have been talking about and asking for have been addressed and that we can continue to work through the bottom line here, in helping the Canberra Services Club to find a new venue. I hope we can focus on that and get a good outcome, without considering some of the collateral that has come into the equation prior to this.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (10.42): First of all I note the amendment moved by Mr Barr. Of course such tactics never come as a surprise to us on this side of the chamber. Mr Barr invariably tries to water down any of the motions that we bring into this chamber and invariably Mr Rattenbury agrees with the watered down versions. Mr Barr in his amendment to my motion has quite a number of notes and he tries to rewrite history. What we have been given is an accurate and historical account of what has taken place behind the scenes. All of those Mr Barr would like to see out of

the way. His calls on the government are a watered down version of the proposed amendment that I have circulated which I hope members have had a chance to look at.

For far too long Mr Barr has treated the electorate at large with contempt. He thinks they will swallow anything that he throws at them. I think he is in for a shock because, as has already been proven, the Manuka community, the Mocca community and the south side community, are starting to understand Mr Barr's tactics and they are not shallow, as Mr Barr thinks they are. The community will not wear the lines the Chief Minister keeps pedalling without evidence. Repeating a mistruth does not make it a fact. Too much of Mr Barr's amendment is based on unknowns or half truths.

Mr Rattenbury well knows his proposed amendment would have been better. His office and my office had discussed it at length and had in fact agreed to accept Mr Rattenbury's amendment. We agreed with all of his amendment. The Canberra Liberals do not want to insult the communities on the south side which are concerned with this issue and we cannot accept Mr Barr's amendment. We will oppose it.

On the other hand, speaking to my amendment which has been circulated, Mr Rattenbury said something interesting. He said he does not care whose amendment gets up. The fact is that the amendment that he drafted was obviously drafted with careful consideration and a lot of pressure from the community—and everyone agreed with it; it was well accepted by the community and by all of us—and all of a sudden he has accepted a watered down version of it. Mr Rattenbury, you will have a chance of course to decide on your initial amendment, which we all agreed with, as it is now before you.

I also do not care whose amendment gets up. I am quite happy to put your amendment forward as my amendment and I will welcome your support for your amendment. It is about time that the community saw just what a wishy-washy member we have. He waxes lyrical that he is in cabinet, he is part of the government and he has got concerns that he wants to make sure the community understands but when it came down to the final point he never, ever in the last three years stuck by those words.

At the last minutes it is always: Mr Doszpot or Mr Hanson or Ms Jones, whatever they are putting up, "Yes, I really like that but ultimately I have got to vote with the government." That is basically what he is saying. And that is what Mr Shane Rattenbury has proven to us here once again today.

Last night we had an amendment that we felt we could agree with and that would bring some clarity, some certainty to the community. This morning the first that I heard of this acceptance by Mr Rattenbury was about two minutes before the Assembly started when he said to me, "Of course, I am very happy with Mr Barr's amendment and I will be backing it." I was surprised. I guess people whom I spoke to last night would have known that we did not fully expect Mr Rattenbury to carry through. We were hoping, we were desperately hoping, that Mr Rattenbury would actually be as good as his word. But that certainly did not carry through here this morning.

Again it is great to see that we have got so many members of the community here, because a lot of the time these issues are argued out, debated in front of empty galleries and the reporting on it sometimes leaves a little to be desired in terms of what the community can hear about what goes on in this chamber. This has been very clear this morning. Mr Rattenbury did not provide his amendment but I have certainly provided Mr Rattenbury's amendment. If he does not care whose amendment gets up I challenge him to support his own amendment.

With those words, we will not be supporting Mr Barr's amendment but I commend my amendment to the Assembly.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you going to move an amendment?

MR DOSZPOT: I move an amendment to Mr Barr's proposed amendment:

Omit all words after "calls on the Government to", substitute:

- "(a) provide an assurance that the Telopea Park tennis courts and change rooms be returned to the school and that any work towards the demolition of these facilities cease;
- (b) affirm its support for community, non-profit childcare;
- (c) continue to explore options for the rebuilding of the Canberra Services Club, with priority given to options that allow a new club without relocating MOCCA;
- (d) ensure that, if the decision is made that MOCCA needs to move, that MOCCA can stay on its current site until new facilities are constructed, noting that this process will take a number of years; and
- (e) report back on investigations of alternative sites for the Canberra Services Club and for MOCCA by the end of the October sittings."

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.48): At the outset I welcome members of the community to the Assembly. It is great to see the community here and I think that this is a great example of where community action can make a difference—where members of the community are being railroaded, where they are not being listened to, where they get together and, through their elected officials and through the media, make sure that people in this place, from all sides of politics, listen to what their concerns are. So I commend the community for that.

I would like to thank Mr Doszpot for bringing this motion before the Assembly. I know that he has crusaded on this issue in this place, in the media and in the community. Again what we are seeing is Mr Doszpot on this issue, as we have with others in Yarralumla, Kingston and elsewhere, making sure that the voice of the community is heard and that the government is listening, and that is a great thing.

What I am sure we all want are winners out of this process. It is not a matter of picking sides, it is a matter of making sure that at the end of this process everybody

walks away with a win-win. Be it Telopea school, be it the local community, be it Mocca, be it DHA or the Canberra Services Club, we want to make sure there is a win-win. I am sure that that is an outcome that can be achieved if we in this place, and particularly the government, listen and consult. Certainly we have been discussing this, through Mr Doszpot, with both the local community and the Canberra Services Club with whom we have been in communication.

This brings me then to the detail of the motion and the amendments. That has been well litigated by Mr Doszpot and others. But we find ourselves in an odd situation, because what we often find in this place—and the community is seeing it today—is that Mr Rattenbury will walk both sides of the fence. He will come to us, he will go to members of the community, he will say, “I am listening. I want to sound reasonable. This is what I am proposing. I am balanced. I will do whatever Andrew Barr tells me.”

That is what we see in this place, Madam Speaker, as you well know, time and time again. We see the Greens member of this Assembly trying to sound eminently reasonable but always, when it comes to the vote, when it comes to what matters, doing what his Labor masters tell him to do. And we have seen that in this chamber dozens of times, if not over 100 times. And members of the community are seeing that today.

The amendment that Mr Doszpot has moved contains the exact words to the letter that was pushed by Mr Rattenbury yesterday. Last night he was out there in the community and in this place with the Liberals saying, “This is what we want.” Mr Doszpot received that and said, “I think that it is a solid amendment. It is what the community is calling for and we will accept that. We will agree with Mr Rattenbury.” Mr Rattenbury is going out in the community saying, “This is what the community wants.” And my understanding is the community was very happy with that process.

What has happened in the intervening period, of course, is what always happens in this place. He then gets together with Minister Barr. You can imagine the conversation, “Shane, mate, you’ve got your office with a million dollars in it. You’ve got all of your sparkly bits that you need. Remember light rail, mate. We’re giving you light rail. We’ll get some solar plants going for you. We’ll get some solar going, some wind. Don’t you worry about that.”

Mr Barr: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has just implied that the Greens member can be bought, has sought to impugn the nature of Minister Rattenbury’s character in a most unedifying way.

MADAM SPEAKER: Can we stop the clock, please.

Mr Barr: That accusation contained within his previous statement is unparliamentary.

MR HANSON: Madam Speaker, on the point of order, I am not doing any such thing. There is clearly a political negotiation occurring, as it does at all times. Indeed, there is a political negotiation called the Greens-Labor parliamentary agreement where the two sides of politics have negotiated and agreed what outcomes there would be. I do

not think it is in any way impugning or suggesting that anything dodgy or corrupt is happening. What I am simply saying is that there has clearly been a political negotiation occurring behind the scenes and that is the course of business that we see in this place. It is hardly impugning anyone's motives in any sort of improper way.

Mr Barr: On the point of order, Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition made reference to a financial amount. He referred to an amount of money that was somehow determining or guiding Minister Rattenbury's decision-making process, and that is unparliamentary.

MR HANSON: Madam Speaker, what I was referring to was what is called his million dollar office where Mr Rattenbury has got an office bursting at the seams with staff members and that was part of his demands as part of the political process of the Greens-Labor agreement. It was part of the negotiation for him to get into government. I do not think it is unreasonable for me to point out that part of the Greens-Labor agreement, part of the cosy arrangement that keeps these parties together, included a substantial amount of staffing appropriation for Mr Rattenbury.

Mr Barr: Madam Speaker—

MADAM SPEAKER: This is the last one.

Mr Barr: The Leader of the Opposition also receives a substantive amount of staffing allocation, so that accusation again is uncalled for, unwarranted and unparliamentary.

MADAM SPEAKER: I do not think that there is a point of order. That is my ruling, that there is no point of order, that the issues canvassed in Mr Hanson's speech are issues that have been canvassed here on a number of occasions. Reference to the amount of staffing allocation members receive has been canvassed here on a number of occasions. The Labor-Greens alliance is not a secret. But I will ask Mr Hanson to be careful in his phrasing to ensure that he keeps it in the political domain and not a reflection on anyone's character.

In defence of your comments—you are saying that you are reflecting on the political status quo in this Assembly—I remind you to keep your terminology and phraseology in that space and not a reflection on people's character. I will be listening carefully. Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will continue to reiterate my point. What has occurred is that Mr Rattenbury was peddling an amendment yesterday to the Liberal Party and to the community. In the intervening period he has again succumbed to the will of the Labor Party and is doing the Labor Party and Mr Barr's bidding. I make the point that Mr Rattenbury is the winner, be it on light rail or other issues. What we see regularly in this place is that Mr Rattenbury will have an alliance with the community and will have an alliance with us but, ultimately, Mr Rattenbury knows that his interests in terms of getting light rail and everything he wants for himself as a politician are best served by doing what Mr Barr wants on these sorts of issues.

We have seen it time and time again; this is not news for us. The odd occurrence here, though, is that Mr Doszpot, in good faith, having had discussions with Minister Rattenbury, has circulated an amendment which are Mr Rattenbury's words. Mr Rattenbury now is standing in this place and arguing against his own position that he held yesterday evening. Based on what he has said so far, Mr Rattenbury is now going to stand up in this place and vote against himself. He is going to vote against what he argued for yesterday because in the intervening period Mr Barr, again, has been able to convince him, "No, Shane, this is what's in your best interests."

It is disappointing in terms of the result, but it is also disappointing that, again, we have seen a member of this place, a representative of our community, say one thing, peddle a line, run an argument right up to the eleventh hour and then acquiesce to his Labor masters.

I will obviously be supporting Mr Doszpot's amendment to what Mr Barr has put forward. I implore Mr Rattenbury to support it, given they are Mr Rattenbury's words that have been cut and pasted into this by Mr Doszpot. It will be weird—that is probably the best word—if Mr Rattenbury does not support that. Again, it calls into question what on earth Mr Rattenbury's motives are in all of this.

But that all said and done, what we will achieve in this place today, regardless of which way Mr Rattenbury votes for his own words, is a good result for the community. It is a step forward. It may not be as far as perhaps we could have gone because Mr Rattenbury has decided to walk away from his words, but it still is a step forward. I commend you, Mr Doszpot, and I commend the members of the community that have been advocating.

I give this advice to members of the community: perhaps not be trusting of this government. We have learned in this place, as has been seen today from Mr Rattenbury's action, that just because the government says something, watch for the weasel words. They are very clever at watering down language so they can then backtrack and do something that is quite different later on. Continue to hold them to account; continue to hold us to account; continue to hold Mr Doszpot to account. Make sure you hold us to account because you deserve it. We are here to represent your interests as the members of the community, not our own interests, which I fear was the government's plan. If they can have their way I think they will get back there as quickly as they can.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (11.00): I thank the Liberal Party for the colourful character assessment they have just offered of me. It might be entertaining, but it is more important to look at the text in a cool and logical way, and that is what I am about to do. I will compare the two amendments in light of the commentary that has just been given. I will work off Mr Doszpot's amendment and go through each of them. Yes, I am perfectly happy to admit that this is the proposal I put forward yesterday. But the nature of the discussion is that things have moved on. Let us start with paragraph (a), which is to:

provide an assurance that the Telopea Park tennis courts and change rooms be returned to the school and that any work towards the demolition of these facilities cease;

Paragraph (2)(d) of the Chief Minister's amendment says:

ensure that the lease for the site of the Telopea Park tennis courts is returned to school and community use.”.

I think that is stronger than mine as it refers to the return of the lease. I have enough humility to come into this place and say, “Actually, someone has come up with even better text than I have.” I think it delivers a stronger outcome for the community, so that is why I am prepared to back that one ahead of my paragraph (a). I am prepared to admit that it is better text than what I put forward less than 24 hours ago.

I will reinforce the point of why that was changed. The Liberal Party may not know that last night, aside from sending my proposal to both the Labor and the Liberal parties in a very open and transparent way, I also sent all the text to the members of the community that had been calling me. I said to them, “Here are the three sets of text. I need some advice on the best way to proceed, because I think what the Chief Minister is putting forward is pretty good, and I'm inclined to back that because having the support of the Chief Minister on this is particularly valuable in terms of the outcomes we're after.” They gave me some feedback. I had some further discussions with Mr Barr, and this is the result. So there has been community input into this as well, and that is the way these things should work. Paragraph (b) of Mr Doszpot's amendment calls on the government to:

affirm its support for community, non-profit childcare;

They are my words, again, and that is really important. Mr Barr's amendment at paragraph (1)(d) notes:

the importance of ongoing community-based, not-for-profit childcare provision in Canberra;

It is there; it is in the text. Nothing has been lost. Let us go to paragraph (c):

continue to explore options for the rebuilding of the Canberra Services Club, with priority given to options that allow a new club without relocating MOCCA;

That is contained in Mr Barr's paragraph (2)(b), which calls on the government to:

decide as quickly as possible on any replacement site for MOCCA, noting the mix of community concern and support about possible sites;

That is encapsulated there. Paragraph (d):

ensure that, if the decision is made that MOCCA needs to move, that MOCCA can stay on its current site until new facilities are constructed, noting that this process will take a number of years;

Paragraph (2)(c) of Mr Barr's amendment states:

ensure that MOCCA will not move from its current site until new facilities are constructed;

That is exactly the point—that Mocca should not be left out in the cold and if they have to move, they will move into new, ready-made facilities that can open the day they move in. That is what the community wants, that is what Mocca wants, and that is the outcome of Mr Barr's text.

Yes, one thing that is not here is a reporting date, which was paragraph (e) of my original text. That is not here, but that is okay. With the clarity we have achieved today, a reporting outcome is not so important. Frankly, Mr Doszpot and his colleagues are free to come into this chamber and ask the Chief Minister a question about this any time they like. There are plenty of opportunities.

For all the characterisation the Liberal Party have tried to make about this, I would like to know from Mr Doszpot whether he thinks anything is actually missing in the final version from the text I drafted. The answer is no, other than a reporting date. Everything we were seeking in terms of a return of the tennis courts to the community—a guarantee to the Telopea Park School community that the tennis courts will remain—we have. The Chief Minister has stated it clearly this morning.

I am all about outcomes, and that is the outcome we were seeking. With the Chief Minister's support for that, I reckon that is rolled gold in terms of an outcome. I would rather have an amendment the Chief Minister supports backing the outcome. Sure, I can get together with the Liberal Party and roll the government if I want to. That is fine, but we want an outcome here.

What we have seen today, unfortunately, is a great example of the Liberal Party putting politics ahead of outcomes. We have got the outcomes the community asked for, and I welcome the fact we have been able to find a way through this where we will walk out of the chamber this morning with the certainty the community has been seeking.

Mr Doszpot could characterise today's outcome in two ways: we have seen one way he has done. The other outcome is that he brought a motion to the Assembly today, the parties got together and collaborated, we talked about it some more and we have got a good outcome. I do not understand why Mr Doszpot cannot see that characterisation of it, because it is what we were after.

I will not be supporting the amendment Mr Doszpot has put forward. I acknowledge it is my text, but the world moved on—24 hours in politics is a long time. The outcomes we have here are exactly the things people have been talking to me about. I will walk out of this chamber when this debate is finished, I will make myself available in the foyer, and if the community think this is not right, they can tell me that directly. Because they are here, and they will—they are shy. I will stand by what I voted for in this chamber this morning and I will hold my head high, because we have achieved the outcomes people were looking for.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (11.06): I thank all speakers for their contribution on this important motion today. On this side of the chamber we have outlined very clearly the issues the government has foisted on the Manuka community. The education minister

throughout the process may well have been merely a pawn in a wider determination over the best deal for Manuka Oval, but in not standing up for one of her schools she has lost enormous credibility. I would not wish to repeat some of the angry comments and commentary on her performance by callers and in some of the emails and letters. While thanking the contributors to the debate,

I note the absence throughout this whole motion of the minister for education, whose portfolio responsibility is one of the main points of discussion in this motion. Ms Burch's dedication to her portfolio should be well and truly noted by the community and the education community. The compromising position that the principal of Telopea Park School was put in by being forced to stay mute on the land grab had the potential to lose her the respect and support of the parent community. It should not have occurred and, again, the education minister has to answer for that.

The Mocca community, faced with little option at one stage other than to declare bankruptcy and close up shop, should not have been put in a position where it started to lose clients and live with an uncertain financial future. Information exchanged via media should not have occurred. Blaming the whole land swap arrangements on the desire of the Services Club to rebuild was not fair and, as I understand, not accurate. They had every right to expect they could have a new building on their old site, and there is no real explanation as to why that cannot occur.

We all suspect it is because of the Chief Minister's grand plan for Manuka, but why is it such a secret? Why does the minister not communicate with the community? Why does he not communicate with the Assembly? Where and how will Defence Housing Australia build their apartments? How many storeys and what location is not known, but lots of limitations have been unfairly attributed to DHA without any opportunity for them to defend what they are prepared to do and share. That also should not have occurred.

Yet again, this whole sorry and distressing saga could have been avoided with a more open and honest approach by government to the electors of Canberra and, more specifically, to the south side community, the education community of Telopea Park School, the Mocca parents, friends and teachers. They have been put through considerable trauma. We are just starting to see how nervous the Griffith community is because, yet again, another community has learned via media that a childcare centre might be coming to their shopping centre. No detail, no consultation, no explanation—just another limp defence by the Chief Minister that unfortunately governments have to make hard decisions. Yes, they do, Chief Minister, have to make decisions, but they also have a duty to the community to work with them, to explain, to tell them what the situation is and to hear their response. They owe that respect and obligation to the electors of Molonglo at this point.

The government time after time, suburb after suburb, development after development fails to do such—any consultation. All of us in this place are here because people in the community have voted us in. We owe them respect and we have a duty to consult with them. We owe them the opportunity to voice their concerns, their wishes and their directions to this government. That is our job. We owe them the chance to put their case. That chance was denied to the Telopea Park School community. It was

denied to the Mocca community. If ministers in this place had only taken the time earlier to talk to these communities, much of this angst and community upheaval need not have occurred.

I place on record my thanks and appreciation to the hardworking parents—I apologise if I miss some people in this—to the Telopea park P&C community, to the board of the school, to Paul Haesler, president of the P&C, to Hugh Griffin, and to the parent who first alerted my office to the problem very early in the new year. You know who you are, and I thank you for telling me about your concerns and making me aware of the issue that was about to get very, very serious. Thanks to Robby McGarvey and her Mocca community and to Rebecca Scouller and Anne Forrest and, indeed, all other inner south community councils who have been put through the ringer over what to do and where to go. They have spent hours on this issue, which has cost not only their calm but also an opportunity to get on with their lives in other matters. They have had to concentrate on this issue for far too long.

I want to answer a couple of points made by Minister Rattenbury. He spoke about what is there in Mr Barr's motion. Mr Barr's motion almost tries to simplify things. We can never quite trust Mr Barr. There are some weasel words in there that he will use to his own advantage. We have had about 10 minutes to study his motion. Normally, after a while, we discover where his weasel words will take effect. I guess I should ask what else has it got apart from Mr Rattenbury's motion? We thought Mr Rattenbury's motion covered the areas. I believe the community asked Mr Rattenbury to put his amended version in. I believe that was the request made of him. If that is the case, he has spoken against what the electors have asked him to do.

It is a community that recently he has spent a lot of time listening to. Certainly last night he spent a lot of time listening to them and putting their thoughts into what we thought was a reasonable amendment that did not get rid of all the historical aspects. To answer Mr Rattenbury's question, what is not in Mr Barr's motion is the history of it; it is Mr Barr's version of the history, which we all know cannot be trusted. There are things in there that do not reflect what happened in the community. It is Mr Barr's version of what has happened.

Mr Rattenbury, I said to you some time ago, if there was ever an issue that you should support—

Mr Gentleman: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, the standing orders call for members to direct their comments through the chair, not directly to other members in the Assembly.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Doszpot—

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair, and I welcome—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Just a moment. Resume your seat. Stop the clock. I remind you, Mr Doszpot, to address people through me. All your comments go through the chair. Thank you, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. I thank Mr Gentleman for his absolutely critical interjection. He has not said boo about any of the issues even though it comes across his portfolio. Yet the mere fact that I addressed Mr Rattenbury incorrectly is obviously such a huge issue. I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I am talking through you. Mr Rattenbury, through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, if ever there was an opportunity for you to have a look at the amendments you put in and back your own amendments, this was it. Again, Mr Rattenbury has proven how little we can trust his words. As Mr Hanson pointed out, we have got to stop being so trusting when we get information from our Greens colleague, who will always stick with government, regardless of what the community wants.

Question put:

That **Mr Doszpot's** amendment to **Mr Barr's** proposed amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

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

Question so resolved in the negative.

Mr Barr's amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Public housing—Northbourne Avenue corridor

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (11.20): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the ACT Government's pursuit of light rail down the Northbourne Avenue corridor;
- (b) the ACT Government's public housing program includes selling all public housing properties along the Northbourne Avenue corridor, including the Dickson Flats and connected vacant land, Dickson Garden Flats, Owen Flats, Northbourne Flats in Braddon and Northbourne Flats in Turner;
- (c) the ACT Government's plans to relocate public housing tenants from the Northbourne Avenue corridor to outer suburbs, including Chisholm, Monash, Nicholls, Moncrieff, Coombs and Amaroo;

- (d) the ACT Government has not made a commitment to build new public housing properties along the Northbourne Avenue corridor;
 - (e) the Dropping off the Edge 2015 report shows that in 2015 Chisholm ranks as one of the most disadvantaged suburbs in the ACT;
 - (f) research shows that building large concentrations of public housing in one suburb or area can create a pocket of disadvantage; and
 - (g) the ACT Government has repeatedly expressed its commitment to the salt and pepper approach; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) develop and implement a strategic plan for locating new public housing;
 - (b) ensure that new public housing is not built in areas where public housing tenants will experience, or be at risk of experiencing, transport disadvantage;
 - (c) ensure that new public housing is not built on a site purely because there is vacant land at that site;
 - (d) ensure that large concentrations of new public housing is not built in one suburb or area; and
 - (e) report back to the Assembly in September 2015 on progress.

I am pleased to move the motion today relating to the salt and pepper approach to public housing down the proposed light rail corridor. We all know that this government are charging recklessly down the path towards light rail. They are galloping off after an ideological pursuit and this is occurring at the expense of some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our community.

Canberra has a long and proud history of public housing but we need a strategic approach for relocating people into new public housing. It should have started with careful planning about where to build new public housing properties, for example to ensure that proposed sites are close to public transport, essential services, employment and education and training opportunities. Instead, what we have seen is a headlong approach to light rail and all of a sudden the government realising they would have to move public housing tenants out of that light rail corridor.

We all know that the government's public housing program includes selling all the public housing properties along the Northbourne Avenue corridor, including the Dickson flats and associated vacant land, Dickson garden flats, Owen flats, Northbourne flats in Braddon and Northbourne flats in Turner. We also know that the government are planning to relocate public housing tenants to other suburbs including Chisholm, Monash, Nicholls, Moncrieff, Coombs and Amaroo.

The government have put the cart before the horse. First they decided to do their light rail project, then they figured out this would require demolishing all Northbourne Avenue public housing properties and then they hastily decided where to build new housing properties, basically by seizing on any vacant land.

One of the fact sheets on the department's website is about frequently asked questions about where public housing will be relocated to. One of the FAQs, the frequently asked questions, is: "Why are you undertaking Territory Plan Variations?" It says:

This objective is designed to support greater urban sustainability and increase the focus of development on Canberra's town centres and along the major public transport corridors, particularly the proposed light rail linking Gungahlin with the City.

You would think that when you were planning where to build new public housing properties, ensuring that they are located close to public transport, as per this frequently asked question, and are not concentrated in particular areas creating pockets of disadvantage would have been the first thing a responsible government would do. Yes, you would expect a reasonable, responsible and accountable government to do that.

We have spoken many times in this place about the salt and peppering approach. The government's own fact sheet from the economic development division, from July of this year, says: "What is 'salt and peppering'?" The answer is:

'Salt and peppering' refers to the dispersion of public housing across all Canberra suburbs.

Canberra's long standing 'salt and pepper' approach to the distribution of public housing allows public housing tenants an opportunity to be part of their communities and gives children the chance to attend schools all over our city.

All over our city! It goes on to say:

Dispersing public housing and reducing concentrations of disadvantage is just one way in which Canberrans can send a clear signal that it is an inclusive community, and proud of providing a range of housing options for all Canberrans.

Hear, hear! I agree. "Dispersing public housing and reducing concentrations of disadvantage is just one way in which Canberrans can send a clear signal that it is an inclusive community." I agree with that.

However, despite many questions here in this place, the ACT government has not made a commitment to replace public housing properties along the Northbourne Avenue corridor, which is strange in light of the fact that government has repeatedly expressed its commitment to the salt and pepper approach. For example, the Minister for Housing, on 18 June 2015, in estimates hearings said:

The ACT government is investing in a major, long-term renewal of public housing that will further embed our longstanding approach of salt and peppering ...

In another example, the Minister for Housing, on 6 May this year, said:

The public housing program will also enable an increased public housing presence in growth areas such as Gungahlin, west Belconnen and Molonglo, ensuring the continuation of a salt and pepper approach throughout the city as our city grows further.

Further, the Minister for Housing on 3 June in this place moved an amendment which included this paragraph:

... the Government will be maintaining the “salt and pepper” approach to public housing in existing suburbs, and expanding this approach to public housing in new and developing areas ...

I hope you got that. It said:

... the Government will be maintaining the “salt and pepper” approach to public housing in existing suburbs, and expanding this approach to public housing in new and developing areas ...

Just how does taking all public housing tenants out of the Northbourne Avenue corridor and not giving a commitment that a reasonable amount of new public housing will be built along that corridor continue the salt and pepper approach to public housing? How does this further embed the salt and pepper approach? Is the government really committed to continuing the salt and pepper approach to public housing? It does not really look like it.

I will give you an example. The *Dropping off the edge* report for 2015 shows that disadvantage is concentrated in a small number of communities within the ACT. These communities experience a complex web of disadvantage and bear a disproportionately high level of disadvantage within the territory. Disadvantage is concentrated, the report says; these communities bear a disproportionately high level of disadvantage within the territory.

The *Dropping off the edge 2015* report shows that Chisholm is amongst the most disadvantaged communities in the ACT. It was not in there eight years or so years ago when the previous report was done but it is in there now. Chisholm is a lovely suburb, but according to the *Dropping off the edge 2015* report it is one of the postcodes which ranked in the “most disadvantaged” group on more than five indicators.

The report found that these multiply disadvantaged postcodes had a number of dominant features. The *Dropping off the edge* report found that the dominant characteristics of the ACT’s multiply disadvantaged locations included (1) rental assistance; (2) poor education levels; (3) long-term unemployment; (4) low family income; (5) lack of internet access; (6) limited work skills; (7) disability; and (8)

unemployment. In other words, Chisholm, as at 2014 when these statistics were collected, is a suburb whose residents are some of the most disadvantaged in the ACT.

This government are building more public housing properties and creating further pockets of disadvantage in this suburb, which is already one of the most disadvantaged in the ACT. How is that salt and peppering? How is that not replicating what the government say they are trying to change from what happened along the Northbourne Avenue corridor? They talk about that being a pocket or suburb of disadvantage, but they are doing that again in Chisholm, for example. I just do not understand. There is no real commitment to salt and peppering here. What they are doing is creating further disadvantage in disadvantaged suburbs.

Research—not just this *Dropping off the edge* report, which is a recent report which I have been referring to today, but many other research papers—shows that building large concentrations of public housing in one suburb or area creates further disadvantage. That is not salt and peppering.

My question is: why is the government building new public housing in Chisholm when Chisholm is already ranked amongst the most disadvantaged suburbs in the ACT? It is about a lack of a strategic approach. It is a headlong seizing of vacant land without considering what the best approach to building public housing would be.

We can see already that earlier this year, when I had a question on notice about it, 21 per cent of all ACT public housing stock was located in Tuggeranong, 23.25 per cent was located in the inner north and 10.56 per cent in the inner south. By a rough back-of-the-envelope calculation, if there are 422 public housing dwellings in Braddon, 112 in Dickson, 349 in Lyneham and 403 in Turner, that gives us a total of 1,286 public housing properties in those four suburbs in the inner north area. If 1,286 of them are removed, that will mean that roughly 10 per cent of ACT housing dwellings will be taken out of that area. There is currently about 10 per cent of public housing dwellings concentrated in that area which will go somewhere else.

What we are looking at here is the creation of what Mr Barr seems to want—a hip, cool, new, expensive corridor down the proposed light rail corridor of Northbourne Avenue. He is not thinking about some of our most disadvantaged citizens. Mr Barr tries to tout this government as being all about protecting our most vulnerable citizens. How is this doing that? I am genuinely perplexed by this approach which further disadvantages some suburbs and creates a new, expensive area, because that is what the government wants—to sell off land down Northbourne Avenue for as much money as possible.

The motion today is calling on the ACT government to develop and implement a strategic approach to locating new public housing, not just seizing on any vacant land anywhere they can find it. It is calling on the government to ensure that new public housing is not further built in areas where public housing tenants will experience or be at risk of experiencing transport disadvantage. It calls on this government to ensure that new public housing is not built on a site purely because there is vacant land in that place. It is calling on this government to ensure that large concentrations of new public housing are not just built in one suburb or area and not just move what they see

as the problems of Northbourne Avenue to another area of Canberra. It is calling on the government to report back to the Assembly in September 2015 on their progress in achieving these things.

This government needs to be more transparent and accountable about its public housing renewal program, including its plans for how it locates new housing properties. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (11.33): I move:

Omit all words after “notes”, substitute:

“the Government:

- (a) is determined to deliver the first stage of a light rail network that will tackle congestion between Gungahlin and the City, provide 3500 jobs in Canberra over the course of construction, increase Canberra’s economic competitiveness, and reduce the ACT’s greenhouse gas emissions;
- (b) is pursuing the biggest public housing renewal in Canberra’s history, replacing 1288 ageing and inappropriate public housing with new homes that will provide the kinds of housing our public housing tenants need;
- (c) is consulting with public housing tenants about their needs, including which locations will most suit;
- (d) in responding to the needs of tenants relocating from housing along Northbourne Avenue, will provide replacement housing within the 800m corridor either side of the Capital Metro line where possible;
- (e) recognises large concentrations of public housing in a single location can create pockets of disadvantage; and
- (f) is committed to maintaining the ‘salt and pepper’ approach to public housing, including along Northbourne Avenue and in new suburban developments, to avoid creating pockets of disadvantage; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

- (a) continue its public housing renewal program;
- (b) work with public housing tenants affected by the renewal program to identify their individual needs, including location; and
- (c) ensure that new public housing is cost-effective to build and maintain for the Government and to live in for tenants.”.

My amendment outlines the government’s determination to deliver the first stage of the light rail network that will tackle congestion between Gungahlin and the city,

provide 3,500 jobs for Canberra over the course of construction, increase our city's economic competitiveness and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

We note that we are pursuing the biggest public housing renewal program in Canberra's history, replacing 1,288 ageing or inappropriate public housing properties with new homes that will provide the kinds of housing that public housing tenants need. We continue to consult with public housing tenants about their needs, including which locations will most suit them. In responding to the needs of tenants relocating from housing along Northbourne Avenue, we will provide replacement housing within 800 metres of the corridor either side of the capital metro line where possible.

We recognise that large concentrations of public housing in a single location can create pockets of disadvantage. We are committed to maintaining the salt and pepper approach to public housing provision, including along Northbourne Avenue and in new suburban developments, so as to avoid creating pockets of disadvantage.

We will continue our public housing renewal program. Indeed, we will continue to work with public housing tenants affected by the renewal program to identify their individual needs, including their preferences in relation to the location of future housing and, importantly, we will ensure that new public housing is cost-effective for the government to build and maintain and for tenants to live in.

These amendments capture the government's intent to provide more suitable accommodation for our vulnerable residents, to renew our public housing stock and to ensure that the location of such housing best meets residents' needs. We do this because we are an inclusive community, because we have a proud history of public housing and because it plays a key role in supporting some of our most vulnerable and disadvantaged Canberrans.

Public housing is generally well distributed through the city, but it is, on average, older than in other jurisdictions. Many of our older public housing properties are in larger groups of units in Canberra's inner north and inner south. These properties no longer meet the needs of tenants. They do not suit families; they do not properly support ageing in place or provide appropriate disability access; they are expensive to maintain; and they are often difficult to live in. They need replacing. That is why the government is undertaking a renewal program to improve the overall quality of our public housing and to improve outcomes for tenants.

As part of the program, we are committed to building and purchasing 1,288 replacement homes across the city. These will be a mix of small unit developments, single residential houses and compact homes. They will be modern and energy efficient; they will help reduce utility and living costs for tenants whilst at the same time improving their quality of life. Some of the new homes will be designed to suit specific families on our waiting lists and in our service whilst others will be designed to support tenants who are getting older or who are living with a disability. Through the program of renewal, the number of public housing dwellings that make up our portfolio will not be reduced.

It is important to note that we will have a focus on the provision of public housing in our new suburbs. Whilst there is a very strong concentration in older parts of the city, the program of salt and peppering has not been as extensive as it should have been in new areas of the city. Through this program, we are looking to provide opportunity for new public housing to be constructed in some of the newer areas of the city; that includes Gungahlin and the Molonglo valley.

We are focused on ensuring access to public transport, access to community services and access to local schools and local shops. In undertaking the program, we are aiming to reduce the number of large public housing developments and spread public housing more evenly across the city. This approach gives tenants an opportunity to be supportive in their local communities, gives children the chance to attend local schools, and gives all tenants the ability to access services that meet their needs.

An example of this program will be, particularly, in the suburbs of Moncrieff and Coombs, to bring the public housing percentage in those suburbs in line with the Canberra average for public housing. In relation to Ms Lawder's comments about Chisholm, adding a small number of additional public housing properties in Chisholm will not bring Chisholm up to the level of public housing percentages currently found in the inner north and the inner south.

The government has a responsibility to our tenants to ensure that we locate new public housing in appropriate locations. There are many criteria to consider when determining where new public housing can be located. This is done strategically, with consideration of existing public housing as well as access to transport and services. It is done following extensive work with tenants to identify their individual needs and to ensure that new housing works best for them.

The government remains committed to this renewal program. We will continue to improve outcomes for public housing tenants and ensure that our city remains a welcoming and inclusive community. I commend my amendment to the Assembly.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (11.39): I would like to speak to the amendment. There are some parts of Mr Barr's amendment that I am completely amenable to. I find it a little disappointing that the amendment talks about ensuring pretty much only that public housing is cost-effective to build and maintain for the government and to live in for tenants. It is an admirable aim, and I do support it, but there is a lot more to it than just making sure that public housing is cost-effective to live in. As I said, I do support that, but we want to make sure that people are living in areas where they have the support and the services that they need—access, whether it is transport or otherwise.

I know that many public housing tenants want to live in Tuggeranong. I myself know quite a number of public housing tenants already in Tuggeranong. I understand why they would want to live there, because I live in Tuggeranong myself; it is a beautiful place to live. I know many people who are on the waiting list who want a house in Tuggeranong. Unfortunately, they have been on the waiting list for a long time for a house in Tuggeranong because the government has this management-initiated transfer

list or out-of-turn transfer list that we heard about during estimates and we had questions about yesterday in the chamber.

It is important that people are able to live in the area they want to live—close to their community, maybe close to their family members, close to where their children want to go to school. It is an important thing. It is about making sure that people have access to the services they want. They need access to transport and they need to not experience transport disadvantage. We have spoken before in this place about transport disadvantage.

Chisholm was one of the suburbs specifically mentioned by the government's own transport plan. Once again, we are wondering why we are focusing on this.

Mr Barr: Keep on filibustering. Who are you waiting for?

MS LAWDER: No. I have 7½ minutes to go.

Mr Barr: Who has forgotten that they were on the speaking list?

MS LAWDER: There is plenty more to come. Apparently, the suburb of Chisholm had about 8.07 per cent of public housing at 2014 figures. I do not think I was suggesting that it was reaching high rates or high percentages; I was suggesting that it was having pockets of disadvantage as measured by the *Dropping off the edge* report and the seven or so factors that they talked about, which included transport, access to the internet et cetera.

There are many other things that we could be looking at in Mr Barr's amendment. Mr Barr talked about the fact that this was a strategic approach. I have yet to see the evidence that this is a strategic approach. The government, as I have said, is, with almost indecent haste, seizing on available land on which to build public housing properties. That is all to the disadvantage of people who are already on the public housing waiting list or the public housing transfer list. Thank you, Mr Barr, for your considered amendments, which we will not necessarily be supporting today.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (11.43): My colleagues and I are somewhat surprised that the Minister of Housing is not speaking on this public housing motion despite the fact that even the Chief Minister's amendment refers to the fact that Ms Lawder's motion, notice No 2, deals with light rail and public housing. One would have thought that the Minister for Housing would have an interest in this—indeed, would be a stakeholder in this—but obviously not.

The genesis for the ACT government's decision to relocate public housing on Northbourne Avenue lies purely in their decision to go ahead with light rail. They realise that light rail does not stack up as a transport option, so the only way to make this project even vaguely viable is to try and develop a Northbourne Avenue corridor and claim the benefits of this development for light rail.

To do this, they need to demolish the existing public housing properties on Northbourne Avenue. The problem the government face is that they are in such a

hurry to begin light rail, they are in such a hurry to sign the contract, that they do not have an adequate policy to deal with the displacement of public housing tenants up and down Northbourne Avenue, many of whom would have been there for decades. Does anybody here actually think that this government would be relocating these tenants if it was not for light rail? This newfound determination to find better dwellings for these people is not actually motivated by social policy; it is motivated by light rail policy. It is a symbol of this government's motto of "light rail at all costs".

As I have said many times, the government do not need to develop Northbourne Avenue. If they want to see higher density on Northbourne Avenue, they simply have to allow the private sector to get involved and do what they do best—maximise the return on investment. As we have seen time and time again up and down Northbourne Avenue, on privately held land the densities are being developed well. Whether it is Space, Space 2, the Avenue, Axis, IQ apartments or the many other buildings up and down Northbourne Avenue, they are already being developed at a high density. You can have high density on Northbourne Avenue without light rail, as we have seen time and time again.

The government also need to sell these properties because they know that light rail is simply not affordable. The government know they cannot afford to commit to a billion dollar project at a time when the territory is running the largest ever deficit. We also know that when this project was put forward to Infrastructure Australia on its merit, the Gillard Labor government said no. The Gillard Labor government said that this project does not stack up from a transport point of view. It is a shame that the government is choosing to spend the asset recycling initiative windfall amount on light rail rather than more productive infrastructure elsewhere in the territory.

One of the problems with removing housing along Northbourne Avenue and relocating the tenants elsewhere is the considerable disadvantage some people may find themselves in. The transport for Canberra 2012-31 plan says:

For some areas on the fringes of suburbs (e.g. ... Chisholm) the circuitous street layout and hilly topography can make it difficult to provide public transport within a reasonable walking distance of some households, and make the car an easier travel option. Housing near transport corridors such as Northbourne Avenue have access to high frequency public transport. In these areas, transport disadvantage is reduced as people have easy access to services without needing a car ...

By deduction, moving people from Northbourne Avenue will increase transport disadvantage. How many of the proposed public housing dwellings are on the light rail route? How many of the dwellings which the government has planned are actually on the light rail route? Absolutely none. Absolutely none of what this government has planned are on the light rail route. You are taking people away from probably the best transport corridor in Canberra and putting them somewhere else. Somehow we are meant to believe that this is some sort of humanitarian policy of the government. We all know that it is simply the "light rail at any cost" philosophy.

Most obviously, moving people to Chisholm, Monash, Moncrieff and Coombs will remove people from the red and blue rapid routes. Nicholls and Amaroo are both

currently serviced by red rapids, but they only run during peak hours; these ones will be cancelled following light rail. Consequently, these relocations will limit the frequency of buses these tenants have access to and reduce their mobility and social inclusion.

This issue is another problem faced by the government as they try to force Canberrans to accept their flawed light rail policy. The light rail plan, the light rail project, has wide-reaching ramifications. The ramifications go to rates, taxes, fees and charges, buses, parking, public housing and more. Everything and everyone will suffer as a result of this government's stubbornness with light rail.

Ms Berry, despite showing great concern for public housing tenants on Northbourne Avenue during last year's estimates process, is now the first ACT housing minister to support removing public housing tenants from transport corridors. I do not think we have ever had that policy in place before—whereby we are actively taking people out of a transport corridor. We are actively making people worse off by way of transport under this policy; we are increasing social isolation. We are increasing transport disadvantage as a result of this policy. It is absolutely undeniable.

Northbourne Avenue is the main public transport route in Canberra at present, and it is meant to be the flagship corridor for the light rail project. Yet Ms Berry and this government do not think that public housing tenants deserve to live on that corridor. That is the consequence of their policy here. They do not think that public housing tenants deserve to live on the light rail corridor. They would rather shuffle them out and sell the land than have these people living on that corridor. That is the truth of this policy.

Social isolation and transport disadvantage will increase as a result of this government's policy. That is why I will be supporting Ms Lawder's motion today. I encourage all members to do the same.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (11.52): I wish to reiterate a few points about the percentage of public housing dwellings per suburb. According to information I received last year, 2014, in response to a question on notice, I could work out the average across suburbs in the ACT. Each suburb on average has about 8.13 per cent of public housing. That is a pretty rough average, but that was the information provided to me in the question on notice response.

There are other suburbs with far greater proportions of public housing—for example, Reid, 34.04 per cent; Oaks Estate, 18.13 per cent; Narrabundah, 15.14 per cent; Charnwood, 17.63 per cent; Ainslie, 18.28 per cent. All of those are higher than Braddon, Dickson, Lyneham and Turner, where dwellings are being replaced. In Braddon overall it is approximately 14.73 per cent; in Dickson, approximately 12.02 per cent; in Lyneham, approximately 13.52 per cent; and in Turner, approximately 13.02 per cent.

There a number of suburbs with far higher rates of public housing in them. That is not really a problem but it proves the point that the government are not doing this because they are concerned about public housing tenants and pockets of disadvantage; they are

doing it to pursue the light rail corridor down Northbourne Avenue and using the renewal of public housing as an excuse—the renewal of public housing they had many years in government to do something about and chose not to until it suited their ideological pursuit of public housing.

Chisholm, by comparison, currently has pretty much the ACT average. Chisholm has 8.07 per cent public housing compared to the ACT average of 8.13 per cent. Nevertheless, Chisholm, as I already outlined, is considered to be one of the most disadvantaged suburbs in the ACT. This government is trying to increase that disadvantage in Chisholm.

Some of the other suburbs that they are moving people out of do not rate anywhere near as highly on the list of disadvantaged suburbs according to the *Dropping off the edge* report. It really is a sham. It illustrates that this government will do anything to pursue that light rail dream they have down Northbourne Avenue. It will turn into a nightmare for many other people. We will not be supporting the amendment today.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

Noes 8

Mr Barr
Ms Berry
Dr Bourke
Ms Burch
Mr Corbell

Ms 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.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Education—teacher quality

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (11.59): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that first Ministers at last month's COAG meeting committed to making improved student outcomes and teacher quality a national priority;
- (b) that the ACT Government will work with the Queensland Government on developing recommendations to improve teacher quality nationally;
- (c) the contribution the ACT Government has already made to enhancing teacher quality by establishing the Teacher Quality Institute and through its contribution to the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group and the work of the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership;

- (d) the decision by the Minister for Education and Training to institute a literacy and numeracy test for all new teachers in ACT Public Schools from 2016;
 - (e) the ACT Government's introduction of the ACT Teacher Quality Institute (Australian Professional Standards for Teachers) Determination as a requirement for teacher registration in the ACT; and
 - (f) the work the ACT Government is undertaking in collaboration with the University of Canberra and the Australian Catholic University to improve teacher education courses and ensure new graduate teachers are classroom ready; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to continue to work with:
- (a) the Commonwealth, States and Territories on implementing national improvements to teacher quality; and
 - (b) employers, universities, teacher and parent groups on improvements to ACT teacher quality to ensure ACT students continue to achieve excellent school outcomes.

I am pleased to move this motion today on the importance of improving student outcomes and teacher quality here in the ACT. Quality education should always be a key priority for any government. The ACT Labor government is particularly focused on improving teacher quality for Canberra's 70,000 students across both government and non-government schools.

Established research shows that teacher quality is one of the most influential in-school factors affecting outcomes for students across all sectors of schooling. But international comparisons have also shown that the outcomes for Australian students have not kept pace with those in other countries regarded as our peers.

I am a strong believer in the power of education. It is the way I was brought up, and it is the way I have lived my life. Every child should have a right to the best education possible, regardless of where they live or what their socioeconomic background might be. I am proud that in the 2015-16 ACT budget there is a record \$1.1 billion for education to ensure we continue to put the needs of students first.

This budget will invest more than \$160 million in modern classrooms and schools right across Canberra. It includes \$18.4 million to modernise Belconnen High School, including extensive refurbishment and upgrading of existing facilities, a project that is very much welcomed by the Belconnen High School community. This budget includes \$3.9 million in funding to help students with disability, including extra resources to increase participation in education and transport for students with a disability to ACT public schools.

It includes \$1.3 million for the next stage of online services for professional learning, teaching standards and professional practice through the ACT Teacher Quality Institute. This is important, and it highlights that the quality and capabilities of the

teaching workforce here in the ACT remain a priority for our government and indeed governments across the country. The recent COAG meeting in Sydney also identified this as a priority, with first ministers recognising the critical role teacher quality plays in delivering better educational outcomes.

I was pleased to see the Queensland Premier and our ACT Chief Minister Andrew Barr agreeing to work together to develop options to progress school reform in school education as a result of that COAG meeting. I believe the ACT Labor government's commitment to teacher quality will help us all as we continue to raise the bar for the profession of teaching.

The teaching profession here is strong, and the results of our students show, year after year, just how wonderful our teachers are. But this is not an excuse to be complacent. We must continue to strive for excellence so that our education system is one that our community can continue to be proud of. Canberra is seen as a wonderful place to raise children, and our quality education system is a big part of that. We need to ensure it stays that way. We need to adopt a range of measures to ensure that our teachers are supported and are at the cutting edge of teaching practice.

The ACT government has taken a leading role when it comes to instituting measures that will substantially improve teacher quality. In 2011 this government established the ACT Teacher Quality Institute, which has in turn set up a framework for the teaching profession that is focused on quality improvement, not just regulation. The institute works to build the professional capabilities and standing of all ACT teachers, whether in Catholic, independent or public schools. It works by registering all teachers seeking to work in ACT schools, ensuring that our teachers are appropriately qualified and continue to uphold the standards of the teaching profession.

Alongside the institute's role is our plan to introduce a literacy and numeracy test for all new public school teachers. This will enhance teacher recruitment here in Canberra. Like a lot of professions, the community expects a certain standard of our teachers. It is fair to say that a high standard of literacy and numeracy is expected. That is why this government's plan to introduce a literacy and numeracy test is important, to ensure that our teachers have literacy and numeracy levels in the top 30 per cent of the country.

The Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group was established in February 2014 to examine how new teachers can be better prepared with the right mix of academic and practical skills needed for the classroom. The ministerial advisory group finalised its report into teacher quality in Australia earlier this year. The report found that there is a high degree of variability in the quality of training provided to initial teacher education students and recommended changes to initial teacher education that are practical and achievable. The report concluded that universities alone cannot reform the training of our teachers. Successful reform will require collaborative partnerships between universities, school systems, teacher regulatory authorities and governments.

The advisory group's recommendations seek to achieve improvements in both the content and delivery of initial teacher education courses in Australia. These recommendations are important, and the ACT is already leading the way in

implementation of many of the recommendations of the report through the collaborative work of the ACT Teacher Quality Institute, Catholic, independent and public schools and the ACT universities.

Much work remains to be done about what we really mean by teachers entering the profession “ready to teach”. We must find ways both to enable new teachers to access the benefits of working with their more experienced colleagues and to ensure that experienced teachers continue to develop their professional practice. Teachers must own these standards and continue to develop them so that they do not become something that is imposed upon them externally but are part of the profession itself being responsible for those who enter it. That is why it will be important that we continue to work with the commonwealth, states and territories to implement national improvements to teacher quality, and work with employers and universities to achieve better outcomes.

I would also like to touch on the importance of parental engagement in all of this. Parents are vital to this process. They have a key role to play in ensuring students continue to achieve excellent student outcomes. There are clear benefits of positive parental engagement in student learning, by way of improved academic achievement, wellbeing and productivity. Parent engagement is associated with improvements across a range of indicators, including better education outcomes, enhanced engagement with school work, more regular school attendance, better behaviour and increased social skills.

I believe that resourcing and effectively progressing parental engagement initiatives are warranted for, if not essential to, education reform and quality improvement. Together with national improvements to teacher quality, our community can continue to reap the benefits of having a highly educated population, making us continue to be “clever Canberra”.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (12.07): I welcome the opportunity to speak to this motion today, and I thank Dr Bourke for bringing this subject on for debate. I am pleased that Dr Bourke, in bringing this subject matter to the attention of the Assembly, continues to demonstrate a keen interest in the advancement of and discussion on educational matters, which is quite a contrast with the minister for education, who just this morning could not be in attendance to debate a very serious issue for her education community with regard to Telopea Park School.

Enhancing teacher quality and lifting the profile of teachers is critical. If we are to raise overall educational outcomes for all children, it is important to address the issues that Dr Bourke has raised. However, I do admit to a wry smile when I first read this motion last week—it did not get a run then—because, on the face of it, it suggests that without the enlightenment of the ACT education minister and the advice and support of a newly elected Queensland Labor government, Australian educational standards would be in ruins and ACT education would be struggling.

Of course, what Dr Bourke very glibly passed over, and only mentioned in passing in his call to action, is the vital, indeed pivotal, role that the current federal coalition government is playing in driving the educational agenda. In fact, his motion is a

blueprint for what the federal government is doing, and I am pleased that he recognises the quality work that the coalition government is doing to lift educational outcomes and teacher quality throughout Australia. The federal coalition parties first proposed these initiatives before they came to government, and I congratulate him on recognising the quality work that it is.

The basis for the initiatives outlined in the motion today are contained in the federal coalition's education policy, released in August 2013, just prior to the federal election. Called "Policy for schools: students first", the policy was built on four key principles. Of the four, two are of direct relevance to this motion today: a renewed focus on what students learn through a robust national curriculum; and improved quality of teaching and related support services.

In respect of the quality of teaching, the approach of the current federal government was, and remains, an unambiguous policy that focuses on improving teacher quality, because we all know, and domestic and international studies have consistently shown us, that teacher quality has the greatest impact on student learning outcomes. The coalition policy commits to working with state and territory governments to ensure that Australia's quality of teaching is world class and that teachers have the support they need to succeed.

The ACT is a high performing system by national standards—and well it might be, given the higher socioeconomic profile of parents and the fact that per capita spending on students is high. But national performance is flatlining and by international standards Australia is not that impressive in terms of educational outcomes.

We have to accept that Australia's performance on international testing has declined significantly since 2000. Research undertaken by Thomson, De Bortoli and Buckley in 2013, and others since, tells us that. This is apparently particularly the case in the ACT, which has experienced large falls which cannot be explained by demographic changes. I am confident that the ACT Education and Training Directorate is also aware of these claims, so this is not about me talking down education in the ACT, as Minister Burch so often accuses me of, and no doubt will again today. It is about addressing some home truths and honestly addressing what needs to be done. That is what the federal government has done since coming to government, and through the COAG process this is what all states and territories, including the ACT, are setting about redressing.

Indeed, with the initiatives that the federal government is driving for all states, and the ACT is adopting, there are some exciting initiatives available for the uptake. The basis for much of this work was undertaken by the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group, the same group that Dr Bourke's motion references. The Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group was established by the federal education minister, Christopher Pyne, in 2014—the same minister about whom Minister Burch had some less than flattering remarks to make, as I recall—to provide advice on what changes were needed in training Australian schoolteachers. I say to Ms Burch—through you, Madam Speaker—that I was referring to your tweet.

The advisory group was asked to deliver a report on what needed to be done to drive education reform and put Australia among the world's leading educators. The report to government was developed after significant consultation—over 175 public submissions received and over 30 consultations undertaken with key stakeholders. The report talked about stronger quality assurance of teacher education courses, rigorous selection for entry to teacher education courses, improved and structured practical experience for teacher education students, robust assessment of graduates to ensure they are classroom ready, and national research and workforce planning capabilities.

The federal government response delivered in February this year agreed with the advisory group's findings report. Things such as improved educational outcomes, better teacher training and higher level entry for teachers are all being driven by a national agenda, and the ACT is embracing these principles, along with other states. If we want better educational outcomes for all ACT students then it starts with how we deliver education for teaching.

As Dr Bourke's motion highlights, the work of the advisory group and the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, or AITSL for short, are pivotal in this. The advisory group report suggested that high standards for initial teacher education are achieved through strong course accreditation and are essential to producing great teachers. AITSL is to be given greater responsibility for driving improvement in the quality of initial teacher education and will work with state and territory jurisdictions to make that happen.

While the advisory group suggests there needs to be rigorous selection for entry to teacher education courses, just as the Finnish education system insists on, it should not be based simply on a single selection tool such as an ATAR score. The group suggests that high quality candidates should be selected on their potential to become effective teachers. The AITSL have been asked to identify best practice in selection and develop specific selection criteria to assist universities in selecting the right people.

So it is a combination of a number of factors, including high level numeracy and literacy skills, which all states and territories, the ACT among them, have now agreed to adopt for universities with students graduating from 2015. From 2016 all teacher education students will be required to pass the test before they graduate. The group's report also went on to suggest that practical in-class experience should give teacher education students the opportunity to connect what they learn at university with real-world experience.

Federal government funding provided to universities for the training of teachers includes the delivery of practical experience. As the government response suggests, as this is a shared cost between universities and schools, it is important for universities to work collaboratively with school systems and schools to make sure this funding is used to support effective practical experience placements.

The advisory group talked about gaps between knowledge and skills regarding universities preparing their teaching graduates, and those skills and knowledge that are needed for teachers to thrive in the classroom. Of course, state and territory governments and non-government schools are the employers of teachers, so it is important that they work closely with the federal government and commit to the findings that the advisory group has delivered and which the federal government has now endorsed.

The ACT government has demonstrated an appetite and a willingness to date to ensure that teacher quality is an important driver of education reform. But as research shows, Australia is losing ground on international rankings and we cannot and must not be satisfied that the ACT is doing better than other states, so everything is okay, as the last line in this motion today suggests. “To ensure ACT students continue to achieve excellent school outcomes,” as the motion proposes, could be interpreted to mean we are doing enough and we should simply continue to do what we are doing, or more of the same.

There is lumpiness in our school results. We do have better results in some areas than in others and we do know that literacy and numeracy are important but are not widely and consistently delivered to acceptable standards. We also know that the previous federal Labor government’s \$540 million literacy and numeracy program did not deliver any significant improvement in either literacy or numeracy in any state. So it is not just about throwing a bucket of money at the problem. Improving student outcomes across the board and throughout all schools, and not just highlighting the shining stars in our system, must be the focus for the future.

I again thank Dr Bourke for this motion today and commit the Canberra Liberals to supporting better education outcomes for all ACT students.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (12.18): The ACT Greens are happy to support the motion before us today calling, as it does, on the government to work with all stakeholders to improve teacher quality and to ensure excellent outcomes for our students. The ACT Greens believe that high quality, free and equitable education is a cornerstone of a healthy democracy and is fundamental to Australia’s continued prosperity.

We understand that learning is a lifelong process fostered in both formal education and informal settings from early childhood through adult life, and we believe everyone should have equitable access to an education that meets their needs and aspirations and gives them the skills and capacity to participate in society. The Greens are committed to closing the gap in academic achievement associated with students’ socioeconomic status and cultural background.

We would like to see improved educational and training outcomes for young people with a disability or a learning difficulty by expanding and diversifying alternative settings and programs within schools for students with complex learning needs or experiencing barriers to mainstream education. It is important that a diversity of teaching methods are considered and evaluated in this objective, as we know there is a

strong body of evidence about what is most effective in teaching children and what does not work so well. Educators must, like other professions, stay on top of what the research is showing, perhaps in spite of personal preferences or habit or previous training. Teacher quality is an important part of achieving this.

Teachers need to be nurtured and offered up to date training opportunities that reflect the very best of pedagogical practice. They need access to new and emerging technologies and the time to undertake professional development and engage with mentors. This approach to teacher quality also needs to recognise the many different functions of the modern teacher and the complex nature of modern classrooms.

Aside from the core curriculum, mainstream teachers are increasingly called on to provide lessons to students who may have learning disabilities or English as a second language. They are required not just to teach but to mark their students' results, design classroom programs, engage with parents and carers—the list goes on. That is why the profession deserves our respect and we have so much pride for the great student outcomes we see reported on in the media.

Madam Speaker, we must not forget that not all students are having equal outcomes and that teachers are only part of the answer to closing the gap in academic achievement associated with students' socioeconomic status and cultural background. It is also about the robust nature of the curriculum, the quality of our teacher training institutions, the flexibility of the school as a community and the passion of principals as school leaders.

I note the recent comments in the media regarding the NAPLAN results. Yes, the ACT should have some pride in our results, but I also note the national picture emerging that clearly shows the generic testing approach has yet to demonstrate a lift in our national levels. I also note with some concern the previously mentioned gap in academic achievement associated with students' socioeconomic status that is clearly illustrated when the NAPLAN data is disaggregated. The ACT performs well, but so we should: we have some of the highest SES rankings in the country, and we would do well to ensure we evaluate our outcomes in light of this.

We cannot have a debate in this place on educational matters without mentioning the broader issue of school funding. Our schools and teacher training facilities need resources to keep ahead of the curve and adapt to new research and new technologies. We need universities funded to levels that will produce great teachers and we need realistic university fees so we can encourage people to the profession. Teacher quality is obviously a key component of educational quality, but so is education funding as well.

I am happy to support Dr Bourke's motion today. Like Mr Doszpot, I welcome Dr Bourke bringing this matter up for discussion. It is certainly worth spending time on. The observations made in Dr Bourke's motion are good ones, and I am certainly happy to participate in the debate and also flag some of these issues, particularly making sure we give more thorough consideration to how we deal with differences in socioeconomic status as we think about how we train our teachers and the educational outcomes we are seeking.

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) (12.22): I thank Dr Bourke for moving this motion today because I always like to take the opportunity to talk about how the ACT education system is leading the nation on improving teacher quality. Members are, of course, aware that following the most recent COAG meeting in Sydney, the Chief Minister announced that the ACT would work with Queensland on developing options to progress school education reform across Australia. The announcement has firmly placed on the national agenda a commitment from all levels of government to improving student outcomes. As minister for education, I am very pleased that the ACT, along with Queensland, has been asked to lead this significant piece of work.

As I have said many times, I believe every Australian child, regardless of their background, location or school setting, should have the right to the best education we can provide. I believe this in my core, and it is central to the Labor government's policy agenda. We as a community have the responsibility to ensure this right is realised, and we need to ensure that we enable the optimum education conditions for every child. We know the keys to achieving a goal such as this is school funding based on student need, moving the decision-making closer to the delivery point and, of course, the quality of teachers; and this goes to the core of the motion today—a focus on teacher quality.

Research clearly tells us that the quality of the teacher is paramount to achieving student outcomes. All teachers must be encouraged, supported and required to become as good as they can possibly be, always striving to be great teachers. Improving teacher quality is so important to achieving high student learning outcomes that it cannot be left to chance. Everything we do to improve teacher quality needs to be purposeful and well planned.

The improving teacher quality national partnership provided the impetus for the national collaboration effort that produced a number of tangible and practical mechanisms for improving teacher quality, such as the Australian professional standards for teachers, the Australian professional standard for principals, agreeing on nationally consistent processes for certifying teachers against those standards, and a nationally aligned teacher registration processes.

Locally, the ACT response to that national partnership was highly collaborative and cross-sectoral, involving the Catholic sector, the independent schools and the public education system. As a key initiative of the national partnership, the then minister for education and now our Chief Minister, established the ACT Teacher Quality Institute as an independent statutory authority to focus on improving and building the capacity of those entering the ACT teaching profession. I note that Mr Doszpot made no reference to TQI. Perhaps after his visit at the end of this week he will see and recognise the valuable work they do.

The institute has continued this collaboration and cross-sector focus in all of its subsequent work. The TQI has maintained a very active and highly engaged partnership with the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership in implementing nationally agreed initiatives to improve teacher quality.

Due to the high level of work done in ACT schools to introduce and embed the Australian professional standards for teachers, the ACT was chosen to pilot the nationally agreed process for certifying teachers against the highly accomplished and lead levels of those standards. Consequently, the level of acceptance and understanding of those standards is very high across all our schools.

Another significant outcome of the national partnership, coordinated again through TQI, was the development of the ACT teacher mentor program, which has been accepted as a unit in the master program at the University of Canberra. The TQI now requires all teachers seeking re-registration in the ACT to demonstrate their ongoing commitment to professional learning through the completion of at least 20 hours of quality professional learning in the previous twelve months.

A component of this professional learning must have been accredited by the TQI using the Australian professional standards for teachers. This requires more than simply sitting passively through a professional learning model; teachers must record and reflect on the professional learning they undertake, assessing its impact on their practice. The TQI mantra is to continue learning, reflective practice and professional growth. The recent teacher education ministerial advisory council report advised that improvements can be made in the preparation of future members of the teaching profession. Indeed, the TEMAG report referenced work that has already commenced here in the ACT.

A comment on the federal government's approach: there would be many in all sectors in the ACT that would say that the feds have merely adopted a blueprint of what the ACT already has underway. That is recognised and referenced in the TEMAG report. Mr Doszpot may scoff at that, but it is most unfortunate that he has not acknowledged the clear showcasing in the report, which he referenced, of the work already underway in the ACT through the coordination of the Teacher Quality Institute.

We know we need to better ensure that the right people are being selected into initial training education programs, that quality assurance procedures for accrediting initial teacher education programs are more rigorous and that the practical experience programs in our schools better support new teachers who will be ready to teach.

The AITSL is currently producing a series of case study videos nationally showcasing good practice examples of professional experience in initial teacher education, and the TEMAG report, for the interest of members, goes to the common practicum assessment tool that is used by both universities—the University of Canberra's teacher secondment program and a partnership between the ACU and St Mary MacKillop College, fine examples of nation-leading work. For the ACT, AITSL has chosen to highlight the value of the partnership between University of Canberra, the TQI, the Education and Training Directorate and the extended professional experience program at the university's new Master of Teaching.

Modelling high expectations is important to the learning process and I believe that it is crucial that our teachers are capable of modelling high standards of literacy and numeracy for our students, and our community expects this of our teachers. This is

why I have asked the directorate to trial a new assessment tool, as Dr Bourke referenced, to assess the literacy and numeracy competence of the teachers we employ in ACT public schools.

From this year's recruitment round, all new applicants will be asked to demonstrate that they have personal literacy and numeracy skills which place them in the top 30 per cent of the population. We are the first jurisdiction to do this; the rest of the nation will follow us. It is a demonstration of the quality of the cross-sectoral work we have in the ACT out of our public education commitment to provide only the best teachers for our students.

In looking at the recommendations for TEMAG, I am particularly interested in improving the practical experience for teacher education and students, building university and school partnerships, selecting the right applicants for initial teacher education programs and ensuring the literacy and numeracy standards of our new graduates.

The ACT has built a strong national reputation through its positive engagement across our sectors. We are often described as punching above our weight. I commend the efforts of the Chief Minister at COAG and the work where we will support the nation in making sure that all teachers are of the highest quality. In many ways we are leading by example. It is about teacher quality but it is also about resources. It is disappointing that the federal government tore up the unity ticket and that Mr Doszpot and others on the other side continue to seek fair resources for the independent and catholic education systems that will be millions of dollars worse off because of their failure to honour the unity ticket before the previous election.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (11.32), in reply: I welcome the support across the house for this motion I have brought today on teacher quality and education in the ACT. I thank Minister Burch, Minister Rattenbury and Mr Doszpot for their contributions. But I cannot let go past my concern about the way Mr Doszpot as education spokesperson continues to talk about things and the things does not talk about. We have already heard from the minister that Mr Doszpot did not even acknowledge the existence of the Teacher Quality Institute in his speech. Perhaps this is a hark back to the time during the 2012 election campaign when he forgot the Canberra Institute of Technology.

But putting that to one side, I think it is a much greater issue that he seeks to model himself and his educational philosophies on Christopher Pyne. Goodness me, this is the man who before an election says, "We're a unity ticket on education. We subscribe to the principle that we are going to fund schools and children on the basis of those most in need," which is at the essence of the Gonski review, and then tears it all up the minute he gets into office. That is what we have seen from the federal education minister.

This is a group of neocons who want to take this country and this territory back to the 1950s. That is where Mr Doszpot wants to take education, education funding and education philosophy in this territory and in this country.

Mr Doszpot: I've just said I support your motion. What are you talking about?

DR BOURKE: I urge Mr Doszpot, if he does not want to look across this side of the chamber to find a model for his educational philosophy, to maybe look at Adrian Piccoli in the New South Wales government. But, of course, I forgot—he is not the same party, of course.

Mr Doszpot: We're supporting your motion, Dr Bourke. This is ridiculous.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Doszpot! I remind Dr Bourke that when you refer to members of parliament you refer to them by their title, not by their Christian name.

DR BOURKE: Thank you Madam Speaker. I conclude by thanking members for their support of my motion. This is going to be a great thing for education in the ACT as we look forward to the continued work of the Teacher Quality Institute and the rollout of these new plans to ensure that new teachers have those literacy and numeracy skills which are so valuable and so desired by parents.

Motion agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 12.35 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Government—enterprise bargaining agreements

MR HANSON: My question is to the minister for industrial relations. Minister, how many enterprise bargaining agreements are in place with the CFMEU across all ACT government projects?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Hanson for his question. I do not have the list of enterprise agreements across the town with the CFMEU and employers, but I am happy to do some research and see if I can find those numbers for him.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, when you do provide those numbers, can you provide also how many of these EBAs with the CFMEU provide payments to that union? And how much of that money, directly or indirectly, does the ACT government pay each year to the CFMEU?

MR GENTLEMAN: I am not sure of Mr Hanson's direct question in regard to money. My understanding is that the ACT government would not be paying the CFMEU any money for matters to do with enterprise bargaining agreements; they would be matters between the employer and the CFMEU.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, does the ACT government stipulate that EBAs with the CFMEU or any other union must be in place for government construction projects?

MR GENTLEMAN: Matters to do with government construction projects are matters for procurement; that does not fall under my portfolio. My understanding is that there is no stipulation in the regard Mr Wall indicates.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, what safeguards are in place to ensure that government funds which are directly or indirectly paid to the CFMEU are not spent on political campaigns?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Wall for his supplementary question. I have not seen any evidence that any payments by government for government contracts go to campaigning. It would be an interesting question, though, to chase down, as we hear in interjections, where those funds do go and come from. There are, of course, a lot of building contractors in the ACT that are contracted by government. Of course they are at liberty to spend their profits and earnings wherever they like.

It is my understanding clearly, from the payments made to the Liberal Party for campaign programs, that some of those moneys would certainly go that way. Yes, I will be happy to have a look and see what details we do have of where funds go from government contracts to builders in the ACT—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order!

MR GENTLEMAN: for construction and see where the trail goes, as Mr Hanson insinuates.

Water—recycled

MRS JONES: My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, who is responsible for the pricing of recycled water in the ACT? Is this at the discretion of Icon Water?

MR BARR: The ICRC provided a determination in relation to secondary water use some years ago which I understand sets in place a pricing path for such water as was considered by the ICRC.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Treasurer, what is the pricing structure for recycled water in the ACT? Is it tiered like potable water?

MR BARR: I do not believe so, but I will seek some information. I will look at that ICRC determination and provide some information to the member.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Treasurer, how does the cost of recycled water in the ACT compare to other jurisdictions?

MR BARR: I think that would depend on the nature of other jurisdictions and the nature of the recycled water—as to whether it was desal, for example, or simply water that was harvested through stormwater. We would need to look at the detail. I would have to confess that I do not have in my head at the moment a ready reckoner on the price of recycled water in every other Australian jurisdiction.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Treasurer, who is able to access recycled water in the ACT?

MR BARR: A range of organisations, as long as they are able to tap into a supply source.

Business—policy

DR BOURKE: Chief Minister, how will the new business development strategy help provide business growth and jobs?

MR BARR: I thank Dr Bourke for his question. Our new strategy reflects how far our economy and our business community have developed over the last three years and seeks to make sure we remain well positioned to continue our city's economic growth, our job creation and also to seize new opportunities for Canberra in future years.

We remain committed to three key objectives: creating the right business environment, accelerating innovation, and supporting new investment in our economy. The business development strategy includes a range of actions which we pursue in partnership with business and with the innovation and research community in order to achieve these objectives.

It recognises that creating the right business environment is the most important thing the government can do to assist the more than 25,000 businesses that operate in the territory. Examples of our regulatory and tax reforms that seek to make doing business easier in the ACT include the establishment of Access Canberra, the elimination of red tape, increasing the payroll tax threshold, the elimination of inefficient taxes and duties, and new procurement policies designed to make it easier for local businesses to benefit from ACT government expenditure.

The second goal is to accelerate innovation to create wealth and jobs. We are committed to working even more closely with our higher education and research institutions to deliver better outcomes for the community. It is worth noting that this sector contributes about \$2.7 billion to Canberra's economy and employs around 16.00 full-time equivalent positions in the territory.

As an early indication of the government's renewed commitment to the support of the higher education sector, this place has, of course, dealt with a range of reforms to assist the University of Canberra to grow, and we have also made a decision to support fee exemptions for the dependants of international higher degree research students who come to Canberra to study at one of our universities to allow their kids to study in ACT public schools.

We are also committing to accelerating innovation through our Innovation Network. I have spoken in this place at length about the range of new initiatives there, including the Griffin Accelerator and the KILN incubator.

The third aspect of the strategy is to support business investment in future growth areas. That will further boost our activities aimed at increasing trade and investment with key partners, particularly working with the Canberra Business Chamber.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Chief Minister, how will the renewed business development strategy provide local companies with opportunities to deliver innovative products and services to the ACT government?

MR BARR: Thank you, Dr Bourke. The small business innovation partnership program will use government procurement to uncover local innovation by allowing local businesses to directly engage with the territory government to develop new products that meet identified outside of normal procurement processes. This approach will produce benefits for government procurement, and as a result innovative companies will be able to develop more opportunities to subsequently sell these products and services to other governments and clients.

A co-design workshop was recently held between government and industry representatives to collaborate on the development of a program that will maximise benefits for industry. I am pleased to report to the Assembly that there is a great deal of excitement and energy about this program and the possibilities that it will create for local entrepreneurs.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Madam Speaker, my question is again to the Chief Minister. How will this strategy ensure that the ACT government procurement decisions take into account the capability of local industry?

MR BARR: The appointment of the Local Industry Advocate will ensure that the ACT government's procurement decisions take into account the capability of local industry. The advocate will be there to ensure a level playing field to allow and facilitate fair and reasonable access to participation in government procurement as well as brokering links between local businesses and larger entities to optimise benefits for local industry. The local industry participation policy will be released,

providing a framework to make local jobs and investments central considerations in major government procurement activities.

The advocate's first job will be to work with local industry to identify improvements to procurement processes to ensure that our rules and regulations work in a way that assist and benefit local firms and that we are providing opportunity for local business to create jobs.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Chief Minister, why is it important for the government to drive business growth and utilise the capability of local industry?

MR BARR: International research is demonstrating that businesses from any sector of the economy will grow more quickly if they innovate, and our renewed business development strategy encourages economic diversification based on building an innovative ecosystem and an entrepreneurial culture for businesses that want to grow.

Coupled with our emphasis on supporting business to innovate and to attract investment, and our focus on creating the right business environment, the ACT business community is well placed now to build on capacity and capability to create jobs and to generate new economic activity for the city.

ACTION bus service—management

MR COE: My question is to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services. Minister, what restructuring of ACTION management is currently underway and how many staff have been made redundant or have accepted redundancies this year?

MR RATTENBURY: There has been an exercise within ACTION to look at the management structure and, more importantly, at how ACTION actually performs its job and the capability of the management team to deliver the best possible service for ACTION. The structure has been reorganised so that there is a stronger focus on oversight and some staff are being put into different roles so that ACTION is capable of making some of the business improvements that the government is looking for.

Through that process, obviously some staff positions have changed. I will not speak about individuals, but for some people that has meant that the role that is now available to them perhaps does not match their skills. As is the case with normal ACT public service processes, those staff are not made redundant. In the first instance they are given the opportunity to be redeployed into another part of the government. For some people a redundancy may be the ultimate outcome.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, what managerial positions have been abolished or significantly re-scoped in recent weeks?

MR RATTENBURY: I thank Mr Coe for the follow-up question. I think that level of detail—I am not in a position to provide a detailed breakdown of all the positions and the job descriptions that go with them. From an ACTION point of view, I am happy to offer a briefing to Mr Coe—for the ACTION management team to come down and go through that in detail as much as is relevant for the purposes.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, will you commit to reporting back to the Assembly in the September sittings on the managerial and structural changes taking place within ACTION?

MR RATTENBURY: I hesitate on that one. I am quite happy to be open and transparent about it. I do not know how much detail people want me to come in here and talk about.

Mr Coe: Give a ministerial statement in September.

MR RATTENBURY: I do not actually know what the questions are, to be honest. I could talk for four hours about this.

Mr Coe interjecting—

Dr Bourke: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Stop the clock, please.

Dr Bourke: Mr Coe is conducting a conversation across the chamber with Mr Rattenbury, which is disorderly.

MADAM SPEAKER: It is question time. Mr Coe has asked some questions. It is a modest interjection. I am not going to call Mr Coe up on that one. Have you finished your answer to Ms Lawder's question, Mr Rattenbury?

Mr Rattenbury: Sure.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, what efficiencies are intended to be derived through these changes?

MR RATTENBURY: As I indicated in my earlier answer, the government is very committed to improving our public transport in the territory and has a transport reform agenda, including improving the performance of ACTION, both in terms of getting better outcomes for customers and making sure we are getting value for money out of the public moneys that go into providing our bus service.

The areas of future focus are customer experience, network and service performance, fares and ticketing, and our own internal structures to make sure they are as efficient as possible. That is the purpose—it is about making sure ACTION is performing as well as possible and that we have the modern systems and job descriptions in place to make sure we are delivering those outcomes that the government is seeking.

Government—explosives licensing fee

MR WALL: My question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney, in 2012 Shooters Wholesale, a local business, paid \$485 for a three-year licence fee to import, store and supply explosives in the ACT. However, upon renewal of the same licence this year the fee increased to a whopping \$7,350—that is, a 1,500 per cent increase. Attorney, what are the reasons for such a staggering increase?

MADAM SPEAKER: Is this for you, Attorney-General?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Wall for his question but no, these matters do not fall within my portfolio responsibilities.

Mr Wall: Could you provide some guidance?

MADAM SPEAKER: Would you like to provide some guidance to Mr Wall on where he should direct his question?

Mr Barr: Access Canberra.

MR CORBELL: The question should be directed to the Chief Minister, as he is responsible for Access Canberra, which administers these matters.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Barr, are you going to take up Mr Wall's question?

MR BARR: I am looking for some information at the moment, Madam Speaker. I am aware of a particular issue in relation to this. I am sure my office will provide me with the information. I have seen a media inquiry and I recall that there was an entirely legitimate explanation for the change in price. I will provide that information to the member.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: I was going to ask, Chief Minister, when did you become aware of it, but it seems you are not entirely aware. What I will ask is: when was the business notified of the reason for the increase in these fees, and what were the circumstances of the fees increasing to this extent?

MR BARR: I will take that on notice. I am aware of the particular incident but I do not have immediate recall of all of the facts in relation to that particular case.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, what is the government doing to alleviate the pressure this ACT government administration error and huge increase has caused this business?

MR BARR: The establishment of Access Canberra aims to assist by providing a one-stop shop for businesses. We also seek to work closely with individual businesses in relation to individual matters.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, have any other businesses been affected by this kind of error in the ACT?

MR BARR: Not that I am aware of.

Canberra South Motor Park

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, I understand that the Canberra South Motor Park has been sold and that the new owners will take over in August 2015—this week, in fact, I believe. In a letter you wrote on 15 January this year to Mr Bruce Best of the Canberra South Motor Park residents group you said that if a company purchases the Canberra South Motor Park, “The ACT government will want to know what measures the new owner will put in place to support residents who have been living on the site.” Chief Minister, what steps has the ACT government taken to find out what measures the new owner of the park will put in place to support residents who have been living at the park?

MR BARR: I will find out for the member.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Chief Minister, what is the ACT government’s plan to rehouse the hundreds of Canberra South Motor Park residents if the new owners require that they move out?

MR BARR: That is a hypothetical question, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think that is a hypothetical question. It is not within the standing orders. I refer members to standing order 117. I will give Ms Lawder an opportunity to rephrase the question because it is within my capacity as the Speaker to do so.

MS LAWDER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Chief Minister, what plans does the ACT government have to house people who are uprooted from parks such as the Canberra South Motor Park?

MR BARR: It is a hypothetical question; there is no—

MADAM SPEAKER: I think it probably is still hypothetical. A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Chief Minister, what assurances have you or any directorate provided to the Canberra South Motor Park group that the ACT government will rehouse residents of the park if necessary?

MR BARR: The assurances of protection under the ACT's housing policies.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Chief Minister, what discussion have you or any directorate had in relation to the need for the ACT government to step in and rehouse these residents?

MR BARR: There is no proposal as far as I am aware for any of the residents to require movement.

Crime—restorative justice

MS PORTER: My question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney, can you please explain to the Assembly how restorative justice practices are applied in the ACT?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Porter for her question and for her ongoing commitment to and interest in the issue of restorative justice. Ms Porter has been a very strong advocate for the value of restorative justice in our justice system.

The ACT has strong restorative justice practices in place. These date back to the original reintegrative shaming experiment, as it was known, in 1995. The principles behind that justice tool are just as relevant today and are still going strong today. We know that restorative justice has enjoyed very strong support from across the community. That is because it is a process that focuses on accountability for offenders; sometimes involves them facing their victim to take responsibility; allows their victims to discuss the offending against them and the harm caused to them and others who have been impacted by the crime; and challenges the offender to be actively involved in the restoration and repairs of relationships and wrongdoing.

It is for all these reasons that the government has just committed an additional \$2.1 million over four years in the most recent budget to make this justice process an option that is available to all victims of crime in our community. We know that for the past 10 years, with the application of restorative justice for juvenile offenders and for less serious crimes, the process has been overwhelmingly positive for participants, who report satisfaction rates of 97 per cent over the past three years. For matters that proceed to agreements, compliance by offenders has averaged 90 per cent over the past 10 years. These are levels of compliance, when it comes to undertakings made by offenders to victims, that the courts would be envious of. That very high level of compliance is a good thing in providing for better restoration for victims.

The expansion of the Restorative Justice Unit to include adults, as funded in the most recent budget, makes sense considering the positive impact the program has consistently delivered in dealing with juveniles. The phase 2 process will create opportunities for more victims in the ACT to participate in restorative justice, particularly those in vulnerable groups, including women, people with a disability and

Indigenous people. Recruitment and training are now underway to expand the program to also manage domestic violence and sexual offences from the beginning of 2018.

We do tend to think about these programs solely in the context of the criminal justice process in some way. But in fact we could be thinking and asking questions about how a restorative approach would operate in a broader context in our community—how it would work, for example, in terms of human resource management and how it would work in terms of conflicts and misbehaviour in civil society more broadly, whether that is sporting groups or other groups like that. There are great opportunities for us to look at this restorative approach in a broader way.

To that end, I recently hosted a conference here at the Legislative Assembly—the “Towards a restorative community conference”. Guest speakers were leading academics from overseas and from the ANU. They were talking about how the ACT could draw upon its very significant leadership role over the past decade when it comes to restorative justice for juveniles and how restorative practices could become more mainstream in dealing with conflict and disputes in our community.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Attorney, what other evidence is there that restorative justice has been successful in the ACT?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Porter for her supplementary. What I can say is that the success of restorative justice in the ACT has been extensively reviewed, including by the Australian Institute of Criminology and by the global Campbell Collaboration systematic review of restorative justice conferencing using face-to-face meetings of offenders and victims.

The Campbell Collaboration, which reviewed the effectiveness of restorative justice schemes around the world and compared them against each other, confirmed that the process of restorative justice demonstrates positive results for offenders and victims and is also very cost beneficial. The review reported clear and compelling evidence of a beneficial relationship between restorative justice conferencing and subsequent reoffending over a two-year period. Nine out of 10 results showed that restorative justice conferences were more effective than a court process alone.

Since 31 January 2005 and up to the end of June this year the ACT Restorative Justice Unit had received over 1,600 referrals for over 3,800 offences involving approximately 2,800 victims and over 2,000 young offenders. It had convened 692 face-to-face conferences, 437 indirect conferences and had seen a broad range of participants.

The respondents to a survey on the effectiveness of the program have confirmed a very high level of support, including, amongst others, that 98 per cent of all respondents said they felt they were treated with respect, 98 per cent felt they were able to have their say, 97 per cent felt the process was fair to them, 97 per cent felt the

process was fair to offenders, and 96 per cent would recommend the process to someone else. It was a very strong endorsement of the program. *(Time expired.)*

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, what will the expansion of the ACT's restorative justice scheme entail?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Fitzharris for the supplementary. The expansion of restorative justice will, first of all, bring adult offenders for the first time into the scope of the program, and it will be done in two stages. The first stage will focus on all types of offence categories and offenders except domestic violence and sexual assault matters. The second phase will include those matters, and that will commence later, in two years time, in 2018. The reason for that is to ensure that we have an appropriately recruited, trained and ready-to-go capability that deals with those most complex of matters—sexual assault and domestic violence matters.

To this end the Justice and Community Safety Directorate has developed guidelines for the management of domestic violence offences and is consulting with key stakeholders to develop guidelines for the management of sexual offences referred to restorative justice. These guidelines are intended to be a robust set of principles and procedures that build on the suitability criteria set out in the legislation to deal with the particular power dynamics that are often inherent when it comes to sexual assault and domestic violence matters. This will ensure that there are safeguards to limit risks through a thorough assessment, intensive preparation, constant monitoring, and professional advice and support.

But the great benefit of this is that there will be many more types of offences and offenders and, most importantly, victims of crime who will be able to have a greater opportunity for restoration, capacity to move on with their lives, because they will potentially have access to the restorative justice conferencing program. That is particularly important in the age cohort 18 through to about 24 where there is a large number of offenders, mostly young men, and the capacity to divert them to restorative justice or in parallel with a process involving conviction through the courts will provide better restoration for victims and better opportunity for victims to move on with their lives. *(Time expired.)*

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Attorney, can you explain how restorative justice meets the needs of victims of crime?

MR CORBELL: I thank Dr Bourke for his supplementary question. Yes, the focus of the government's restorative justice program is victim-centric—it is focused overwhelmingly on benefit to and the needs of the victim. The strength of the RJ process is in delivering the emotional restoration that victims seek, especially in receiving an apology from their offenders that they consider to be sincere and meant. This is an outcome in around 90 per cent of restorative justice programs. It is not, unfortunately, an outcome that is often seen in the traditional court process.

For example, in a recent conference a young person damaged a vehicle being driven by a young student on her way home from the library. The incident caused much distress to the driver. The young person was referred to RJ with a number of related charges. The young person agreed to meet face to face with their victim, during which the victim was able to get the full story and see his sincere remorse and willingness to put things right. She was able to convey to him the full effect of the incident on her. The victim asked that the young person compensate her for the cost of repair to the vehicle and that he apply an equivalent amount of time that she had wasted on voluntary work that would also assist him to find full-time employment.

The young person exceeded the amount of voluntary work the victim had requested. The victim of the matter has been pleased to see the young person apply themselves and in a manner that will further their own development and also future non-offending behaviour. This is a good, simple but straightforward example of the effectiveness of RJ in dealing with disputes that would otherwise end up in court, often without any sincere remorse on the part of the offender and without any closure and emotional recompense for the victim.

Emergency services—levy

MR SMYTH: Treasurer, in this year's budget the fire and emergency services levy will increase by \$66 to \$196 for Canberra households, and it is projected that this levy will increase by about \$40 a year after that. Two years ago households paid \$104.80 for the emergency services levy, and by 2018 households will pay over \$300. Why will the fire and emergency services levy for Canberra households triple over six years?

MR BARR: The government is focused on providing the best, highest quality fire and emergency services to the people of Canberra, and that involves additional investment in increased capacity. That comes at a cost. As I have indicated publicly on a number of occasions, I have no doubt, Madam Speaker—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order!

MR BARR: that if a member of your family, my family or the family of any member in this place needed the support and services of the fine men and women who work in our emergency services—whether that is in ambulance, fire or otherwise—I do not think anyone is going to begrudge paying a few extra dollars if that means saving lives. Only the Liberal Party would make this a financial issue, not a community safety issue. The Liberal Party does not care. Our focus is on ensuring high quality emergency services—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson!

MR BARR: I am happy to have that public debate about the importance of putting saving lives ahead of a few dollars.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Treasurer, how much will the fire and emergency services levy increase for commercial properties in 2015-16 and in subsequent years?

MR BARR: There are, of course, increased charges for some commercial properties that are associated with the commonwealth's reduction in their share of fire payments. The commonwealth occupy a number of commercial properties. They have determined not to make an appropriate contribution to the protection of those buildings that their staff occupy. So the government is seeking to maintain that level of emergency service cover and is recovering that through commercial fire and emergency service levies.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Treasurer, how much extra will households have to pay as a result of the new funding model for the Emergency Services Agency?

MR BARR: The ACT government seeks to minimise taxes and charges whilst maximising service delivery.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Chief Minister, what other states and territories have a similar levy?

MR BARR: Such levies are commonplace across the country, recognising the importance of the provision of these services to the community.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Coe!

MR BARR: I reiterate the point that faced with the choice between someone you love dying or receiving the support of our emergency services, I am confident that the people of Canberra would choose—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson and Mr Coe!

MR BARR: I am confident that the people of Canberra would choose an appropriately resourced Emergency Services Agency.

Asbestos—worker safety

MR DOSZPOT: Chief Minister, on 3 May 2015 the *Canberra Times* reported that amosite asbestos was found in government files and that hundreds of thousands of files have now been quarantined for months. What level of potential amosite contamination is included in this reported discovery?

MR BARR: I am aware, as I understand it, that at the time of the first attempt at cleaning up the Mr Fluffy properties some samples of loose-fill asbestos were attached to files and stored in some form of container or plastic envelope in relation to some of these files. That is my understanding of the nature of the issue. When these files were accessed in the context of recent issues associated with Mr Fluffy these samples were found and appropriate measures were put in place.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, in how many buildings were the files stored at Fyshwick, how were the files transported to Mitchell and how many locations at Mitchell received these files?

MR BARR: I do not have that information in front of me, and I will seek access to that information and update the Assembly in due course.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, what quarantine measures were taken at these locations and during the transportation of these files?

MR BARR: The appropriate measures as would be required under legislation.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, will these files be retrievable in any form, and are there relevant copies for the documents?

MR BARR: I understand that is the case in relation to most, but I will seek clarification as to whether that is the case with all files.

Community services—*Dropping off the edge* report

MS FITZHARRIS: My question is to the Minister for Community Services. Minister, the recently released *Dropping off the edge* report shows the suburbs with greatest disadvantage across Australia, including here in the ACT. How is the government shaping the community services system to respond to these areas of highest need?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Fitzharris for the question. The *Dropping off the edge* report released last month reminds us all of different communities across the country and about some people who are doing it very tough. Across 13 indicators of disadvantage

the report ranks different postcodes and for us in the ACT it points particularly to west Belconnen and parts of Tuggeranong. It is a high level analysis.

What we have done since the release is look at the report against more detailed local information here in the ACT. What emerges is that the reforms the government is progressing under the better services initiative are responding directly to the needs of our community. This is particularly the case through the west Belconnen local services network, which is a truly innovative project which for the first time is putting our community at the heart of the service system.

The local services network is the better services initiative which specifically aims to address disadvantage experienced by people living in a particular area. It builds services and supports around their needs, and the network is bringing together the collective expertise of local service providers, including businesses and community leaders who will work together in the way that services are being delivered and tailor them to specific local needs.

It capitalises on the very strong leadership in the community, and I thank the members of our network leadership group which include UnitingCare Kippax, Belconnen Community Service, Red Cross and Inanna Inc. They have been putting their hands up to say, "Here's how we provide our range of services. We do it better by designing a system together, and the end result will be better for local people."

Central to this is the need for anyone who comes in contact with the service system to find the support that suits them and not have to shop around for different services. The network offers a better wraparound service for people whose needs can be diverse and complex.

Crucially, as we progress and evaluate the local service model we can look at applying it elsewhere. For example, Ms Lawder mentioned this morning that Chisholm is identified in the *Dropping off the edge* report and it may well benefit from a similar response to that being applied in west Belconnen. Every community has its leaders and local champions and this model has the potential to tap into these assets across the territory.

Already at this early stage the model is attracting interest from elsewhere in Australia, most recently from Tasmania. It is a testament to our community leaders that we can lead a reform of this nature.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, how is the local services network being established in a way that ensures community needs and priorities are front and centre?

MS BERRY: As I said the local services network model is different in that it has brought local service providers into the tent from the beginning. At the same time an extensive community engagement process was undertaken to better understand the issues and needs of people in that community. We gathered input through surveys, focus groups, neighbourhood forums and roving storyboards which sought to capture

people's thoughts. To truly get the whole story of west Belconnen, more than 160 schoolchildren were also surveyed to ensure that all voices had the chance to be heard. Through this process we identified key priorities to address place-based disadvantage in west Belconnen: a better start for children under eight, supporting stronger families, employment pathways for young people, and connecting older people in the community.

In March this year I opened the first meeting of the network leadership group—the small group of local leaders, residents and champions from the organisations I have mentioned. The group is now working collectively on each of the focus areas and increasingly reaching out to local businesses, schools and others in developing the responses to these needs. I will soon be releasing new material to further encourage community involvement in this process.

This is a theme right across the better services initiative—making our services better integrated and better tailored to local needs. It offers better value for public money and better support for those who need it—and the local services network is central to these goals.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, why was no data available for the ACT regarding criminal convictions and domestic violence for this report, as was available in 2007, and unlike other regions?

Ms Berry: I am not clear on the question the member is asking.

MADAM SPEAKER: Would you like to repeat the question, Ms Lawder?

Ms Berry: I do not know whether she is referring to the community services blueprint.

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Lawder?

MS LAWDER: I am referring to the *Dropping off the edge* report.

MADAM SPEAKER: Will you repeat the question so that I can hear it and Ms Berry can hear it.

MS LAWDER: Minister, why was no data available for the ACT regarding criminal convictions and domestic violence for this report, as had previously been available for the 2007 report and for other regions?

MS BERRY: I do not have that detail with me. I will have to come back to the chamber with that.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, what has been the response by the broader west Belconnen community?

MS BERRY: Support from the local community has been very encouraging and continues to grow. In November last year, 20 community members attended neighbourhood forums to help shape the network's priorities. Many more contributed by posting their ideas on storyboards at places such as Kippax Fair, Belconnen Community Service, UnitingCare Kippax, West Belconnen Child and Family Centre, Strathnairn Arts centre and the Charny Carny.

In May we held a forum with over 40 community members. As a result of the forum, a number of community members committed to being active participants in the network. Among those local businesses are Kippax Fair shopping centre, Capital Chemist Charnwood and the Riverview Group. Belconnen Community Council has also participated actively in the community forums and the network gatherings.

In a recent interview on 666 ABC, Danielle Bates from Canberra city cares talked about the value of the program in direct response to the *Dropping off the edge report*. And I have received consistently positive feedback from talking to other organisations in recent months.

The fact that we have such strong endorsements from those who have been working on the ground with the community is a strong sign that we are responding to place-based disadvantage in the right way. Again, I thank the community and business leadership for getting so strongly behind the initiative.

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

Supplementary answer to question without notice Planning—Dickson

MR GENTLEMAN: I have a matter from question time the other day. Mr Doszpot asked me what consultation took place with the community prior to the territory plan variation on section 72 Dickson being released. The answer is that the territory plan variation has not been formally released for comment. It is currently on track for public release by the end of 2015. All of the consultation to date has been ahead of and in addition to the required consultation as part of the statutory territory plan variation process. This additional level of consultation acknowledges the importance of this site and the government's commitment to balancing the desires of the community and urban renewal objectives of the government. For the information of the Assembly I table a list of consultation undertaken to date:

Dickson Section 72—Community engagement—List of dates.

Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union—media campaign

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (3.18): I move:

That this Assembly condemns the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) for their recent anti-Chinese media campaign.

In this sitting fortnight we have had a statement from the Chief Minister about the importance of China to the ACT economy, particularly about the importance of the sister city relationship that Canberra and Beijing have. I would like to focus on page 2 of his ministerial statement, where he says:

The three primary objectives of the April mission to Beijing were:

- to progress the Canberra-Beijing Sister City relationship;
- to encourage cultural, education, business and tourism links ...
- to encourage and grow the exchange of international students ...

On page 3, the Chief Minister goes on to say:

... Madam Speaker, allow me to reinforce the significance of Canberra's sister city relationship with Beijing and China's significance to the ACT more broadly.

He goes on to say:

Beijing is China's global economic hub. As China's capital city, and with a population exceeding more than 20 million people, it is the nation's political and educational centre. Beijing's museums and universities, all with histories dating back millennia, have made Beijing the centre of culture and art in China.

The sister city relationship Canberra shares with Beijing has been a highly collaborative, beneficial and rewarding relationship throughout its 15-year history.

Let me say that again:

The sister city relationship Canberra shares with Beijing has been a highly collaborative, beneficial and rewarding relationship throughout its 15-year history.

For those who do not recall—you were in the building, Madam Speaker, as was Mr Corbell—we had a debate about this issue on 7 September 2000. Yes, the sister city relationship is 15 years old; it was formalised, I believe, on 13 September 2000, so we are coming up to the 15th anniversary. Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, there is a pall cast over the anniversary of this fabulous sister city relationship. First, there is the lingering memory that the Greens voted against it and the Labor Party abstained because they did not believe in such a relationship. Second, more recently, there has been what Ged Kearney—yes, that is ACTU President Ged Kearney—described as a very xenophobic sounding campaign being run by the CFMEU against the Chinese people.

You know you are in trouble when you play the race card. The CFMEU—in trouble on many fronts, whether it be the royal commission that they are facing or other things—decided that the easy way out of this was to go the race card. They attacked

the Chinese people—Chinese business men and women, Chinese labourers, ordinary Chinese citizens, ordinary people—in an attempt to move the focus off them and away from their deals which we have now heard so much about.

It is interesting when you reflect on what some great people have said about prejudice and xenophobia. Albert Einstein said:

What a sad era when it is easier to smash an atom than a prejudice.

It is time that this Assembly stood up, smashed that prejudice and disavowed the words and the campaign of the CFMEU. Anyone who votes against this motion—it is very hard to see what you would object to in condemning the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union for their recent anti-Chinese media campaign—anyone who cannot stand up and vote for this motion, really must have a good look at themselves and what they truly believe. We get many speeches and lectures from those opposite about what a great place it is as a multicultural capital and how we should be open to those from different countries. Here is your opportunity to vote and say to the CFMEU, “No more.”

George Gordon Byron, better known as Lord Byron, said:

Those who will not reason, are bigots, those who cannot, are fools, and those who dare not, are slaves.

The CFMEU have shown that because they would not reason, they are bigots. And in relation to those who cannot, they refuse to and therefore they are foolish. The question is: are those opposite slaves to their union mates in the CFMEU and will they dare say, “No. Enough is enough. This must stop.”?

How important is China to the ACT? The Chief Minister laid it pretty much on the line. He said on page 4 of his speech:

It is probably not widely realised that around 2 per cent of Canberra’s population was born in China—

two per cent of our Canberrans—

and that Mandarin is the most commonly spoken language in Canberra after English.

Further to this, he said:

Further to this, Chinese students form the largest international student group at Canberra campuses. There are around 5,500 Chinese students enrolled in our education system.

In addition, he said:

In addition, and to further reinforce the significance of China to the ACT economy, the ACT regularly receives more visitation from Chinese tourists than from any other country.

Members, through you, Madam Speaker, are we in favour of supporting our two per cent of the population who are from China, the 5,500 Chinese students that study here and the regular visitation we receive from Chinese students? We should be. What we cannot let stand are the bigots in the CFMEU, through their advertising and their robocalls, saying that Australian jobs will be lost, unqualified tradesmen will be allowed in the country and all will be ruin. It is just not true.

The myths they were running out included that Chinese companies will have unrestricted access to Chinese workers for major projects threatening Australian jobs. The reality? That is false. Anyone who wants to bring somebody here to work will go through the existing visa arrangements, including the 457 visa program. And it would be reasonable to ask how many Chinese people are working in Australia under the 457 visa program? According to the CFMEU, the yellow horde is coming. Beat that drum. I thought the white Australia policy had gone. I thought everybody believed it had no place in a society like ours.

Let us look at the numbers. Analysis done by Migration Council Australia shows that the impact using 457 visas to bring workers to Australia will be exceptionally small. Here I am quoting from an article by Paul Kelly, editor at large in the *Australian*. He said:

At September last year there were 6245 Chinese citizens on the 457 visa and it is estimated only about 1150 would have been subject to labour market testing. "These migrants represent approximately 1 per cent of the 457 visa program," the Migration Council Australia said, a sobering analysis.

One per cent! This is the drum that the CFMEU beats and this the drum we can stop today as an Assembly—united by saying that we do not support them and we condemn the CFMEU for their program.

Of course, there is the second fact that they claim that the China Australia free trade agreement will allow Chinese electricians to work in Australia without any skills assessment. False again. Under the 457 subclass, anyone coming here to work will have to have the requisite skills, qualifications and work experience to work safely in Australia. If you do not meet it, you do not get the visa.

The third myth is about investor state dispute settlements—that the ISDS provisions will allow Chinese companies to sue the Australian government if they make a loss on investment. Again, it is just false. And again, on the free trade agreement on the DFAT website, it says:

The ISDS provisions in ChAFTA—

the agreement—

provide a mechanism for Australian or Chinese investors to pursue international arbitration based on a claimed violation of the national treatment commitment in the investment chapter. ISDS does not protect an investor from a mere loss of profits following a change in government policy or regulation.

So there is the third myth smashed. Myth 4 is that the agreement will allow businesses to import dangerous substances such as asbestos. There is a good one. False is the reality. The agreement will not make any changes to Australia's safety regulations or import-export prohibitions.

The fifth myth is that that the China-Australia free trade agreement will allow food importers to bypass Australia's food safety processes and import contaminated foods such as berries. Again false. The agreement does not affect Australia's science-based biosecurity system.

What we have is an entirely dishonest campaign based on fear, based on playing the race card and based on the most base of actions by the CFMEU. The free trade agreement is an excellent outcome for Australia. Let me look at the recent figures released by Tourism Research Australia and read from their report on international visitors in Australia for the year ending March 2015:

Across our top 5 markets, China continues to lead growth. China's trip spend increased by 25% to \$6.4 billion. China now accounts for 20% of all trip spend by international visitors to Australia—up from 7% ten years ago ... Visitor numbers and nights from China have also increased significantly, both up 19% to 829,000 and 36 million nights respectively. Visitor numbers and spend were also up for most other key markets:

If we go back to what the Chief Minister says in his statement about why he was in Beijing earlier this year, we see it was to look at things like tourism, education and business and to encourage cultural exchange. We have the opportunity, members, to stand up for that today.

It is interesting that most commentators have come out against the CFMEU. ACTU President Ged Kearney gave the game away back in November. Let me quote from a press release when the unions first mounted their scare campaign. "It is very difficult not to sound xenophobic," she conceded. And xenophobic they are.

We must not fall to this. We must say as a united Assembly that we will not stand for xenophobia in any form in this country, and certainly not in this city, when we have a great relationship with the people of China and coming up next month is the 15th anniversary of our relationship with Beijing in particular.

It is interesting to read the articles that covered this debate. Labor Party figures have disowned this disgraceful campaign. Michael Costa slammed the CFMEU campaign, pointing out that its members in the coal industry are relying on Chinese money. I quote:

"It's disgraceful, it's completely disgraceful. It's just absurd," Mr Costa said.

"Every day there are ships going out of the port of Newcastle that have had CFMEU labour—involved in loading, and delivering that product, heading off to China. It's not only disgraceful advertising, it is damaging to the national interest and, more importantly, they are shooting themselves in the foot. They are damaging their own members ...

The Race Discrimination Commissioner and former speech writer for Labor New South Wales Premier Bob Carr tweeted his displeasure with the CFMEU. This is Tim Soutphommasane. He tweeted his displeasure with the CFMEU yesterday when he said:

It's disappointing to see some NSW political adverts using inflammatory language about foreign investment

Then there is Mr Foley's comment. "Let's not license xenophobia," he said. Mr Foley's anti-privatisation campaign has been attacked by a former Labor senior figure who said it made him ashamed of his own party. It just goes on.

There has been lots of commentary about this. In the *Australian Financial Review* there was an opinion piece. Isn't it interesting? A couple of years ago the Labor Party were talking about the Asian century. The Asian century apparently stopped in about 2013. It lasted a whole year. A century means a hundred years, members; a hundred years. The editorial in the *Financial Review* said:

... the party ... now seeks to play the Asian peril card against a trade deal with a country with which we run a merchandise trade deficit topping \$20 billion a year, which is our biggest customer and which supplies the bulk of our tourists and foreign students.

The CFMEU, through their disgraceful xenophobic campaign, put this at risk. It goes on to say:

But the campaign against the marginal easing of foreign worker provisions included in the China FTA is all about defending the labour supply monopoly that unions led by the CFMEU maintain and which ends up financing the Labor party.

Let us see whether we can put principles above your funding. Then there is an article in the *Australian* by Alan Oxley which I will grab a few quotes from. It says:

A leading left-wing union (the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union) then let loose on what's wrong with the FTA. The party congress approves Shorten's refugee policy. Then the CFMEU claims polling results show Labor will lose seats in South Australia because of the China FTA ... Can it be a coincidence that a few months earlier the left-wing Australian Manufacturing Workers Union warned the government it would lose South Australian seats unless the new fleet of submarines was built there ...

The article goes on to say:

Australia has never had a more beneficial trading partner than China. Japan runs close. Most Australians are unaware we are one of Japan's primary sources of energy.

There were the benefits, for instance, when China was purchasing amounts of coal and iron ore. The article goes on:

The benefits to Australia were direct. The workforce in the Pilbara, where most iron ore is mined, jumped from 10,000—

(Time expired.)

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Planning, Minister for Roads and Parking, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations, Minister for Children and Young People and Minister for Ageing) (3.33): The government will not be supporting Mr Smyth’s motion basically because it is incorrect in its terminology. Mr Smyth’s motion says that this Assembly condemns the CFMEU for their recent anti-Chinese media campaign. It is not an anti-Chinese campaign. It is an anti-federal government campaign and their free trade agreement. The focus of the CFMEU’s campaign is jobs for Australia. And rightly so! If you look at some of the quotes from the people that Mr Smyth has been quoting, the ACTU’s website for example says about the federal government’s fact sheet:

The fact sheet states that—

under the deal—

Chinese companies can bring in workers for projects of \$150 million or more under the new labour agreements called Investment Facilitation Agreements (IFAs) which allow for so-called ‘increased labour flexibility’.

And they can bring Chinese workers to Australia without even advertising for that work locally. This is why the union movement is upset about the campaign for the free trade agreement signed by the federal government. The ACTU’s website says:

Enterprise Migration Agreements were set up for projects of more than \$2 billion with more than 1,500 workers.

The federal government indicates it will do that with the Chinese free trade agreement as well. The ACTU’s website says:

The fact sheet states that the free trade agreement will also “guarantee access” to Chinese citizens who are:

- intra-corporate transferees and independent executives for up to four years,
- contractual service suppliers for up to four years
- installers in services for up to three months ...

The ACTU website suggests:

The Abbott government needs to explain exactly what ‘guaranteed access’ means, how many workers it will apply to, and exactly which jobs it will include.

Unions have raised repeated concerns about the China Free Trade Agreement and are calling on the Abbott Government to finally come clean on the impact it will have on jobs and unemployment.

Mr Smyth quoted several times from Ged Kearney. Let me quote from the website what Ged Kearney said.

“The Abbott government needs to come clean on the impact the China Free Trade Agreement will have on unemployment and local jobs.

“Free trade agreements must support local jobs and industry and all indications are that the deal with China does not.

“There must be strong rules around labour market testing and labour mobility clauses in the China free trade deal to ensure local jobs are protected.

“Unemployment has been at or above 6 per cent for one year yet it appears the government is intent on selling out even more local jobs.”

Quite contrary to the motion that Mr Smyth has written, it is not about anti-Chinese at all. It is about jobs for Australia. And that is a reasonable campaign, I think, for a union to run. After all, unions and the labour movement are about workers, not about income for particular companies. Quite clearly the motion is worded incorrectly. It is not in relation to what the CFMEU are doing with their campaign. As I said, it is quite clear that Mr Smyth is suggesting it is an anti-China campaign by the CFMEU. The CFMEU and others are helping to raise industry awareness also of defective products.

I can advise that our recent building ministers forum in Melbourne indicated that, in relation to inferior products for the construction industry in Australia, it was very important that we look at what has occurred with recent imports, not just from China but from other countries as well, that are not fit for purpose. I can advise that at the forum that all states agreed to create a task force to look into these not fit for purpose materials, one of which was quite clearly demonstrated by a recent fire at a building in Victoria, in Melbourne, where a not fit for purpose cladding material was used on the side of a building and something like 15 storeys of fire raced up the side of the building, because of the improper use of the material, lit by cigarette butt. That and the Infinity wiring were the two key matters that were discussed at the building ministers forum most recently in Melbourne.

As I said, all states agreed to the task force. The task force will advise, after investigation, the way forward to look at not fit for purpose materials and materials that are imported into Australia that could be dangerous either on building sites or in residential areas as well.

Importantly, as I said at the beginning, it is not about an anti-China campaign by the CFMEU at all. It is an anti-federal government campaign about jobs for Australia. A recent news broadcast, on 24 June by the ABC, stated:

Voters in marginal seats across four states strongly oppose key aspects of Australia's free trade agreement with China, according to an opinion poll.

The two countries signed the agreement last week, with ... Tony Abbott hailing it as “history making”.

The deal could see prices on electronics fall for Australian consumers, and eliminate tariffs on various commodity and agriculture exports to China.

But more than 90 per cent of people surveyed by UMR Research said they would oppose the agreement altogether ...

The national secretary of the CFMEU, the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, Michael O'Connor, is quoted as saying that the whole economy will be covered by the deal and:

“What we have here is a radical altering of the labour market in our country, we’ve ceded sovereignty to another nation when it comes to regulating our labour market,” he said.

“We have a situation where nearly every sector of our economy will be exposed in this area with a situation where staff, labour, jobs will be offered to Chinese nationals rather than locals.

“We think a whole range of economic activity will be covered by that arrangement, and that means a lot of jobs therefore will be allowed to be sourced exclusively from China.”

Those are not my words; they are the CFMEU’s words. But they do reflect concerns across the country about employment in Australia. The ACT does not share some of those views in regard to the work that we do in China. As Mr Smyth indicated, the Chief Minister has visited China on many occasions talking about trade. I want to distinguish this motion from those conversations. This motion from Mr Smyth is incorrectly worded and is political.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Coe, next time I will warn you.

Dr Bourke: On a point of order, I realise that you have already called Mr Coe to order but his persistence in interjecting is highly disorderly.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Dr Bourke. I have already noted that. Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: I will go back to that point. Mr Smyth’s motion is a political attack on the union movement. It is not about, as I said, an anti-Chinese campaign at all. It is an anti-federal government campaign by the union to support jobs in Australia and indeed across our territory as well.

MRS JONES (Molonglo) (3.42): Obviously Mr Gentleman has been practising his gymnastics. Anybody who sat in their car and listened to the anti-Chinese campaign that the CFMEU has been running, this cringe-worthy campaign reminiscent of the

1800s anti-Chinese worker campaigns, would understand that a free trade agreement that is going to create an average of 9,000 jobs per year and some 178,000 jobs for Australians by the time the agreement comes into full force in 2035 does not deserve this kind of savage attack.

As the shadow minister for multicultural affairs I am deeply concerned by the cringe-worthy, xenophobic, radically charged campaign of the CFMEU and what impact this kind of campaign will have on people of Chinese origin or Chinese people living in the ACT as well as around the country. This is nothing short of base union propaganda. It is very clear in the DNA of the union movement that their only interest in this case is creating terror in the hearts of hardworking people, drumming up fear and a sense of xenophobia towards the Chinese.

This kind of media campaign reminds me of 1855 when anti-Chinese legislation was passed in Australia. The Victorian government imposed a tax of £10 on each Chinese person arriving in the colony, plus a restriction on the number of Chinese people allowed to disembark in Melbourne to one Chinese person for every 10 tonnes of shipping. In 1857 South Australia limited Chinese immigration by imposing a £10 poll tax on all Chinese people entering the colony. In 1857 anti-Chinese sentiment heightened when riots took place in north-eastern Victoria on the Buckland River. About 120 miners attacked Chinese people in their camp, stole their gold and burnt their tents and all their belongings. Many Chinese workers died, drowning in rivers and getting lost after escaping into the bush.

What an embarrassment that this campaign harps on that kind of sentiment from our history! What an embarrassment! This is not the Australia I know. This is not the Canberra I know. Five thousand five hundred students from China live and study here. What an embarrassment to them to hear such an ad on the radio! Various visa holders in our community work for all of our benefit. They fill gaps and they allow us to have investment that we all benefit from. These kinds of campaigns take us back to a xenophobic debate, and I call on the government to condemn them.

Nine thousand jobs per year will be created by this agreement, and 178,000 jobs by the time the agreement comes into full force. Increased exports to Asian markets will increase by \$20 billion over the next 20 years. A whole host of Australian jobs that would not exist without it will be created. Union claims are absolutely over the top and an embarrassment, and this government should not be standing by doing mental gymnastics to try and pretend that this is a campaign purely about the federal government. This is a campaign which brings up a history that we do not want to repeat in this country.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (3.45): It is fitting that just a week ago we were talking about the exact same union here, their experience in the royal commission and the allegations that have come to light. Last week we saw government members opposite refuse to distance themselves from that, refuse to suspend those relationships and continue to be the beneficiaries of the largesse of the CFMEU that props up their political campaigns, both Labor and the Greens, by in excess of \$300,000 that they are all the richer for by continuing to side with this union.

It is very concerning that in this city, which has spent so much time and effort and taxpayers' money promoting the relationships and the economic relationships between this city and China, particularly Beijing, it is all going to waste simply because this government chooses to side with their union financiers over the interests of saying, "This is a racist campaign. This is anti-China and this is doing more harm than good for our country".

During budget debate yesterday we heard time and time again the Chief Minister accusing the Canberra Liberals of having policies of the 1950s and 1960s. By not supporting Mr Smyth's motion, a very simple motion to condemn the CFMEU for their recent anti-Chinese media campaign, and by voting that motion down, all those members opposite—the Labor members and the Greens member—are endorsing not just a policy that harks back to the 50s and 60s but a policy that harks back to the 1800s. And that is absolutely shameful.

It is my understanding that yet another trip by the Chief Minister on a trade delegation to China is imminent. It is happening in the next couple of weeks. Again, off he runs on the taxpayers' purse over to China to spruik the benefits of this city. And there is value in ministers, parliamentarians of all persuasions, heading abroad to promote the city or the electorate or the towns that they represent. It brings opportunity, it brings investment, it brings wealth. But doing that all the while endorsing an anti-Chinese campaign being run by an organisation of which you are a beneficiary is an absolute slight.

Mr Barr will lose great face with the Chinese over this issue. I think his credibility, his trustworthiness, is certainly in jeopardy if he continues to endorse a racist campaign proliferated by the CFMEU all the while using taxpayers' dollars to head overseas and encourage Chinese to come here. Why would they want to come to a city and do business in a city where the government of the day refuses to draw a line in the sand and say, "That kind of anti-Chinese behaviour, that kind of attitude, is not tolerated"?

It seems that the CFMEU has those opposite by the short and curlies and I think it is about time that they grew a spine, took a stand and stood for what the community expects them to.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (3.49): I rise today in support of Mr Smyth, and I commend him for bringing forward this motion. Mr Smyth has a proud history in this place; he has held many portfolios, both as a minister and as a shadow minister, and has in many ways been responsible, certainly in part, for the strong relationship that we enjoy with Beijing and other cities across China. I also commend the comments from Mr Wall and Mrs Jones, who have made the point very clearly about what this campaign is. It is harking back to a shameful past, in many ways. I think that point has been well made by Mr Wall and also by Mrs Jones.

The Labor Party that we saw perhaps under Hawke and Keating—a free trade party, a party that looked beyond our borders to Asia—had a free trade attitude that, at the time, many people applauded. Unfortunately, what we see now is a Labor Party that seems to be shrinking back upon itself.

This free trade agreement has been negotiated over a decade. It has been put together by trade ministers, foreign ministers and members from both sides of the political divide on the hill. But in recent times the labour movement seems to have been moving towards a xenophobic rhetoric. We saw it, unfortunately, with the poles and wires debate during the New South Wales election. The CFMEU came out and attacked the fact that it might be Chinese—how dare they—that would be engaged in leasing poles and wires. It was again a xenophobic campaign that was condemned at that point.

We saw Bill Shorten in front of a union rally. If you look at the pictures from that rally, Madam Deputy Speaker, you will see CFMEU flags front and centre at that rally. It was the sort of rally that harked back to a distant, shameful past with predominantly white men yelling and screaming, and with Bill Shorten at the front rousing the crowd and yelling out, “Last time we had Jap subs they were in bloody Sydney Harbour.” This is the leader of the Labor Party; this is the man that purports to be fit for the office of Prime Minister of Australia. We see pictures of him rabble rousing in front of a bunch of white blokes chanting and yelling, waving flags, many of them CFMEU flags, and screaming out, “Last time we had Jap subs they were in bloody Sydney Harbour.” Shame on him, and shame on any member of this place that supports that sort of campaign, because we are seeing that happening again.

Madam Deputy Speaker, all you need to do is a simple Google search for these sorts of campaigns. You see the union movement with their flags, with their banners and with their signs saying things like, “Don’t sign away Australian sovereignty.” For them, this is not about trade and opportunity; this is about xenophobia. It is disgraceful. It is not good for a government who purports to be supporting growth, supporting jobs and building a relationship with China to be so closely associated with an organisation that is running xenophobic, anti-Chinese campaigns.

Graham Richardson has called on the ALP to de-affiliate themselves from the CFMEU, and there is a very strong argument for that. But rather than that sort of leadership being shown by Mr Barr and any of his colleagues, by saying, “Yes, we’ll stand up for free trade. We’ll stand up for the markets. We’ll stand up for jobs and we’ll stand up against xenophobia wherever we see it,” we see the Labor Party and the Greens in this place locking in behind the CFMEU.

The members here who are funded by the CFMEU, who get tens of thousands of dollars from the CFMEU to fund their Greens and Labor election campaigns, are now going to stand in this place and say, “We are not going to block this xenophobic campaign because we’re funded by the people running that campaign.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, shame on all of you. All I can say to the Chinese students, to the people from China who live in our city, the dual nationals, the people that have come across the seas, the many people with Chinese heritage who are second, third or fourth generation Australians, is that this is not what we believe. This is not what we believe on this side of the chamber. We respect the Chinese people. We want to see a growing relationship between Australia and China, and between Canberra and China. We utterly reject this xenophobic campaign, and so should you.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (3.56): It has become clear over the last week that the Liberal Party have decided on a new tactic. We have seen it with the motion that came forward on the CFMEU last week, we have seen it with the various questions in question time, we have seen it in the numerous interjections they have made on the topic in the last week, and now we see it in Mr Smyth's motion.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Coe!

MR RATTENBURY: Of course, Mr Coe, who is perhaps one of the rudest members in the place, has already started interjecting, less than 20 seconds into my speech. He is clearly vying with Mr Hanson so that by the end of the term it will be a close-fought contest as to who is the rudest member of this house. But it will be one of those two; there is clearly no doubt about it.

When it comes to the motion at hand today, I will not be supporting Mr Smyth's motion because it talks about an "anti-Chinese media campaign". In Mr Smyth's motion there was no discussion of the actual nature of the campaign. In his remarks he went into a little bit about what the campaign is about. It is worth reflecting on that because these are debatable topics. There are topics such as issues around the 457 visa program that are being raised by the CFMEU. Whether you agree with them or not, what the Liberal Party is suggesting is that the CFMEU should not be campaigning on these issues, and I cannot support that position. We can debate the topics, and Mr Smyth went some way towards doing that today, and that is fair enough—around whether the claims are accurate. He clearly articulated that he has a different view on the benefits or otherwise of a free trade agreement.

That is the discussion we should be having, and not some lazy motion that talks about the fact that because the CFMEU have taken a certain position, we should condemn them and that somehow it is racist. He did not use the word "racist" in his motion. I cannot remember whether Mr Smyth did but certainly his colleagues subsequently have used the word repeatedly.

Of course there is great irony in this. The party that has spent the last decade or so demonising asylum seekers and denigrating them as human beings is now coming into this chamber and giving the rest of us a free lecture on racism. It is the same party whose members have attended Reclaim Australia rallies in recent times and they are coming into this place and giving a lecture on racism. It is an extraordinary exercise in double standards and one that I think is contemptible.

Let us reflect on some of the elements of the campaign being run by the CFMEU, because that is what we should be having a discussion about. The CFMEU's argument is that employers are using workers on 457 visas to drive down everyone's terms and conditions. They are concerned that it is often hard for 457 visa workers to speak up at work or join a union.

The CFMEU say they have uncovered many cases of abuse of 457 workers, such as 150 Korean workers in the Roy Hill mine, allegedly working up to 84 hours a week, paid as little as \$16 per hour and doing work outside their visa conditions. The CFMEU are concerned about the policy settings around 457 visas. In their campaign they note that in the current system it is cheaper and easier for an employer to take on a 457 worker than employ and train a local.

This hurts all workers, and I think that is a valid discussion to be having. What we know—and the CFMEU point this out in their campaign—is that there are over 700,000 unemployed people in Australia looking for work, a large proportion of whom are young people. If it is easier to employ and bring in a 457 worker than offer an apprenticeship or employ and train a local, that is a serious discussion we should be having—in other parts of Australia, and possibly here in Canberra. If that claim is true, we need to talk about whether that is a policy outcome that we are seeking in Australia. Is that the intent of 457 visas? If not, is the system failing? That is a debate we should be having, and I think it is appropriate that the CFMEU are flagging those questions.

In addition to those 700,000 unemployed people in Australia, an additional 2.2 million do not have a secure income and cannot provide a reasonable future for themselves or their families. Apprenticeship and traineeship numbers have dropped by about 41,000 over the last year. The CFMEU juxtapose this to the 457 visa situation, where there are over 100,000 temporary overseas workers on 457 visas currently in Australia and about half of them are under the age of 30.

If we go back to the high levels of youth unemployment, that is a debate we should be having. How do we create the space to make sure that those young people in Australia do get work opportunities? And is it appropriate to be bringing in 457 visa workers given those high levels of youth unemployment? Some will argue—and I have heard these arguments in the press—that some businesses cannot find Australian workers to fill those jobs. I have heard those claims. I have not done the research myself to see whether that is true, but that is a legitimate debate to be having in this country.

The issue of the 100,000 temporary overseas workers is one that has particularly caught the CFMEU's attention when it comes to the China free trade agreement. The CFMEU says the FTA is a bad deal for Australia at a time of high unemployment, especially as it allows Chinese companies to bring in semi-skilled workers and removes the requirement for employers to advertise for local labour first. These are perfectly reasonable issues to raise and for the CFMEU and others to campaign on.

As members probably know, the Greens and I, and in fact many people in the community, do have concerns about similar issues. We have concerns about the free trade agreement and about Australia's working visa system. While there will always be a place for skilled migration and working visas, there need to be appropriate protections to ensure that neither locals nor overseas workers are exploited. These are real issues that we should be talking about.

At the federal level my Greens colleagues have taken a strong interest in this issue, initiating a broad ranging Senate inquiry into Australia's working visa system,

particularly focused on the impact of temporary work visa programs on the Australian labour market and on temporary work visa holders, and it included the use of 457 visas.

The inquiry looked at a whole range of issues, such as the wages, conditions, safety and entitlements of Australian workers and temporary work visa holders; the impact of Australia's temporary work visa programs on training and skills development in Australia; whether temporary work visa holders receive the same wages, conditions, safety and other entitlements as their Australian counterparts or in accordance with the law; and the adequacy of monitoring and enforcement of the temporary work visa programs and their integrity. That is what the Senate inquiry looked at. If anybody in this place wants to claim that looking at those issues is racist, I would be surprised if they were able to make that claim stack up.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Coe, you are warned.

MR RATTENBURY: The Greens have also expressed their unease at the China-Australia free trade agreement. My federal colleagues have raised, for example, concerns about the liability faced by future governments who could be sued by foreign corporations simply for making laws that protect the public interest. With the text of the agreement heading to the Senate and a joint committee for inquiry, the Greens have said we will scrutinise the text very carefully. The Greens will particularly focus on the unprecedented new temporary unskilled worker entry provisions, the impact on manufacturing workers and the investment and investor-state dispute settlement provisions. There is still some time to go on that process as the committee is currently up to the stage of accepting submissions.

On the issue of racism which has come up today, I find it disturbing that some conservative commentators and members of the Liberal Party claim that raising these issues is racist or xenophobic. This is a low form of politics and, as I said earlier, one that, in the light of discussions about asylum seekers and the like in recent years by members of the conservative parties in Australia, is an extraordinary double standard.

There is nothing wrong with raising concerns about visa conditions, local training, local jobs and the economy. I find the Liberal Party's suggestion about this campaign being racist to be a particularly egregious one. There are genuine concerns and questions about visas, working conditions and the local employment situation. I know, for example, that members of the opposition locally—Mr Wall, for example—sometimes ask questions about local job opportunities on ACT government projects. There are questions like, “Will local firms be provided with opportunities instead of firms from outside Canberra?” and the like. Those are reasonable questions that bear no relation to racism or xenophobia.

To conclude, I simply reiterate that I will not be supporting this motion. As I have said the CFMEU and others can campaign on this and other contentious issues, and I find it a little strange that this Assembly should condemn them for that. There are very interesting policy issues to consider in relation to 457 visas, the visa system more

broadly and in relation to the impacts these have on workers in Australia and from other countries.

A point that is worth dwelling on, which I mentioned earlier, is that we have seen unions in Australia standing up for foreign workers who are being exploited as well. So to suggest that these unions are taking a racist or xenophobic position simply does not stack up against the facts. The China Australia free trade agreement also needs close scrutiny, particularly on the question of what impact it will have on the long-term prosperity of Australians.

I will not be supporting the motion, particularly because of the broad, sweeping statement that it makes and also because I believe there are legitimate discussions to be had in the policy areas that Mr Smyth has canvassed today.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (4.06), in reply: In the words of Lord Byron, bigots, fools or slaves—people can work out for themselves what category those opposite fall into. It is interesting that when I go to the website “China free trade agreement: the facts”, I cannot find reference to a Japan free trade agreement website or a Korea free trade agreement website. What is so special about picking out the China-Australia free trade agreement that has got the CFMEU so cranky? You go to the website and it runs all the old myths—it will remove labour market testing, it will reduce migration safeguards, it will remove mandatory skills assessment, it will cost local jobs. It is interesting because most of the reports seem to suggest it will create jobs for Australians. In fact, it will create thousands of jobs for Australians because it opens up new markets for and gives us greater opportunities.

The Centre for International Economics—I am not sure they have ever been accused of anything—says that the China-Australia free trade agreement provides Australian services providers with considerably greater access to the Chinese market compared to competitor countries. We are getting a bit of bargain here; we are getting better access by reducing significant barriers to service trade. What is Canberra? It is mainly a service trade location. Improved access is granted in legal services, telecommunication services, tourism-related services, health and aged-care services, construction and engineering services, manufacturing services, architecture and urban planning, transport and other services. Canberra is a service business community. We provide exactly those sorts of services.

It is interesting that the Chief Minister is mute today. The Chief Minister, the Minister for Economic Development, the Leader of the Labor Party has not deigned to grace us with his presence to tell us what he thinks. He does not have to—he told us that when he tabled his ministerial statement on the delegation to China. What does he say on page 6? And let me read it to those opposite:

Discussion also focused on the opportunities presented following the recent completion of negotiations for a China-Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA). Now ratified the Agreement presents major trade and export opportunities in the tourism, education, healthcare and professional services sectors. Each of these fields present significant opportunities for the ACT’s private sector and research partnerships, and also complement the ACT

Government's high level priorities of transport reform, ongoing urban renewal, and our continuing work to build Canberra as Australia's premier knowledge capital.

I looked for the problems that China FTA agreement website raised, but clearly Mr Barr does not believe that because none of that was raised or reported on in his report. He gives it a glowing endorsement. I will read the endorsement again, members opposite, in case you missed it:

Discussion also focused on the opportunities presented following the recent completion of negotiations for a China-Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA). Now ratified the Agreement presents major trade and export opportunities in the tourism, education, healthcare and professional services sectors.

There are opportunities here, members, but those opposite think it is okay to run a campaign against those opportunities.

My understanding is that there is no weakening. I have gone through the documents provided by the federal government. If you look at some of the information put out by the federal government you see that the results of independent economic modelling show three FTAs with Korea, Japan and China will be worth \$24.4 billion in total additional income to Australia between 2016 and 2030. This is income to Australia. The FTAs are forecast to create almost 8,000 jobs in 2016 peaking at almost 15,000 new jobs in 2020. What have you got against new jobs?

The information from the federal government also discusses some of the issues Mr Gentleman brought up on the IFAs, the investment facilitation agreements. It says that the IFA MOU provides Chinese companies making infrastructure investments in Australia in excess of \$150 million with greater certainty in workforce planning by ensuring that any estimated labour shortage can be met through temporary foreign workers where suitable local workers cannot be found. I will say that again, slowly: where suitable local workers cannot be found. If there is a workplace shortage what do we say? Do we say, "Well, sorry about that. There's a workplace shortage. You all need to go away and take your investment dollars with you," or do we come up with a reasonable process, which we do in many cases, and say, "If you've got the skills and you meet the qualifications, then of course you can come."

Under IFAs Australian workers will be given first opportunity and employers will not be permitted to bring in overseas skilled workers unless there is clear evidence of a genuine labour market need as determined by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection. I will say it again: under IFAs Australian workers will be given first opportunity and employers will not be permitted to bring in overseas skilled workers unless there is clear evidence of a genuine labour market need as determined by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

This is an important issue. Yet again, as they did in 2000, the weasel words are used. In 2000 the Labor Party abstained and the Greens voted against the highly successful, 15-year long sister city relationship we have with Beijing that Mr Barr lauds. He said it has delivered the goods. Back then they voted against it, or abstained. Now they are

going to vote against something that I think is an insult to the Chinese people. If you had a broad-brush approach to free trade agreements, you would set up websites for all of these things and you would attack every single one and you would run the sort of campaign that has been run against this Chinese free trade agreement, but they did not.

I will quote from the ANZ Chief Executive Mike Smith, who wrote in the *Financial Review*:

Rather than flooding Australia with Chinese workers as Labor and the unions claim, the Chinese free-trade deal will create new Australian jobs and new markets for Australian manufacturers, miners and farmers. It is contemptible for Labor and the trade unions to seek to undermine this by reviving one of the ugliest aspects of their own distant past.

Clearly, Madam Deputy Speaker, they have not learned. Today is very important; we see history repeating itself. I hope members reflect about what they do today. The 15th anniversary of the debate that said go ahead with the agreement was on 7 September and I think it is 13 September when it was signed. I am sure the Chinese people of Australia and those overseas will question it.

I went to the dinner to celebrate the 10th anniversary and members of the Chinese community, both local and diplomatic, were asking me, "Could you please explain to us why the Labor Party abstained and the Greens voted against this agreement?" I had to say, "I have no idea," because they never made a case. Same as today—they are not making a case, and we are seeing history repeating itself all over again. Indeed, they are running from it; I notice the benches opposite are basically empty. I go back to where I started with the words of Einstein:

What a sad era when it is easier to smash an atom than a prejudice.

The prejudices still exist. This is xenophobic. Ged Kearney in her own words said:

It's very difficult not to sound xenophobic.

Yes, it is very difficult not to sound xenophobic when you are and when you are behaving in a xenophobic manner. Goethe said:

There is nothing more frightful than ignorance in action.

That is what we are seeing today—we are seeing a scare campaign because the CFMEU, for all its activity which has been exposed by the royal commission, is seeking to divert people's attention from itself. E H Chapin said:

Bigotry dwarfs the soul by shutting out the truth.

The truth is that this is a good thing for all Australians. It might not be a good thing for the CFMEU, but it is a good thing for all Australians. I started with whether they would rise to the occasion today and the quote from Lord Byron:

Those who will not reason are bigots—
 there is no reason being presented here today—
 those who cannot are fools—
 they have not taken the opportunity—
 and those who dare not, are slaves.

We see a Labor Party and the Greens that are slaves to the CFMEU. Today, members, is your chance to vote against xenophobia. Now is your chance to vote against bullyboy tactics. Now is your chance to vote against the lies they promulgate. Now is your chance to vote against the most base of politics. Now is your chance to vote against the old ways. Now is your chance to vote for a stronger economic future not just for Canberra but for the country. Now is your chance to vote for those additional Australian jobs—8,000 next year and 15,000 in the long term. Now is your chance to vote for a closer relationship with China, our largest market. Now is your chance to vote for the ACT economy. Now is your chance to vote and show some leadership. Disavow yourself of these people; disavow yourself of this campaign. Vote for this motion.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

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

Question so resolved in the negative.

Emergency Services Agency—executive structure

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (4.20):

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the United Firefighters Union ACT Branch has expressed concerns to the Minister regarding the proposed changes to the Emergency Services Agency (ESA) executive structure;

- (b) the establishment of three executive positions to oversee support services will not lead to improved efficiencies and effectiveness in emergency service provision for ACT residents; and
 - (c) while the ESA had taken steps to establish operational capabilities across the ACTF&R and ACTRFS following the 2003 bushfires, there is now a perceived reversion to pre-2003 structures and mindset; and
- (2) calls on the Government to:
- (a) re-establish the ESA as a statutory authority, independent of the Justice and Community Safety Directorate, and to be headed by a chief executive officer; and
 - (b) make redundant the role of the Commissioner with amendments to the Emergencies Act 2004 with new arrangements including the Chief Police Officer to be made Emergency Controller.

All here would remember the disastrous fires of 18 January 2003, and many would remember the aftermath. There is now a well-established cycle called the bushfire cycle—some call it the cycle of complacency, whereby following a significant event you see lots of government interaction. They set up authorities, they fund lots of things, they buy lots of trucks, they build lots of structures, but then over time apathy sets in and the effort diminishes, until you have another major event whereby you go through the same routine. We see this in the ACT. We see that some organisations, be they volunteer or employee based, are very concerned about the return to the bad old days of 2003.

The problem is that in 2003, following the McLeod and Doogan inquiries, everyone agreed there should be a stat authority. It was formed, and it lasted for about three years. Three years, and the Emergency Services Authority was dragged back into JACS. Since then, as one looks at the last nine years, it has not been a particularly happy relationship. So today I have moved this motion to again say that emergency services in this city should be a statutory authority with direct access to the minister without any filtering of any kind by any department.

There are many who are calling for this—volunteers in the Rural Fire Service, volunteers in the State Emergency Services. Members privately in the Ambulance Service have said the same thing to me. Indeed we know that there is a letter from the United Firefighters Union of Australia saying exactly the same thing. They are worried about the arrangements that this minister is putting in place, and they are worried that it is a return to what they see as the very poor set-up that existed in 2003. They say:

The United Firefighters Union (ACT Branch) raises significant concerns regarding the proposed changes to the executive structure of the ESA. The position of executive support services was created approximately three years ago to oversee areas of support of the ESA, and irrespective of continual complaints from the service no substantial improvements have been made to any of these areas.

That is all that you really need to read. This is not working, and this minister allows it to continue in this way. Indeed we have recently made some changes. The letter goes on to say:

Changes to the Emergency Act 2004, implemented against the wishes of all chief officers of each agency last year; inappropriate and dangerous attempts to influence operational decisions at the Sydney Building fire in 2004; the continual and systematic degradation of fire brigade operational staff numbers and the non-filling of senior operational positions; senior officers in acting positions for years; and the proposal to realign reporting lines from within services to across the ESA are significant cause for concern for the safety of emergency responders in all four agencies and the ACT community.

The union closes by saying:

The United Firefighters Union implores the ACT Police and Emergency Services Minister Joy Burch to provide leadership and halt the return to the dangerous structures and practices currently being hotly pursued by the Justice and Community Safety Directorate and the Emergency Services Agency.

That is a pretty damning letter from a union. It is pretty damning because what they are saying is that the reforms have not worked; the amendments to the act, as I pointed out at the time, were not supported by the service, and they believe they are dangerous because they allow the commissioner to interfere. They now expose that during the Sydney Building fire—Mr Corbell denied this many times—there were inappropriate and dangerous attempts to influence operational decisions, and that could have been disastrous for all involved. And it is time we had a proper structure.

After the 2003 fires there was a meeting at the old Curtin headquarters where a lot of the volunteers came together and said, “What’s the best structure for what we do?” The one that everyone agreed with in the end—there were about four options put up—was a very flat structure which said, “Somebody in charge, four service chiefs.” What the UFU is saying, and what I have been saying for a long time, is that we need this inside a stat authority so that they are independent, so that they are not ruled by the Justice and Community Safety Directorate, which I believe has not been a good place for them to be.

What is proposed in this motion is that we re-establish the ESA as a stat authority independent of the Justice and Community Safety Directorate, and to be headed by a chief executive officer. It is impossible for any commissioner—and I acknowledge the presence of the commissioner in the chamber today, and I acknowledge his deep and abiding knowledge of Rural Fire Service matters—to be fully competent across Fire & Rescue, Ambulance Service, RFS and SES operations. It is just impossible. It is unreasonable to put that on an individual.

If we look at the set-up that the government has implemented for the courts, we now have a court administrator, and the court administrator is there to run the operation while the delivery of justice is left to the judges. We should have the same model in ESA. We should have an administrator at the top of the organisation who has

administrative control, but the service chiefs should be empowered to conduct operations as they know best. That is what should happen. That is not an unreasonable request. Part (2)(b) says:

- (b) make redundant the role of the Commissioner with amendments to the Emergencies Act 2004 with new arrangements including the Chief Police Officer to be made Emergency Controller.

There has been discussion within a lot of groups over the last decade about the best place for this to be, and the people I have spoken to have come to the conclusion that, on the day of a significant emergency, all resources are brought to bear, that it is the interface and relationship with the police which is particularly important, and it is the police that normally have the powers to block roads and to prevent people from going into dangerous areas.

Most people that I have spoken to about it over the last decade seem to think that the best way would be to go back to having the Chief Police Officer as the emergency controller, with perhaps some delegation power depending on the nature of the emergency. That is what part (2)(b) asks the government to do. We are simply calling on the government to set up a stat authority and to make the changes to the act.

Mr Barr was sounding off about the emergency services levy during question time, saying that everybody wants the best service we can get. That is what we all want. Now, with this letter to the minister from the UFU, it is quite clear that these matters have come to a head. There seems to be a growing level of bureaucracy surrounding the position of the commissioner whereby the deputy chief officers of each of the services now have other functions. I am not sure how you split those and say that the deputy chief officers will always be up to speed on what is going on in their primary area. You cannot serve two masters. That model has always been shown to be flawed, and it has always been shown to fail. The union makes it quite clear. They call on—and I quote:

... Joy Burch to provide leadership and halt the return to dangerous structures and practices currently being hotly pursued by JACS and by the ESA.

It is not an unreasonable request. My expectation is that it will be revenue neutral. All of the administration has already been paid for at some point at this stage, so all of those funds can be appropriated directly to an ESA authority. So there should not be any additional cost. In fact I expect it may produce a saving, because much of the admin work is already carried out in ESA, and people tell me that there is not a great call on the services of JACS, yet of course the overheads are apportioned across the whole portfolio.

It is important that we get this right. It is important that we make these decisions now. It is important that we get ready. The coming fire season could be particularly hazardous given all the rain we have had throughout the winter. If the dry turns up as it used to do—those who have lived here for a long time know Canberra had wet winters and long dry summers—if that occurs this year then there is the potential, as there always is, for a disastrous bushfire season. But it is not just about bushfire; it is about Fire & Rescue, it is about the ambulance officers, it is about the State

Emergency Service workers who give their time, and it is about getting it right for all of those.

We simply say: let us have a stat authority back; let us move to the court model which seems to have worked quite well, where you have a court administrator. So you would have an emergency services administrator. That would free up the service chiefs to do what they do best in their specialised field and that would give everybody confidence in a more streamlined administration framework in which to operate. This is a reasonable motion and I look forward to the support of the Assembly.

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Racing and Gaming and Minister for the Arts) (4.31): I thank Mr Smyth for bringing this motion to the Assembly. He has brought it here before where it was defeated, and I suspect and forecast that it will be defeated again today. But the opportunity is for me to speak of my high regard for the men and women working in emergency services. It is disappointing that Mr Smyth continues to go out into the public arena and downgrade and dismiss and talk down the men and women who fight fire and provide services in our community.

Mr Smyth's motion raises concerns and refers to concerns put in a letter to me by the United Firefighters Union relating to the proposed changes to the ESA's executive structure. It has been clear since the creation of the ESA in 2004 that the government has been making incremental and sound reform to the agency. The government has significantly increased funding to the ESA, including over \$15 million over four years in this budget alone. The ESA is on a reform through the strategic reform agenda. It is the next phase of reforming our emergency services. As has been stated by the previous minister, this government holds the strong view that there is significant underlying benefit gained in keeping and maintaining the ESA as part of the JACS directorate.

There has been increased expenditure and investment in front-line services and the infrastructure, and this government has absolutely demonstrated a firm commitment to supporting our ESA. Unfortunately those opposite and Mr Smyth continue to publically criticise and attack the ESA in an attempt, I fear, just to smear me and the government. Each and every time he does it, though, he needs to remember that men and women that he is out there talking down are the very men and women that come out and provide support when we need it most.

When I move around and visit stations, the resounding message I have heard is that the men and women within our services are tired of being the political football of Mr Smyth. Indeed, at one of the stations I visited it was freely offered to me that while Mr Smyth purports to be a supporter of the ESA, they are very tired of him using them as his political football to gain some sort of skin off my back. That is disappointing indeed.

Mr Smyth referred to the UFU letter, and I will read a response to the UFU from the commissioner himself. I acknowledge the commissioner in the gallery today. He has come here, quite rightly, because this is a serious matter. He has a serious reform

agenda for the ESA, and he should be supported by both sides in this chamber to get onto it.

In his letter to the UFU the commissioner notes that:

The amendments to the Emergency Act 2004 which strengthen the coordination of operational services during emergencies are an example of improving our operational service delivery based upon lessons learned. Significant consultation has occurred across the ESA including several meetings with your previous Secretary

I note that the secretary who penned the opening letter is no longer in the ACT; he has taken up employment elsewhere. Commissioner Lane also notes:

As you would be aware the ACT Government has previously responded to the recommendations of both the Coronial Inquiry and the Inquiry into the operational response to January 2003 bushfires in the ACT. This response led to significant changes in the ACT; the implementation of new legislation, the creation of the ESA led by a Commissioner, a complete overhaul of hazard reduction policy, significant improvements to operational readiness, response and coordination across all hazards as well as an unprecedented levels of funding delivered to ACT F&R. All of these changes benefit the community we serve.

Mr Smyth also made reference to the roles and functions of our chief officers. Again, I will read from a letter that went out to all colleagues signed by Conrad Barr, David Foot, Andrew Stark and Tracey Allen as heads of the respective agencies:

The letter asserts that “*changes to the Emergencies Act 2004 [were] implemented against the wishes of all Chief Officers ...*”

That was in reference to the letter from the UFU. These four chief officers said:

We reject that these changes were made against the wishes of the Chief Officers. The Chief Officers from the respective Services within ESA at the time were provided with the opportunity to respond to the draft amendments ... From this consultation process, changes were made to what became the final amendments ...

This letter to all colleagues across the ESA goes on to say that the chief officers:

... further reject the assertion that the re-profiling of the executive roles of People and Culture, Logistics and Governance and Risk and Planning cannot “*be supported in relation to improved efficiencies and effectiveness*” The positions will be progressively introduced via realignment of existing Executive positions as part of the Strategic Reform Agenda (SRA).

We also refute the assertion that the SRA is resulting in “*untrained administrators adopted positions of interference and were influential in operational decision making*”. ESA remains committed to ensuring the roles of Commissioner, Chief Officers, and Deputy Chief Officers continue to have the management professional and technical expertise to exercise the functions as required by the Act.

Mr Smyth recognised the expertise the commissioner has, but he went on to ask how one person can hold all these various skills. I am at a loss to understand how, if the commissioner cannot hold those skills as one person, a new title, an executive officer, can hold those functions?

It is important that major policies and changes are done through extensive consultation, and that is what ESA and JACS are doing with the strategic reform agenda. If Mr Smyth took time to consult with the ESA, JACS and the key stakeholders on the state of affairs within ESA he would not be here talking down the men and women that provide that essential service to our community.

Now is not the time to undo the good work that has been done by the dedicated officers of ESA. Now is not the time to unravel the lessons learned from our past history and experience. Now, indeed, is not the time to rip apart and dismantle a very effective emergency services model for this jurisdiction.

ESA officers have worked tirelessly. We have recruited the right people to lead our services. We have established the right structures to support our services. We have invested in our emergency services capabilities to ensure our front-line staff have the necessary tools to protect the Canberra community.

This leads me to the main point of Mr Smyth's motion—addressing the UFU concerns. I read extracts of letters to back the commissioner and the chief officers. It is very clear that the strategic reform agenda and the capacity we have built up across ESA over the past years put the ESA in a good position to support this community. I am and our government is very supportive of ESA's strategic reform agenda, and that support is reflected in the 2015-16 budget as a strategic priority for government for maintaining community safety.

The strategic reform agenda, or the SRA, will support ESA to continue as a high performing emergency services organisation, indeed among the best in Australia, and will position it to best meet the challenges of the years ahead. It will also enable ESA to mature as a unified entity with four dedicated operational services. This SRA will pave the way for the ESA to become a leader in disaster mitigation, operational response capability, emergency management and operational training.

Through the SRA there are five key focus areas: strategy, so we have a new strategic plan for the ESA; structure, through a realigned organisation to better serve its operational functions; its people, so we have a continued investment in our volunteers and staff; a focus on performance to see continued improvements to the standards and service delivery; and accountability, to assure our community that the ESA continues to provide its services in the most efficient way.

Contrary to speculation from those opposite, the ESA will not be changing the four service chief officers. Rather, the SRA seeks to create three new areas to better support and coordinate the agency's enabling services. These new areas include: risk and planning to help create a safe community; governance, logistics and infrastructure

management; and people and culture, which includes training, workforce planning and volunteer management.

These enabling support areas will be managed by the ESA, which will be utilising the expertise of its current executives. The ESA will continue to consult with staff and volunteers, unions and associations on the changes to the agency. I commend the commissioner and the chief officers for the very open and active consultative process they are undertaking across the services.

As demonstrated by the all-staff letter that I referred to from the four chief officers, I know the ESA executive team are committed to working with the commissioner as a unified executive to plan and implement the ESA's strategic reform agenda in an open, transparent and consultative way.

Unfortunately, this motion is another attempt from the opposition to take the focus away from all the good things that have been occurring in emergency services in the ACT, and I will mention a few. This year has seen a number of accomplishments for the ESA: the best ambulance code one response times in the country; continued progression of the station upgrade and relocation program with the opening of the south Tuggeranong Fire & Rescue station as well as the commencement of the co-located ambulance and Fire & Rescue in Aranda; successful interstate deployments by SES and Rural Fire Service into New South Wales and Western Australia and, indeed, a crew has recently returned from Canada; a very successful Canberra bushfire ready and doorknock campaign to ensure residents do what they can to reduce their own bushfire risks; and very successful services support for the Asian Cup and world cup cricket events this year.

As Minister for Police and Emergency Services, I know the territory's emergency services personnel remain vigilant and prepared for the imminent threat of bushfires, storms and major incidents to our community. I have confidence in the ability and leadership of the ESA commissioner and of the chief officers of ACT Fire & Rescue, the ambulance service, rural fire and the SES as well as the other ESA executives that provide such important support and services to this community.

In closing, I move an amendment that has been circulated in my name:

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

"(1) notes:

- (a) the commitment of the ACT Government and the Emergency Services Agency (ESA) to continue to deliver nation-leading emergency services to the ACT community;
- (b) the significant changes put in place as a result of the recommendations of both the Coronial Inquiry and the Inquiry into the Operational Response to the January 2003 Bushfires in the ACT, including the creation of the ESA led by a commissioner;
- (c) the increase to ESA's budget of \$15.62 million over the next four years;

- (d) the amendments to the *Emergencies Act 2004*, which strengthen the coordination of operational services during emergencies;
 - (e) the work the Commissioner is doing, with the support of the Chief Officers, to restructure the agency through the Strategic Reform Agenda;
 - (f) the All Staff letter signed by all Chief Officers on 17 July 2015 supporting the Strategic Reform Agenda and the proposed changes to the executive structure; and
 - (g) the Canberra Liberals' continuing attacks on the structure of the ESA and its trained and dedicated staff; and
- (2) calls on the Government to provide regular updates to the Assembly on the implementation of the Strategic Reform Agenda.”.

I take this opportunity to put an absolute call of gratitude and thanks to all the volunteers and to the ESA officers—the men and women that step out and do the right thing when we need help. The least we can do in this place is treat them with the dignity and respect they deserve.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (4.45): The issue of making the ESA an independent statutory agency is one that Mr Smyth has brought to the Assembly before during this term. I recall that the last time was at the end of 2013. At that time I said to Mr Smyth that to change the ESA in such a way was a major change and a change that would significantly restructure how the government provides emergency services to the community. I recall noting that it was hard to support proposals like that when they are essentially sprung on the Assembly with less than 24 hours notice. So I say again that whilst I am happy to talk about these proposals, if we are serious about restructuring the ESA there would need to be a much deeper conversation about the perceived concerns and what a new structure might look like.

I have been in the Assembly since 2008, and I am aware that there is quite a history concerning the management model of the ESA. In the past the ESA had been a separate statutory authority, as has been noted today. The McLeod inquiry following the 2003 bushfires looked at the structure of the emergency services bureau and, amongst many other things, recommended that a new statutory authority should be established. The McLeod inquiry said it would be separate from and independent of any department of state and would be outside the public service.

Importantly, though, as I noted last time when we talked about the same issue, the McLeod report suggested that the prime concerns were cultural problems of the old establishment. It is over 10 years since that report was handed down, and we are clearly in a different time.

Following the report, the Emergency Services Authority was established in 2004 and it sat outside the public service. My understanding is that a few years later the ESA was altered to its current form. This was in 2006, post functional review, and it was placed under the administrative control of the Justice and Community Safety

Directorate. I understand there were several reasons why this occurred, including that the ACT is a small jurisdiction and it is difficult for the ACT to operate a large number of statutory agencies.

I agree it is something of a vexed question as to what would be the perfect structure for the ESA. I know there are some advantages to having the ESA as an independent agency. There are also advantages to the current administrative structure. The Emergencies Act, for example, still ensures that the commissioner and chief officers for operational response have independence. They also have direct communication and reporting to the minister.

There are significant efficiencies to be gained by having the ESA in a directorate structure. It saves duplication on things like corporate functions, financial governance and, for that matter, project management for new capital infrastructure. The benefit is that this allows the ESA to focus more on operational service delivery rather than having to deliver those functions as well.

I cannot say at this point that I am convinced that making the ESA an independent statutory authority will necessarily solve the challenges faced by the agency or that it will result in an overall better outcome. As I said, that is a serious decision that would result in a significant restructure.

There has been a large amount of work in this area. The McLeod and Doogan reports gave the ACT government and emergency services a wealth of recommendations to work with. The Auditor-General has undertaken relevant inquiries, including several relating to bushfire management. We have seen more recently, for example, the lower Cotter catchment report. The government has been working with these for several years.

There is a strategic reform agenda underway within the ESA. This is a complex task, occurring over several years. It does not surprise me that there are contentious elements of this agenda. One specific issue that Mr Smyth has raised relates to the executive structure. The four service chief officers remain, and three new areas are created to support the agency's enabling services. My understanding is that these changes stem from ESA reviews. I am satisfied at this point that we should let this process continue to unfold.

Minister Burch recently reported to the estimates committee on the strategic reform agenda. She said that it was progressing positively and especially noted that since the quarterly report for the ESA the ACTAS blueprint for change showed that staff in that agency were positively engaged in the organisation. As she also noted, the Assembly will receive an update in September when Minister Burch reports to the Assembly on progress.

At estimates the commissioner, Mr Lane, also elaborated on the rationale for and the progress of the strategic reform agenda. He pointed out, for example, that the ACT is part of a national strategy for disaster resilience and that the strategic reform agenda focuses on achieving that, especially through a focus on prevention and protection. He also pointed out that the expenditure review of the ESA and the recent \$3.9 million

budget allocation to base funding has put the ESA in a good financial position. Mr Lane is clearly committed to this agenda and is putting a great deal of work into its progress.

I am aware as well, of course, that there are various issues of disagreement within the emergency services—disagreements about the approach to certain incidents, for example. The issue of the deployment of a Bronto during the Sydney Building fire is one example that Mr Smyth has raised. These incidents, as well as relationships within the agencies, seem to muddy and complicate the approach to reforming and restructuring these agencies to get the best outcomes.

I said to Mr Smyth last time this was debated that I would be happy to look at the creation of new strategic and accountability indicators to ensure that the government is on track annually to achieving the best emergency responses possible and that the Assembly has clear parameters by which they can make those judgements—for the non-executive members of the place. Again there has been no further discussion on those matters. So I think there are matters that we could canvass in this space. I am not convinced a full restructure to an independent statutory authority is the answer.

I was interested in the excerpts from Mr Smyth's comments on ABC radio this morning. I am the first one to acknowledge that an excerpt does not always give the full context regarding what is meant, so I will give that caveat. Mr Smyth made references to issues of misogyny, bullying and other issues in the Emergency Services Agency, and they have been well ventilated in this place and in the media.

What I would say, assuming that it was not taken out of context, is that if those problems exist, I do not believe that goes necessarily to the structure of the organisation. If those issues are persisting in the Emergency Services Agency—and I hope that, given the ventilation they have had, they are being well and truly tackled—they are management issues, they are cultural issues and they are ones that need to be tackled head-on. I am not convinced a restructure will go to the root of those sorts of problems. If that was the suggestion this morning, I am not convinced that is the right way to tackle those sorts of issues. They are best tackled, I believe, in other ways.

I will not be supporting the motion today and I will, amongst the alternatives, support the amendment moved by Ms Burch. I particularly welcome the undertaking in paragraph (2) to provide regular updates to the Assembly on the implementation of the strategic reform agenda because I know it would be of interest to many members of the Assembly as well as to many members of the community, given the history of incidents in the ACT. I think that level of updating and transparency is welcome.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (4.53): It is interesting that the union wrote a letter to Minister Burch and, from what she said, it would appear that she did not respond. She let the commissioner respond. I find it passing strange that a minister gets a letter written to her but she does not have the simple courtesy to write back and address the issues in that letter.

She started her speech on the motion as she always does—she denigrates, dismisses and goes on the attack. You know when they start with a slur it is because they really

do not have an answer to what you have raised. I have never attacked the staff or the volunteers—I have been in the field with them, I know what they do—but I will attack toxic culture and I will attack sexism and bullying wherever I find it. It is a shame that the minister does not do that.

She claims that people are telling her that I am using them as a political football. It is interesting that they come and talk to me and that they give me copies of the letters that they send to you, minister, and that you failed to respond to—the lack of courtesy is noted—because they have had enough.

If you look at the amendment, it is the same old amendment—an amendment that will be supported by Mr Rattenbury to keep the government where the government is. So let us understand exactly what that is. But there is another document that I have not quoted from and that I will quote from now. I refer to “Signal 7”, the United Firefighters Union of Australia ACT Branch, dated 14 July 2015. It is their newsletter. I will read the first paragraph:

Attached is the open letter to Minister Joy Burch imploring her to refocus emergency services on frontline emergency response, not empire-building. While ACT Fire & Rescue is severely understaffed, fire stations are in a state of decay and non-reflective of the facilities required to accommodate a multi-gender, respectful and decent work environment, non-frontline resources across the ESA continue to swell and operational responsibility migrates from Chief Officers to the Commissioner. Sadly, here in the ACT we only have to look back 12 years to see the results of similar disastrous practices.

Let us marry up the statement from the UFU with the amendment to the motion. Let us go to (1)(b). With respect to (1)(a), everybody wants nation-leading emergency services. Paragraph (1)(b) reads:

the significant changes put in place as a result of the recommendations of both the Coronial Inquiry and the Inquiry into the Operational Response ... including the creation of the ESA led by a commissioner;

How disingenuous; how dishonest is that? Those reports said it should be an authority, not an agency. We do not have an authority. So to put that in and somehow claim that you have done it is disingenuous in the extreme. Paragraph (1)(c) reads:

the increase to ESA’s budget of \$15.62 million over the next four years;

What did the UFU say?

... non-frontline resources across the ESA continue to swell ...

There you go: the money has gone in; it has gone to non-frontline resources. Paragraph (1)(d) reads:

the amendments to the *Emergencies Act 2004*, which strengthen the coordination of operational services during emergencies;

How did the UFU view that? They said:

... operational responsibility migrates from Chief Officers to the Commissioner.

Paragraph (1)(e) reads:

the work the Commissioner is doing, with the support of the Chief Officers, to restructure the agency through the Strategic Reform Agenda;

It is interesting to look again at the letter that they sent to Ms Burch:

The recent Treasury review did not propose any improvement to support areas that clearly duplicated what occurred elsewhere and/or were able to be outsourced, thereby providing efficiencies and improved service.

Gee, look at that: no improved service! They continued:

The creation of three executive positions to oversee support services cannot be supported in relation to improved efficiencies and effectiveness and will not improve emergency services to the people of the ACT.

This is what you are supporting, Mr Rattenbury. Let me again read the words of the union:

The creation of three ... positions to oversee support services cannot be supported in relation to improved efficiencies and effectiveness and will not improve emergency services to the people of the ACT.

Is it any wonder the minister did not respond to that? This is a minister who is not in control of her portfolio. This is a minister who does not take seriously her responsibilities. With respect to the discourtesy in not responding, I assume it is so that there is no paper trail, for her to put something in writing to say that she believes in everything that is going on.

I think this is a sad state of affairs. It is now quite clear that the UFU have lost faith in what is happening. They have written to the minister asking her to intervene. They have written to the minister asking her to show leadership. Who would have thought it—asking the minister to show leadership. I go back to the final paragraph of the union's letter:

The United Firefighters Union implores the ACT Police and Emergency Services Minister Joy Burch to provide leadership and halt the return to the dangerous structures and practices currently being hotly pursued by the Justice and Community Safety Directorate and the Emergency Services Agency.

Minister, you should honour what your amendment actually says, so that we have the creation of an emergency services authority. Experience now shows, some years on, that we should perhaps have a CEO. Again the minister just gets it wrong. I do not know whether it is deliberate or a lack of comprehension. She says, "How can you have a commissioner who is not across all four services and then have a CEO who is

across the individual needs of the four services?” You do not have to. The CEO is an administrator. He runs the administration. The chiefs, whoever they are, the four service chiefs, will of course provide the technical authority and the leadership in their emergency services speciality field. That is the difference.

As I explained—perhaps you were not listening—it is like the court administrator model that we have adopted, whereby somebody manages the court’s budget and the judges deliver the justice through the system. That is what it would look like. That is the request from many people now.

What we hear from those opposite, and backed up again by Mr Rattenbury, is that this will not happen. I will not stop in my endeavours to restore the emergency services to where they should be, as an independent statutory authority of the government, not within the government, with clear lines of reporting straight to the minister, and where the service chiefs will be allowed to do their jobs properly.

I refer members to the strategic reform agenda. Any reasonable reading of it is that there are a lot of words here and there is a lot of talk about the movement of individuals, but I am not sure what the strategic reform agenda actually is. I get worried when you start with a structure that had four services, and now we have the commissioner, the executive unit, an executive support unit, and you have gone from four to seven headings. You have ACT Ambulance Service, ACT Fire & Rescue, ACT State Emergency Service, ACT Rural Fire Service, executive people and culture, executive risk and planning and executive logistics and governance. And remember what the UFU says:

The creation of three executive positions to oversee support services cannot be supported in relation to improved efficiencies and effectiveness and will not improve emergency services to the people of the ACT.

They are saying that there is a move away from the service chiefs and their operational independence to a collective model under the control of the commissioner and that it should not be tolerated.

This is too important an issue to get wrong. We have learnt those mistakes, hopefully; we saw some of the outcomes in 2003 when the lessons of the 2001 Christmas Eve fire were ignored. Thirteen months later, we were visited again by a much larger tragedy. Again from the correspondence from the UFU, it would appear that the minister refuses to learn. She has got her head in the sand on this. The request for leadership will go unanswered simply because Minister Burch is not a leader, does not show leadership and is not up to the management of her portfolio.

This motion should be supported. It is the right thing to do. It allows us to put operational command back into the hands of the professionals in charge of the services while at the same time providing them with the support they need to deliver the best service to the people of the ACT. This motion should be supported by all in this place today.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

Noes 8

Mr Barr
Ms Berry
Dr Bourke
Ms Burch
Mr Corbell

Ms 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.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Local shops—upgrades

MR COE (Ginninderra) (5.07): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the importance of local shops to local communities;
- (b) that many local shops are becoming rundown and are in need of an upgrade;
- (c) the Government promised in 2012 to upgrade the Evatt, Florey, Fisher, Gwydir Square, Hughes, Glasson St, Macquarie, Mannheim St, Rivett, Fraser, Carleton St, Fadden, Wanniassa, Castley Circuit and Marconi Crescent local shops; and
- (d) the majority of the promised upgrades have not been completed or even commenced; and

(2) calls on the Government to undertake the upgrades to all local shops as promised in 2012.

I am pleased to move this motion today about local shops. Local shops are a great community meeting place in the heart of most of Canberra suburbs. Most suburbs, of course, do have shops and ones that do not usually have one very close by. Canberra was designed so that people could visit their local shops for essential items and group centres and town centres for access to a wider range of shops and services. Under this design, people could walk or drive to their shops easily and regularly. We are concerned that the run-down state of many local shops in and around Canberra is discouraging people from visiting them.

Of course, I am not the only one to think this. In an article in the *Chronicle* on 25 September former Chief Minister Katy Gallagher said:

We have to make sure these places look good otherwise people will start shopping elsewhere.

Ms Gallagher was correct. The poor state of local shops is an embarrassment and in some cases it is driving people away.

The government simply do not seem to care about the fact that people are choosing to avoid some local shopping centres due to their lack of investment. They are so obsessed with their light rail project that they are allowing shopping centres right across Canberra to become run down and uninviting. The government's attitude about the state of local shops shows their contempt for Canberrans. It shows how little this government care about essential local services that should be core business for any local government.

In late September 2012 the former Chief Minister, Katy Gallagher, announced \$11 million to upgrade 15 local shops. Ms Gallagher's media release stated:

The works will commence in 2013 and be completed over the next four years.

We have an article in the *Chronicle* in September 2012 about the Evatt shops. Ms Berry is on the front page of the *Chronicle* along with Ms Porter and the Chief Minister proudly saying that work at the Evatt shops would start the next year if Labor was re-elected and that upgrades to 14 other local shops across Canberra would be finished over the next four years. Alex, the owner of the IGA, is still waiting. Here we are still waiting.

This government simply do not prioritise the concerns of these business people. These people put their houses on the line, they make tremendous sacrifices, they worry about payroll, they worry about rates, they worry about land tax, they worry about all the issues that come with running a business. When they were told by government, when they were told by Ms Berry and others, "Don't worry, we will upgrade your local shops, we will give you a return on your rates and the fees and charges you pay and we will do it next year," they believed them.

I am sure Alex at the IGA walked away after that photo shoot in September 2012 thinking, "Isn't it good, next year my local shops, the place that I have invested in, is going to be upgraded." Unfortunately he has been let down. He has been let down as has Ano Birkesh from the Evatt newsagency and all the others who operate out of the Evatt shops.

But of course Evatt shops are not the only ones to not be upgraded despite the promise of Ms Berry, Ms Gallagher and Ms Porter back in 2012. The government promised seven major upgrades and eight minor upgrades would be completed over four years. Let me remind members which ones the government promised. They promised Evatt, Florey, Fisher, Gwydir Square, Hughes, Glasson Street in Spence, Macquarie,

Mannheim Street in Kambah, Rivett, Fraser, Carleton Street in Kambah, Fadden, Wanniasa, Castley Circuit in Kambah and Marconi Crescent in Kambah.

The first shopping centre on the list is Evatt. The Evatt shops were featured on this front page, as I just said, in 2012. The upgrade was announced and promised. Chief Minister Katy Gallagher, Ms Porter, Ms Berry and numerous others were all there promising to deliver. Anyone who has visited the Evatt shops will understand why an upgrade is required.

There are a range of businesses at the shops. The owners work hard and provide a great service for the community. They live up to their end of the bargain. They do a great job servicing the community. But is it too much to ask for cracks in the pavement to be fixed, for the lighting to be repaired, for the abandoned truck to be taken away, for the graffiti to be cleaned, for the stairs to be made safe or for the cracks in the walls to be fixed? Residents of Evatt have been waiting for the promised upgrades since 2012.

At the time of the 2012 announcement one of the owners of the shops said he was looking forward to the upgrade. The direct quote is:

Hopefully we get it very soon and it will look much better. I've been asking for the work to be done for a long time so it will be good. We need a bit of a facelift.

How this government has let them down. These people have been investing in their community for years and they were told that in 2013 an upgrade would happen, would take place. They are still waiting.

There was some progress from the government when it produced preliminary sketch plans for the upgrade. However since then nothing has happened. In fact in February 2014 when I wrote to the minister to ask what was happening I was told:

In terms of priority, Evatt and Florey Shopping centres were assessed as being of highest priority in the Belconnen region and Forward Design work is underway at these centres ... Funding of the construction of these shopping centres will be considered in the 2014-15 ACT Budget process.

They might have been considered but they were knocked on the head. They are still waiting. Is it going to happen in 2015? Maybe Mr Rattenbury is going to stand up and say, "I promise it is going to happen next year." The problem is: that has been promised before. The Chief Minister in 2012 said that it would happen next year. We are still waiting.

In early 2014 the project was a year behind what was promised. In October 2014 I again asked the minister about the upgrade at Evatt. The minister said:

Future funding bids will determine when the upgrades at Evatt and Florey shopping centres will be constructed.

It is open ended. At that point in effect the Labor promise has been absolutely discarded.

By the end of last year the project had been put off indefinitely. The minister cannot give any indication when the money will be available and when the work will be done. This was supposed to be the first upgrade but the government cannot say when it will happen. It is unacceptable that the residents of Evatt are still waiting for an upgrade for their shops and the government promised that it would be upgraded in 2013.

The Gwydir Square shops were also on the list of shops being promised an upgrade. The Gwydir Square shops are very busy and popular with local residents. However they do need an upgrade. The paths need to be upgraded. There is no public toilet; there is not enough parking for customers and staff. The businesses at Gwydir Square have been waiting for the government to start the upgrade process by consulting them about what improvements are required. They have not heard anything.

I have contacted the government several times about this. The minister told me in early 2014 that funding would be considered for last year's budget. However there was no money in that budget and there is no money in this year's budget. The minister refused to say when the design for the upgrade will be prepared or when the work will begin. It is unacceptable.

Canberrans pay high rates and other taxes. They can expect that they will receive something in return. However the government continue to neglect local shops. Not only do they neglect local communities and local business people but they actually mislead them. That is exactly what this promise is and what this story is: it is a mislead. It is the government misleading.

Dr Bourke: On a point of order, Mr Coe has been saying that the government is misleading, and that is unparliamentary.

Mrs Dunne: On the point of order, Madam Assistant Speaker, I have been listening very carefully to Mr Coe. Mr Coe was talking about a story in the *Canberra Chronicle* and he did not say that anyone had misled this Assembly. It was not out of order.

Mr Rattenbury interjecting—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Ms Lawder): Mr Rattenbury, do you have a point of order?

Mr Rattenbury: No.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Maybe you could keep the comments to yourself.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: You too, Mr Hanson. Mr Coe, would you clarify for me: were you talking about this article in the *Chronicle*?

MR COE: I was talking about it implying or having said that the government has misled. Whether it is out of order to say the government has misled as opposed to an individual—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I will take that as perhaps he did not say “the government”. He has not said an individual has misled anyone. It is talking more generally as a debating point, but thank you for pointing that out. Mr Coe, I am sure, will be careful with what he says.

Dr Bourke: On another point of order, Madam Assistant Speaker, just a moment ago you brought Mr Hanson to order, at which stage he laughed, which is a reflection on your ruling.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you, Dr Bourke.

Mr Hanson: Madam Assistant Speaker, I can assure you that I would never laugh at one of your rulings. I may have laughed at Dr Bourke.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: That is enough, thank you. Let us all proceed and get through this as best we can for the rest of the evening.

MR COE: It is interesting that this article from September 2012 does not include Dr Bourke. Maybe Dr Bourke was in on the truth that perhaps there was not ever going to be any money for the old Evatt shops upgrade or for any of the other ones. Maybe he knew that Evatt was not going to be upgraded and Gwydir Square was not going to be upgraded and it was a bit of a sham promise and that is why he is not in the photo. Perhaps that is why it is Ms Berry, Ms Porter and Ms Gallagher.

Unfortunately the community was still clearly left with the impression that this government would deliver, and once again they have been let down. The Canberra community have been let down despite the fact that rates go up, that fees go up, that charges go up, that taxes go up. Yet they are getting very little in return.

Next year I am sure we can expect the government to make promises about upgrades to local shops as part of the election campaign. Who knows, maybe they will recycle Evatt and Gwydir Square and others around Belconnen and other parts of Canberra? Maybe they will promise to do it next year. Maybe 2017 is the year. 2017 is the year it is all going to happen!

I am sure Mr Rattenbury is going to say, “We’ve done this piece of work here and this piece of work there. We’ve got a plan here and a plan there.” But that does not change the fact that there are numerous sites right across Canberra that the government said they would be upgrading and it simply has not happened.

The motion today calls on the government to honour its promises to the Canberra community and to the businesspeople who take risks and invest in our community. The government made promises to the community during the 2012 election campaign, and I think it is reasonable that they are honoured. They have gone well above and

beyond their promise for light rail. They promised \$30 million for light rail; yet somehow they have found a billion dollars for it. You would think they would be able to find some money for the Evatt shops upgrade or for the Gwydir Square shops upgrade if they can find a billion dollars for light rail.

Unfortunately there are so many people in Canberra that feel absolutely deflated by a government that simply invests in light rail at the expense of every other core urban service that should be delivered by a local government. And that is why I urge members to support the motion.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (5.22): I rise to recognise the recent and future shopping centre upgrades in Belconnen. The Melba shops and Scullin shops have had wonderful themed upgrades in recent years. Melba shops pay tribute to Dame Nellie, and Scullin's upgrades celebrate the aviators that the suburb's streets are named for.

Macquarie shops have also benefited recently, with new safety bollards installed to stop a mini-spate of car accidents, with cars crashing into shopfronts, which I am sure those opposite may have noticed in the weekly newspaper. In addition, TAMS made the car park road one way, as a needed safety measure. This safety measure protects the many elderly people and children using that set of shops. But it is a safety measure attacked in a recent search-and-destroy mission by the senior Liberal member for Ginninderra, Mrs Dunne, to discredit any progress on shopping centres in Belconnen.

Cook shops have recently benefited from a public toilet block that was installed to the relief of anyone caught short themselves or with young children at the Cook shops. Through the estimates process, Mr Rattenbury informed me about further upgrades for Cook shops, saying that the detailed and construction tender drawings will be completed in August 2015 and construction is scheduled to begin in late 2015 and be completed by mid-2016. The scope of work includes an additional parking space for people with a disability; improvements to paved areas, including a new gathering space; the upgrade and provision of additional pedestrian paths, including a new path to the bus stop, lighting and pram ramp upgrades; and street furniture such as seats, bike racks and a drinking fountain.

For the Florey and Evatt shops, I am told that minor works are to begin early next year and be completed by mid-2016. The scope of works includes furniture improvements such as bike racks, drinking fountains, seats and notice boards. These minor upgrades are consistent with the preliminary plans for upgrading Evatt and Florey shops, which will be undertaken as funds become available for this.

The residents of these suburbs are looking forward to these upgrades, as I am. The sooner the better. We all wish they had been completed yesterday, of course, but I am confident these upgrades will happen and that they will enhance the shops that are at the heart of each community.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (5.25): I will be brief. I wanted to concentrate on a couple of shopping centres, the Evatt shops in particular, and the Florey shops, but also to touch lightly on the Cook shops.

This again is a saga of the ACT government over-promising and under-delivering. As Mr Coe pointed out, in the last election we saw the Chief Minister at the time, Ms Gallagher, and Ms Berry and Ms Porter, turning up to over-promise for Evatt, to commit that within a year of the successful election of an ACT Gallagher government the Evatt shops would be upgraded. I was involved, as many residents were, in the consultation on the upgrade of the Evatt shops. Not only have they over-promised and under-delivered in relation to the timing, but the officials and the government have over-promised and under-delivered in relation to what is actually going to come about.

I was involved in this consultation. I spent a couple of useful mornings going from shopping centre to shopping centre as representatives of TAMS conducted consultations at Evatt and then at Florey. The officials pointed out to me all the things that were wrong with the Evatt shops that could be fixed in an upgrade. Then we went to the Florey shops and they pointed out again all the things that were wrong. They talked to the traders; the traders talked to them and gave them their ideas.

What have we got? The last briefing I received in relation to the Florey and Evatt shops was that for the Florey shops there would be about \$80,000 worth of concrete to fix some grade issues for wheelchair access from particular roads. That is important, but does not address important issues like the discontinuity in the footpaths outside the shops, where there are quite dangerous steps for people that might have low vision. These issues are not being addressed.

When I asked in the briefing, “What are you doing about this discontinuity?” I heard for the first time an official who came specifically to give me a briefing about the upgrade to the Evatt and Florey shops say, “Oh, Madam Speaker, I am not familiar with this site.” So I received a briefing from someone who was supposedly an expert who had not visited the site.

I asked a number of questions about the upgrade. With things that were discussed openly at the public consultation that the traders asked for, I asked, “Are these things going to be included?” “Oh, no. We are just going to fix the easement, add a disabled car park and make sure that the disabled car parking spaces are up to the modern standard.” It was much less than was promised or foreshadowed at the consultation. I made the point to the officials that both at the Evatt shops and at the Florey shops they did not lower people’s expectations; they raised them. They did not say, “We are here to get your views about whether we need to fix up the pram ramps and whether we need to make a particular path grade-appropriate for wheelchairs.” They came there asking for views for major upgrades. They over-promised and they under-delivered.

This is the story of this government in relation to shop upgrades across my electorate. During the last budget—not this budget we are debating today, but the one we debated this time last year—Dr Bourke extolled the shop upgrades program because it would deliver money for Cook. We are still waiting for it. The money that was promised in the last budget for Cook has not yet seen the light of day. The new toilet had already been built before there was a commitment in the last budget supposedly for Cook. Dr Bourke promised that there would be a shop upgrade for Cook last year. It has not, to this day, happened.

This is the constant story across this place. The government raises expectations unreasonably, and cannot come up with the funds. It has spread itself far too thinly. What we have is a whole range of unhappy shopkeepers and unhappy users of the shops. People are less likely to use the shops because they are dangerous at night and dangerous on other occasions. People do not get an opportunity to see the government put taxpayer funds to work and improve the public amenity at these shops.

I had a briefing in relation to the Evatt shops. Again the official said to me on a number of occasions when I asked specific questions, “Madam Speaker, I cannot answer that question. I am not familiar with the site.” I asked the minister, “Why am I sent someone to brief me on a subject when they do not know very much about the local shops—certainly much less than I do?” As a result of this, we have seen a high level of disappointment, a high level of dissatisfaction, amongst the traders at the shopping centres and amongst the users.

I commend Mr Coe for his persistence in bringing these matters to the attention of the Assembly. I condemn the government for its failure to fully address the issues raised by traders and raised by users about the need for proper upgrades and for their penny-pinching approach to upgrading. People are seeing their rates rise hand over fist, 40 per cent over the last few years and more, but they do not see it in services provided, in amenity and public safety at shopping centres.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (5.31): I will speak quite briefly. We have seen that shopping centres in Fadden, Wanniasa, Carlton Street Kambah, Mannheim Street Kambah, Castley Circuit Kambah and Marconi Crescent Kambah were promised upgrades prior to the 2012 election. Currently the Mannheim Street Kambah upgrade is underway, I believe. That is good to see, but it means the remaining ones have not yet been done, and that makes me wonder when they are going to be done. Marconi Crescent Kambah at Kambah village has been described to me as the worst shops in Canberra.. The people that go there are quite disturbed by the state of the shops at Kambah village.

One that has been done is Theodore shops. Theodore shops were not on the list of election upgrades for shopping centres. Perhaps it is thanks to Mr Gentleman’s lobbying for Theodore residents that Theodore shops got done, but as we have discussed a few times in this place, including at estimates hearings, what was put in at Theodore was not quite what residents expected and not quite what they indicated they wanted when they had the consultation about the shops, with the brick sign for Theodore shops being the best example of that.

I urge the government to take seriously their program of shopping centre improvements, especially the ones they promised during the 2012 election campaign. People take pride in their local shopping centres. They want to support local shops where they can, and we owe it to the traders of Marconi Street at Kambah village as well. Helen Tan, for example has contacted me several times about the general state of the shops at Kambah village, so the traders would also like to see a bit more work done.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (5.34): I welcome the fact that Mr Coe has brought this motion on today as it gives me the opportunity to speak about the government's commitment to the ongoing sustainability of local shopping centres. The motion provides a good opportunity to reflect on the improvements that have been made over the last few years and also to discuss future plans.

As minister for TAMS, my directorate is responsible for the management of public open space in 87 local and district shopping centres across Canberra. City Services within TAMS looks after the upgrade of public space in local shopping centres, and the upgrade works aim to encourage the use and enjoyment of public places by all members of the community. One of the features of the recent upgrades has been about making the shops more accessible for people with a disability. A key feature has been some of those access points that have been identified as problematic for people who are mobility impaired.

It is important to note that many of the local shopping centres and buildings are not owned by the ACT government but are primarily leasehold with private parties, and I will come back to that point later. As such, TAMS works closely with the building owners to deliver ongoing management of and upgrades to the public space surrounding these local centres.

As part of the shopping centre upgrade consultation process, members of the local community are encouraged to provide input on concept plans to ensure upgrades address priority needs and reflect the local community's identity. I have attended a number of these when I have been able to at a range of shopping centres around Canberra. I have discussed in this place before the way the process works in that there are a couple of stages. The first is to go out and ask what people want. The next stage is to come back with a draft design and seek further confirmation.

Going to comments Ms Lawder just made, it is important to note that consultation does not mean that if you ask people they get everything they want. In asking a very open question you will get a great number of ideas, but that does not mean they are practical, possible or affordable. It is not fair or accurate to say that the consultation process is not an open one. It is simply that in asking the open question one gets more ideas than one is able to implement. Certainly at places like Hughes shops and Chapman shops I have watched and been involved in the community consultation, and I think it has been a very positive experience.

The shopping centre upgrade program is about trying to tackle the problems with ageing infrastructure in the local centres, updating or replacing specific assets and infrastructure and giving them a refresh. It can be a range of things: it can be lighting; it can be the planting of new garden beds, as I spoke about earlier; it can be access issues such as ramps for both prams and for people with a disability; or it can be changing the configuration of the parking area to improve the way it flows, which has been the case in a number of shopping centres. It depends on the nature of the local centre.

Local shops provide convenient access for daily shopping needs as well as to a variety of local community services and businesses, which, in turn, creates local jobs. Each shopping centre is unique, and often each shop within the shopping centre can be a focal point. It is important that we keep local shopping centres alive because they provide a really important service to people who perhaps do not want to or cannot travel far for some of their shopping needs.

They also play an important role in strengthening connections within the local community where people run into their neighbours at the shops, they get to know people at their local shops and they get to know the shopkeepers. I know each member in this place could give examples of the strong relationships and connections that exist in a local shopping centre they know. That, again, underlines the importance of local shops.

Similarly, one of the advantages of local shops is the possibility for people to walk or cycle to them rather than needing to take the car. They are often only several hundred metres, a kilometre or a couple of kilometres away, and these are distances that are achievable from an active travel point of view. Not everyone is going to be able to commute from their home to their workplace, but visiting their local shops through a bit of active travel, getting some exercise and saving some greenhouse emissions are a very positive opportunity.

The ACT government introduced a local shopping centre upgrade program in recognition of the importance of local shops, for all the reasons I have just spoken about and the necessity of making sure that they remain vibrant and vital and sustainable. In 2012, as has been highlighted today, the government committed to improving paving, seating, parking, lighting and safety at a range of local shops across Canberra. As the program continues to be developed and delivered, the level of financial commitment to providing these basic infrastructure upgrades continues to increase.

It is worth noting that the range of 2012 commitments came on top of a range of 2008 commitments that had been rolled out. The government proposed in 2012 to upgrade 15 local shops, and Mr Coe has outlined those in his motion so I will not repeat them. The government has had a continuing program of local shop upgrades since 2008, as I mentioned. Since 2012 it has upgraded Waramanga, Farrer, Red Hill, Scullin, Lyons, Ainslie, Garran, Charnwood, Griffith, Theodore and Chapman. No-one can doubt that this program is going on. The government is clearly committed to it and will continue to roll it out.

In that sense, upgrades for Cook, Rivett shops and Mannheim Street Kambah are underway and will be finalised during this financial year. Minor upgrades will be undertaken at Torrens, Evatt, Florey and Hughes shops in this financial year as well. For Mr Coe's benefit, because he was particularly interested in Evatt shops, I assure him the financing has been committed for the work to take place in this financial year.

The government shopping centre upgrades are being delivered in accordance with the government's promises that were assessed and prioritised for upgrade in 2012 and

funded through an ongoing upgraded program. In 2015-16 a feasibility study is being undertaken and preliminary plans prepared for improving the public domain around the local shops at Kambah—the Marconi Crescent ones, which have also been referred to in today’s debate. In 2014-15 and 2015-16 a total of \$4,308,000 of capital works funding has been made available for upgrades at local centres. These upgrade works focus on priority areas and elements identified through the forward design process which I spoke about earlier—that is, the consultation undertaken with leaseholders, local community groups and traders.

I will also talk about the issue I touched on earlier—that is, that much of the land and space is owned, controlled or leased by private parties. This is a really important issue. I have asked Territory and Municipal Services to review the funding model for future upgrades at shopping centres, and this work is currently underway. I am looking at what other jurisdictions do. I am happy to acknowledge that some members of the community have expressed frustration to me when TAMS has completed the work it has undertaken at a local shopping centre on the public domain and yet the shops look the same. Of course, TAMS does not have any control or ability to work on those areas.

There a number of examples around where shop owners have done nothing at the time that TAMS has done upgrade work. Members of the community turn up and go, “Yes, there’s been all this construction work, and yes, the footpath looks great and I appreciate the new trees and the new lights and things like that, but what about the shops?”

Mr Hanson: Too busy with light rail, Shane?

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Dr Bourke): Order, Mr Hanson!

MR RATTENBURY: Mr Hanson is interjecting, as he always does. I think he is suggesting the government should spend money upgrading private property as well. That seems to be what he is suggesting. I do not think that is an appropriate role for government. I would like, though, to explore a co-investment model so that when the government approaches a shopping centre and says, “The government is prepared to commit money to this shopping centre,” the traders, the owners of those buildings, also participate so that we get an enhanced centre upgrade where both the public and the private domains are upgraded. We have seen some precursors to that. It is done in other jurisdictions, and I think of the recent example of Chapman shops, where some of the store owners were very enthusiastic participants in the upgrade program and did some work on their locations as well. That is a welcome contribution and one I am keen to explore further.

We have seen some great examples of these partnership and co-investment models, be it the lawns at Green Square at Kingston or the ongoing partnership with Canberra CBD, where traders contribute towards a range of upgrades and initiatives in the CBD. I have asked TAMS to get on with that. I am keen to explore those models and how it can work, how it has worked in other jurisdictions and where others have made not such good attempts at their programs.

Mr Assistant Speaker, can I clarify the time? I believe I was given only 10 minutes, when, as the government responder, I believe I have 15.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I will seek some advice.

MR RATTENBURY: I will take the crossbench member allocation, if that assists.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: You may continue, Mr Rattenbury.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you. I will not go for much longer anyway, members. Having flagged the intent to look at the opportunities in co-investment, I am happy to assure members that the government is committed to continuing the program of shopping centre upgrades. A range of works is going on this year. Of particular interest, the Evatt shops are committed for this financial year. The funding is available.

I have circulated an amendment, which I now move:

Omit all words after “notes”, substitute:

- “(a) the importance of local shops to local communities;
- (b) the importance of upgrading local shops to assist with their viability and vitality;
- (c) the Government promised in 2012 to upgrade 15 local shops at Evatt; Florey; Fisher; Gwydir Square; Hughes; Glassey St, Spence; Macquarie; Rivett; Fraser; Fadden; Wanniasa; and Carleton St, Mannheim St, Castley Circuit and Marconi Crescent in Kambah;
- (d) the Government has had a continuing program of local shop upgrades since 2008 and has upgraded Waramanga, Farrer, Red Hill, Scullin, Lyons, Ainslie, Garran, Charnwood, Griffith, Theodore and Chapman since 2012;
- (e) upgrades for Cook, Rivett shops and Mannheim St, Kambah are underway and will be finalised in 2015-16;
- (f) minor upgrades will be undertaken at Torrens, Evatt, Florey and Hughes shops in 2015-16;
- (g) feedback from the community highlights that although the ACT Government is able to upgrade the public space around local shopping centres, as the buildings and adjacent land are privately owned, public investment in upgrades does not always create the desired outcome for the community; and
- (h) the ACT Government is developing a shopping centre co-investment model that will allow for privately and publicly funded upgrades with better overall outcomes for the community; and

- (2) calls on the Government to continue the program of shopping centre upgrades and explore options to leverage greater levels of private investment into these projects.”.

I indicate that I have made a number of adjustments. I note that it is Glassey Street in Spence. Mr Coe mentioned Glasson Street. If my memory serves me correctly, that is in Turner. Glassey Street, Spence is the one listed there, so that is why that adjustment is made. I have highlighted, relevant to a number of the questions asked today, where the program either has been completed or is scheduled for the coming year. I flag the fact that I intend to explore, through research from TAMS, this co-investment model and the possibility of getting enhanced outcomes by co-contribution from the private sector as part of these upgrades to meet some of the community expectation and the community ideas that are out there. I commend my amendment to the Assembly, and I look forward to receiving support for it.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (5.46): To conclude debate on this motion, I am disappointed we did not hear from the minister about why the upgrades have not been done yet despite the fact that they were promised. What is the reason why Evatt was not done in 2013 as promised? What is the reason why all these shopping centre upgrades are not going to happen this term as promised by Labor in September of 2012? I do not understand what the rationale is. What is the reason? Surely it is not a capability issue. Surely TAMS have the ability to manage this process. Is it simply that they have not prioritised it? Is it simply that the government has said, “This is not a promise we want to keep”? Is it simply that they have prioritised light rail over all of these services? How is it that there is over \$20 million for light rail in this year’s budget but there is not any money for the Gwydir Square shops in Kaleen? Why is that?

These are all reasonable questions, and I think it is reasonable for the government to respond and give the business and property owners some explanation as to why the government simply has not delivered on its promise. Mr Rattenbury has said he is looking for ways to get private sector investment. I believe the traders of Canberra invest in our community. I believe the traders of Canberra invest in our community when they put their houses on the line; when they take out a tenancy; when they buy a building; when they pay their rates; when they pay their utility bills; when they pay their levies, their licences or their fees and charges; when they pay and collect GST; and when they pay company tax or income tax.

These are the sorts of commitments and investments businesses and property owners right across Canberra make on a daily basis. They are investing in our community, and I think we are short-changing them if we say they are not doing enough. Simply taking a risk in this city is something we should be commending, not something that we should be lamenting as not being enough.

I call on the government to deliver their promise. I call on the government to do what they said they would do. You would not think that would be a controversial statement. You would not think you would vote against that, but it seems that is what the government are going to do. The government are not going to vote for a motion that simply calls on them to implement their own election promise. It amazes me. What

does that mean for next year when the election promises start to come out again? Does that mean they are simply not going to be delivered?

The motion includes the importance of local shops to local communities, but they are not arguing against that. Many local shops are becoming run down and in need of an upgrade. Are they against that? Obviously not, because they have a commitment to upgrade local shops. The government promised in 2012 to upgrade numerous shops. That is the truth. The majority of the promised upgrades have not been completed or even commenced. That is the truth, too. Finally, the motion calls on the government to undertake the upgrades to all local shops as promised in 2012.

The government seems to have a problem with paragraph (2), which calls on the government to undertake the upgrades to all local shops as promised. It is interesting that the government is going to be, in effect, voting against the Labor policy of 2012. We are quite happy to endorse this policy of 2012. Why is the Labor Party not willing to back its own policy of 2012? What are the other priorities? What are the things the government thinks are of higher order than the policy as promised in 2012? It is disappointing the amendment is going to water down the motion such that it does not give any commitment whatsoever to all the people the government made promises to in 2012.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Executive business—precedence

Ordered that executive business be called on.

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

Sitting suspended from 5.52 to 7.30 pm.

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.

Detail stage

Education and Training Directorate—schedule 1, part 1.9.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (7.30): Education and Training by any measure continues to require a significant amount of taxpayer dollars. The education minister

is quite right to highlight and acknowledge that this year's allocation of \$1.1 billion is the largest investment ever. It is incumbent on all of us to ensure that the money is well spent and spent well. Given the ACT has one of the highest, if not the highest, per capita spend on public education, it is important that the money is appropriately allocated. My comments tonight will focus on two main things: ageing infrastructure and capacity issues at Canberra schools. I also wish to draw the attention of the Assembly to the government's response to recommendations related to education and training.

For some time I have been concerned at the quite frequent mechanical and infrastructure failures in Canberra schools. Dickson College is the latest to have a fire in their electrical switchboard. I cannot remember how many times incidents like this have disrupted a school during school hours, but quite frankly there are just too many. Dickson College is one of the schools in their 50s. It was built in 1962, making it 53 this year. Harking back to the 1950s is clearly the Labor Party room slogan of the week, so I will take the liberty of using it as well.

Every time I refer to ageing infrastructure, the minister interprets that as meaning the Liberals want to knock down schools. For the record, yet again, no, it does not. What it does signal is that on this side of the chamber we believe political parties should not make election promises they do not intend to keep. It does seem a challenge for some of those opposite to accept that what is said and promised in an election period is expected by the community to be delivered in government. And \$70 million in new money—that is, spending over and above the usual maintenance allocation—was a program promised in 2012.

Since then, I have asked how it has been spent. Teachers keep asking where it is being spent, and the teachers' own union claim it is not being spent. None of us believe it is being delivered, and that was confirmed during estimates. I quite specifically asked about how much had been spent in the years since the 2012 election, and was advised that over \$62 million had been spent since 2012 on a variety of programs—\$3 million on school infrastructure, another \$3 million on hazardous material removal, and the balance on capital school upgrades.

When I asked if the funding was new money, the answer came back as "The funding was appropriated through the annual budget." I take that as a no. I also asked if the program was a replacement for previous programs. The answer came back as "This program includes capital upgrades." I take that answer to mean nothing new or special here. Canberra is 102 years old, so of course we will have schools that belong to an earlier era. They do not mean they should be pulled down, but it does mean that they need close scrutiny and more frequent maintenance to ensure that they remain fit for purpose.

I think the intention of promising an additional \$70 million in 2012 was recognition of that need. It is regrettable, then, that higher priorities, such as train sets and light rail, perhaps, seem to have allowed this government to fall short. We have electrical faults, leaking roofs and schools that could do with a little more than a new fence or some extras.

This leads me to my second point, and that is one of capacity. Again, it is a topic that I have asked several questions about. The minister has advised that the ETD works closely with the environment directorate and the Land Development Agency to plan for future school sites. For Gungahlin and Molonglo—identified future growth areas—that is a responsible approach. I note the ETD's remarks in estimates that there is sufficient capacity in Gungahlin at the moment. For how long? We do not know.

Similarly, there was acknowledgement that there was also growth in enrolments on the south side primary schools, similar to what is occurring north of the lake. In other words, we have schools that are full. The work undertaken by *Canberra Times* journalists less than a year ago to highlight this issue has not been disproved, although much was said about its apparent inaccuracy. Markus Mannheim reported that an internal government document indicated that almost a quarter of Canberra's schools could be overcrowded within three years. The same report suggested that 10 schools, mostly primary, are already over capacity.

There are a number of schools in this area that we commented on at length when this debate was going on. A very topical one at the moment is the Telopea Park School issues, where land has been taken away from education uses and made a community usage. I guess it will be interesting to see how this is going to be handled, but early indications are that already the promise that Mr Barr made was fairly hollow. The community is just now starting to come to grips with what was said this morning.

Telopea Park School is probably one of the most congested schools in terms of student ratio to land availability. If any of that land is taken away from Telopea Park, it will cause severe problems—if not this year, then certainly next year or the following years. The long-term planning by the education minister for this particular school just on its own is something that deserves quite a bit of attention from the community. Of course, this minister was so interested in Telopea Park School that she could not be bothered to attend a fairly robust debate that took place this morning. Both Minister Barr and the Greens minister, Mr Shane Rattenbury, took part, but the education minister, whose portfolio it is, was nowhere to be seen.

Since these early reports on primary schools and school capacities, the report on government services earlier this year showed that the number of children aged between one and five attending an approved childcare service had increased by 15 per cent in the last two years. This will inevitably lead to increases in primary school enrolments, and more schools will get to capacity.

The minister is at pains to assure the Assembly that ACT schools are managing, and capable of managing, capacity issues. However, building demountables is not the best solution and not always possible. Changing the priority enrolment area or excluding students from out of area is not always optimal, and eventually you run out of schools to push children into. If you keep moving the boundaries, the boundaries will soon run out.

I know from conversations I have with parents that at least one primary and one high school in the inner north is currently at capacity. In older suburbs, there is no

opportunity to take more land, so the initial decision to reduce the footprint of a school like Telopea Park, as we said, was clearly short-sighted and, frankly, stupid.

I note that the estimates committee recommendation that the Education and Training Directorate provide to the Assembly its assumptions underpinning modelling in relation to future school developments was refused. One needs to ask why that might be so.

In respect of where new schools should be, I know that the non-government school sector would like to be considered in planning processes undertaken by ETD and LDA. Given that we know that the ACT has a consistently high percentage of children attending non-government schools, it would seem prudent that land be set aside for schools, recognising the current ratio between government, independent and Catholic schools.

Such a policy might also help to reduce what I consider is unreasonable criticism every time the government is asked to approve a new non-government school. Given that groups such as SOS and the AEU will never accept the need for and role of non-government schools, I believe their arguments and complaints have to be considered in that light.

On the recommendations of the appropriations report, the committee made several and I will go through them. Recommendation 92 was about providing the Assembly with the assumptions underpinning the modelling for future school development, and that was denied. The response claimed that this information is contained in working documents and updated on a frequent basis. (*Second speaking period taken.*) I see that was the fairly frequent excuse used to deny information to the Telopea Park P&C president in the response to his FOI that arrived yesterday.

Recommendation 93 recommended that the ACT government consult more closely with the affected parties in the Telopea Park and Mocca land swap to investigate what other options might be available. This was agreed. But as we saw today, this government is like Houdini when it comes to moves and twists and turns and obfuscation. Suffice to say we will believe it when we see it. The affected communities are even less impressed by those on the other side of this chamber after witnessing at first hand just how frequently they change positions and reinvent the truth or just do not show up to take part in debates on education at the ministerial level.

Recommendation 94 recommended that the government conclude its inquiry into the inappropriate withdrawal space in an ACT school expeditiously and provide an update to the Assembly within three sitting days of receipt of the report. The government's response was "Noted." Frankly, that is about all we can expect to get. To say that the finalisation of the inquiry "remains a priority" is bunkum at best.

After the very first announcement of the issue at hand, Ms Burch, the minister for education, gave us a briefing, which we attended, at which I agreed with the approach that the minister was taking. I questioned whether it was actually an independent inquiry that was being set up. I did question that. But I wanted to see the terms of reference to be applied. That was way back then. We are talking about 2 April, when I

asked a number of questions of this minister. The only response I got on that was a very angry minister on the end of the telephone when I was travelling in my car who spoke about being betrayed about information that was given in a briefing. There was nothing I divulged in the press release that I put out apart from questioning the minister on some of the methodology that she used.

But ultimately I agreed with her. I agreed with her when she said, “This is a serious issue. We have to get to the bottom of it.” But nearly five months later—that was on 2 April; we are now in the middle of August—Minister Burch still has to bring back to the community anything of any consequence regarding the promise that she made on 2 April.

We have already started to hear the preparatory softening up on this issue with words about privacy, HR matters and the old chestnut protection of “legal advice” restricting what can be reported. We are not asking this minister to give us information regarding individuals or to impinge on the privacy of the people who have been affected—and that includes the whole school that has been affected. As to whether this minister has actually gone to this school and given the reassurance that we asked for quite some months ago, I have yet to hear from the minister whether she even did that. As with the previous recommendation, it does not matter what this government does or says about this. The electorate has made a judgement; in fact, the rest of Australia has also. We expect little based on their response to the recommendations.

Recommendation 95 recommends that if the report is not ready before the August sittings—and, obviously, they conclude tomorrow—the Assembly receive an update on the situation. Again, legal advice was going to be required before the minister could divulge anything. So we are not holding our breath. They have a big hole to dig themselves out of, after all, and this minister is quite capable of digging an even bigger hole. I look forward to hearing what answer she comes back with.

Recommendation 96 relates to CIT and its provision and delivery of Auslan courses. Ms Lawder clearly knows more about these courses than anyone else in this chamber, and it would seem she knows more than many within the Education and Training Directorate. As she demonstrated yesterday, CIT would be foolish to try to confuse her with course requirements and demand.

I would like to record my thanks to the officials from ETD who attended and provided answers to the various issues we raised. I would like to thank also all the members of the estimates committee, who toiled for many long hours on many long days. I did not envy them their task but very much appreciated their commitment, especially to the education component of their report.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (7.46): There is some great news in this budget for education in Belconnen. Most significantly, this government is investing \$17 million in this year’s budget for a major refurbishment of Belconnen High School, which will include an outdoor learning area and a new school administration area. The refurbishment reflects consultation with the school community, teachers and parents.

Detailed design work will begin immediately with construction of the new administration area, expected to start in February 2016 and to be completed around July. Modernisation of the student learning areas is expected to start in May 2016 and be completed by late 2017. A wing at the rear of the school has already been demolished to make way for these changes. The inclusion of extra funding in the outyears of operation of the new building brings the total spend on Belconnen high up to \$18.4 million.

The initiative reflects the government's focus on modernising our schools. Of course, that modernisation agenda crucially involves information technology. To that end, Belconnen primary schools will benefit from the government's program to upgrade computers and wi-fi infrastructure. Specialist teams have been going out to primary schools and assessing their current wireless connectivity, identifying priorities for upgrades and how they will be done.

The ACT is implementing a nationally developed digital technologies curriculum in our schools including coding and design aspects. Information and communications technology, ICT, learning is one strategy the government is using to keep Canberra ahead of the curve. We want to ensure the future workforce of our knowledge economy is equipped with a modern, robust education in our clever capital.

The budget also includes \$1.7 million for upgrades at CIT in Bruce, reflecting the government's ongoing commitment to skills and training. CIT is also set to benefit from our investment in renewables. As a result of the wind power auctions, the Bruce campus will become a major trainer of wind turbine maintenance workers.

Of course, the Liberal Party, as we know, has a very different attitude to wind power. In fact, the Abbott government's recent attack on renewable energy—and the Canberra Liberals seek to model themselves on that government—has particularly targeted wind. These are the role models for the people opposite us. Treasurer Hockey said, "I cannot stand those things." Of course, we had some commentary yesterday, for instance, in the *Financial Review* by Laura Tingle—

Mr Doszpot: I have a point of order. Madam Speaker, this, I believe, is about education and Dr Bourke is ranging off into all sorts of directions. Could we ask him to come back?

MADAM SPEAKER: On the point of order—I was thinking about this as I was listening to Dr Bourke—the budget debate is always a wide-ranging debate. That said, I think I should remind Dr Bourke that we in this place are responsible for issues in the ACT and I am not entirely sure that the views of the federal Treasurer on wind farms are particularly appropriate for this debate. I ask him to be more relevant to the issues of the appropriation in the ACT. Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: On the point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: No, I have ruled.

DR BOURKE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Of course the attitude of the Canberra Liberals to wind power and the investment we are making in Bruce campus is directly relevant to this budget line item given the investment we are making in the Bruce campus to become a major trainer of wind turbine maintenance workers. The federal Liberal government, on which this Canberra Liberals team have already stated in this place this week that they seek to model themselves on, as we know, according to Associate Professor Jotzo from the Crawford School at the ANU, has no credible plan to achieve their mediocre targets. So I think this is something that really needs to be brought to the attention of the Assembly. But to conclude—

MADAM SPEAKER: You might also be mindful, Dr Bourke, of the ruling that has been made and I do have the power to sit you down.

DR BOURKE: I am about to conclude, Madam Speaker. Education is a strong and growing sector of the Belconnen economy with our residents reaping the rewards of our great education system. I commend this budget area to the Assembly.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (7.51): I have a few quick comments I would like to make. I commend the government on their initiative of \$615,000 in this budget to counter domestic violence in schools. Obviously, addressing domestic violence with young children is important to change behaviours and knowledge right from the beginning. I think it is a good initiative. It is something that was very much recommended from that domestic violence roundtable that we held in early April. And it is good to see that that is having some money put to it in the budget.

During the estimates hearing we spoke about a specialist learning centre at Caroline Chisholm School and it was good to hear about that as well. My understanding was that the amount in the budget was not as much as was promised at the election. However, I would have to take Minister Burch at her word that it was what the school had agreed was what they need. And we will be watching the Caroline Chisholm School with a lot of attention over time.

I touch on child care very briefly. There was not much discussion on that during the estimates hearings. However, it is important to keep track of these things. We have learnt more recently of some issues in some childcare centres. I understand that the regulator sits within the education department. I had a briefing on that particular issue earlier this week and it was good to hear more about the work of that regulator. I thank the minister's office for organising that briefing.

Education is something that every Canberran feels is important. It is something that we need to invest in. There are obviously always things that can be improved. We have already spoken about CIT, so I will not talk about that. But it is important that we keep our eye on the ball with education. What we do now with our children will see them in good stead throughout the rest of their lives. We really need to make sure that we are monitoring what is going on in our schools to get the best possible result for our children.

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (7.54): I am pleased tonight to rise to talk in support of this budget line on this Labor government's investment in education in our community. I particularly focus on two aspects, investment in education facilities and education services across my local area in Gungahlin and also this government's commitment, led by Minister Burch, in national leadership roles on a range of areas.

This year's budget very pleasingly includes \$30 million investment in a new north Gungahlin preschool to year 6 school and also feasibility funding for a new north Gungahlin high school. As the minister knows and as my community knows, this is a fast growing area and this new school is extremely welcome to all those new people currently living in Gungahlin and also those seeking to move there. Last week Minister Gentleman launched the display village in Moncrieff. We know that over 2,000 families will be looking to move into Moncrieff over the next couple of years. This significant investment in a new P-6 school which will open in 2019 is extremely welcomed by the Gungahlin community.

I take a moment to acknowledge previous investments by this Labor government in education across Gungahlin: the Franklin Early Childhood School, a \$30 million state-of-the-art facility offering schooling and childcare services for Gungahlin families, providing places from preschool to year 2 as well as a 120-place childcare facility; the Neville Bonner Primary School, a \$48 million investment which opened in 2013, providing for nearly 400 students; the two super schools, the P-10 schools, at Amaroo and Harrison, teaching children from their very first school experiences all the way through until they move on to college, providing high quality education for over 2,200 students; and Gungahlin College, a fantastic facility which has had \$75 million invested in it in order to give the best possible education to nearly 900 of Gungahlin's teenagers as they arrive at the end of their secondary education journey and step into adulthood.

Certainly, this minister has led nationally and certainly in the ACT on a range of key leadership areas across education: the digital revolution in our schools, the investment in digital facilities across our schools recognising the future of learning, as Dr Bourke recently outlined, recognising the importance of coding in schools. Our new education facilities are being built to have this capacity to enable our students not just to observe the digital revolution but to engage in it and to drive it.

As Dr Bourke and Minister Burch spoke of earlier, there is also the ACT's leadership role in teacher quality across the country, leading Australia in the campaign to ensure that we have the highest quality teachers that our children deserve; Minister Burch's commitment to school safety, to traffic safety around schools, wearing both hats as Minister for Police and Emergency Services and minister for education. I know—and we discussed this in estimates—how even the gentlest of people can get pretty frustrated at school pickup and school drop-off times and it does not make for a very peaceful day when you are frustrated, in congestion, outside schools. And it certainly does not make it safe for our children.

I highly commend the work being done in this area. As Ms Lawder just noted, there is the work to make sure that respectful relationships are being taught in our schools

across our curriculum and are being built into the work that teachers do and into what our children learn from their earliest engagement in the schooling system.

Importantly too, another nation-leading initiative of this government under Minister Burch is parental engagement. This, I know, has received coverage in a number of ways but it is more than movie nights at schools, as important as they are. What this recognises is the inherently important role that education plays in the lives of our children and the lives of our community, how parents need to work with their children and be engaged in their schooling. As more parents work, as more families juggle more responsibilities inside the home and outside the home, parental engagement becomes a diverse and important initiative and is something that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to.

But what this government is doing is leading the way on finding the best possible opportunities for parents to engage in their children's learning. So I am pleased today to speak in support of this important education line and I commend the government for its commitments in education.

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) (7.59): It gives me great pleasure to stand tonight as minister for education and once again announce and highlight a strong education budget in this budget and our commitment to education in this community.

We are a government committed to delivering great things for this city and its residents. Part of that is laying a great foundation for our community by providing the best education to Canberrans that we can, from early childhood and preschool all the way through to vocational education, skills and degrees. That is why we have such a strong record of investment in education across the territory. This investment confirms our commitment to the national education reform and the priority we place on education in Canberra. This budget delivers on that commitment, targeting investment to provide the best possible education for every child, regardless of their ability, background or the challenges they face.

This budget provides over \$160 million for better classrooms and state-of-the-art, innovative facilities. The government is committed to meeting the individual needs of all students and has provided additional resources to support students with a disability to access and participate in education. This year's budget provides an additional \$3 million for additional support for students with complex learning needs in ACT public schools. A further \$925,000 is allocated to support the transport of students with a disability to and from ACT public schools.

We know that the quality of learning environments has a big impact on how, and how well, students learn. The way students and teachers are able to interact with their spaces is a key driver in the learning process. To make sure we have classrooms and schools of the future, this budget invests over \$31 million to enable design and construction of a new preschool to year 6 in the north Gungahlin suburb of Taylor. We will also undertake preliminary design and feasibility study work to determine the

future educational needs for the high school in north Gungahlin and for a P-10 school in Molonglo.

The new school will provide yet another quality learning environment in the Gungahlin region to meet the needs of students in the new suburbs of Moncrieff, Jacka and Taylor. I know Ms Fitzharris has a keen interest in educational opportunities and development in her electorate. The new school in the Gungahlin area will provide for up to 88 preschoolers and 450 primary schoolers. Over \$7 million will be provided to support the establishment of the school, including the school leadership team and other operational costs such as building security and maintenance.

It gave me great pleasure to stand with my colleagues from Ginninderra—including you, Mr Assistant Speaker Bourke—when we went to Belconnen high and made the announcement of the upgrades to that high school. You made mention of the investment of over \$18 million into Belconnen high. That work has already begun, with the removal of the unused building. Certainly, a very active and positive conversation with the school community will see that \$18 million deliver on our commitment.

I say to those opposite that once we go in and do the hard work regarding the actual cost, we will deliver upon our commitment. I think that should be celebrated, and we should be congratulated on delivering that commitment while spending less from the community's bank account, so to speak.

The focus of the Belconnen high modernisation project is the refurbishment of the student and teacher spaces, outdoor learning spaces and a new school administration building. This will enable the school to provide a 21st century learning environment for students and teachers and modern facilities for local communities to access.

I am also pleased that this budget will deliver on another election commitment through a further \$6.5 million invested in the Caroline Chisholm School to enable the construction of a specialist learning centre. I am very pleased to see this investment in my electorate of Brindabella, in the local school in Chisholm. The focus of this initiative is the establishment of a focal point for student learning and teacher professional development and community use. The centre will be designed to deliver science, technology, engineering and mathematics programs to students attending Caroline Chisholm School and public schools in the Tuggeranong network, teachers from across the ACT public education system and members of the local community.

In an increasingly connected world it is important that our schools keep up with the latest developments in information technology. That is why in this budget there is provision for over \$37 million to support ICT in our schools. That is a serious investment and this funding will ensure that all ACT public school students, across every school, have access to ICT to support their learning.

It will also ensure that schools retain access to reliable ICT network infrastructure that is critical to ensuring effective administration of schools. It will facilitate contemporary learning experience for all students across all curriculum areas,

enabling ACT students to graduate from our schools as active, productive and engaged citizens equipped for the digital age.

To further support teachers in this information technology age, the government has provided over \$1 million for the ACT Teacher Quality Institute for their digital services delivery phase 2 initiative. This will enable our ACT Teacher Quality Institute to deliver online services relating to teacher registration, professional learning, teaching standards and professional practice and conduct. That is a very important area given that earlier today we discussed your motion, Mr Assistant Speaker, that had a focus on the need for quality teaching to improve our students' outcomes. In addition this budget provides \$700,000 to support teachers with online teaching and learning resources to assist in the delivery of the Australian curriculum.

Domestic violence has for too long been something that has gone sadly unchallenged in our society. We must, as leaders of this community, stand up and with one voice say "no more" to domestic violence. I am proud of the leadership role that this government, including my colleagues Minister Corbell and Minister Berry, are taking to tackle domestic violence. I am proud to be leading the response that our schools and education system are implementing as part of that holistic response.

The ACT government will support ACT public schools to provide social and emotional learning programs through the counter domestic violence initiative which invests \$600,000 over two years. This initiative builds on existing programs to make domestic violence an explicit focus of schools in a measured and consistent fashion. It will provide additional resources for the training of teachers and staff on domestic violence issues, including mandatory reporting requirements.

An online resource centre will be developed to connect families to support services, provide additional resources for teachers and support children and young people who may be experiencing domestic violence. This is an important initiative that will be taken to the community and the benefits will be seen for generations to come, when we have the notion of respectful relationships and a zero tolerance for domestic violence initiated, impregnated and implemented within our schools year in and year out.

Our budget initiatives are complemented by our ongoing strategies to support the nation-leading performance of our schools through quality teachers, effective learning environments and positive parental engagement. Ms Fitzharris spoke about parental engagement and I am very pleased to be working with ARACY, the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, in this very important area. I note that our national, leading edge work is being picked up by the commonwealth, which has also been working with ARACY to build on the work that we have done here in schools across the nation.

Teachers are the biggest influence on our student achievement, and teaching quality is therefore critical to improving our education system. Ensuring that we have high quality teachers in our schools is fundamental to building high performing systems and obtaining the very best student outcomes. Above all else, the community expects

our teachers to have high levels of literacy and numeracy. As was mentioned today in your earlier motion, Mr Assistant Speaker, we will this year assess all teachers that are recruited into ACT public education to ensure that they are in the top 30 per cent of the country in literacy and numeracy.

Research also shows that positive parental engagement in learning promotes academic achievement. I want to see families in a genuine partnership with their schools, and put families in a position to support the education of their children. Putting children and parents at the centre has been a key priority for me and this government, and the ACT has led the nation in educational reform.

There is much that the ACT can offer to inform reforms in this space, and we have a strong track record in the area of school education. Our education system has consistently delivered Australia's best overall NAPLAN results as we have some of the best educators in the country. I am confident that we can provide insights into how our education system may evolve nationally and help Australian children to be ready for the challenges into the future.

Our priorities going forward will be designed to ensure that every child, young person and adult will benefit from a high quality, accessible childcare, education and training system. Underpinning such a system is an equitable and appropriately targeted approach to funding. Accordingly, this government will continue its commitment to needs-based funding in our public schools.

To support this I call on the commonwealth government to reverse the growth funding cuts, which for the ACT are estimated to be around \$7 million from 2018; that is, our schools, predominantly our Catholic system schools and our independent schools, will be worse off to the tune of \$7 million. That is something that they have very serious concerns about. I call, and continue to call through the Education Council, for the commonwealth government to reinstate that funding growth. I hope that all of us in this place, even those from the Canberra Liberals, would support not taking \$7 million out of our Catholic system and our independent schools.

The directorate will take a coordinated and comprehensive approach to identifying areas of underachievement and turn them around while also extending those students who are already performing well. We will cultivate a culture of high expectations in our schools in which every child, regardless of their background or circumstance, has the support and the opportunity to be the best that they can be. We will be directing funds to where they are needed most, to ensure that every child has the knowledge, skills and disposition for success in an ever increasing globalised and digital world. Through this budget our focus remains on providing the best education system in Australia, and to each and every child.

In closing I would like to respond to some of the matters raised by Mr Doszpot in his comments. One was in regard to an election commitment of \$70 million. Our election commitment was very clear. We said we would upgrade and extend existing classrooms; fund better fit-out of furnishings and equipment; deliver play area upgrades; refurbish simple things such as toilets, change rooms and shower blocks; and provide new rainwater tanks. Mr Doszpot asked where that money was being

spent. I refer to security upgrades—fences, for example, and security sensors at Red Hill, Macgregor, Maribyrnong, Fraser and Wanniasa schools. There are also rooftop programs at Curtin and Chapman. At Canberra College, there is a lift program, and at Macquarie primary there is a staffroom upgrade. There are school frontages and landscaping at Lyneham high, Namadgi School, Hawker primary, Farrer primary and Lake Ginninderra College. In 2013-14 over \$3 million was spent across those lines.

So far we have also increased the number of solar panels. Indeed we now have every public school with solar initiatives and we are about increasing and enhancing that capacity. When we look at the new school that will go into the new, growing suburb of Molonglo, that will have the largest solar panel in our schools, at 100 kilowatts. We have smart meters across our schools for water and electricity. So not only are they benefiting from renewable energy but they are also able to track their use, use it as science, maths and lifelong learning within our schools and invest that saving in their school in ongoing improvements.

We made mention of teacher quality. Again I remind members that the TEMAG report looked to the ACT and showcased the initiatives that we have had in this place for a number of years, and in which we lead the nation. Also, in the last week I had the absolute pleasure of standing with the independent schools and the Catholic education system and signing an MOU—the first of its kind in this jurisdiction. That showed the partnership between all our sectors. We, as one—public, Catholic and independent—will sign an annual assurance statement that assures the community they are compliant with all the necessary laws and regulations.

Also, for the very first time, we have an agreed and shared understanding and definition of critical incidents. Our Catholic schools and our independent schools will provide a six-monthly update to me on critical incidents. That is the first time ever that we have reached that agreement, and it has been reached under my leadership and I am very pleased about that.

In closing I must respond to Mr Doszpot's continued reference to an incident that happened in one of our schools—Mr Doszpot knows that I briefed him on this—around what I considered to be an inappropriate structure within a school. When it came to my attention, I was the one that brought it into the public arena. I did say at the time that I wanted to get to the bottom of it, and I set up two inquiries. One is an expert panel comprising Professor Tony Shaddock, the Children and Young People Commissioner and an eminent Canberra paediatric clinician. They are coming to the end of their public submissions and I know that they will meet in a very tight time line and then come to me.

On another matter, Mr Doszpot continues to go on as if I were deliberately hiding information from the community. The director-general has been very clear about this inquiry. This is an HR inquiry. It is part of the EBA. Mr Doszpot, you have family members in the teaching community. Mr Doszpot—and I note that you are in the chair at the moment, Mr Assistant Speaker—how would you feel if someone was seeking to acquire the internal ins and outs of an HR review of someone in your family? These are matters of importance to the system but they are also important matters to the people involved.

As I said, I wanted this inquiry done as a matter of urgency. It is independent. I have no control over the time that it takes. It must be done thoroughly; it must be done respectfully. As I understand it—this is on the public record—the review has been concluded and it now sits with an independent delegate. It is not for me to tell the delegate when he or she should make that decision. That is the basis of an independent review and an independent delegation.

I continue to receive correspondence from family and friends of family who are supportive of this approach. They understand; they want this concluded as well. So I ask all in this place to note, when any reference is made to it, that there are professionals involved; there is a family involved. Every time you choose to try and take a cheap political pop at me, you are going straight to the heart of their concern and their own personal dilemma at the moment. I think it is appalling, Mr Assistant Speaker Doszpot. It is a bit tricky when the one I am talking to is actually sitting in the chair.

We have also set up a hotline for the school so that contact can be made. As I understand it, on the last advice I got there had been fewer than five calls made to that service. So, yes, we need to get to the bottom of it, but let us be very mindful of the other side of this matter. It is about the school and the families, and we need to have respect and regard for that.

Having said that, I commend this wonderful investment. There is close on a billion dollars in this budget for education in this city. It is where we need to invest the money. Education is the key to opportunity, and it is the key to future endeavours of the next generation. I commend this budget to the Assembly.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Environment and Planning Directorate—schedule 1, part 1.10.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (8.20): I am pleased to speak today in this debate on the environment, in particular output class 2.1, environment, and output class 2.3, sustainability and climate change. The estimates committee this year considered a wide range of matters under these output classes, and I will touch very briefly on a few of them tonight, including renewable energy, the kangaroo fertility control trial and a few minor comments on other related matters.

Renewable energy has been a hot topic recently, and the ACT government, of course, has legislated a target of 90 per cent renewable energy by 2020. As the Minister for the Environment would know, I have raised on numerous occasions questions about the costs to average households for the commitment to renewable energy. In that regard the committee recommended that the ACT government examine the alternative analysis by the Energy Supply Association of Australia of future costs of the ACT's renewable energy policy, confirm if the government's projections are still valid and report its findings to the Legislative Assembly by the last sitting day of November 2016. The government noted this recommendation.

If the government is to be accountable and transparent about its renewable energy program, it should have agreed with this recommendation and done the analysis as proposed by the Energy Supply Association of Australia using the same methodology as the ESAA so we could look at the future costs of the ACT's renewable energy policy. It is another example of this government keeping things under wraps; increasing the fees and rates for everyday Canberrans but without providing the detailed analysis.

Moving on to the kangaroo fertility control trial, in a discussion in the estimates hearings it appears we are still unable to quantify the cost per kangaroo of the trial. From my reading and recollection, it is two to five years in the making of the trial. Again it would be good information for the public let alone members of the Assembly to know the cost per kangaroo for the fertility control trial.

I will touch on a couple of related matters not necessarily specific to these output classes but more generally. One of the things we discussed in detail that was raised by the Conservation Council was weeds management. When Conservation Council ACT region appeared before the committee it expressed concerns about the budget reduction to the weeds management program, especially in the absence of any scientific basis to support the reduction of funding. The Conservation Council indicated that previous funding levels enabled the ACT weeds strategy to be fully and stably implemented. The funding cuts in this budget will not allow for adequate weeds management in the coming financial years, setting the program back a decade by allowing controlled weeds to regrow and propagate.

Funding for weeds management is important. Insufficient funding will adversely affect biodiversity, agricultural areas and landscapes. The estimates committee was concerned to hear of the reduced funding for weeds management in the ACT, especially, as I said, in the absence of a scientific basis for the reduction. The estimates report has a recommendation about restoring the funding for weeds management, which the government noted but did not agree to.

Another one which is not specific to the environment portfolio but certainly has a connection to it is about divestment. Again, this was raised by the Conservation Council of the ACT. The comment from the executive director was that whilst they commended the ACT government for taking steps to combat climate change, they noted that the government should not be investing in fossil fuels which contribute to climate change. The Executive Director of the Conservation Council of the ACT encouraged the government to divest of fossil fuel investment to "align its climate change policy with its investment policy". That is recommendation 61, and the government has agreed to that because it does not have a particular time frame associated with it.

In closing, I note the contribution of Mr Bob Neil, the former Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, who has retired. I thank him for his long and worthy service to the ACT government and the ACT population as a whole through his important work as the commissioner and before that in his other work. Thank you very much to Mr Bob Neil.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (8.26): Planning is very important to the ACT, and this government continues to get it wrong. The government talks about consultation but refuses to listen to the community's views on major projects. The government continues to try to bypass important scrutiny from public and statutory bodies, particularly when it knows its plans are just so unpopular. The government continues to cling to unreasonable policy even though it has proved to be a failure. The government continues to be unwilling to listen to the community, and there are so many examples with regard to this fact.

The government likes to talk about community consultation but very rarely does it act upon that consultation once it has been conducted. It produces lots of fancy brochures and sends public servants along to community meetings, but very rarely do the plans change by way of what the community wants. If the government was listening to the community, it would make changes to improve projects. Instead, after all the supposed consultation, the government goes ahead and does exactly what it wants to do anyway which is, of course, not always in conjunction with what the community is saying.

This method of consultation has been seen at the Canberra brickworks. For years the government has been talking about developing the brickworks site. Numerous plans and reports have been prepared, open days have been held, and still the government cannot get it right. The results of the consultation show that the residents of Yarralumla are not opposed to redevelopment of the site but they want the development to be appropriately serviced by adequate infrastructure and also to be to the appropriate scale.

The government simply cannot come up with plans that are suitable when they keep trying to jam in as many units as possible to try and get the best yield of that land. It seems there is a fair bit of gamesmanship when it comes to Yarralumla or Downer or many of the other sites around Canberra. It seems that they say, "Well, we want 1,000 units, so we'll go for 1,500 and then do a wind back to 1,000 and everyone will thank us." The truth is this gamesmanship can be so easily called out, and that is exactly what the community is doing time and time again.

Another issue of particular concern to the opposition is variation 306. The effects of this variation continue to be felt by the construction industry. It was no surprise to hear from officials at the estimates hearings that they are recommending changes to these provisions. I am very keen to hear from the minister as to whether these changes are going to play out in reality. Officials noted they are looking at simplifying the development codes in order to make it easier for industry to comply.

The opposition continue to have serious concerns about variation 306. We believe it needs to be repealed and we need to start again. The government continues to stubbornly cling to this unreasonable policy, despite the fact that it was opposed by the Institute of Architects, the Institute of Landscape Architects, the Master Builders Association, the HIA, the planning industry, the Property Council and others. It is unworkable and it will continue to be unworkable.

I draw the government's attention to recommendation 97 of the estimates committee. The committee recommends that the ACT government reconsider variation 306 with regard to solar access and report on the review to the Legislative Assembly. I am pleased the committee has made this wise recommendation, and I urge the government to seriously consider the impact of the solar access provisions on the construction industry. Unfortunately, this was simply the government, especially Minister Corbell, stubbornly clinging to this notion that the solar access rules contained in variation 306 would have good outcomes when, in actual fact, they have done the opposite. They have not created better solar living spaces; they have created worse. They have not given us better streetscapes; they have given us worse streetscapes. They have not given us plots positioned well on sites; they have done the opposite.

The government have a very complicated and regulated planning system, but when the planning system becomes too restrictive they change the system to suit themselves, and this is exactly what has happened with planning legislation to allow the University of Canberra to sell off its land for development. This will allow the University of Canberra to compete with private developers in the residential market as well as with businesses and the commercial property owners at the Belconnen town centre and other surrounding suburbs. This is not good planning. It is yet another example of the government interfering in the planning system, creating uncertainty and establishing a two-tier system—one for them and another for everybody else.

The government is not even providing justification for the change. The only reason for allowing UC to develop their land is that the university has asked for it. So it seems that if you are in with the government you can simply get them to change the planning system for you. This is unacceptable; it is not what a planning system should be. A planning system should provide parameters, it should provide certainty and then allow people to take risks to create opportunities. Instead this government either micromanages or creates a system which is totally unworkable.

The complicated territory plan is a major problem within the ACT planning system. The plan is so long and confusing there are very few people who understand it let alone comply with it. On many occasions I have called for the government to conduct a comprehensive review of the territory plan to find ways to simplify it. I am not the only one who has noticed the problem in the territory. Architect Tony Trobe recently gave his opinion of the territory plan in an article in the *Canberra Times* where he said:

Over the years the ACT Planning code has expanded like an ex-rugby player on chocolate cake.

He also noted that many larger jurisdictions have smaller planning documents. Whilst the size of our planning regulations is not the only consideration, the fact that the territory plan has become so large is not something the government should be proud of. What we would do in 2½ thousand pages of territory plan is done by many other jurisdictions in 500 or 600 pages. We should be looking to those as good examples of how we can streamline the system to create a more workable system where everybody

is better informed. At present nobody is well served, whether it be the developers, the builders or neighbours and community groups. Nobody can comprehend this system.

I also feel sorry for the assessors at ACTPLA because they have their work cut out for them when it comes to any development application they have before them. It must be so difficult to assess a DA given the cumbersome rules everybody has to try and comply with. It is no wonder there are so many opportunities to go to ACAT when there are so many rules making it plausible to make a mistake when assessing them.

The government is determined to build its light rail, and in doing so there is no regard for any planning restrictions that get in the way. The government has passed legislation to remove scrutiny. It has refused to listen to community concerns and is determined to build light rail whatever it takes. We have already seen several pieces of legislation and other instruments come into play. That is all about steamrolling this process until completion—steamrolling the community until this project is complete.

I have already spoken about the problems with the government's land release strategy when discussing the LDA. However, let me remind members of the issues that I raised. The government's land release simply does not match community demand. The location and size of blocks are often unreasonable and do not meet the demand for family homes. Of course, the price point is often out of reach for Canberra families, and it is a shame that our land release policies are driving people across the border. Our policies are driving people to Googong and Tralee because the Queanbeyan City Council have seen a market. They are simply supplying the market and the demand is picking it up.

Another significant problem in the planning space is the excessive and counterintuitive fees and charges this government imposes. The lease variation charge is a counterintuitive and unfair tax and simply does not comply with its supposed wish to have high density. If the government is serious about increased density in the city and town centres it should rethink the lease variation charge. Last year the estimates committee made a recommendation about reviewing the application of the lease variation charge to achieve a target of 50 per cent greenfield and 50 percent urban renewal development. The government refused to review the application of the lease variation charge even though there is a clear case of the tax working against the government's published densification objectives. If the government really wants to encourage densification in the city and town centres, a change to the lease variation charge is an obvious step. *(Second speaking period taken.)*

The government should also reconsider the extension of time fees as part of its strategy to increase housing affordability. The extension of time fees are supposed to stop people land banking. However, the vast majority of people who are caught by the fees are not holding on to land to try to make a profit but simply because there is not demand for that product at the time. They are people who bought land with the intention of building on it and have since discovered that there is no demand for office or commercial space. They are also people who have bought land with the intention of building a family home but, due to circumstances beyond their control, have been unable to start building. These people are paying rates, fees and charges and often mortgages on these blocks and are not getting anything in return. They are not land

banking; they are trying to develop their blocks or even trying to sell them but are unable to because of the fees and charges imposed by this government.

It is hard not to be cynical when looking at the fees and charges this government imposes on the construction industry. You cannot help but conclude that the fees and charges, especially the lease variation charge, are all geared towards higher yield for the LDA. It is simply about making LDA land more attractive and, therefore, about higher yield. On the one hand you have the government saying they want higher density, "We want people living on transport corridors. We want people living on the light rail corridor," yet just about all the LDA developments are happening outside the light rail corridor.

All the new greenfield sites are all outside the light rail corridor. What is light rail going to do for people in Moncrieff? How is light rail going to service people who live four or five kilometres away from the nearest light rail stop? We in the opposition do not have a problem with greenfield sites on the edge of the city, but we would not pretend to say that the light rail route is going to service them. That is what this government seems to be saying. It is saying someone in Moncrieff is going to be better off because of light rail. We simply do not accept it. I firmly believe the vast majority of people in Gungahlin are going to be worse off as a result of light rail.

This government has made a mess of the planning system in the territory. As I have said on many occasions, it is time for a total rework of the system, and the first step should be a comprehensive review and simplification of the territory plan.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (8.39): The 2015-16 budget reinforces our commitment, this Labor government's commitment, to the environment. The ACT is now a recognised leader in developing solutions that address the challenges of climate change at a city and regional level whilst also lessening the burden on households and, in particular, those on lower incomes.

We are working to help all ACT residents with an innovative and interactive sustainability website called the Actsmart sustainability hub, which I launched last year. This provides practical hints and tips on how to reduce your impact on the environment as well as the opportunity to challenge friends and colleagues on the impact of activities on the environment. The website will continue to be updated throughout the year and continue to provide useful information to the local community.

Our conservation activities are continuing to deliver outstanding outcomes for endangered species in the territory. I was delighted earlier this year that our ecologists confirmed that corroboree frogs which were bred in captivity have survived in the wild now for a number of years. This is very exciting as it shows that the preservation programs assist in reversing the continuing decline of these endangered frogs in the wild. This work by EPD conservators, along with a number of other unique programs, will continue throughout 2016 as a result of funding in this year's budget.

The government's kangaroo research work will also continue throughout 2015-16. While still in its early stages, the results so far have been very positive in relation to developing non-lethal means by which to control kangaroo populations in our precious nature reserves. Maintaining the balance of our biodiversity is essential to making sure of the preservation of our diverse environment, and the government remains committed to these programs in this year's budget.

In this financial year we will continue to implement the new Nature Conservation Act. This act will enhance the role of the Conservator of Flora and Fauna in the monitoring and management of nature conservation, increase the alignment between ACT and commonwealth environmental protection law, facilitate a more flexible approach to management of species and ecosystems, and facilitate the introduction of resource protection areas which will assist the ACT in rehabilitating and protecting sensitive breeding areas.

This budget also includes funding to implement the recently commenced bilateral agreement with the commonwealth. This groundbreaking work will enhance the way we manage environment approvals and the accompanying environmental offsets. These environmental offsets help manage impacts on threatened species and threatened species habitat. They provide for environmental compensation for development impacts on sites that contain matters of national environmental significance such as threatened species or communities like yellow box, red gum woodland. The new one-stop shop will maintain high environmental standards while promoting a stronger economy by simplifying the approval process and will be supported through funding in this year's budget.

In July I launched options for improving long-term water quality in the ACT and Murrumbidgee River catchment for public comment. The public consultation includes open-house-style consultations throughout each catchment, which is allowing the community to better understand factors affecting water quality in their local catchments. The options being discussed include systems to promote sedimentation, including wetlands and swales, and more mechanical infrastructure, such as gross pollutant traps and collection of water for irrigation purposes.

As members would be aware, the commonwealth government is providing up to \$85 million to improve water quality in the ACT. Given the significance that our lakes and waterways play in this the largest of Australia's cities inland and making our city a remarkable place to live, we must maintain our commitment to enhance water quality.

The work undertaken to improve our water quality will be complemented by the newly introduced catchment management coordination group. This group will allow agencies, commonwealth sectors and interest groups to assist in the ongoing preservation and improvement of water quality in the ACT.

This government has been very focused on programs that help empower the community in nature conservation tasks. As part of this, the government will fund on-ground programs such as Waterwatch. The program highlights the value that the community puts on environmental management. Waterwatch has been able to

mobilise significant numbers of volunteers and has established an important network for the monitoring and reporting of the health of the ACT's waterways. It has been an essential element in the development of the options for improving water quality as part of the basin priority project.

The ACT is continuing to lead the way when it comes to supporting the development of renewable energy generation for clean, emissions-free electricity for our city. Recently the government undertook an expression of interest phase for next generation solar development. I am pleased to say that the response from industry was overwhelming, with 30 submissions put forward for consideration.

The next generation solar process will deliver an additional 50 megawatts in renewable electricity to the ACT. The combined total of the proposals put forward in the expression of interest round equates to approximately 976 megawatts. This highlights the innovation that the ACT is driving in this important industry. This stage forms an important part of our 90 per cent renewable energy target by the year 2020. The government has decided to target next generation solar, including energy storage and new renewable energy technologies, as part of its plan to reduce emissions and grow the renewable energy sector in the ACT—not only reducing our city's greenhouse emissions, but helping to position our city as an internationally recognised centre for renewable energy innovation and investment.

In 2015-16 the government will continue to implement the carbon-neutral government framework. We have taken the approach of leading by example, finding new ways to reduce the impact that government operations have on the environment. Through the carbon-neutral fund, the government will continue to provide funding for capital works which will not only reduce emissions but improve the efficiency of our business. An example of the positive outcomes this program is delivering is the work across 90 government buildings, including schools, offices and libraries, to upgrade to light-emitting diode, LED, lighting technology. This work is expected to achieve a 20 to 30 per cent electricity use reduction at these sites and support growing the local clean economy. Projects like these move us closer to our goal of zero net emissions in government operations by the year 2020.

Just last week, with the support of the Assembly, the government extended the energy efficiency improvement scheme which was first introduced in January 2013. The Energy Efficiency (Cost of Living) Improvement Act establishes a territory-wide energy savings target and establishes an energy savings obligation for individual electricity suppliers. The government has undertaken detailed modelling and assessment of the likely impacts of the EEIS to the year 2020, including a comprehensive analysis of the likely economic costs and benefits for Canberrans. This analysis concludes that the objectives of the policy, including substantial energy and greenhouse gas savings and enhanced social equity, can be achieved with a net economic benefit for the ACT.

As I mentioned at the beginning, this budget also continues the important work of the Actsmart programs. These programs have engaged thousands of Canberra households, and Actsmart has been very successful in helping them to achieve the government's target of reducing energy consumption while reducing their utility bills. This is

happening for households and small businesses. It has helped many low income households to replace inefficient appliances. It has supported the installation of window fittings to improve comfort and increased general awareness of factors that affect electricity consumption.

The Actsmart program has also been highly successful in diverting large volumes of waste to landfill, particularly for events and businesses operating in the ACT. The education and awareness program has achieved excellent outcomes in our schools, with all ACT schools now accredited under the program, the only Australian jurisdiction to have achieved this.

We are seeking to enhance Canberra's reputation as the bush capital. To achieve this, we are partnering with the 2020 vision to increase the extent of green space in the ACT by 20 per cent, with particular attention placed on new suburbs. Increasing the number of trees and green cover in the ACT will also assist us in meeting the challenges of a changing climate and improving the amenity of the places where we live and work.

With the recent discussion around the benefits of wind generation as an alternative to fossil fuel energy generation, I would like to again reaffirm the ACT's commitment to this form of renewable energy. This year's budget allows the government to continue to undertake a second wind auction process. The first auction was exceptionally well supported and the submissions received were of a high quality. The process created certainty for an industry that had been badly hit by proposed changes and uncertainty at a federal political level. We look forward to the outcomes of the next auction, including the further economic benefits that will come from investment in our city. This auction will also bring us a step closer to our goal of 90 per cent renewable electricity by the year 2020.

The first round of the wind auction delivered to the ACT funding to provide \$1.2 million to establish the renewable energy innovation fund. This fund, combined with our recently released strategy to bring together industry and research sectors to accelerate the development of the renewable energy industry in Canberra, is helping to cement the ACT as a centre of excellence for renewable energy nationally.

Focusing on solar, wind and energy storage, the renewable energy industry development strategy brings together a range of existing government initiatives and will help to facilitate the next generation of renewable energy technologies, including the creation of a renewable energy precinct and test berth facilities. There is no doubt that there are significant economic benefits to be had from being an early adopter economy, and this government wants the ACT to benefit from the jobs and investment that can come from this.

In this budget we have a strong focus on delivering projects that will build a sense of community awareness of and improvement to our local environment. The budget contains grant funding for both the ACT environment grants program and the community gardens program, totalling over \$200,000. This includes \$185,000 in environment grants. The program has a long history of supporting community groups to deliver terrific projects in the nature conservation area. Successful environment

grants in previous rounds have included grants to community and landcare groups for the control of invasive weeds and planting of native species in integrated areas along the Murrumbidgee River corridor, for the housing and rehabilitation of injured native wildlife, and for the annual frog watch volunteer survey data.

A new addition to this year's grants process is a community gardens scheme, which closed recently. The grant program was open to individuals, community groups and not-for-profit organisations, and will help to promote locally grown, sustainable food choices within the Canberra region. Although the ACT is a small jurisdiction, the challenges that we are facing are no less significant than in other places.

This budget puts in place measures to preserve our delicate and fragile ecosystems for future generations and confronts the impacts of climate change on our city and our region directly. We are now recognised globally as a leader in developing innovative solutions which not only deliver real, positive outcomes but also are generating economic activity and prosperity for our city. We have continued to show that we can rise to this challenge. The work we will be able to do as a result of this year's budget will have long-reaching benefits for us all.

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) (8.53): The Environment and Planning Directorate is responsible for a wide range of activities that provide the broad, strategic, city-wide planning policies for the ACT. These responsibilities include the ongoing implementation of the ACT planning strategy; delivering master plans that incorporate extensive community engagement; preparing planning and design studies; conducting social infrastructure planning; identifying strategic initiatives for urban renewal; providing input to the land supply strategy, major projects and capital works; providing advice about quality urban design outcomes and the public realm; and conducting urban research and monitoring.

Land planning activities include urban structure planning and investigation and feasibility assessments for new metropolitan areas. Activities are based on the government's indicative land release program, which sets out the sequencing and programming of land releases in the ACT. A coordinated approach ensures an adequate supply of land across the territory. While work focuses primarily on residential land, it also supports the release of commercial and industrial land and planning work for redevelopment areas and broadacre areas.

The directorate also has responsibility for transport policy, planning and design, with a key focus being contributing to building an integrated transport network which sees land use and planning used strategically to connect Canberrans with their schools, university, workplace and sporting activities and interests—a key strategic priority for the directorate. The work of the directorate is significant, as is the breadth of their contribution to our community. As minister I am extremely proud of the professionalism and dedication demonstrated by the directorate.

In 2014-15 the ACT government assessed 1,169 merit track development applications. The directorate's reporting targets for approval of DAs were 75 per cent in the merit

track and 85 per cent in the code track. For the 2014-15 financial year the reporting average for merit DAs was 72 per cent and for the code track 94 per cent. The total value of the estimated cost of works for all merit track DAs as at 1 July 2015 was \$799.2 million.

There were also 421 exemption declaration applications, with an average determination time of six working days. The directorate also undertook 215 lease variations, 1,361 leasing checks and completed 40 deeds of agreement. As you can see, this highlights the important work that the government is doing behind the scenes everyday to ensure that we have an efficient and effective planning system in the ACT.

This budget ensures the ongoing prosperity of the ACT. This budget focuses on the fundamental aspects which ensure a robust economy and a place that grows and supports communities. By focusing on urban renewal, well-integrated transport options and better service delivery whilst continuing to protect our heritage, all Canberrans will benefit from this budget.

The 2015-16 budget includes funding for the enhancement of eDevelopment. This system has revolutionised the way that the territory manages development applications in the ACT. This upgrade will further strengthen our commitment to delivering digital services to residents and will make sure there is a greater level of accessibility between the community and the government. The upgrade will improve the functionality of the system and address concerns raised by industry. Indeed, the industry has already expressed a keen interest in this project and we will continue with rigorous consultation throughout the development of the upgrade. The system will also be designed to integrate seamlessly with other government systems and will complement the work of the newly formed Access Canberra.

In July, I announced over \$330,000 in grants to community organisations to protect and enhance the rich heritage of the territory. These grants include funding for projects covering Aboriginal, natural and built heritage. The works to be completed include conservation works for heritage-listed properties, oral histories and interpretative walking tracks. This ongoing grant program maintains our strong commitment to preserving and promoting diverse heritage in the territory and allows an opportunity for visitors and residents alike to explore and better understand the development of our wonderful city.

This budget also includes funding for the preservation of important Aboriginal heritage. The government has committed over \$70,000 to stabilise and relocate Aboriginal artefacts such as scarred trees. Interpretative information will also be developed so that the community can gain a greater understanding of the culture and practices of the territory's first residents.

Funding will also continue to support the ACT Canberra and Region Heritage Festival in 2016. This year's festival included 140 events over 15 days and showcased the extensive and diverse history of our city and region. I am pleased to say that over 20,000 people attended the festival. As you can see, this is not just another example of how we are boosting our economy but is a good way of promoting Canberra as a very interesting place to live and visit.

Mr Assistant Speaker, as you would know, the territory plan forms an integral part of planning in the territory. In 2015-16 the government will continue to support work to ensure that it remains contemporary and maintains the appropriate balance in development. We are currently undertaking public consultation on a number of variations to the plan. These include instilling the principles identified as part of the master planning programs into the plan.

An important variation I have recently tabled in this Assembly is territory plan variation 347, which will provide the stimulus needed to propel the University of Canberra to the forefront of higher education in Australia. This innovative initiative will stimulate investment and encourage a stronger connection between industry and research. This hub will be an attractive place for a number of businesses to interact in a mutually beneficial environment and will also complement the government's commitment to renewing the urban environment and maintaining our vibrant cultural environment.

In June I indicated that we would undertake a review of variation 306 to ascertain whether this was still achieving the important principles it was designed to deliver. We have continued to monitor the impact of this variation since its implementation, and in consultation with industry and the community we will be examining ways to further enhance the desired outcomes.

The government has also released for public comment a number of variations in relation to the public housing renewal program. These variations cover a range of suburbs throughout the ACT and are a result of extensive community consultation and planning studies to help determine the appropriate development criteria for each site. These variations support the government's urban renewal strategy as well as the government's target to deliver 50 per cent or more of new housing through urban intensification.

Reducing red tape has been a priority of this government. In June the Legislative Assembly passed changes to make the progress of unit titling easier. This will provide greater flexibility and enable developers to plan more vibrant additions to developments and also ensure that fundamental aspects of these buildings, such as lighting, security and cooling systems, are not delayed through unnecessary red tape. This makes it easier to do business in the ACT and will benefit a lot of people. I am pleased that the ACT is at the forefront of reducing the burden on businesses and residents together.

Furthermore, the ACT is one of the first jurisdictions to actively engage with the commonwealth in relation to streamlining the approval process for EPBC assessments. With the commitment of \$1.449 million in this year's budget, this government has committed to implementing a new system to improve the efficiency of the approval process while also ensuring better environmental outcomes. This funding provides for three new positions to undertake important work in the assessment, survey and ongoing management of offsets. This will ensure that the process is managed efficiently and will provide a greater level of certainty for people undertaking

development in the ACT. It will also lead to greatly reduced time frames for the development assessment process.

This budget includes \$500,000 for the Canberra and urban regional futures program. We are already beginning to see the outcomes of this important program, and it has continued to develop. This is a program that will deliver a platform to share information in our region across a range of issues, including sustainability and climate change, at the same time as strengthening relationships with our neighbours to share experiences and develop collaborative solutions.

Later this year I will finalise my statement of planning intent. I have taken a fresh approach to the development of this statement, including a significant level of consultation across the ACT. These workshops have enabled me to see and hear firsthand the passion and innovative approach that residents have when it comes to the very emotive subject of planning. The statement will guide the key planning priorities over the next three to five years. From my perspective it has been an essential opportunity. I have taken the time to listen to all points of view and ensure that the statement captures our ongoing commitment to development in a vibrant and connected community. I have also sought to ensure that this document will integrate and complement the government's other strategies, such as transport for Canberra, the planning strategy and the climate change strategy.

This budget provides funding of \$340,000 to continue our relationship with the Heart Foundation through our active living program. The work of the Heart Foundation has enhanced the government's commitment to providing a connected and integrated transport network and encourages healthier transport options. This relationship has already delivered an innovative planning solution which integrates physical activity into everyday life. Good urban planning improves our neighbourhoods and encourages people to walk and cycle for recreation and so-called social interaction and provides options for people to walk, cycle and catch public transport to destinations such as schools, work and shops. As we renew our city and develop new suburbs, we will further embed active living principles into our suburbs and into the lives of residents.

With our continued focus on livability, in May I announced a parking strategy to better manage increasing demand and encourage more residents to utilise public transport. This strategy also allowed for long-stay parking on the fringes of town centres and group centres, which will encourage economic activity by freeing up spaces in commercial areas and in turn increasing access to businesses. Ensuring that we address parking issues is an important aspect of developing an integrated transport network for Canberra.

This government has made a clear commitment to urban renewal, and it is a strong theme throughout this budget. Through our initiative of better connections to better places, the ACT government is further delivering on the groundwork which was identified as part of the master planning process.

Capital works funding associated with the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate in this budget will deliver important links to improve the way in which the

community use their centres, further rejuvenating and building a vibrant environment for locals.

Our highly successful master planning program will continue throughout 2015-16. The process of developing master plans for town and group centres has energised communities throughout the ACT to have their say on the things they believe will enhance their shared spaces. To date the ACT government has delivered final master plans for Weston and Oaks Estate and draft master plans for Woden and Mawson, with rigorous consultation being undertaken in the Belconnen, Curtin and Calwell centres as well. We are also preparing a draft master plan for Kippax which we expect to release later this year. All of these plans are being developed in conjunction with the work mentioned earlier in relation to better connections to better places to ensure that the concepts developed as part of the master plan can deliver the desired outcomes.

Our work in 2015-16 will continue to be supported by the Government Architect. The creation of this position has allowed the government to deliver better design outcomes and ensure that the work of our directorates is coordinated and delivering improvements in the way this city is developing, a particularly important consideration when we are committed to urban renewal.

The 2015-16 budget reaffirms this government's commitment to maintain the ACT as the most livable city in the country—indeed, the world, according to the OECD. Our planning systems ensure that we are delivering great outcomes for the ACT. With the initiatives that will be delivered as part of this budget, we are developing a city which will be exceptionally well connected, organised and vibrant for years to come.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Health Directorate—schedule 1, part 1.11.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (9.08): I will start with some words on the health budget:

We need to get better access for patients, particularly in our emergency department and particularly for elective surgery. We need a better culture for staff. There is no question that across the health system, when you talk to the staff and the nurses and the doctors, there is a real problem. I have had nurses in tears about the treatment they have received at various stages at the Canberra Hospital. And we need a healthier community. We need strong incentives to be active and well.

It is a great disappointment to me that we are in this place debating the budget, looking at the statistics, looking at the data and we see again that where there should have been improvements, where we were promised new buildings, where we were promised improved access for patients, where we were promised a better culture for staff, none of that has been achieved. What we get year after year are endless promises from the health minister that the situation will improve while year after year it does not.

That was a quote from my budget reply last year. Sadly we are in this place again debating a sick health system and again we are seeing the same problems. Again we are hearing the same excuses.

The problems in this health system are deep rooted and the damage that has been done by the ACT Labor government since 2011 is extensive. The minister has been the minister prior, but just since this minister was appointed on 20 January we have seen endless problems coming out of the health system. We have seen a whole series of reports that are a damning indictment of this government. We have seen the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reports, the National Health Performance Authority report, the MyHospital reports, the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons audit report, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists accreditation report—we have not actually seen those two: the government will not release them; we just know they are dreadful—the AMA public hospital report card and the ACT Auditor-General's data management report.

Across the board what we have seen since this minister has taken over is a worsening continuation of what was happening before—a degradation. It started two days after he was appointed, when the ACT government refused to release results of staff surveys from the troubled Centenary Hospital for Women and Children. As was reported by the ABC on that day, ACT Health has been plagued by reports of a bullying culture in its maternity department.

We found out a few weeks later, on 24 February, that the hospital's obstetrics department had failed to get proper, full accreditation. RANZCOG, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, had only extended that training for a further six months. Again we saw serious concerns being raised in reports by the *Canberra Times* about bullying and staffing arrangements.

On 27 March there were concerns raised in the media again about the overcrowded ED and stressed staff and comments that the plan to resolve overcrowding at the Canberra Hospital's emergency department "has been slammed"—and this is a quote from the ABC—"as lacking intellectual rigour and being dismissive of contrary opinion". Staff at the Canberra Hospital reported close to 28 people waiting for treatment at one time and some being treated in nursing corridors. The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation ACT representative, Jenny Miragaya, said that the hospital moved to code yellow status on multiple occasions, which represents an internal disaster. She said that the staff in the emergency department are under a huge amount of stress because of this.

We saw in April the issue of the cut in hospital beds and then the attempted cover-up by this minister where 200 beds that were promised by this government for the subacute hospital were reduced to 140. This minister came out in the most convoluted fashion and tried to explain where these beds had gone. We still do not know what a bed is. This minister refuses to define it. Indeed the estimates committee, in one of its recommendations, said:

The Committee recommends that the Health Directorate produce and use a standard table of definitions of 'bed' including definitions of acute, subacute, non-acute, and overnight and day beds, in-patient and out-patient beds, bed spaces and traditional and non-traditional beds.

Not agreed by the government. And the reason is that in attempt to cover up the fact that this government has cut 60 beds from the planned hospital Mr Corbell was making it up on the fly. They denied that there were any bed cuts. Then they said there were going to be 75 bed spaces. In some correspondence, in statements provided, they said that that included treatment rooms, consult rooms. Then in answers to questions on notices they said it does not include the consult rooms. They said the hydrotherapy pool was a bed.

Then we went through estimates—and it was bizarre for anyone that was there—where essentially what Mr Corbell said was that anywhere that someone was treated constituted a bed. So if you are treated somewhere it is a bed. The staff were looking anywhere they could but at the minister. It was embarrassing for everybody because everybody knows—and indeed I talk to staff: staff talk to me regularly; they roll their eyes—what has happened. The 200 beds were cut to 140. There was this whole business that really there are these extra 75 beds, which are a hydrotherapy pool and gym equipment. Sometimes they say it is a consult room, sometimes they say it is not a consult room—depending which day it is and which answer to a question on notice it is. The reality is that because of the strain and stress on this budget this government is not fulfilling its promises.

We heard it today in Mr Coe's motion about local shops. This government had promised to upgrade local shops and had broken its promise. And we are seeing it in health. This government promised to build a 200-bed hospital and broke that promise and has been trying to cover it up. It is quite outrageous. I again call on this government to fulfil its promise, not to have this breach of trust, and to reinstate the 60 beds that it has cut from the University of Canberra hospital.

Even in the government's own documents, the size of the hospital has been reduced from 26,770 square metres to 20,745—22 per cent smaller. It is a reduction in the size; it is a reduction in the beds; it is a broken promise by this minister. If the health system were not at capacity, if the health system was all tickety-boo, perhaps we could say that we could afford not to build the full, promised beds. But clearly that is not the case. What we do know is that this is a hospital system that is bursting at the seams.

Dr Hall, who is head of the emergency department, for those who are unaware, has made it very clear that the levels of bed occupancy are unsafe. Let me quote from the ABC on 1 September:

A senior staff member at the Canberra Hospital has spoken out, saying current patient numbers are “unsafe” and “unsustainable”.

The Australian Medical Association recommends that hospitals run at an 85 per cent bed occupancy rate for efficient and safe practice.

But according to Canberra Hospital data, the facility has averaged about a 95 per cent capacity so far this year.

But the hospital's emergency department clinical director Dr Michael Hall said he sees dangers in running such high occupancy rates.

"Ninety-five per cent is unsafe ... once you reach above 90 the hospital is under stress, once you reach above 95 the hospital is seriously under stress," he said.

Dr Hall said when that happened, the pressure was felt back in the emergency department, in terms of waiting times to be seen and to get a bed.

"So people will be cared for in a less than satisfactory environment," he said.

(Second speaking period taken.)

I will say that again. This is from Dr Hall, who runs the emergency department:

"So people will be cared for in a less than satisfactory environment," he said.

He continued:

"So it increases time in hospital, it increases costs, it increases complications and in fact it increases mortality."

What is the minister's response? Cut 60 beds. That sounds almost farcical, until you get to understand what motivates this government, what drives this minister. He does not give a hoot about health. He has got it because there is no-one else that the Chief Minister dares give it to. You saw the performance today from Ms Berry and you see it regularly from Ms Burch and others. There is no-one that he dares give this portfolio to.

So he has given it to Mr Corbell thinking that it is in a safe pair of hands. Mr Corbell is quite happy to have a health system where you have got the emergency department head saying—and I will say it again—that people are cared for in a less than satisfactory environment in a hospital where it increases costs, increases complications and increases mortality. As long as this minister has got his light rail, health is always going to be a second-order issue for him.

The executive director, Mark Dykgraaf, sent out an email on 11 September 2014. What did he say? He said:

TCH is frequently operating at capacity levels over 95 per cent. Since 2012 there have been strategies to respond to increased demand and alleviate pressure on the ED.

And he goes on:

Some of these strategies might be viewed to be less than perfect solutions for the ED and the broader hospital.

What could he be talking about there? Perhaps it is the walk-in centre where the staff told the government, “Do not put it at the Canberra Hospital,” but they did so regardless.

The problem with this, of course, is that ultimately this means that patients are not being treated as well as they could, that staff are in a stressed environment, and, as Dr Hall said, that you massively increase costs. Indeed, the reporting from the *Canberra Times* is that the Canberra Hospital is the most expensive in Australia according to the National Health Performance Authority. Average cost of care for an acute patient in the Canberra Hospital was \$6,500, which was 76 per cent higher than the best performing metropolitan hospitals in Australia. Certainly we have done that research.

My office have compared the costs of running all the hospitals and we have looked at this. If we could get down to an average cost, we are talking about tens of millions of dollars if not hundreds of millions of dollars that could be saved in our health system and be reinvested in health. If we could manage those costs, we would not need to be in a position where the minister is cutting 60 beds from the planned University of Canberra hospital.

Of course all of this combines. None of this is in isolation. But what we know is that within that system as well is this toxic culture. It is so toxic that there is no accreditation in urology. It is so toxic that accreditation is only temporary in obstetrics. And it is so toxic that this minister has instigated a review of culture at the hospital. It has reached a pressure cooker point where the minister has had to instigate that review because of the amount of toxic culture and the areas of this hospital that are not getting accredited as a result.

I hope that we see that review. I hope that we see that report. And I hope that the minister can perhaps reference that in his speech, because, indeed, we need to know what is going on. We hear from the nurses, we hear from the doctors, we hear from the royal colleges, but there is this assurance from this government that this is being dealt with. But it is all buried. We remember this, I am sure, when we recall back in 2010 the bullying in obstetrics and how that was all buried as well.

With regard to the money—of course every cent counts—there was a damning report under this minister about data, about the management of data. We know that we have had problems in this hospital before with the management of data where the former minister’s close friend was doctoring the data because, as she said, of the political imperative and because of the fear that she felt.

But again, stemming from that issue, there was a review of data more broadly done across the hospital system by the Auditor-General. She found that there was about \$3 million that had been lost, had not been accounted for. It was just waved away by this government. They just said, “It’s not a great amount of money; it’s only \$3 million.” What can you get with \$3 million in this health system? What sort of blase attitude is it that \$3 million is just seen as loose change within the health system?

Just recently we have seen again, since the budget was delivered, that we have the longest waiting times for emergency departments in the country. We have seen the issue, as I said, about urology and the refusal to release the urology report, and we have also seen the concerns about the tower block. I am very disturbed about the tower block because, as much as there are problems in the health system right now, the important thing is: what is the way forward? What is the plan to build extra capacity? What is the plan for this government to dig itself out of this hole? It had been agreed in this place some years ago that there would be a 200-bed hospital at the University of Canberra, and it has cut that.

The other project that had broad support was the rebuilding of the tower block at the Canberra Hospital. That is a project that had \$41 million allocated, that was meant to be ongoing. Again what we see is that years later that money has been withdrawn and nothing is happening. But what we do see is turmoil in that project. Mr Smyth has spoken to people concerned about the whole procurement process and what happened there, and whether it was just that the legs were chopped from under them. But as was reported, a former project manager of health infrastructure for the ACT government has slammed the government's handling of the redevelopment as unconscionable after the firm was forced to submit and resubmit multiple tenders. It is chaos.

This is a project that the previous minister was talking about. She called it the capital asset development plan. Remember? In the lead-up to the election there was great fanfare about building the tower block. "We are going to build this big tower block, and it is going to be \$800 million, and this is going to fix the health system." Here we are in 2015, and the only news we get about what is going on with the tower block is from tenderers, who are so distraught, so vexed with the system that they have to go to the media, who say this is just dysfunctional, this is just not working.

It is a shame that we are again here highlighting the problems in our health system. Things are not getting better. What I say to this minister is, "Reinstate the 60 beds cut from the University of Canberra and stop trying to cover it up. Stop trying to bamboozle people. No-one believes you. Everybody in the media and your own staff were rolling their eyes about the convoluted excuses you have given. Present to us a coherent plan for what you are going to do at the Canberra Hospital." It is not good enough for us to find out what is going on simply from reports from tenderers who are saying that what is going on there is unconscionable.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Smyth**) adjourned to the next sitting.

Adjournment

Motion by **Ms Burch** proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

St Anthony's Playground Dreaming

MR WALL (Brindabella) (9.29): I rise this evening to discuss the wonderful work being done within the community of the St Anthony's parish primary school in

Wanniassa. On Friday night I had the pleasure of opening Playground Dreaming, a weekend of Indigenous art, food and friendship, raising money through the sale of Indigenous art supplied to support the sensory playground being built at St Anthony's. The artwork has been supplied by Yuendumu community in the Northern Territory, one of the largest Aboriginal communities in central Australia. The artwork was up for sale on the evening, with all the profits going towards St Anthony's sensory playground.

It should be noted that St Anthony's has strong ties to the Yuendumu community, which was formed in 2012 through the Warlukurlangu arts centre, one of the largest and most successful Aboriginal-owned art centres in central Australia. The novel idea for this has been developed in collaboration with the school community, and has produced an event that benefits both the Indigenous artists in the territory and one of our local school communities.

I note that the school has had a long relationship with the Indigenous community in the Northern Territory and had a drive to send clothing, books and the like to support students and young children in the territory. It is nice to see that kind-heartedness and charitable gesture being repaid by using some of the talents and skills that they possess in central Australia.

As I mentioned earlier, the event was opened on Friday night and was held in the foyer of the Southern Cross Club. On the night I was welcomed by Greg Walker, the principal of St Anthony's, and was delighted to be joined for a welcome to country performance by Jaharn, a student at the school, and his godmother.

The effort put into the evening was evident in the amazing quality of artwork, and the sales that took place are a sign of the success of the evening. I would like to make a special mention of Libby Andrews, one of the masterminds behind the scenes who organised the event and all that it entailed. Libby and the other parents involved should be commended for their dedication to the school community and the positive effect this will have on those with a disability in their school.

Just in case anyone feels as though they have missed out on the evening, I would implore you to visit the temporary shop located at the Tuggeranong hyperdome, where sales will continue. As I mentioned before, all the benefit will go to one of Canberra's great local Catholic schools, a school that I was privileged to have attended in my younger years. I congratulate them for the hard work they have been doing.

Recreational Aviation Australia

MR COE (Ginninderra) (9.31): I rise tonight to talk about Recreational Aviation Australia. Beginning life in 1983, Recreational Aviation Australia is the peak body in Australia responsible for administering ultralight, recreational and light sport aircraft operations. The organisation supports over 9,500 members, over 3,300 aircraft and 40 registered aero clubs. Working with the Civil Aviation Safety Authority, the group is able to train and certify new pilots, maintainers and flying instructors as well as overseeing the operations of 172 flying training facilities throughout the country.

Primarily, members of Recreational Aviation Australia fly ultralight or light sports aircraft, weight shift and microlight aircraft and powered parachutes. In 2014 members of the RAA performed 349,000 landings and spent 192,000 hours in the air. RAA is also maintained as an incorporated association right here in the ACT, where it employs 15 staff.

Whilst spruiking the merits of recreational aviation, the association also rightly upholds, strongly promotes and constantly strives to improve safety in aviation. These are important principles for light aircraft operators, who often fly away from controlled airspace in larger cities and around military bases, meaning they do not have to file any flight plans or talk to air traffic control. The work done to keep recreational pilots safe is one the most important jobs of the association, and they should be proud of the work they do.

Each year, the association runs a scholarship program known as “Giving young flyers training support”. The scholarship program has operated since 2008, with the aims of introducing young people to recreational aviation, developing responsible and safe flying attitudes and offering a basis of aviation knowledge to further potential careers in recreation, military or commercial aviation. The program was originally run through members’ donations. However, recognising the merit of the program, Airservices Australia has kindly been sponsoring the program since 2010.

I speak of RAA today because I had the opportunity of attending a scholarship ceremony on 16 May this year. I would like to extend my congratulations to those who won the scholarship on the night. The scholarship winners were Beau-Jacob McAuley, Brianna Willoughby, Clare Millett, Connal Martin, James Kissell, Juan Sperling, Leah Barber, Nash Goode, Nicholas Thompson, Toby Mallon, Zachary Brown, Hayden Goodwin, Matthew Webster, Othram McLeod, Oliver Gadsby, Amelia Morton, Carew Laver, Dean Cagorski, Hannah Mahon, Isaac Wishart, Jack Zani, Matthew Webster, Mitchell Paterson, Robin Watson, Tait Jeffries and Thomas Murray-Smith.

I wish all the scholarship winners happy and safe flying in the years ahead. I note that Mr Wall also supported RAA at that event. Thank you also to everyone who made donations in order to ensure that scholarships could be provided as well as everyone involved in running and promoting the scholarships.

I would also like to congratulate the staff and board of RAA. The staff members include the CEO, Michael Linke, and his assistant, Kelly Stirton; the national operations manager, Jill Bailey; the assistant operations manager, Neil Schaefer; the national technical manager, Darren Barnfield; the assistant technical manager, Jared Smith; the national finance and administration manager, Maxine Picker; and the national safety, risk and compliance manager, Katie Jenkins. RAA’s board consists of the president, Michael Monck; the secretary, Tony King; the treasurer, Jim Tatlock; and the state representatives, Ross Millard, Mark Christie, Michael Apps, Ed Herring, Mike Smith, Trevor Bange, Eugene Reid, Rod Birrell and Ed Smith.

I congratulate the RAA for the work they do and commend the association and its scholarship program to members. Further information about the association can be found on the website at www.raa.asn.au.

Step into the limelight

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) (9.35): I stand briefly to put on record my admiration and respect for all those artists, performers and other creatively minded students who were involved in this year's step into the limelight program.

I would like to commend the music director, Naida Blackley, the production manager and artistic coordinator, Cheryl Diggins, the art exhibition curator, Renee Newton, the film festival curator, Fiona James, the dance coordinator, Hiria Reppion, and the stage manager, Danuta Mrowka, who make this fantastic event happen so that our many students can display their talents to the community through painting, sculpture, film, dance and music.

Step into the limelight provides a wonderful opportunity for students to grow and develop within the arts and present their work in a professional setting, with this year's art exhibition at the ANU School of Art, the film festival at the Palace Electric Cinema and the gala performance at the AIS arena.

Over 2,000 students from over 60 public schools participated in this year's events—more than double the size of the first production back in 2007. This growth confirms the program's significant reach and contribution showcasing the arts in ACT public schools, and the outstanding commitment of students, teachers, parents and local community organisations to the program.

I was fortunate enough to be able to attend this year's art exhibition launch at the ANU. This year's exhibition features over 400 works from 30 different schools, from preschool to year 12 students. There is clearly a great deal of talent in our schools. Indeed Denise Ferris, head of the ANU School of Art, commented to me that she had her eye on a number of rising artists who she hoped would continue with their passion through to university and beyond. I should also like to give a big shout out to the talented musicians from Canberra High School, under the direction of Eileen Currie, who provided entertainment during the launch event.

Seeing these works this year and knowing the many talented artists, musicians, actors and others, I know that the artistic community in this city, this region and nationally will be well served by the graduates from ACT public schools for many years to come.

Once again congratulations to all the students and the teachers who make step into the limelight such a fantastic event. They should be rightly proud of their work, as I am rightly proud that they are showcasing ACT public education.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 9.38pm.