



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

EIGHTH ASSEMBLY

28 OCTOBER 2015

www.hansard.act.gov.au

Wednesday, 28 October 2015

Petitions:

Lottery products—petition No 13-15	3695
Ministerial response.....	3695
Lyneham neighbourhood oval—petition No 9-15.....	3695
Lotteries Amendment Bill 2015.....	3697
Personal explanation	3701
Asbestos—proposed inquiry.....	3702
Transport—public.....	3715

Questions without notice:

Canberra Hospital—alleged bullying.....	3737
ACT firefighters—wellbeing study.....	3739
Mental health—ice addiction.....	3741
Transport—public.....	3742
Floriade—proposed relocation	3745
Roads—projects.....	3747
Refugees—resettlement.....	3749
Planning—Giralang.....	3752
Oaks Estate—amenities.....	3753
Crime—domestic violence	3756

Supplementary answers to questions without notice:

Planning—Giralang.....	3759
Transport—advertising.....	3759
Auslan interpreter (Statement by Speaker).....	3760
Standing orders—matters of public importance	3760
Statement by Speaker	3760
Transport—public.....	3760
Taxis and ride sharing.....	3765
ACT Health—hospitals.....	3776
Animal welfare.....	3790

Adjournment :

<i>Punuku Tjukurpa</i> art exhibition.....	3799
Cranleigh School	3801
Transport—light rail.....	3802
Annual silent sports challenge.....	3803
Parliament of youth on sustainability.....	3804

Wednesday, 28 October 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.

Petitions

*The following petition was lodged for presentation, by **Mr Wall**, from 2,619 residents:*

Lottery products—petition No 13-15

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

This petition of certain residents of the Australian Capital Territory draws to the attention of the Assembly that: NSW Lotteries and Woolworths petrol stations have entered into an agreement in the ACT that allows for Woolworths petrol stations to sell a full range of lottery products, therefore, threatening the viability of small businesses in the ACT that currently sell these products in a responsible manner. It also exposes ACT residents that are at risk of problem gambling to greater access to these products in a less controlled environment.

Your petitioners therefore request the Assembly to: support any legislative move that prevents the sale of lottery products in the ACT by corporate giants such as Woolworths and Coles.

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

Ministerial response

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

By **Mr Rattenbury**, Minister for Sport and Recreation, dated 27 October 2015, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Rattenbury on 4 August 2015 concerning the Lyneham neighbourhood oval.

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

Lyneham neighbourhood oval—petition No 9-15

The response read as follows:

In October 2014, Sport and Recreation Services (SRS), as custodian of the Executive Crown Lease over Lyneham Neighbourhood Oval (LNO), authorised lodgement of a Development Application (DA) by the Brindabella Christian

College (BCC) for construction of a sports pavilion and associated parking. Authorisation was provided to enable the DA to be assessed on its merits, as the proposal was seen to have potential mutual benefit for a range of stakeholders (three adjoining schools, sporting groups and the wider community).

After a community forum on 20 November 2014, highlighted a range of concerns about the DA, including a lack of community consultation, the BCC withdrew its DA on 21 November 2014.

BCC then worked closely with Sport and Recreation Services (SRS), to revise its proposal to address community concerns and, as part of this work, SRS prepared a draft Lyneham Community Precinct Strategy (draft strategy). The Lyneham Community Association (LCA) was consulted throughout this process.

The revised proposal and draft strategy were presented at a second public forum on 17 June 2015, which I attended. Many who attended the June meeting had also attended the November 2014 forum and remained concerned about the proposal.

Noting ongoing concern voiced by some members of the community, I asked SRS to facilitate further consultation to provide the best opportunity for all Lyneham community members to be informed of the proposal and have a say. This included an ACT Government Survey that was open from 20 August to 11 September 2015.

On 15 September 2015, and after careful consideration of feedback from the Lyneham community, I confirmed that the ACT Government would not endorse the lodgement of a revised development application by the BCC to build a Sports Pavilion and associated facilities on LNO.

MR WALL (Brindabella): Madam Speaker, I seek leave to make a brief statement in regard to the tabling of my petition.

Leave granted.

MR WALL: The petition that has been tabled here today has been signed by 2,619 residents of Canberra and also a great number of residents from across the border who fundamentally support local businesses. In the case of this petition, this support is aimed directly at newsagents, lottery kiosks and specialty businesses which currently sell and promote lottery products here in the territory. I note that some of the owners of these businesses are here in the chamber today, and I thank them for their presence and for the great work they have done in speaking with their customers and for actually having a proper consultation on what the community expects in this space. It is also important to note that many of them have probably already worked a full day before they walked in here today. That is the kind of hard work and effort that these people put into their small businesses on a daily basis.

This petition highlights community expectations in terms of how lottery products are sold and promoted, and who sells them. Members will recall that I tabled a bill in this place last month outlining legislative changes aimed at preventing the rollout of the sale of lottery products from ACT petrol stations, legislation that, if supported, would prevent the corporate giants from taking over in this space, a move that would

ultimately leave a great question mark over the viability of many small businesses operating in this space, primarily local newsagents. I think Canberrans have a great affinity with their local newsagents. My colleague Brendan Smyth grew up working around them. I think it is important that we preserve what is great about our local shopping centres.

Coming up today there is an opportunity to pass this bill. I understand that there are some concerns, but I also hope that we can work through these and come up with a compromise that addresses the expectations of the community, recognises the investment of these local small business owners and also delivers a great result. I thank members for the opportunity to speak briefly.

Lotteries Amendment Bill 2015

Debate resumed from 16 September 2015, on motion by **Mr Wall**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Racing and Gaming and Minister for the Arts) (10.05): I thank Mr Wall for bringing this matter to the Assembly. However, while I appreciate his intent, the government cannot support the Lotteries Amendment Bill 2015 in its current form. The government understands the concerns of our local newsagents about the potential impact on their businesses if lottery products are available in other outlets, particularly supermarkets. I recognise that representatives of the newsagents group are here this morning.

It is clear that as newspaper sales have declined, some agencies may have become increasingly reliant on revenue from sales of lottery tickets and scratchies. The Tatts announcement in August this year that it planned to expand sales of NSW Lotteries products into a small number of service stations in the ACT came without consultation or notice, and I have made my thoughts about that well known to the company.

Unfortunately, this bill in its present state will not achieve the outcome that it seeks. It will open up a range of unintended consequences, including providing a perverse disincentive for small businesses to grow. The advice I have is that this bill requires significant amendment, not just in its amendments to the Lotteries Act but to other existing laws.

For a start, large public lotteries such as OzLotto and Powerball are regulated by both the Lotteries Act 1964 and the Pool Betting Act 1964. The existing approval for the sale of Tatts products in the ACT was issued under both acts. As Mr Wall's bill seeks to amend only the Lotteries Act, it will be ineffective and will lead to confusion. Therefore matching amendments are also needed to the Pool Betting Act.

I mentioned unintended consequences. One of these is the restriction excluding "non-retail businesses from entering into an agreement with a lottery operator to sell, pay prizes and promote". I know that this is not Mr Wall's intention but, as drafted, this restriction will also apply to other minor gaming activities regulated under the

Lotteries Act such as school raffles. This is because our Lotteries Act regulates all lottery activities whereas the relevant acts in Queensland and New South Wales relate only to large-scale public lotteries, with separate legislation governing raffles, housie and bingo.

It may be considered especially strange to pass this legislation today, given that only yesterday we passed the Lotteries (Approvals) Amendment Act 2015 to exempt low-risk, low-value lotteries such as school raffles from having to apply for approval from the Gambling and Racing Commission.

Once again I thank those opposite for supporting the legislation yesterday and allowing a significant cut in red tape for schools, charities and community groups. I would say that today we should not be reimposing red tape on them. That would be the consequence of this bill in its current form.

Mr Wall's bill therefore requires amendments in order to do three things: first, define large lotteries; second, differentiate between these and other lottery activities; and, third, make it clear that the bill is aimed at regulating formal arrangements for large public lotteries alone. It also requires amendments to ensure consumer safeguards. The bill does not introduce suitability provisions—for example, no criminal history—for retailers of lottery products. These provisions do not currently exist in the ACT since Tatts, as the licensed lottery operator, is held accountable for all legislative matters.

Both Queensland and New South Wales restrictions rely on agency arrangements. In Queensland restrictions on eligibility to act as a lottery agent are coupled with provisions about the suitability of the agent. Under Mr Wall's bill, business type and size are the only determinants of suitability for a business to sell lottery products. Again, this is not his intention, but significant amendment is required.

The bill also seeks to address potential problem gambling harm. Mr Wall's bill proposes that by allowing only small businesses to sell lottery products people dealing with a gambling problem can avoid having to encounter gambling products while shopping for essential goods such as petrol or food.

While I support his aim of minimising problem gambling, neither the Centre for Gambling Research at the ANU nor the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission is aware of any research that demonstrates significant risk to consumers from lottery products being sold at the same place as petrol. Even with our relatively high lottery participation rates, Canberrans spend less than half the national average amount per person on lottery products per year. In line with this, ANU research indicates only 0.6 per cent of lottery gamblers experience harm linked to problem gambling; which, I have to say, is a good thing.

The ACT has some of the nation's most stringent harm minimisation measures in place and the government remains committed to protecting the community from harm caused by problem gambling. I recognise that while lottery products are lower risk than other gambling products, they are not a no-risk product and the continuous sales of lottery products at 24-hour petrol stations would mean an increase in the community's exposure to gambling products.

The government has already acted on these concerns. Within days of the Tatts announcement, the Gambling and Racing Commission moved to restrict the sale of lottery products in the ACT to between 5 am and 9 pm—the earliest and latest opening hours of existing NSW Lotteries outlets in the ACT. I believe these measures address any potential risks while also protecting newsagents from unfair competition from 24/7 operators. The time limit also helps to protect service station workers, often sole operators overnight, from becoming the target of criminal activity.

I recognise that there are concerns about the wellbeing of our small business community, notwithstanding that existing Tatts retailers have operated alongside more than 100 fuel outlets selling lottery products in South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales for some time. To that end I have sought and received assurance from Tatts that this limited expansion into five service stations is considered to be a 12-month trial. At the end of that period both Tatts and the government will review the results, including impacts on existing small businesses.

I have also received an assurance from Tatts that NSW Lotteries will not expand its network of lottery outlets in the ACT into supermarkets before 2018. This small business protection measure is in line with arrangements in New South Wales and makes significant clauses of Mr Wall's bill redundant.

A key part of this government's economic growth and business development strategy is to minimise red tape and to get out of the way of the private sector. I believe Mr Wall's bill in its current state does the opposite. By seeking to legislate restrictions on the business type, size and location of lottery product retailers, the bill represents the most restrictive approach of any jurisdiction in Australia. Further, restricting economic opportunities to businesses on the condition that they do not exceed a certain size or staffing level creates possibly a disincentive to grow, acting as a brake on economic growth.

The bill would create a situation where a thriving small business could be punished for growing. A business owner would have to choose between putting on an extra staff member and losing their right to sell lottery products. This is not a desirable outcome for business or the wider economy.

The Lotteries Amendment Bill 2015 is inadequate in numerous respects; it stands in contrast to the government's economic policy and business development strategies; is not supported by academic research on gambling harm; and fails to recognise that appropriate gambling safeguards are already in place. It is for those reasons that the government cannot support the bill in its current form.

My proposal to Mr Wall is that we adjourn debate on this bill to give him the opportunity to consider the comments that I have now read into *Hansard* and possible amendments. I remind Mr Wall that I offered to facilitate having EDD look at his bill to identify shortcomings. However, he simply declined this offer.

Given the commitments I have extracted from Tatts and the time restrictions already in place on sales, I believe it is now up to Mr Wall to do the further work required before bringing amendments back to the Assembly.

Mr Doszpot: Another mislead from Joy.

Dr Bourke: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Do you have a point of order?

Dr Bourke: Yes, I do, Madam Speaker. I just heard Mr Doszpot interject that Ms Burch was misleading.

MADAM SPEAKER: Did you use the word “mislead”?

Mr Doszpot: That is not quite right. I used the words, “Another mislead from Joy.”

MADAM SPEAKER: Can you withdraw, please, Mr Doszpot?

Mr Doszpot: I withdraw.

MS BURCH: I have concluded my comments, Madam Speaker. I was coming to the last sentence when Dr Bourke took the point of order. Again I will say that, given the commitments I have extracted from Tatts and the time restrictions already in place, I believe it is now up to Mr Wall to do the further work required before bringing amendments back to the Assembly.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (10.16): As Mr Wall has outlined, the intent of his bill is to constrain the venues where Tatts lottery products can be sold in the ACT. The bill was drafted in response to the public announcement on 20 August this year that NSW Lotteries had entered into franchise agreements with five ACT-based Woolworths petrol outlets to sell Tatts lottery products. In his media release of 26 August Mr Wall said:

The primary intention of this legislation is to ensure newsagents and other small businesses remain the primary point of sale for lottery products.

The news of these franchise agreements was received with significant concern by many of the 43 existing Tatts lottery retailers in the ACT, the majority of which are local newsagents and all of which are small businesses. Representatives of the Newsagents Association of NSW & ACT have met with all parties in the Assembly to raise their concerns.

Members may recall that similar legislation to prevent the sale of lottery products from petrol stations was enacted in Queensland. I understand that Mr Wall has used that as a basis for his legislation here in the ACT.

In response to the Tatts-Woolies franchise announcement Minister Burch, as she noted in her remarks, moved to limit the hours of sale of lottery products to between 5 am and 9 pm every day. This is designed to address concerns that lottery products were going to be available for sale 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I certainly welcome that amended regulation as a starting point.

As Minister Burch noted, the ANU Centre for Gambling Research has previously advised us that lottery products are at the lower end of the risk spectrum for problem gambling, but I agree with the minister that a harm minimisation approach that says that lottery products are not available 24/7 is a reasonable step to take.

In the broader picture, in my opinion the Coles-Woolies duopoly presents a very real problem for Australia. That level of market concentration will never be good for the community. Over the past years and decades we have seen both Coles and Woolworths price local businesses out of existence, using their duopoly power to Hoover up a vast market share. To that extent I agree with Mr Wall's amendment bill, in that I do not want to see Coles and Woolworths further siphon off more local business and send more local businesses to the wall.

We have heard today from Minister Burch that the bill in its current form would have some unintended consequences. We have heard that for such an amendment bill to effectively fulfil its policy intention we would also have to amend the Pool Betting Act 1964.

I am sympathetic to and supportive of the intention of Mr Wall's bill, but I do accept the need for further work to be done, and the bill in its current form perhaps does not do what it intends to do.

Minister Burch has also advised that she has reached an agreement with the Tatts group that they will not move to sell lottery products in full-line supermarkets before 2018. While this is welcome breathing space, I would prefer to see a longer term solution to keeping gambling products out of supermarkets. Aside from the small business elements of this discussion, I also hold the view that we simply do not need more places where gambling is being promoted. I do believe it is appropriate to provide some limits on this, and supermarkets and petrol stations do not need to become more places in our society where we are being urged to gamble.

So while I agree with Mr Wall's intent and objective, and seek to support his bill, there is still some work to do on it. There will be a move to adjourn this bill shortly, and I will be happy to work with Mr Wall to get to a stage where we can get a bill that we can pass in this place, to provide some limitation on where lottery products can be sold in the ACT and to provide some bulwark against the further expansion of the Coles and Woolworths duopoly and some protection for small business in the ACT.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Smyth**) adjourned to the next sitting.

Personal explanation

MR WALL (Brindabella): I seek leave to make a very brief statement under standing order 46.

MADAM SPEAKER: Do you claim to have been misrepresented?

MR WALL: I do, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

MR WALL: I would like to have the record clarified concerning something that Ms Burch mentioned in her speech—that is, that I declined an opportunity to have the department look over a copy of my draft legislation. In actual fact the offer was extended by Minister Burch’s office. It was graciously accepted by mine. Contact details for a relevant member of the public service were provided to us, and we contacted them with the blessing of the minister’s office.

The bureaucrat in question raised concerns about this occurring and stated that they felt that it may have breached the public service code of conduct and so declined to look at the legislation. Both the public servant in question and my office then immediately contacted the minister’s office to notify them of this decision. So for the minister to come in here and say that I refused to have it looked at does not accurately represent what happened on that issue, and I would like the record to correctly reflect that.

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): I will make a brief response, if I may.

MADAM SPEAKER: No. First of all, you need to seek leave and you need to say why you need to seek leave. This is not a debate. Mr Wall sought leave under standing order 46 because he said that he was misrepresented.

MS BURCH: I believe I was misrepresented, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: You claim to have been misrepresented?

MS BURCH: Yes.

MADAM SPEAKER: Leave is granted to say how you were misrepresented.

MS BURCH: It is my understanding that the offer was there but in the end your bill had to go to the bureaucrats through my office.

MADAM SPEAKER: Address the chair.

MS BURCH: Madam Speaker, that offer was there for Mr Wall’s office to take advantage of, to have his bill sent through to EDD for some scrutiny. It did have to pass through my office. That offer was declined. That is my understanding, Madam Speaker.

Asbestos—proposed inquiry

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.22): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) on 14 December 2014 the Assembly Standing Committee on Public Accounts, including two Labor Government MLAs, recommended that an ACT board of inquiry be constituted, pursuant to the *Inquiries Act 1991*, to investigate the full history of the Mr Fluffy legacy and report by 1 March 2016;
- (b) in response to the Committee on Public Accounts, the Government agreed there was a need to consider the entirety of the history of this issue; and
- (c) that Mr Barr said on 22 September 2015 in response to an Assembly question that “I never disagreed with the need to establish a board of inquiry”; and

(2) calls on the Chief Minister to immediately establish a board of inquiry into the Mr Fluffy tragedy pursuant to the *Inquiries Act 1991* to present a final report to the Assembly no later than the last sitting day of August 2016.

This is not a new issue. I think people are well aware of the circumstances surrounding Mr Fluffy and of the tragedy and impact on our community; indeed, we were debating this issue yesterday. The issue of a board of inquiry into this issue is not new either; this has been discussed for some time in committee, in the Assembly and in the community. Indeed, it was the subject of an editorial in the *Canberra Times* yesterday. I am disappointed that I find myself back in the Assembly calling on the government to do this, because in my view it is self-evident that this is something that should be occurring with a degree of haste.

As we are all aware, there are in the order of 1,200 homes that will be demolished. They are not just bricks and mortar; they are people’s family homes. They have been the subject of this tragedy and are now going to be demolished. A billion dollars is going to be expended on this program, and the net impact on our budget is in the order of \$400 million. The impact on people’s lives emotionally has been significant, and the impact on people’s health is not as well understood as perhaps it could be. I note again that there was an article earlier this week about someone who, sadly, seems to be dying of mesothelioma. The impact on the health of many home owners, tradies, electricians and people who have crawled through wall cavities is extensive.

There is also the point that this is now an ongoing program. The substantive decisions have been made; the money has been appropriated; this is an ongoing task. There will always be excuses that there is more that needs to be done, more that needs to be remediated. But we have inquiries after significant natural disasters and we do not wait until the whole community is rebuilt before we have an inquiry. That is not the case. That is not the precedent. I think that in many ways it is the least the government can do to move on from this issue and learn from it.

In December 2014, the Assembly Standing Committee on Public Accounts, which included two Labor members, Ms Porter and Ms Berry, recommended that the government establish a board of inquiry pursuant to the *Inquiries Act* to investigate

the full history of the Mr Fluffy legacy and report by 1 March 2016. I think the reason those members recommended that is that for those who participated in that inquiry—although not a member of the committee, I was there for the public hearings—the evidence was quite compelling. The need for such an inquiry was established and the time frame was provided by the committee because the committee obviously formed a view that this was not something that should be put into the never-never, that this was not something that needed to be delayed, but that this is something that could be done concurrently with the demolition process. The task force would not be conducting the inquiry, as has been asserted by the government. It would be done independent of the task force—although, of course, they would be required to participate.

The government, in their response to the committee, noted that they agreed that there was a need to consider the entirety of the history of the issue. The government did not agree to start straightaway, but they agreed that there was a need to have an inquiry. In September this year, in response to a question in the Assembly, Mr Barr said:

I never disagreed with the need to establish a board of inquiry; the areas of disagreement have been the timing and what was the most important series of tasks. The Leader of the Opposition has outlined a number of important tasks that have been completed, but it remains the government's view that there is still more important work to be done by the task force. As such, it will prioritise those areas. A board of inquiry remains important, but not the most important thing to be done at this point in time.

In answer to a supplementary, he said:

The question is not one of disagreement over whether a board of inquiry will be established; it is one of priorities.

In response to that, I would argue, firstly, that we can do things concurrently. There is now a broad operational phase for the task force, a demolition process to be conducted. With the major parts of legislation, as I said, the acquisition and appropriation of the funds have occurred. To say that you can only do demolition over five years or however long it takes and then have an inquiry is arrant nonsense.

On 1 July 2015, the ABC published a story headed “Mr Fluffy: New inquiry expected on loose-fill asbestos” in which it was reported:

A board of inquiry will be announced on Mr Fluffy loose-fill asbestos to examine how multiple governments have dealt with the problem ... Andrew Barr confirmed he will create an inquiry to consider the handling of the issue ... “We will in due course,” he said.

There seems to be agreement that there is a requirement for the inquiry. It is now, seemingly, a debate over time lines. There is a view that comes from the government, this odd view, that an inquiry can occur only once the demolition has been completed, it seems. It is nonsense.

Ms Porter and Ms Berry, in this Assembly, tabled a report calling on the government to do it. The government agrees that we need to get on with this. So let us get on with

it. We have Liberal members calling for it; we have Labor members calling for it; we have the affected Mr Fluffy home owners calling for it. It would appear now that the person who is blocking this from occurring is Mr Barr. It is down to Mr Barr.

Having dealt with both Ms Gallagher, the previous responsible minister, and Mr Barr over this issue, I get a sense that Ms Gallagher was far more empathetic, far more understanding of the plight of the home owners—whilst understanding the impacts on budgets and other things—than Mr Barr, who seems to be somewhat uninterested in the plight of the home owners and far more interested in the budgetary impacts.

As I said before, the impact on our community is well understood, both financially and in terms of health and so on. There are various home owners who have been impacted by this saga. There are allegations that Mr Barr has declined to meet with a number of groups. He said he was going to attend forums and then did not attend forums. Over the course of this process, I have met with dozens of impacted families, as I know my colleagues and Labor members have. I do not think you can meet with the people impacted and then come away unaffected by this, come away not understanding the importance of moving our whole community forward to make sure that we learn the lessons, that we have resolution on what has happened and that this never happens again.

When you examine the Mr Fluffy saga without the benefit of a board of inquiry, it is clear that, over a period of decades, information was available and decisions were made that led to this point. I think it could have been averted, could have been prevented, could have been dealt with in a far better way. There were the original Mr Fluffy decisions about allowing this to occur and the original remediation plan at massive cost that eventually proved to be a failure in a sense through to where we find ourselves today and the impact on certain groups in our community. I think particularly of home owners who have been in their home for a long time—elderly people who have been in those homes for many years, people who are now going to be financially disadvantaged to the point where they will be forced to leave their block of land, their home and, in many cases, their community. I could go on and on.

I was speaking to a Mr Fluffy home owner just this morning. Mr Kefford—who is in the chamber today; I acknowledge him here—is aware of this case, and I have written to the Chief Minister about it. It is unique in how tragic it is. This is a family with a profoundly disabled child. He is 16 years old. He has spastic quadriplegia; he has essentially been brain damaged from birth. We have a situation where they have been through enormous suffering in their lives but are people who have stepped up to look after their child over the last 16 years and now find themselves in a Mr Fluffy home to which they have made significant renovations to make sure that it is fit for purpose for their son. They now find themselves in a position where they are going to be essentially out on the street and virtually penniless unless action is taken. I am hoping that will not come to pass, but that is one of many similar stories that I have heard, a tragedy from this program.

Yes, there are great budgetary concerns. The original remediation program cost millions; this current program is costing hundreds of millions. There are massive complexities about government decisions and bureaucratic decisions. But ultimately

this comes down to the people that we are here to represent—making sure that we are doing what we can to provide answers for them, the community and now their neighbours, who are going to be massively impacted through the demolition process, through the rebuilding and through the variation to the territory plan which is, potentially, going to change, in many ways, the character of many neighbourhoods as a result of those government decisions.

I do not accept the answers given by this government that essentially this just is not a priority. That is Mr Barr's answer, in essence, to the question of why he is not doing this: it is just not a priority for this government. I am disappointed by that response. We have seen some of the government's priorities over this time. We know what we have debated in this place in terms of legislation; we have seen government programs. When the community looks at what the government establish as their priorities as opposed to what is the most significant issue to come before this Assembly, in the words of Mr Barr—to accept that this is the most significant issue to come before this Assembly and then say, “But we are not going to inquire into what went wrong over decades; we will put that on the never-never” is a dereliction of duty, a failure in leadership and, ultimately, lets down the people that we serve here in this Assembly.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (10.38): I move:

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

“(1) notes:

- (a) in the Government response to the Assembly Standing Committee on Public Accounts' inquiry into the proposed Appropriation (Loose-fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication) Bill 2014-2015, the ACT Government noted the need to consider the full history of the Mr Fluffy legacy;
- (b) the ACT Government, through the Asbestos Response Taskforce, is currently responding to the Mr Fluffy crisis; that many Fluffy owners remain in their homes; the demolition process has only just begun and it will take up to five years to rid the ACT of the toxic Mr Fluffy legacy;
- (c) an inquiry launched immediately would mean substantial distraction to the work of, and diversion of resources from, the Asbestos Response Taskforce, delaying the implementation of the Government's response at the expense of those directly affected by Mr Fluffy;
- (d) the Mr Fluffy legacy extends back to 1968, well before self-government in the ACT, and that the Commonwealth Government has played a central role in the Mr Fluffy legacy;
- (e) the Mr Fluffy legacy extends into NSW, with the NSW Government creating a taskforce similar to the ACT to respond to the presence of loose-fill asbestos in homes throughout NSW;

- (f) an inquiry into the legacy of Mr Fluffy could only achieve its goals with the involvement and close co-operation of the Commonwealth and NSW Governments as the ACT does not have jurisdiction over activities of the Commonwealth and NSW Governments; and
 - (g) that a board of inquiry is likely to cost the Territory tens of millions of dollars and would likely take more than a year to complete;
- (2) calls on the Chief Minister to formally raise this issue with the Prime Minister and the NSW Premier to seek the views of the Commonwealth and NSW Governments on the form of an inquiry into the legacy of Mr Fluffy and to seek support for the cost of an inquiry; and
- (3) update the Assembly on the outcome of discussions with the Prime Minister and NSW Premier as part of the Asbestos Response Taskforce quarterly reports to the Assembly.”.

It is timely that we pause today, on the first anniversary of the government’s announcement of the loose-fill asbestos insulation eradication scheme, to reflect on what has transpired in the 20 months since the Work Safety Commissioner sent letters to the owners of affected properties in February of 2014.

In that period we have seen first a trickle and then a flood of positive asbestos tests from affected properties. We have implemented an emergency assistance package providing immediate help to families who discovered that pure asbestos was in their living rooms, their cupboards and their kids’ bedrooms. We took the decision, based on a consensus of expert advice, that the only enduring solution to the crisis of contamination was the demolition of all of the affected houses.

As of today, 950 owners have accepted the government’s offer to acquire their contaminated property; 750 properties have been acquired by the territory; and we have begun the demolition process, with 16 houses demolished so far.

In that same time, in this place and in individual conversations, sometimes in different parts of the world, we have all heard individual stories. When you are on a trade delegation, you will meet people who are impacted directly by the Mr Fluffy circumstances. I reject the assertion made by the Leader of the Opposition that I have not been engaging with families and households that have been impacted. That is an unfair and unnecessary politicisation of this issue.

We have all heard the individual stories of grief, anger, loss and frustration from a wide variety of families who by chance owned an affected house and who may have participated in what has been a merry-go-round of property acquisition and sale of these properties in this city over 50 years. We have also heard, though, stories of great strength, resilience and, importantly, hope as families have moved into new homes or have progressed plans to rebuild on their blocks, starting what is both a physical and a psychological rebuilding process.

It is now common knowledge that raw, pure asbestos fibres were pumped into the ceilings of more than 1,000 Canberra houses in the late 1960s and 1970s. Use of asbestos in that form and in that way remains unique to the ACT and surrounding New South Wales.

The Asbestos Response Taskforce's report of August 2014, which underpins the scheme, sets out in detail what happened. Those of us who are long-term residents of Canberra can remember houses being enclosed in plastic bubbles when the original removal program was undertaken in the early 1990s. That program, designed by the commonwealth government and implemented by a fledgling ACT government in the very first years of self-government, should have been the end of the story. Unfortunately, as we all know, it was not.

What we did not know until last year was that the residual asbestos fibres that the clearance certificates said were left behind when visible and accessible asbestos were removed were not only in the walls but in the living areas. That is why the government decided, in October last year, to implement the scheme and to deliver an enduring solution to problems created for our community so long ago.

The government has always maintained that there should be a proper examination—at the right time and, of course, in the right way—of why that decision was necessary last year. We have also consistently said, though, that any inquiry must not divert attention or resources away from what remains the most pressing need, which is assisting families in the best way we can to move from contaminated houses to safer accommodation. This is not the time or place to debate the merits of the scheme beyond the observation that before June last year none of what is now in place to provide assistance to owners of affected properties to move from contaminated houses and to manage risks if they chose to stay existed in any form. Much of it had not been developed yet.

The government will not be supporting Mr Hanson's motion today. I have moved the amendments I have circulated to colleagues. We will not be supporting Mr Hanson's motion because it is premature and, most significantly, because it glosses over a range of significant complexities, particularly in setting such an artificial deadline, based on a political imperative, on a process that he himself believes is so important and therefore, in our view, should not be rushed.

A story of this magnitude, this complexity and this significance deserves to be reviewed and written through a process that is robust, that is comprehensive and that, above all, provides proper and considered answers as to why this city faced the crisis it did last year. To do less than this, to heed to some sort of political timetable as outlined by the Leader of the Opposition, would be an enormous disservice to the community—not just for the owners who have lived and raised their families in those properties, but for anyone who has ever worked on those properties and for visitors who frequented them over that time.

Despite Mr Fluffy operating on the commonwealth's watch and the original removal program being a commonwealth-designed initiative, in this case the commonwealth's response, under the Abbott government, was to renege on the signed commitments

that were made at the time to fund two-thirds of any future costs relating to this issue. Instead, what this community got from the Liberal Party at the federal level, announced by a press release, was a concessional loan.

While the ACT has the unfortunate lion's share of the Mr Fluffy legacy, with 1,022 houses across 56 established suburbs, this is also a legacy that spreads into surrounding New South Wales. To attempt to conduct an inquiry into this issue without the full cooperation of the commonwealth and New South Wales governments risks seeing an undertaking that is doomed from the start. Given the commonwealth's recent record on this issue, I am not prepared to risk a failed process that will be derailed by legal argument on jurisdiction. This is one point where our being a territory matters.

Undertaking this inquiry in a way which does this issue justice will involve a significant financial and resource commitment that will run into tens of millions of dollars. I am not sure that that point has been particularly well understood by everyone involved in this discussion so far. Let us be clear: the government is not prepared to contemplate an inquiry that is not equipped and able to tell the whole story, because to do so would be reckless, simplistic and, most significantly, disrespectful to all those who have been touched by this issue. The government will also not agree to impose artificial deadlines such as an election date on an issue as complex and important as this one is. I think we would all note that similar inquiries in other jurisdictions never adhere to deadlines set by governments and tend to extend well beyond that time—also, I note, increasing costs.

The government is resolute in its view that the critical work of the task force in delivering the scheme cannot be distracted by the need to support or respond to an inquiry. Without downplaying the significance of the story that needs to be told, I believe the best thing that can happen for affected families and for the wider Canberra community is that we get on now with the demolition and rebuilding phase of the scheme. It is through this work that our community will be renewed as one without loose-fill asbestos.

The government has consistently maintained that there should be and that there will be a formal inquiry into the Mr Fluffy issue. I will raise with the Prime Minister and the Premier of New South Wales the issue of a proper inquiry into the legacy of Mr Fluffy and seek their support for a wide-ranging, comprehensive but, importantly, properly resourced process that looks at all aspects of the history of the issue that led the ACT government to make the decision it did last year and that led our New South Wales counterparts to make the decision they did a few months ago.

We owe it to the people whose lives have been most disrupted to do this properly. We owe it to them to have a comprehensive, robust inquiry into what happened and why; and what, if anything, we might learn from that story.

The motion moved today by Mr Hanson will not deliver a comprehensive or robust inquiry. That is why we are seeking to amend it. Frankly, it would be a shame for Mr Hanson to seek to undo the bipartisanship that has been central to this place's response to the crisis through this motion and some of the unfortunate comments in his earlier contribution, which appear to be all about politics.

I welcome the opposition's support on this issue. We seek the Leader of the Opposition's assistance in perhaps writing to the Prime Minister and the New South Wales Premier. I will be meeting with both next month in separate meetings and will take the opportunity to raise this face-to-face. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to support a comprehensive inquiry, there is no doubt that it requires the commonwealth and New South Wales to be involved, in terms of the detail and also in terms of sharing the costs of what will be an exercise costing tens of millions of dollars.

That, I think, is the best way to proceed. That is why I urge members to support the amendment that I have moved today, which formally calls on me to raise this issue with the Prime Minister and the New South Wales Premier, to seek the views of the commonwealth and New South Wales governments on the form of the inquiry and to seek their support for the cost. Should this amendment be passed, I undertake to update the Assembly on the outcomes of discussions with the Prime Minister and the New South Wales Premier as part of the quarterly reports that I provide to this place. I urge Assembly members to support my amendment.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (10.50): I welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue today because the issue of an inquiry of some sort into the Mr Fluffy loose-fill asbestos problem is one that has been discussed by many people over the past 18 months. I hold the view that it just was not the right time 18 months ago to begin any kind of inquiry. At that point the government's position was to try to respond to the scenario of over 1,000 families still living in Mr Fluffy houses and I think the right approach was to focus on the immediate needs of those families, getting the program up and running and seeking to remedy the immediate problem that people were facing. Indeed, at that point many people were still living in their houses and the architecture of the scheme was still being put together. I think that was the appropriate place to focus resources in that early phase of the scheme.

What we now know is that the cost of the scheme to the ACT government is estimated to be around \$400 million and we are still very much in the thick of it, as seems the best description to use, of the work that needs to be done in terms of the many families that are still in the process of resettling. I know some have already and others are still discussing the details of the scheme, as we canvassed yesterday afternoon.

Certainly the scale of this problem is right up there with and perhaps even larger than the 2003 bushfires, with more than 1,000 homes and families affected directly and of course then the impact on neighbours, relatives and workplaces of those people who have been caught up in this as well. And we of course have the ongoing issue of the fear felt by individuals who have lived in Mr Fluffy houses and who have the uncertainty of knowing what impact it is going to have on their health and the health of their loved ones over the longer term, having until now unknowingly lived in those houses.

The demolition and rebuilding process is going to be a long one, and that is a hard thing for people who have already been through a lot. I believe that the scheme has given people the opportunity to move on and to seek to start to rebuild their lives as quickly as possible, given the scale and complexity of it.

I believe the ACT government's response has offered financial justice for those affected, noting of course that no monetary figure can take away the grief and dislocation that many people are left feeling as a result of the legacy of Mr Fluffy that blights our city. I know that the ACT government's response has also included many features that have helped support families, including a team of personal support officers, the provision of information through community council meetings and engagement through the community reference group.

I recently wrote to the Chief Minister canvassing options around a restorative justice approach that could be taken to this issue, seeking to find ways to assist people to work through this process, get the answers that they were seeking and, I guess, try and assist the healing process. I think there is a range of ideas that may still be open to us. As I touched on, there is a range of supports already in place but I think, given there is still anger and hurt for some people in the community over this issue, there is still work to be done.

I mention that in this context because clearly an inquiry is one of the mechanisms in that process. That is why I particularly reference this. I think there is a range of levels at which this work needs to be done—at the individual level right through to, I guess, the big-picture level that an inquiry like this would seek to address.

Regarding the timing of an inquiry, I think that there are issues around the capacity of the task force. I disagree with Mr Hanson that the two things can be easily separated. We know the task force are working very hard to respond to the needs of home owners, and there is no doubt that any sort of inquiry would impact on their work load and possibly make it difficult for them to deliver what they need to do in the immediate to short terms. I would imagine that an inquiry would detract from the work that they are busily doing.

We will of course reach a point where the task force's role will become simpler; the architecture will be in place; the scheme will be rolling; there will still be work to be done. But clearly the frontend of this is the more challenging period of it and it opens up the fact that it will be the right time to start to move to an inquiry. There is probably some subtlety around the exact timing of that.

In the context of what the purpose of the inquiry would be—and I have to think about that—I think there are a number of key points. The first is to ensure that we learn from any mistakes that were made. Mr Hanson touched on this in his remarks and it is quite right that we should cast back about what was done, what decisions were taken and what we can put in place to ensure that we do not see a repeat in the future.

Of course, this all started in roughly 1968. I would like to think a lot of things are done differently already to how they were done in 1968—some 47 years down the track. I am sure that a lot of things are done differently but of course there is an ongoing, more modern history of it as well. Certainly there are important discussions to be had there.

Following from that I guess the second purpose of an inquiry is to put in place changes to ensure that similar mistakes are not made again. It is kind of attached to

the first one but the benefit of any inquiry is to make recommendations with the benefit of hindsight which of course always gives us better perspectives on these things.

The third purpose of the inquiry, in my view, would be that, for many of the victims, there would be a benefit in telling their story and how they have been impacted, sharing that in a very public forum and being widely heard. This goes to some of the restorative justice ideas I was reflecting on earlier, that there is a space where there is undoubtedly a cathartic outcome of telling one's story and sharing it with a broader audience as part of that process of healing and as part of making sure that this is on the record and is informing public debate.

A fourth point is that there is no doubt that for some people the purpose of an inquiry is an element of finding someone to blame. Given the dislocation, disruption and hurt that have occurred for many people involved in this process, for some people that is no doubt important.

Finally, I think there would be the issue of compensation. While an inquiry does not necessarily lead to compensation itself, inquiries often do lay a path to compensation by apportioning responsibility to one or more parties and assessing whether there was negligence and the like as part of their findings.

Reflecting on the costs of an inquiry, inquiries of this nature can of course be very expensive. There seems to be little doubt about that. While on a much bigger scale, the child sex abuse inquiry is estimated to cost around \$435 million, and the current inquiry into the unions is estimated to cost around \$61million. That gives us a sense of the scale. Once all the infrastructure is put in place for an inquiry such as this and with the involvement of many legal people in the process, no doubt the expense adds up very quickly. Whilst any inquiry into Mr Fluffy will clearly not be on the scale of the child abuse inquiry, it could easily run into the tens of millions of dollars and possibly more.

The cost should not necessarily be an obstacle to undertaking an inquiry but it must be considered. The important thing is that if it were to proceed, and we were to commit to an inquiry of this expense, then we would want to be sure that we are doing it properly and that it has the scope to operate in a way that actually delivered answers for those people who have been affected.

As such, I do not believe there is any purpose in continuing without having the commonwealth fully on board. Indeed, I believe that the commonwealth should not only participate but should also fund this inquiry.

I have had some discussions with Mr Barr in the past 24 hours as part of the preparation of his amendment, and I flag at this point that I will be supporting Mr Barr's amendment for this very central reason: I do not think the ACT should do this alone. It is essential, given the role of the commonwealth and their significant role in the history of the Mr Fluffy issue, that they are a full party to this inquiry.

As we all know, the Mr Fluffy legacy stretches back into the late 60s, well before the time of self-government. Decisions were made by the commonwealth about how to

respond and programs were put in place. As such, I agree that if the ACT did go it alone in the establishment of the inquiry without having the commonwealth on board then we would potentially be wasting our time and getting only half of the story. Every effort should be made to bring the commonwealth on board and, for that matter, New South Wales.

I do not think that New South Wales is essential to any inquiry but it would clearly be a far better and more comprehensive inquiry and one that actually brought on board our neighbours just across the border, particularly in Queanbeyan—another location that is so close to us and that is affected—but also people throughout our region, some further parts of New South Wales but predominantly this area being the colder regions of the state. I think there is real merit in having New South Wales included. I support the Chief Minister's amendment in the way that he flags raising this with the Premier of New South Wales and also the Prime Minister to seek their support.

I think that the commonwealth should not only participate but should also fund any inquiry. And, of course, having commonwealth participation is essential for making sure that the inquiry is thorough and has access to all of the information. If the commonwealth is a reluctant party to such an inquiry will we have full access to the information? That is unclear. Clearly there are limits to what we can do if the commonwealth is not involved.

I think the role the commonwealth has so far played, since we had the information 18 months or so ago about the situation we are in, frankly, shows its involvement has been very limited. I would go so far as to say it has been churlish. The extent of commonwealth involvement was to provide the ACT government with a loan to enable us to manage the cash flow but, of course, as we have recently learned, that will result in the ACT paying at least \$200 million back to the commonwealth in interest alone, adding very much to the cost of our attempts to deal with this toxic legacy once and for all. The interest rate they charged the ACT was only marginally lower than a commercial interest rate and I think the commonwealth could have done much more.

So it is essential that they come on board to assist with an inquiry. Their response so far has been underwhelming and, perhaps, knowing their role in this issue, their response to having an inquiry will also be underwhelming and perhaps they are not interested in hearing the findings of any such inquiry. But it would fundamentally be a mistake for the commonwealth not to be involved in an inquiry.

On that basis I will be supporting the Chief Minister's amendment this morning. I believe it provides a way forward that is sensible and that ensures that we will achieve an inquiry that is meaningful, that includes all the right players and that is the first step to getting buy-in from the commonwealth on this issue—something that has been sadly lacking to date in this current phase of dealing with our legacy of Mr Fluffy.

I understand that the reporting date means that we will likely see the December-February quarterly report tabled in the Assembly next March but of course I encourage the Chief Minister that, if he does have any fruitful discussions with the Prime Minister and the Premier of New South Wales, to provide an update sooner

than that if he is publicly able to. I am sure he would. I think he would be very pleased to announce that but I think that would be beneficial because I know many people are waiting to find out the outcome on this.

I hope—and I have a degree of optimism with the changes that we have seen in the federal government—we get a better level of support from the federal government. I would certainly urge my colleagues in the Liberal Party here in the ACT to make representations to their federal colleagues to ensure that we have a full inquiry. The sooner we can get commonwealth support and engagement the sooner we can get underway. I agree that there is value in getting on with this in a timely manner but we have to get on with the right inquiry. We need the commonwealth on board and that is why I will be supporting Mr Barr's amendment today.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (11:03): I am happy to speak to the amendment and close. I thank members for their contributions today. We have points of disagreement and we have points of agreement. That is pretty clear. It seems that the point of agreement is the need for an inquiry. The point of disagreement is the time frame. The reality is that the vote in the chamber today will mean that Mr Barr's amendment will get up. But we will not be supporting it. That is not to say there are not some good elements in there. There are some good suggestions. Fundamentally it does not support the calling of an inquiry with an earlier rather than a later reporting date. So I cannot support the amendment.

A couple of points that Mr Barr and Mr Rattenbury have raised include the desire to work with the commonwealth and New South Wales and I indicate through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to the Chief Minister that I would support that. If Mr Barr believes that having my support and that those discussions with the Prime Minister and with the Premier of New South Wales would assist, if that is the path that we are taking—and it appears that we are—then I will offer my assistance to facilitate that because, although I believe it is time to get on with it, if the government is taking that approach then that is a better approach than not having anything.

What I would like to see is the commonwealth and potentially New South Wales participating in that process so that we can get on with it sooner rather than later. I hope that if we get some success there then that process can start in a relatively short time frame, for the reasons that I have outlined.

There were a couple of points that I would address in terms of the time frame in connection with an election and so on. I think that, given that this is being dealt with in a substantive sense by this Assembly, by members of this Assembly, it would be good to have it done in this Assembly. If that is not achievable then I am willing to discuss it but certainly this process needs to start. If the time frames need to be longer let us have the discussion.

With regard to bipartisanship, I hope the comments I have just made express the view that we are trying to get the right result. We have a difference of opinion but I am not going to be obstructionist in any sense. But what I would say is that the call for the inquiry was bipartisan, arising out of a committee, and then stopped being bipartisan when it got to the Chief Minister. We can squabble about that if we like but that is the

reality. The call for a committee inquiry was bipartisan. The date for reporting by March next year was bipartisan. It was tabled in the Assembly and then after that it stopped being bipartisan. The Chief Minister could perhaps reflect on that if he is going to start trying to accuse people of not being bipartisan. Bipartisan does not necessarily suggest that we must agree on every element of this.

This has been a difficult issue for this community. I have a view, the Chief Minister has a view and the Greens have a view. The result today is that we will not support the amendment and given that that will then be the plan going forward, as I have indicated, if we can get the feds onboard—and I would like to see them being more generous with the money; let me be very clear here, I would like them to pay for the lot—that would be a good thing. We are going to tread on the real worm, though, but if I can help with the negotiations that would support the cost of an inquiry that would be good. If we can have negotiations that said, “Let’s waive the interest,” that would be good. The better the deal that we can get for the ACT is something that I have stood for and I think that potentially, as I did with Ms Gallagher when she was negotiating on this deal, we were able to get an agreement, a deal that clearly the government supported. It was their deal and we helped in that process. If we can continue to help we will.

As I have made clear, we will not be supporting the amendment simply because it does not fit the desired outcome of the motion and that is to commence a board of inquiry and have it report sooner rather than later.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 7

Mr Barr
Ms Berry
Dr Bourke
Ms Burch

Mr Corbell
Ms Fitzharris
Ms Porter
Mr Rattenbury

Mr Coe
Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne
Mr Hanson

Ms Lawder
Mr Smyth
Mr Wall

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Transport—public

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (11.13): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) Canberra is growing quickly as it becomes a vibrant and diverse international city;
 - (b) proper investment and focus on public transport is the only way to effectively avoid a congested road network over the next 25 years; and
 - (c) Canberrans deserve a convenient, integrated, reliable, efficient and affordable public transport network to meet their needs for the future;
- (2) welcomes the:
- (a) release of the Government's plan to improve and co-ordinate our public transport by ensuring there is "one ticket, one network" across buses and light rail;
 - (b) ACT Government's commitment to ensure ACTION remains in public hands;
 - (c) release of the consultation draft of the Light Rail Network Plan to identify potential future light rail corridors and seek community feedback; and
 - (d) establishment of the single public transport agency, Transport Canberra, to oversee operational and service improvements to ACTION, and the construction and operation of the light rail network; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) continue to implement a public transport network that meets Canberrans' needs now and over the next 25 years;
 - (b) ensure Transport Canberra prioritises the re-allocation of 1.2 million annual bus kilometres freed up by stage 1 of the light rail network to improve the Canberra-wide bus service; and
 - (c) investigate potential partnership opportunities with the Commonwealth Government for high priority light rail corridors.

I am proud today that we are working on fulfilling the promise we made in 2013, Canberra's centenary year, to continue to build a great inland city that represents Australia's highest aspirations and is one of the world's great livable cities. Canberra's livability depends on factors including the practicality and ease of getting around the city for all members of our community.

Looking back at the 1913 celebrations of the founding of Canberra, we see there were a few early cars and trucks about, and many people on horseback including the light horse. Many had travelled to Queanbeyan by steam train to be here.

When parliament opened in 1927 only a few of the suburbs mapped out on Griffin's plan had started and his plans for passenger rail were still a dream. The design of Canberra going beyond Griffin's plan of what is now called the inner north and south really got underway after the Second World War back in the 1950s and 1960s, the age of the car, the freeway and satellite cities.

The rapid expansion of Canberra and the wholesale import of commonwealth government departments and staff happened from the 1960s. This was at the same time as those rickety old tram and street car light rail systems dating back to the start of the century or earlier were suffering their death rattles in cities like Sydney and Los Angeles, which were giving in to the great urban sprawl.

Back then, Civic was just a few buildings and we had plenty of space for acres and acres of parking, but we do not now. The car ruled in the design of Canberra as tram networks died in so many cities. This seems to be the golden age the Canberra Liberals are stuck in—the Liberals that time forgot.

Now so many cities such as Sydney, under the government of the New South Wales Liberals, are getting into light rail, with the route from Randwick to George Street underway. But the New South Wales Liberals, indeed the federal Liberals now, are not investing in the old noisy, uncomfortable rattlers running on bumpy, uneven tracks that some critics like to invoke, equating light rail with 19th century technology. These are 21st century, efficient, modern people-moving systems, with a smooth, fast ride and easy electronic ticketing.

As you will hear today, the light rail system we are introducing and eventually rolling out across Canberra will be fully integrated with our modern bus system. Passengers will be able to move seamlessly from one mode to another with the same ticketing system built on Canberra's MyWay card.

With the opposition's focus on rubbishing public transport and light rail, this government has not received the credit it is due for the innovations in the ACTION bus system. This includes the fairly smooth introduction of MyWay cards. We avoided many possible pitfalls with MyWay having learned from the failures of some interstate ticketing systems. As an aside, Madam Deputy Speaker, our new light rail system is also technology already proven and now used in many cities worldwide.

The rollout of ACTION's NXTBUS system is another major advance. The NXTBUS app on a passenger's mobile phone is a powerful tool. It is giving passengers accurate live information about routes and the next services to arrive at the bus stops the passenger selects. I am looking forward to the further developments with MyWay, including payment by mobile phone apps. Digital Canberra is getting aboard the buses in so many ways, including the rollout of wi-fi. I am sure we would be dazzled if we could see what will be available in the digital interface with our transport options in a few years time. Ride sharing, car sharing, Uber, taxi booking and tracking and on-demand public transport will all transform our options and rely on smart phone technology.

The finetuning of the ACTION bus network allowed by MyWay ticketing data is greatly improving the efficiency of the service and the ability to schedule the services people want. Of course, the Canberra Liberals say they will just sling a few more buses on Canberra's roads, reduce overheads, sack a few drivers and a few bureaucrats and all will be okay. They think there is no need to think any more deeply about our transport needs over the next quarter century, or congestion or parking or

the urban sprawl. We could have a population of half a million in 20 years time potentially clogging our main transport corridors unless we act now to invest in a better future now.

We are the most car dependent of any Australian capital city. The other capitals have a mix of public transport options including light and heavy rail moving huge numbers of people every day. We Canberrans like the freedom of commuting in a car, but as the city grows we must offer a greater range of transport alternatives or we will end up in a gridlocked city every peak hour. The current draft Belconnen master plan points out that about 70 per cent of Belconnen district workers drive to work and only just over six per cent catch a bus. The figures for workers going to work in the Belconnen town centre show 80 per cent go by car and there is an increase to 10 per cent of workers going by bus. There are similar imbalances in other parts of the city as well.

The Belconnen town centre population is anticipated to grow by 40 per cent by 2031, that is, over the next 16 years. Many of those people will walk to work, if they also work in the town centre, or they will be close to the rapid bus routes and eventually light rail increasing the use of public transport. However, the increased population density of the town centre also puts space for car parking at a premium.

The light rail network report that the government released this week shows further 25-year projections, including a 45 per cent population increase for Canberra overall. In Belconnen, it anticipates a third more jobs in the town centre, a 63 per cent increase in retail space and an almost 50 per cent increase in the number of residences, including flats and apartments. The Belconnen town centre, like the other town centres, will intensify with the people living there, people visiting to use services, shop and work. It will be more dynamic and vibrant but, again, parking, congestion and public transport need to be well managed.

Labor has a long-term transport plan, and we are getting on with it. Buses have an important role to play in our future. That is why we are continuing to build and improve the rapid bus network. We are connecting the suburbs and town centres across Canberra with dedicated bus lanes and priority traffic signalling improving the passenger experience and trip times. I know the new interchanges rolled out in Belconnen, including the one integrated with Westfield Belconnen, are also making public transport a more attractive option. A similar upgrade is underway in Woden.

As the government announced yesterday, we are creating a single agency, transport Canberra, from 1 July 2016, bringing together our bus and light rail agencies, ACTION and capital metro. Transport Canberra will be responsible for integrating Canberra's bus and light rail systems into one network, with one ticketing system, one central point of contact and one timetabling system. I know the Canberra Liberals want to divide and hope to conquer different parts of the city playing one off against another, but I want to remind them that we are one city, one Canberra.

Our transport network is designed to service all Canberrans with a combination of suburban and rapid transit buses and eventually light rail. We have to start the light rail somewhere. The Gungahlin to city corridor is the most congested and the

congestion is destined to grow as new Gungahlin suburbs fill and Northbourne Avenue and Dickson become major residential centres. We cannot just keep jamming more and more buses and more and more cars on the route, which is the Canberra Liberals' default position in lieu of a plan.

It is estimated that the first stage of light rail will remove the need for many of the buses that now ply the corridor, saving 1.2 million bus kilometres that could be used elsewhere. As the light rail network rolls out, there will be more bus capacity released to be used elsewhere in the suburbs. The light rail network plan lays the central framework for an efficient and integrated public transport network to support Canberra as it continues to grow. The plan explores how the light rail network could be expanded across Canberra in the future, in a way that best services our city. Light rail is being considered in Canberra's busiest public transport corridors, where high capacity, high frequency rapid transit services are required.

The corridors beyond the first stage between Gungahlin to city include the parliamentary triangle, Woden to city, Tuggeranong to Woden, city to eastern connections, including the Canberra Airport and Fyshwick via Kingston, Kippax and Belconnen to city and Molonglo to city.

Canberrans are invited to comment on these routes and priorities. Of course, like you, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have great interest in the Kippax and Belconnen to city route. Should it arrive in the city by Barry Drive, as shown on the draft map? Perhaps alternatives have their merits. Perhaps joining the Belconnen line to the first stage at Northbourne via Macarthur Avenue, or via Ginninderra Drive and through to the Northbourne and Swinden Street intersection have a place in these considerations. Both of them have their merits. I look forward to comments from our community about what they would like to see in bringing light rail to Belconnen and Kippax.

Certainly, taking the other end of the line to Kippax recognises the growing population of that part of west Belconnen. With clever use of park and rides and some urban infill along the route I see great benefits for the residents of Belconnen. Likewise across the city, light rail and the integrated bus network promise to make this city even more livable and will better serve growing numbers of public transport users.

This is an exciting time to be in government in Canberra. We are steering Canberra into our second century and planning the future structure of the city. Sitting on our hands is not an option. Anyone who has experienced the horrors of traffic of some of our northern neighbours or even been jammed in traffic in Sydney at peak hour does not want that for Canberra. We know the city is growing. We know the toll that congestion will take on the city as it grows and it will cost hundreds of millions of dollars unless we act now.

Now is the time to start the light rail network as part of a plan over the next quarter century to address our transport needs with a sophisticated, integrated system of transport options that will realise the vision of Canberra as the most beautiful and livable of cities.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (11.26): I thank Dr Bourke for bringing the motion forward this morning. There is no doubt that a strong public transport network must be at the heart of a vibrant and growing city like Canberra—the world’s most livable city. Public transport is an essential service to our community and the driver of economic growth and productivity.

People need to be able to connect with each other. The time that we spend in traffic is time that we are not relaxing, we are not enjoying ourselves, and we are not spending productively. Time we spend in traffic leads to pollution and emissions that damage our environment. Simply building more roads in the city to deal with population growth is not the answer. Only building roads while neglecting public transport inevitably leads to urban sprawl, to even longer commuting times, longer distances travelled and increased social isolation. This is why the government is committed to a well-designed city serviced by strong and accessible public transport.

We have heard the message from our community that people want a convenient, efficient, affordable, reliable and integrated public transport system. The government is seeking to manage our city’s growth in the coming decades to reduce congestion but, most importantly, to protect that precious livability that our city has. To do this we need to improve our public transport system and the government has released a clear and comprehensive plan to do just that.

In any growing city, the ease of mobility plays a key role in creating an environment that is attractive for residents and for businesses. Good public transport means more realistic, genuine, convenient travel options for all Canberrans. With a strong and reliable transport network, walking or riding to a local bus or light rail stop does become a real choice for so many. Park and ride facilities must conveniently link to public transport. The government has released its public transport improvement plan to show how we will go about improving public transport and making it a genuine alternative to driving for more Canberrans.

The new agency, transport Canberra, will be solely dedicated to public transport operations. The agency will be responsible for ensuring that buses integrate seamlessly with light rail and, importantly, there is one ticket, one fare system and one network for our city. The agency’s focus will be on the traveller’s experience, making it easier to move around our city, to plan journeys and to get where you want to go when you need to be there. The new agency will also take forward the government’s 20-year foundation plan for transport, transport for Canberra 2012-2031.

I acknowledge that there are many Canberrans who think that public transport simply cannot work for them because they are a two-car family and that Canberra is the car capital. But this can and will be a city where it will be just as easy to walk or ride to get your kids to school and then jump on a bus to a light rail station and continue your journey direct to your workplace. As we travel we can relax or plan our day, go online using free wi-fi services or, if you are really keen, Madam Deputy Speaker, even begin checking those work emails. The government intends to make this vision a reality.

There is no doubt that ACTION provides a good service for the many Canberrans who use it regularly. It is a well-loved community service, but let us also be frank: ACTION's patronage has not kept pace with our city's population growth. So simply just adding a few extra buses, plucking them out of the air, will not solve our city's problems. As a first step, we must attract more ACTION users, and this means making it more reliable and more user-friendly. This work is already underway.

For example, next year the government will trial an on-demand pick-up system to complement our weekend suburban services. During off-peak times buses providing coverage services to the suburbs, even through some routes, are in fact barely used. Under this trial, passengers will be able to easily and quickly arrange to be picked up from their nearest suburban bus stop and taken to the bus interchange to join more frequent major routes, all for the cost of a single bus fare. This offers the potential for better services along with greater efficiency.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the delivery of light rail will be a key task for the new agency. The first stage, the city to Gungahlin corridor, will transform this area and will support economic development but, importantly, it will free up around 1.2 million bus kilometres per year. It makes sense to reallocate these freed-up kilometres for the benefit of transport across the city. Transport Canberra will design future bus networks to take advantage of these freed-up kilometres.

Another central component of the transport improvement plan is, as Dr Bourke has indicated, the draft light rail network. As the city continues to grow over the next 25 years, we will need a modern light rail network servicing all parts of Canberra. This is the only way that we will keep traffic congestion and commute times down.

Today is very clearly a day that demonstrates just how isolated those opposite are in their commitment to reducing congestion in Canberra. They can join the progressive side of politics today and support a motion that supports a more livable and more functional Canberra.

I note that there has been a dramatic change of heart in the Liberal Party federally. The Prime Minister is particularly supportive of light rail projects in our cities. He recognises that infrastructure such as light rail helps relieve congestion and makes cities and towns more livable. He has commented regularly on the benefits of such investment. That is why I have written to the Prime Minister to raise potential partnership opportunities for high priority rail corridors of mutual interest in our city, particularly in the parliamentary triangle which, of course, accommodates around 60 per cent of Canberra's workforce and caters to five million visitors every year.

If those opposite care about Canberra's transport needs they will support a public transport network that delivers now and delivers over the next 25 years. They will support the reallocation of 1.2 million annual bus kilometres freed up by stage 1 of light rail to improve public transport services right across the city, and they will support the government's efforts to investigate further partnership opportunities with the commonwealth. If not, Madam Deputy Speaker, their only commitment is to more congestion and to more Canberrans being stuck in longer and longer traffic jams.

Successful city planning depends on a capacity to think and to plan over decades. The transport improvement plan is a plan for Canberra as a well-designed city with good public transport, a city that is easy to get around now but, most importantly, over the next 20 years.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (11.34): I believe that the government should stop pursuing this light rail agenda, which is simply to appease a lone Green MLA and to keep themselves in government. In stopping light rail the government has the opportunity to conduct a genuine assessment about the best way to improve public transport in Canberra.

Indeed some of these assessments have already been done and show that investment in our bus network is a better return on investment than is light rail. Any review that the government does is going to be biased, because this government is politically committed to light rail before having a genuine assessment and a genuine look at how best to roll out public transport in Canberra.

Indeed, even TAMS is sceptical of light rail. In a submission in response to the capital metro environmental impact statement TAMS stated:

TAMS is concerned by the information shown in Table 10.5 which shows assessment of overall modelled network performance for 2021. This table indicates no significant decrease in the AM and PM traffic for both base and 2021.

I will read out that second sentence again:

This table indicates no significant decrease in the AM and PM traffic for both base and 2021.

What TAMS are saying is that there is not going to be any decrease in congestion on Northbourne Avenue or on Flemington Road as a result of light rail, and that is backed up by the figures. They say only 3,900 people will use light rail, but if there are 3,500 currently using buses we are not seeing the increase that is being touted by those opposite. If TAMS say there is no significant decrease in the AM and PM traffic for both base and 2021 the light rail business case is flawed.

If the government wants to remove congestion, as stated by the Chief Minister in his press release today, then maybe they should listen to their own directorates who believe that light rail would do little to remove congestion on the route. And, deep down, I know those opposite think so as well. How could they not think that sensible and substantial improvements in the ACTION bus network would not deliver a better return on investment and a better outcome for all Canberrans?

The long-awaited light rail master plan was disappointing to say the least. In fact it was very little more than what was released at Christmas time last year—in effect an image with some tabbed drawings on top of it and some wishful thinking. Although the artist's impressions and the maps are prevalent there is next to no substance attached to it. There is no mention of the cost of the network and very little regard was given to the practicalities of building this network. Worse still, there is no mention of what patronage forecasts might be.

On the cost of the master plan, one word in particular stands out from Dr Bourke's motion, "affordable". This of course was the same term used by the Chief Minister yesterday, the man who is also in control of balancing the territory's books, when he described the government's plans for transport in Canberra, "affordable". Perhaps that is what the union polling is telling them, perhaps that is what their polling is telling them, that people have concerns about the cost. So for the next year we are going to see the government try to bang on with the term "affordable".

Quite frankly, as we all know, this is not affordable, especially when you look at the opportunity cost. It was interesting that the Minister for Planning said in question time yesterday that the master plan has not been costed. As I am sure Dr Bourke and the Chief Minister would agree, we cannot judge whether something is affordable if we have not seen how much it is going to cost.

What is affordable about this network? A best case estimate puts the cost of the proposed network at \$5 billion at least. However I would not be surprised if this figure is perhaps even double that. This is primarily due to some of the practicalities involved in building the network such as getting the tram over bridges, through tunnels and around intersections. Navigating the bridges, tunnels, and intersections will not come cheaply. Quite frankly light rail will actually deliver a slower service than the intertown buses.

Of course these additional routes proposed in the master plan will also need to be financed. As we all know, the interest burden becomes larger with every dollar you borrow and spend. Then of course the trams need to be operated and maintained, all of which will come at a substantial cost and, worse still, a substantial opportunity cost.

The fact that the master plan has not been costed also calls into question the legitimacy of the consultation referenced in Dr Bourke's motion. You cannot expect proper consultation to occur on projects if you do not detail the costs of these projects and what the opportunity cost is. Previous studies commissioned by the ACT government have shown that whilst Canberrans like the idea of light rail they prefer investing in our bus network as a reasonable option for using taxpayers' money. There is a correlation between the support for light rail and the price of light rail. Unfortunately that correlation is a negative correlation.

Aside from the costs of the project, the practicalities of building the light rail network proposed in the master plan are not sufficiently explained. For example, how is the government proposing to get a tram from London Circuit onto Parkes Way? From looking at the master plan, it appears the government wants to run a tram along Edinburgh Avenue and down a ramp onto Parkes Way. Apart from turning the tram into a bit of rollercoaster—and I have no doubt that modern engineering can find a way to get the tram onto Parkes Way—it would not come cheaply.

Then there are the challenges of getting the trams over both Kings Avenue and Commonwealth Avenue bridges and through the Acton tunnel and the Capital Circle tunnel. Again, I have no doubt that engineers can make this happen but it does not come cheaply.

The master plan itself is nothing new, apart from a new route from Russell to the airport and a route taking in the Molonglo Valley and Weston Creek. The light rail master plan simply copies the red and blue rapid bus networks. Of course these are the parts of the bus network which run the best. These are the parts of the bus network that repeatedly get high levels of satisfaction from the travelling public. It is actually the suburban links which are the problematic ones, the very links which are not addressed by light rail. Spending billions and billions to replace the two best bus routes in Canberra is ludicrous.

Any project looks good when it is not costed and there is no time frame for the construction and you do not provide any details on how much it will cost to upgrade. Indeed, with this master plan we could be forgiven for thinking that we are actually watching an episode of *Utopia*. However, sadly there is no-one of the ilk of Tony providing a voice of reason and trying to stop dodgy infrastructure proposals reaching the public domain.

I now turn to the important MRCagney review into ACTION expenditure which the government released yesterday. I support this review being undertaken and I hope the review can lead to a better ACTION bus network in the future. Of course, this review is really nothing new. Madam Deputy Speaker, as you would well know, about every year or two there is a substantial review into ACTION buses and every year or two there is a minister for transport that bangs the table and says, "I am going to change this." It has happened for 30 or 40 years in Canberra, and we all know it.

This is just the latest iteration, just like the claim that the network is going to solve all our problems. They are already talking about network 16 as the silver bullet. There was network 14 and there were stuff-ups. Then there was network 15 and there were stuff-ups with that. Now it is network 16. Last year Mr Rattenbury told this place that network 15 would be it and there would need to be only minor tweaks from then on. Now they are talking about the next big reform coming in 2016 with the next network. It is always another network away. It is always another EBA away. This government has no resolve to actually make travelling on public transport easier for people in Canberra.

The latest review shows that over the past 15 years the general performance of ACTION has declined. Not only is ACTION costing more but it is carrying fewer passengers. Indeed, for the 2014-15 financial year ACTION recorded just 45 trips per capita, one of the lowest trips per capita figures ever recorded. Remember that at the start of the 1990s ACTION's number of trips per capita was more than double what it is today. All this is under a Greens transport minister.

What is most stark in the figures released yesterday, though, is the decline in ACTION once the government decided to pursue light rail. Since 2011 public transport usage to get to work has dropped from 7.8 per cent to 7.1 per cent. This figure is set to drop even further to 6.9 per cent this year. In its transport for Canberra plan released in 2012 the ACT government aimed to have 10.5 per cent of Canberrans using public transport to get to work by 2016.

This government is on track to fail. On these figures they will not just fail by a per cent, they will fail miserably by about a third. This is the legacy of the ACT Labor-Greens government when it comes to public transport: lots of plans, lots of reviews, lots of spend, lots of media but no actual results. This is, of course, backed up by the fact that we have the Chief Minister here talking about urban sprawl as if it were an evil thing. Yet this is the government that is commissioning Denman, Jacka, Taylor, Throsby or Moncrieff, none of which is in walking distance of a tram stop—none of them.

What does Mr Rattenbury do? What does Mr Rattenbury do in cabinet when there are decisions such as Riverview being taken—6,500 homes to the west of Belconnen? I think there is a lot of merit in that development but what does Mr Rattenbury do? What does Mr Barr do when you have this sort of urban sprawl, when you have this sort of greenfield development? What do they do? They back it. They back it because they are addicted to the money of the LDA to build a tram system which they claim is going to stop the need for greenfield development. That is ridiculous. The scams they have are absolutely ridiculous, and they must know it.

Mr Rattenbury in particular must be quite conflicted about all the LDA's greenfield sites to fund their bogus projects which do not deliver. And Mr Rattenbury's own agency, TAMS, said that there will not be a decrease in congestion on Northbourne Avenue as a result of light rail. It is printed in the EIS. There will not be a decrease. I repeat:

This table indicates no significant difference in the AM and PM traffic for both base and 2021.

That is because people are not getting on the tram in 2021 because there are so few people living within walking distance. What does it do for someone in Casey or Ngunnawal or Amaroo or Bonner or Forde or Moncrieff or Nicholls or Palmerston or Crace? It does nothing. They will still be dependent on other modes of transport to get from their home to their destination. That is why this plan is folly. That is why it is fanciful.

There must be some amongst those opposite who are really questioning this, really questioning whether it is the best way to spend \$1 billion on an ACT-wide network to replace the well-performing red and blue rapids with a slower tram service at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars per year to operate in addition to the \$5 or \$10 billion to construct. It is all very well for those opposite to talk about congestion in the abstract, to talk about the end of greenfield. The reality is that this government's actions simply do not reflect their words.

The opposition will not be supporting this motion. I move:

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

"calls on the ACT Government to undertake a genuine assessment about the optimal mode and staging of improvements to public transport in Canberra."

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (11.49): I thank Dr Bourke for moving this motion today. Public transport is clearly a key priority for the Barr Labor government. The benefits of public transport are well known and range from environmental and financial benefits to social and health benefits. I think we all know that encouraging more people to use public transport where possible is a good thing because in Canberra it is only too clear that we have a high dependency on cars. This is particularly true in my local region of Gungahlin. Dependence on private transport in the city to Gungahlin corridor sits at just under 90 per cent.

It is undeniable that Canberra is a great place for cars. We have a great road network that connects the city, and we spend tens of millions—in some years hundreds of millions—of dollars maintaining and improving it every year. However, our car dependency is now becoming an issue due to ever-increasing congestion, health, productivity and environmental impacts.

Some of the most common complaints I get as an MLA are about road congestion. That is why I am such a proud supporter of capital metro light rail, stage 1, which will travel from the city to Gungahlin. Some of the main objectives of light rail are: starting to provide a convenient alternative to the car; and encouraging people to get more active and to use public transport. This just makes sense, and I am constantly surprised that people seem to think it is not a realistic option for Canberra. Indeed the light rail corridor is fast becoming one of the most densely populated corridors of Canberra, and it is a prime location for a light rail line. Gungahlin itself has a rapidly growing population, growing from just over 300 people to over 50,000 in the past 25 years. But the daily commute is getting longer and longer and we just cannot keep building more roads, buying more buses and building more depots. This is not sustainable in the long term.

Light rail will both take cars off the road and reroute buses, reallocating 1.2 million annual bus kilometres across our city. This means that buses can be better managed in areas that need them most. I think we will see massive flow-on effects across our network once light rail is operating. Indeed you needed only to experience the traffic congestion created in different areas of our city during the closure of the Acton tunnel last week to get a feel for the flow-on effects traffic changes can have—sometimes in areas of the city you never thought would be impacted.

That is why the transport Canberra plan released this week by Chief Minister, Andrew Barr, and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Transport Reform, Shane Rattenbury, is so important. It really reboots our community conversation about public transport and the future we envisage for our city, a future that is more sustainable, convenient, connected and coordinated when it comes to how we move about our sprawling city.

Most of all it is about creating a connected transport system that puts people first. The “one ticket, one network” approach is fundamental to this plan, and will be a key component of a system that incorporates both buses and light rail. And people overwhelmingly tell us how much they like ACTION bus services, in particular how much they like the drivers, who are friendly, helpful and professional on our roads. I have had many constituents give me such positive feedback about our bus drivers, with some wanting to see a “bus driver of the year” award implemented.

The benefits of an integrated public transport system for our community are substantial because it supports social inclusion, drives economic development, maintains livability and reduces congestion. Having transport Canberra as the umbrella organisation will ensure ACTION and capital metro are working as one to deliver the best outcomes across a connected network.

I also join with Dr Bourke and the Chief Minister in welcoming the consultation draft of the light rail network plan to identify potential light rail corridors, released on Monday by planning minister Mick Gentleman. This consultation plan has already kick-started the conversation about where light rail should be extended to following the rollout of stage 1. I encourage people to take up this opportunity to have a say on the future proposed corridors of light rail, and have a say on the long-term strategy and vision for Canberra's light rail network.

This is an opportunity for people and interest groups to make the case for the next stage of light rail. The government should be commended and supported on this long-term approach to planning our future public transport network, and I would hope that those opposite would agree that seeking the community's views and planning for our city's public transport future are good things. Too often we lament the difficulties of forward planning in our short-term political cycle, so leadership now on this issue should be welcome. Public consultation for the light rail network plan is open until 11 December 2015.

It is also clear to me every time I visit local businesses and speak to residents in Gungahlin and around the stage 1 route that people are making investments today and buying property, both residential and commercial, in anticipation of light rail being built nearby. It is driving investment and has provided a positive reason to buy property, particularly around Harrison, Franklin and the Gungahlin town centre. A recent article on Domain.com.au said:

Capital Metro's first proposed route will take its passengers from the CBD to Gungahlin. The route will make the daily commute a breeze for residents of the northern suburbs, and for Gungahlin property owners it's also good news.

Independent Property Group Gungahlin agent Andrew Potts is quoted as saying:

One of the main things that we're seeing in Franklin and Harrison is the importance of access to the city and having that direct route.

He said that light rail is on the mind of just about—

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Ms Fitzharris, sit down. Stop the clock please. If you want to make a comment, Mr Smyth, you will have an opportunity when Ms Fitzharris has finished. You can get up and make your point. Meanwhile will you please remain silent.

MS FITZHARRIS: As I was saying, Independent Property Group Gungahlin agent Andrew Potts is quoted as saying:

One of the main things that we're seeing in Franklin and Harrison is the importance of access to the city and having that direct route.

He says that light rail is on the mind of just about everyone buying within close proximity to the city to Gungahlin route. Delmar, a boutique townhouse development on the light rail route in Franklin, has seen very strong sales. "The light rail has definitely been mentioned by the vast majority of buyers," said Mr Potts. In the same article, Domain Group senior economist Andrew Wilson said local public transport improvements increase the demand for properties in the area. He said:

It's always a positive to improve local infrastructure. All these initiatives always put a premium on demand.

Public servant Marko Savic, who purchased a townhouse in the Glasshouse development, said he believes the light rail, which is expected to run straight past the front of his development, will add value to his investment. He said:

I actually work in Civic and the parking is ... difficult, hard to find and quite expensive. If this light rail were to come in it would really make my life so much easier.

I seek leave to table the article.

Leave granted.

MS FITZHARRIS: I present the following paper:

Canberra light rail puts Gungahlin on track for property boost—Copy of news article, dated 30 April 2015.

It is clear that people are already planning for light rail. It is already boosting productivity, investment and economic activity in our city.

I also welcome the debate this week about the potential to extend light rail to Russell, as well as the parliamentary triangle. As Minister Gentleman said, the parliamentary triangle is a high priority corridor, holding 60 per cent of all ACT jobs. At the same time light rail in the parliamentary triangle would also support the travel of more than five million visitors annually to national and local institutions. This is an opportunity that we should look to progress, and one we could possibly partner with the federal government on.

I believe we can put a good case to new Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, who has been at pains to say that one of the key issues—perhaps the only issue—that differentiates him from former Prime Minister Tony Abbott is his commitment to rail. I note the federal government has already seized on the success of the Gold Coast light rail project to showcase its support of light rail, committing \$95 million to stage 2 of that project. Just as Gold Coast light rail is vital for the 2018 Commonwealth Games, Canberra light rail will be vital to the future of Australia's capital city and its institutions, which get better and better every year.

I also point out that we have already secured \$60 million in funding from the commonwealth as an outcome of asset recycling for the light rail project. Clearly, the tide is turning and the Canberra Liberals are being left behind when it comes to investing in public transport, particularly light rail, across Australia.

It is clear that there is a future for light rail in Canberra, along with buses, cycling, walking, private vehicles, taxis and ride sharing arrangements. With so many options, it is important to have one agency that will ensure buses and light rail are integrated with one another and with other forms of transport. It will also encourage more innovative approaches to driving, parking and traffic management.

In the years ahead, when light rail starts operating, transport Canberra will ensure efficient integration by delivering a single ticketing, timetabling and fare system across all of Canberra's public transport options. In the long term this will make Canberra an even more sustainable, modern, prosperous and livable city. I am sure commuters across our city will look forward to this new way of getting around our city in the years to come. I am proud to support this motion and thank Dr Bourke again for moving it today.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Justice, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Transport Reform) (11.59): It seems that, after all that interjecting, Mr Smyth does not in fact want the call.

Government members interjecting—

MR RATTENBURY: I am pleased to support this motion from Dr Bourke today and I thank him for bringing it to the Assembly. I have talked about transport, and particularly public transport and active transport, many times before in the chamber—just as my Greens predecessors have done, and this is because we believe that a long-term vision for transport, focused on active and public transport, is essential to creating the sustainable and livable city for the future. It is an essential way to respond to the challenges we face such as population growth, pollution, energy security, social exclusion, and even the need for continued economic prosperity. If we are going to be ready for these challenges, and resilient to them, a forward-thinking transport plan is a key response.

Some people have a narrow view of transport; that it is only about moving people from place to place. It is about movement, of course, but transport is also a fundamental planning tool and it is at the core of how our city develops and grows. More than how we move around, it is key to our health, social and economic outcomes. As I have said before, if, for example, we just build more and bigger roads and plan only for private car transport, we will end up with a sprawled city, an expensive city, a city with worse health outcomes, a city with increased social isolation and a city with more congestion and more delays. The evidence of this is all around the world and it would be a folly to ignore it.

These are some of the reasons that transport was a major part of my parliamentary agreement with the Labor Party in 2012. It contained major items on light rail, buses, walking and cycling. It is excellent to hear that our Chief Minister is also committed to a vision of Canberra as a modern, sustainable, public transport focused city. He is demonstrating it both in his remarks and in the public transport plan that we released yesterday.

It has not always been the case that the ACT government has focused so strongly on sustainable transport. Its recent commitments are very positive and I think it shows the good work that Labor and Greens can achieve when we work together for a shared vision. The next steps, of course, will see more and more of these commitments come to fruition. We have now a light rail network plan that envisages how a quality, modern, comfortable and convenient public transport spine, powered by renewable energy, can stretch right across our city. This is the type of network that could genuinely make us a world leading city in public transport and sustainable, low-carbon planning.

The public transport plan we announced yesterday complements the light rail network plan. It creates a single public transport agency, called transport Canberra, to ensure a high level of integration in our future multimodal public transport system. It commits to significant reinvestment in the bus network. Buses will improve right across the city. They will connect with light rail. The agency will ensure this happens seamlessly and that there is a consistent and integrated passenger experience. There is a large amount of work occurring to help this occur, perhaps better described as quieter, behind the scenes work. We are in the final stages of a corporate restructure concerning ACTION that will build additional capability for network design and analysis, as well as building the capacity for broader business improvements. This will support reliability and on-time running.

The introduction of light rail will present an opportunity to work on a generational replacement for the current MyWay system. We intend to introduce an integrated payment system that will be the same for buses and light rail and that takes advantage of modern payment options. To support this shift, the government has commenced work on an options paper for future public transport fares in Canberra, for public consultation in 2016.

ACTION is halfway through a program to replace 77 orange buses with new buses. We are also developing a fleet strategy that will consider the longer term needs of the ACTION fleet and the best possible approach to meeting customer needs. I am keen for this to include new bus technology such as hybrid and electric buses. We will also be trialling a new on-demand bus and taxi service for off-peak periods. Passengers will be able to arrange to be picked up from their nearest suburban bus stop and be taken to the bus interchange or a main bus route. This will be for a regular bus fare. When going home, passengers will be able to take an on-demand service from the bus interchange back to their regular bus stop. These are all good and forward-thinking initiatives that acknowledge the realities of our growing city and take steps to respond.

I did note Mr Coe's comments, particularly on the MRCagney report, and I was interested in them. He talked about the fact that these reports have been coming for 30 or 40 years, so clearly since before self-government—I assume that is what he meant—and I note that the Liberal Party has been in power during that period as well.

Government members interjecting—

MR RATTENBURY: What this underlines is the difficulty of seeking change, but we have outlined a series of changes. That is why—

Government members interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Coe!

MR RATTENBURY: we commissioned the MRCagney review and are now implementing a range of the recommendations that were suggested by it. I note that at least in the media comments yesterday and on the news last night Mr Coe rattled off a list of things that were in fact all things that the MRCagney review suggested and which the government is now implementing. So, if Mr Coe has got no other policy proposals, he should be very clear about that and he should come out and welcome what the government is doing in implementing a number of the recommendations of the MRCagney review, because it seems that he agrees with them. True politics, honest politics, would see him coming out and saying, "Well, I agree".

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Sit down, Mr Rattenbury. Stop the clock, please. Mr Coe, this is not a conversation you are having with Mr Rattenbury across the chamber. Mr Rattenbury is speaking. You will remain silent. Thank you.

MR RATTENBURY: Without encouraging them, what I do take from the interjections—from what I have just heard—is that Mr Coe is in fact saying he agrees with the government's approach, and if that is the case he should say it that way.

The bottom line is that we need to keep making improvements to ACTION. I have been perfectly upfront about that and I can tell this chamber that we have been making improvements to ACTION. In the past three years we have driven on-time running up from 67 to 79 per cent. That is a measurable improvement that is real, that is concrete and that is improving the experience for our passengers on the ACTION bus network.

I do need to clarify some comments that were made because I think Mr Coe has misunderstood my views on the way the networks are operating. He quoted me as saying that there would be no big changes to the network—I said that last year apparently—and that we were about to make more. What I have made very clear is that I believe that we now have the architecture of the network right; the route structure is right and what will happen from here are minor adjustments. We will seek tweaks to the network and I have been upfront about that. I have also explained to this chamber that we intend to keep bringing along a network update about every six

months based on customer feedback, based on tracking of the buses from GPS timing and based on driver feedback. And we have seen that: since network 14 was introduced in September 2014 we saw an adjustment in May 2015 and we were due to have another adjustment about now. Members are well aware that there were problems in presenting that network. That is a very unfortunate thing. There were some good further adjustments—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Coe, if you interject again, you'll be warned.

MR RATTENBURY: There were some good further adjustments to that network that would have driven further on-time improvements and better customer experiences. The new weekend network came in as scheduled on 17 and 18 October and will continue to deliver improvements over the weekend timing. I did want to clarify that point because I have been quite clear that we believe we now have the network architecture in place and any adjustments from here will not be “big changes”, as Mr Coe sought to characterise them, but continuous improvement on the network because that is what I am committed to, that is what the Canberra community wants and that is what the government is delivering.

It is disappointing for me and for a large proportion of Canberrans to see that we have a local Liberal Party with a contrasting view on the need for significant investment in public transport and the way that the government is going about it. The shorthand way to describe it would be “the 1950s Tony Abbott view of the world”. Our local Liberals may have been watching federal question time last week, or perhaps they saw the news, in which the new Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, was challenged to explain one difference between his administration and that of his predecessor Tony Abbott. Malcolm Turnbull happily answered that question and singled out one key difference. The key difference, he said, was his support for public transport infrastructure.

Mr Turnbull went on to say that this is a very significant shift. “It has been very much welcomed across Australia and we are looking at urban infrastructure without discriminating as to whether it is road or rail”, the prime minister said. Since his ascendency, Mr Turnbull has been quite vocal about the benefits of public transport and the need to build livable cities. In fact he quickly established a new portfolio of cities and the built environment. He appointed Jamie Briggs to be the Minister for Cities and the Built Environment, whom members may remember is the same minister—

Government members interjecting—

MR RATTENBURY: You might well say, “Hear, hear”, because he is the same minister who said the Canberra Liberals’ approach to light rail was “economic lunacy”. That is what he said. So when these guys cheer for him I am pleased that they are taking note of what Jamie Briggs is saying and I hope they take further note, because he is very clear that their approach to ripping up the contracts for light rail is “economic lunacy”.

It appears that the new administration recognises the need for investment in sustainable transport for our cities if they are to stay livable and economically productive. This contrasts to the approach of the former Prime Minister Mr Abbott, who was well known for his focus on road building at the expense of public transport. So it is pleasing to see that the old-school Abbott approach is on the way out, that is, of course, except if you are here in the Liberal Party in Canberra, where the Tony Abbott approach lives on through our local representatives in the Canberra Liberals.

While Malcolm Turnbull announces that the federal government will co-fund the Gold Coast's second light rail line, the local Liberal Party say they will tear up the contract for a Canberra light rail project, even though that would waste millions of dollars and would scrap a quality, sustainable transport solution that has the support of the majority of Canberrans. All of this must be highly embarrassing for the local Liberal Party. They continue to channel the ghost of Tony Abbott, refusing to recognise the benefits light rail will bring to Canberra and its important role in creating a future livable city.

I have seen the Liberal Party's commentary on the light rail network plan that the government released on Monday, a document that looks forward to the challenges that we will face in our city and built environment. The response from our local Liberals is, of course, totally negative. They do not want light rail from Gungahlin to Civic but nor do they want it from Civic to the parliamentary triangle or to Woden or to Belconnen or to Tuggeranong or to Weston Creek and Molonglo or to the airport. This is a textbook Tony Abbott response. They do occasionally want it. We occasionally hear a line from Mr Coe that says, "Well, you should not be building it from Gungahlin to the city. It is not the best choice. It should be Civic to Belconnen," as they have got to have a bit of parochialism occasionally. So the position does ebb and flow at times.

The bottom line is that the government has released a vision for this city about building a quality public transport network over a sustained period of time. I must say that the reaction I have had to date has been very positive from the Canberra community. The people whom I have spoken to, just in the first couple of days, have been very positive about the fact that there is clearly a big picture here.

Recently we saw some new survey results on light rail—a *Canberra Times* self-selecting poll and a randomised survey conducted by a professional company. Again, the Liberal Party's approach to this survey was revealing and worth looking at more closely. It highlighted the casual relationship they have with the facts on a regular basis. Mr Coe's media release had the headline, "Majority against light rail". It said, "The poll shows 52 per cent of Canberrans do not support the ACT government's plan for light rail from Gungahlin to the city." This is a clear example where the Liberal Party use information selectively or distort it in a way that will obviously give readers an inaccurate impression. Firstly, this release talked about only the *Canberra Times* self-selecting poll. That was a very interesting poll and a lot of people participated but, let us be honest: even the *Canberra Times*, when they announced it, highlighted the shortcomings of a self-selecting poll. They were honest enough to say that when they introduced it in the paper.

The Canberra Liberals in their release said nothing about the other survey, done to professional standards on a random selection of the population, which showed that 56 per cent of people support the project. This was an inconvenient truth that the Liberal Party would prefer to ignore. Secondly, Mr Coe's headline of "Majority against light rail" is a deliberate distortion. The *Canberra Times* reported its own survey results with the words:

Support for the tram line was at 49 per cent ... Opposition sat at 47 per cent.

So how did Mr Coe come up with his claim that the majority of people are against it? It turns out that he completely ignored the variety of positive statistics in the *Canberra Times* survey and picked the response to one question which asked, "Do you support the first stage of light rail as proposed?" Yes, 52 per cent of respondents said no to that. This was a question obviously intended to ask if residents would have liked the light rail to go somewhere else in Canberra. To then conflate this result into a claim that the majority of people oppose light rail is simply misleading, especially since the media release does not mention the other results of the survey, such as the fact that more people said they supported light rail than those who did not. I have no doubt that people reading this media release would not have received the full and accurate picture. But that is consistent with the approach that the Liberal Party have taken to this entire project. We could dedicate a regular segment in the Assembly in which we unpick the inaccurate or misleading comments that the Liberal Party have made about light rail—and it would be an easy segment to fill.

Another good one was Mr Hanson's comment in response to the release of the light rail network plan. He said, in summary, "I do not understand why they have made this plan when they have already chosen the light rail route and it is right through Rattenbury's electorate." That is a perfect example of the Liberal Party's inability to even comprehend the idea of planning for the future. The light rail network is about future light rail routes for the future of Canberra—one that still exists after the 2016 election. So I challenge our Liberal friends to do something positive today. Maybe they can take off their election blinkers and acknowledge for the first time that Canberra will continue to exist beyond the next election and it will need transport planning beyond the next election.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Community Services, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Women and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Social Inclusion and Equality) (12.14): I am very happy to rise today to speak to this motion by Dr Bourke talking about public transport and the need for an integrated, reliable, efficient, affordable public transport network to meet the needs of Canberrans now and into the future.

Madam Speaker, the value of public transport in our community goes further than just moving people from A to B. As Mr Rattenbury just said in his speech, it is not just about people moving. It goes further than the important economic and environmental benefits of reduced congestion, lower emissions and more time spent at home with the family, which all of us can appreciate in the way that our busy lives have become.

Investment in Canberra's transport system provides opportunities for increasing and supporting social inclusion right across our community—from Belconnen to Tuggeranong, from Gungahlin to Woden and here into the city. Inadequate transport can sometimes contribute to social exclusion—which seems to be the path that the Canberra Liberals want to take our Canberra community down—particularly for people who live in a car dependent community, as we do here in the ACT. A good transport system that provides choice can make a massive difference to the lives of people who have a disability, who are on low incomes or who are unable to own or drive a car, and it increases their opportunities to access goods, services and activities, just like the rest of us do every day of our lives.

Quality public transport systems can increase people's ability to participate adequately in society, including through education choices, employment, public services, social and recreational activities. Quality public transport connections can stimulate and renew suburban areas and provide basic mobility to many disadvantaged groups across our city. In many cities, a convenient and well-integrated transport system has successfully integrated with the fabric of the city to create a more livable space for all sections of the community. It helps to shape more compact, walkable and livable cities, with vibrant community places and spaces for people to enjoy, and it enhances accessibility for the community to travel to events and attractions that they might otherwise avoid.

There is a great social dividend in shared, public transport, which brings people together from all walks of life and fosters a strong sense of inclusion and equality. I see it often myself. From my own personal experiences and those of the people I talk to, the social benefits are enormous, such as the ability to catch up with people you have not seen for a long time or would not stay in touch with unless you did not see them on the bus. On occasion I am able to catch the bus into work. Recently I bumped into a friend of mine whom I went to school with at Ginninderra high. I had not seen her for about 20 years. We talked about the school, of course, and our memories from that time, but also about what our children were doing and how they were growing up and the work we were doing, finding out more about each other. Of course, we made a commitment to catch up again, and I am sure we will on the next ACTION bus that we catch together into the city.

There is also a great willingness for people who travel on public transport to help each other out. During the school holidays I took my children to Melbourne and we stayed in the BIG4 caravan park just out of the city. We used the local bus network to get to the tram station to get into the city and get on the light rail. I tell you what: the helpfulness of the Melbourne community was a really great feeling.

It is the sort of help we experience here in the ACT as well when we catch public transport. I hear stories from people and my friends about their experiences of people looking out for each other. They know the people who catch the same bus every day and make sure that the bus driver stops and waits till they are picked up so that they can catch their bus into the city or whatever event they are going to. It makes inclusion and community participation possible for some of the poorest people in our community to access support services, appointments, social events and other

get-togethers. Any ACTION bus driver can tell you about some of the people that they meet every day using our public transport system being part of our community in a way which is not possible in many other places. It is also a great backup when the car is not an option for some reason.

A couple of months ago there was a power outage across four suburbs in west Belconnen, which meant I could not get my car out of my garage, so I caught the bus. It was a great way for me to get into work. I caught up with another lady who volunteers at Vinnies at Belconnen. The bus delivered her straight to Vinnies in Belconnen where she does her volunteering each week. After she got off the bus another fellow sat next to me who was studying at ADFA and we had a chat about employment opportunities for engineers in the ACT. Providing all sorts of different options for different types of public transport in the ACT really gives us a chance to talk with each other about our lives and share our experiences.

There is also a person I regularly meet up with in my neighbourhood who lives in Charnwood. For the Canberra Liberals to say that they want to stop light rail means that he, his children and people like him and their children all across the city who have been excluded from some of the choices that each of us make every day will not be able to go beyond insecure and casual work. Light rail and the plan and the vision that the ACT government has at the moment—and the vision over the next 25 years for a network that will expand across our great city—mean that this person and people like him and their children will have generations of secure employment. That means that they will have more choices and the chance of further inclusion within our community.

It is a shame that the Canberra Liberals, rather than taking the chance to bring our community together, are choosing to actually divide it. They have decided to create fear and division across our community between the north and south, pitting suburb against suburb and neighbour against neighbour. When it comes to providing a chance for people to be included in our community, the ACT government is leading the way.

The ACT government has put out a press release today through the Chief Minister's office which talks about the Canberra Liberals becoming increasingly isolated with their backward-looking position on transport in Canberra. Today is the chance for the Canberra Liberals to choose whether they want to join the rest of Canberra in the 21st century and support this Assembly motion in favour of public transport or vote against it and come clean to Canberra that they are the party that is hardwired to choke our streets with congestion.

Madam Speaker, that is the choice of those opposite. It is the choice of white-knuckle rides in their Audis across from Gungahlin to Tuggeranong—just like travelling through the congested city streets of Sydney and Melbourne—or taking a relaxing, healthy bike ride or a walk. Parking at the park and ride, the park-ride stop at Gungahlin, and catching the light rail into the city, catching up with their friends, they might even run into their old mate Malcolm Turnbull. He might come for a ride on light rail in Canberra. The choice that the Canberra Liberals have to make is between—

Mr Coe interjecting—

Dr Bourke: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I just wanted to draw to your attention to the fact that Mr Coe has already been warned by the Deputy Speaker for unparliamentary behaviour and interjecting this morning.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Dr Bourke.

Mr Coe: On the point of order, I actually have not been warned.

MADAM SPEAKER: My understanding is that Mr Coe has not been warned, from my conversation with Ms Porter.

MS BERRY: Finally, Madam Speaker, of course the health benefits which I was just referring to, of the incidental exercise that we get by travelling on public transport are significant. Anybody who owns a Fitbit can certainly attest to that. I thank Dr Bourke for bringing this motion to the Assembly. I hope that the Canberra Liberals can bring themselves to join with the rest of the city and build a vibrant city that provides public transport for everybody and a more inclusive society that we all would like to enjoy.

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

Sitting suspended from 12.24 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Canberra Hospital—alleged bullying

MR HANSON: So that there are no surprises, my question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, on 8 October 2015, months overdue, you released an independent KPMG report into the clinical training culture at Canberra Hospital. The report was damning. It said management provided “positive reinforcement for aspiring bullies”. In a media release with the report, you admitted that “poor behaviours such as bullying, inappropriate interpersonal relationships and emotional intimidation have been allowed to persist for so long” and that “these behaviours were prolonged and normalised”. You also admitted to “a culture that accepts or condones bullying, discrimination and/or harassment”. In the *Canberra Times*, the AMA said that the so-called “swift and decisive action” that you proposed would almost inevitably fail. The AMA also expressed little faith in the recommendations from the report ending the decades of cultural decay. Minister, over what period of years have the bullying, inappropriate interpersonal relationships and emotional intimidation been prolonged and normalised?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Hanson for his question. This is a serious matter. Going straight to the substance of his question, which is “For how long has this occurred?”, I would draw Mr Hanson’s attention to the conclusions of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons in relation to their national report on this matter, where they

conclude that this has been a longstanding cultural issue between senior clinicians and trainee clinicians that dates back decades and decades. It is not something which is isolated to the Canberra Hospital; it is embedded, as the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons have themselves acknowledged, in the training culture of just about every training hospital around the country.

The KPMG report is very clear. Our problem is no better, but it is no worse, than the circumstances that are faced across training hospitals across the country. What we have to do is respond to this circumstance. The profession as a whole is responding to the circumstance. What I would say in relation to the AMA is: “Where has the AMA been for the past three decades on this matter?” At the very least, the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons has taken ownership of and responsibility for this critical issue. This comes down to the culture between senior doctors and junior doctors, between the doctors who do the training and the doctors who are trained. We know that the conduct and the behaviour of some of those doctors are simply unacceptable.

We are responding to this issue in a clear and very decisive way. I have commissioned the establishment of a clinical leadership committee, drawing upon the clinical leaders across our hospital system, with the management of the hospital itself, to deliver on each and every one of the recommendations of that report—and, indeed, the report of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. I have met with the local chapter of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. They support this course of action. They take ownership of the issues they face as a profession, and they are doing something about it. I will work with the AMA to make sure that they are engaged as well.

I will not accept criticism that says that this is going to fail when, quite frankly, the profession has not taken responsibility for this matter for many decades. I draw the attention of those opposite to the conclusions of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons is very clear: they say this is a cultural issue at the heart of their profession and it needs to be addressed by them as a profession. We agree. We will support the profession and we will work with the profession to address this cultural problem because, ultimately, we want an environment where our doctors are trained in a respectful environment, in a professional environment and in an environment that encourages excellence. That is our focus as a government.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, why are you attacking the AMA for what the report found was actually ACT Health management “providing positive reinforcement for aspiring bullies”?

MR CORBELL: I am not attacking anyone. I am drawing the attention of the Assembly to a simple truth, and that is that the medical profession, for a long time, has not taken ownership of this issue and has not responded to it as a cultural issue within their profession. They have not done so, but they are now, and we welcome that now and we will support the profession in their response.

In relation to the report, Mr Hanson can selectively quote one part of the report if he wishes, but he should, if he wanted to be forthright and full in his accounting of the report, recognise the deeply seated cultural issues that exist between junior doctors and senior doctors. The issue for ACT Health management is to make sure that their procedures and their processes respond appropriately when complaints are made, and that is why I have made sure that not only senior clinicians are represented on this leadership committee that I have convened, but senior management as well.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, how can the people of Canberra trust that your actions will fix the toxic culture at Canberra Hospital when the AMA has categorically stated that you will inevitably fail?

MR CORBELL: I draw Mrs Jones's attention to my previous answer. This is not going to be an easy problem to solve, because it is a culture and a series of behaviours that have become embedded in far too many relationships between senior doctors and junior doctors across the country. Indeed, there is a view among some doctors that, now that they are senior, they should behave in exactly the same way their seniors behaved towards them when they were trainees. That is the problem. "We put up with it, so you should put up with it" was one of the comments made in the KPMG report. It is not good enough.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR CORBELL: How patently ridiculous for the person who claims he is a future leader of this territory to ignore the assumptions and the conclusions of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and ignore all of the cultural evidence that this is a deep-seated cultural problem across the medical profession that dates back to, probably, well before the Second World War. That is the sort of culture we are talking about. That is the sort of problem we are talking about. For him, everything is an opportunity for a political attack. For him, everything is a shallow, simplistic line for him to criticise this government. If he wants to be minister for health, he needs to understand that he is going to have to show real leadership in responding to the issue of culture. He is going to have to demonstrate real insight. So far he has failed dismally.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, when did you last meet with the AMA about this issue?

MR CORBELL: I met with the AMA a number of months ago. I have another meeting scheduled with them next month. To the best of my knowledge, the AMA have not raised this matter with me.

ACT firefighters—wellbeing study

MR SMYTH: My question is to the minister for emergency services. Minister, an article in the *Public Service News Online* this month noted that firefighters from ACT

Fire & Rescue and the ACT Rural Fire Service will be participating in a three-year mental wellbeing study undertaken by the University of Melbourne. Minister, how many ACT firefighters from ACT Fire & Rescue and the ACT Rural Fire Service will be taking part in this study?

MS BURCH: I thank Mr Smyth for his question. This was launched, coincidentally, the day the Acton tunnel got struck by a truck. I was planning to go out to ESA, meet with Andrew Stark and launch this study. It is open to all members of the ACT Rural Fire Service and ACT Fire & Rescue. We are encouraging all the paid firies and the volunteers to participate in the study.

It is the first of its kind. They will undertake a survey. It is my understanding that in 12 months time that survey will be revisited. Participants can go back in. It is important that we get this information and support our firies and our volunteers as much and as we can.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, could you outline for the Assembly what welfare and counselling services are currently provided to officers in both services, particularly those likely to suffer post-traumatic stress syndrome following overseas deployments?

MS BURCH: There are very strong formal and informal structures of support for the volunteers and the paid workforce in Fire & Rescue. What they see and what they do are often traumatic and difficult. They need to be supported by professional counsellors, they need to be supported by their peers and they need to be supported by management. That is what our systems and our services have in place.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, what will the government do to address firefighters who have been identified as having mental wellbeing needs?

MS BURCH: Those who have been identified as having had traumatic experiences and as needing support will be offered external support, access to counselling services or to that part of the medical profession that is deemed to be appropriate. But it is also important that they are supported in the workplace by their peers and by their management.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, can you guarantee that no firefighter will be disadvantaged as a result of having participated in this study?

MS BURCH: Indeed not. I am actively encouraging each and every volunteer and paid member of the Fire & Rescue service to participate in this study because it is important that we have a deep understanding of the issues that they face so we can finetune and better target our support structures to make sure that they are healthy and that they are able to be maintained in their jobs. They do a fabulous job for our community, and they need to be supported.

Mental health—ice addiction

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, during the estimates process it was recommended that a review be conducted into the number of patients who are admitted to the adult mental health unit suffering ice addiction and ice-related illnesses, yet this recommendation has been rejected. Minister, what has the government done to conduct a review into the number of ice users accessing and using the adult mental health unit?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mrs Jones for her question. Obviously issues around the use of alcohol and other drugs are constant issues for our mental health services when dealing with people particularly with acute mental illness. We do know—indeed it is well understood at a clinical level—that co-dependency around alcohol and drugs is all too often a common aspect of people who are suffering severe mental illness. These factors are well understood and are effectively taken into account through the clinical processes adopted by our doctors and nurses at the adult mental health unit.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, what has the government done to address ice users who are presenting with significant mental health problems, as a result of their use, at our mental health facilities?

MR CORBELL: The question is: what has it done? They are treated in the appropriate clinically indicated manner. That is what should occur. The government is committed to ensuring that we provide further support to front-line community services in terms of education and response to people with that type of drug addiction, ice addiction. That is why we provided additional funding earlier this year, in the order of around \$800,000, to four front-line community service providers who are working with people with drug addiction, in particular ice addiction, every day, providing them with more resources to employ more staff, to undertake more outreach and engagement and to provide the support needed for people suffering from addiction.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, what has the government done to assist the adult mental health unit and its staff to deal with ice patients?

MR CORBELL: The government provides an appropriate response to the circumstances faced by people working in that clinical environment. They are well trained and they have the staffing, the resources and indeed the support of their clinical leaders to respond to these circumstances. Clearly, ice addiction presents particular challenges, particularly in relation to psychotic episodes and violent behaviour. But these are matters that our staff are trained to address because they are used to facing potential violence, they are used to facing the acute problems that people with that type of addiction can present with, they have the facilities needed to respond to that and they have the training needed to respond to that. So this is no

different from any other clinical indication in terms of violence or other such related matters. The training is the same; the response is the same. But clearly the volume is a challenge, and these are matters that we respond to appropriately through our staffing levels in the unit.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: What is the number of patients affected by ice admitted into the centre, and is this essentially a quasi rehab service affecting the treatment of other mental health patients within the centre?

MR CORBELL: No, Madam Speaker. In response to the second part of the question, no, this is not an alternative to rehabilitation. The AMHU is not a rehabilitation unit; the AMHU is for people suffering acute mental illness and other related conditions. But, as I said before, there is a crossover often between alcohol and drug addiction and mental illness. That is well understood. So you have to treat both. You have to respond to both, and that is exactly what our staff are trained to do.

In relation to the question about volume or numbers, Mr Hanson would need to be more precise with me in relation to the period he wants to know about for me to be able to answer that accurately.

Transport—public

DR BOURKE: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, yesterday you announced a package of improvements to improve the ACT's public transport network to ensure an integrated, convenient, reliable and efficient transport service for Canberrans. Chief Minister, can you explain how the creation of a single agency to oversee Canberra's public transport, transport Canberra, will deliver real improvements to the people of Canberra?

MR BARR: I thank Dr Bourke for the question. In the simplest possible terms, Canberrans want their public transport system to be convenient, affordable, integrated, reliable and efficient. So transport Canberra will be measured against those requirements. We discussed in this place yesterday that ACTION is providing an essential community service, but we all know that it must improve and be closely linked with the new light rail services to make public transport a genuine travel option for more Canberrans over the coming decade.

In a city of our size, a single agency coordinating all of our public transport needs and integrating those with other travel options is a commonsense proposition. It is the best way to deliver one network, one fare structure and one ticket for Canberrans. That is why a key component of the public transport improvement plan is the establishment of a single agency to oversee buses and light rail. Transport Canberra will have that task.

From its establishment next year, the first task will be to deliver a more reliable system through better coordination, planning and efficiency. Of course, once the light rail service starts operating, transport Canberra will deliver the single ticketing,

timetable and fare system. In the longer term, the agency will forecast and meet the needs of a growing city, providing a strong transport system that will keep Canberra sustainable and modern but, most importantly, maintain the liveability that Canberrans love about this place.

For Canberrans, a single public transport agency supporting a single public transport system will allow us to move around our city with bus routes and timetables connecting to light rail; to more easily plan our journeys with single source timetable information; allow for a consistently positive experience across transport forms—bus and light rail—with clear branding and a single ticketing system; and, of course, provide a single contact point to address any issues.

Transport Canberra will also have responsibility for other public transport services such as special needs transport for school children and on-demand community services transport. The new agency will work closely with other directorates on broader transport land planning, policy development and transport regulation.

It will be undertaking a comprehensive survey of the Canberra community on public transport, which will enable us to shape the priorities of the new agency and to develop a basis for benchmarking its performance. With light rail coming, now is the time to ensure that we have the systems in place to align our bus and rail networks. Light rail, working closely with a strong bus network, is certainly best way to enhance the liveability of our city and to ensure that we do not go down the path of cities like Sydney.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Chief Minister, can you explain transport Canberra's role in reallocating the additional 1.2 million kilometres of bus travel to improve services across the whole of Canberra?

MR BARR: The introduction of light rail will be to the benefit of everyone in our city, not just those who live and work along the initial light rail corridor. The first stage of the network frees up around 1.2 million kilometres of bus travel every year. It makes sense, of course, to reallocate these kilometres to provide more buses on more routes, to the benefit of the broader travelling public.

Transport Canberra will work with the community to get these freed-up buses onto routes where they are needed most and it will be responsible for the design of future bus networks and planning. This will improve services right across Canberra, as well as quickly transporting people into the light rail corridor.

In cooperation with the successful light rail tenderer, transport Canberra will also be responsible for assessing how the bus network can best integrate with the light rail service. This means, in practical terms, being able to step off a suburban bus and straight onto a light rail service, to quickly move between town centres, saving people time and hassle.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Chief Minister, what improvements in convenience and reliability can Canberrans expect as a result of the creation of a single transport agency?

MR BARR: There is no doubt that when using public transport commuters want to be able to get around our city easily and as quickly as possible. That is why transport Canberra's focus will be on the traveller and will place a very high priority on the practical issues that public transport users value. A single ticket to be used across all modes of public transport will keep the system convenient and easy to navigate.

There is a range of technological improvements that will help keep the system reliable and predictable. Modern transport agencies, of course, require sophisticated capabilities to improve services and efficiency. In 2010 ACTION introduced the MyWay system that allows users to see when their bus is going to arrive. My Way also provides real-time data that has allowed the government to make improvements to the bus network over the past three years.

As Minister Rattenbury has pointed out on more than one occasion, an important measure of reliability is, indeed, on-time running. The latest data has shown that on-time running is improving and has reached 79 per cent. This is a relatively good outcome but, of course, we can do better, and transport Canberra will be structured to readily adopt new capabilities to ensure that we do better.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Chief Minister, what efficiencies does the government believe can be achieved through the creation of a single transport agency?

MR BARR: It is, of course, important that ACTION operates efficiently and within its budget to ensure that it delivers the best possible services for Canberrans, and that is why we have undertaken an expenditure review of ACTION over the past financial year. A key finding was that the number of Canberrans taking public transport has declined in the period 2011 to 2014, despite an increase in public transport expenditure. This is clearly not a sustainable outcome.

The review also recommended structural changes to deliver long-lasting improvements, and that is what the government is doing by creating transport Canberra. We have already commenced a range of improvements to ACTION in the back-of-house areas, planning and their IT capacity. We are looking at how we can adjust workshop hours to get buses back on the road as quickly as possible.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members, there is too much conversation.

MR BARR: Through transport Canberra we will work with our employees and unions on the 2017 enterprise agreement that will be focused on delivering a customer-focused, efficient and reliable public transport.

The review, I acknowledge, did recommend that we consider the privatisation of ACTION but the government has made it very clear that we will be keeping ACTION

in public hands and that we will not be cutting jobs. This plan is about making ACTION better for everyone, not cutting services and not selling off essential public services. I think those opposite would do well to put their position on the public record and stand with us in support of this essential public service.

Dr Bourke: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, Mr Hanson is continuing to interrupt the Chief Minister in his answer, which is disorderly.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. The Chief Minister has finished. Mr Hanson was interjecting but no more—considerably less—than he usually does.

Dr Bourke: Further to the point of order, Madam Speaker, whether he is interjecting less or more than he usually does is not actually a matter for the standing orders; it is the fact that he was interjecting and interrupting the Chief Minister's speech.

MADAM SPEAKER: On the point of order, I chose not to rule on that because the Chief Minister had finished and because I have taken the view that a reasonable amount of interjection is acceptable in this place. If you want to go down the path of my requiring all of you to be silent all the time you will be very bored and you will not enjoy it. We could try it if you like.

Floriade—proposed relocation

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Planning regarding reports that Floriade will be moving to Glebe Park potentially from 2017. Residents of Reid and other suburbs close to the city have raised concerns about the impact of Floriade on their amenities. Residents have raised concerns with the opposition that the government has not consulted with residents associations or other stakeholders on this issue. Minister, when will the government consult with residents of Reid, Braddon, Campbell and Ainslie about the proposal to move Floriade to Glebe Park?

MR BARR: Madam Speaker, I have responsibility for Floriade, as minister for events, so I will take this question. I thank Mr Wall for the question. Members would be aware that Floriade is held in Commonwealth Park, a site managed and owned by the National Capital Authority. The National Capital Authority advised the ACT government that they would not make Commonwealth Park available to us for Floriade in the form that it was previously available over the last 28 years. They had a range of concerns associated with the event. A number of these concerns have been articulated publicly but include the length of time required to set up the event and then to bump the event out. They also have concerns in relation to damage to some mature trees within the park that they believe the event causes. They have advised the ACT government that it was not their intention to renew our rental arrangement on the facility and gave us notice of that some time ago to give us some time to consider alternative options.

Mr Wall may not be aware, because he has not been in this place for that long, that there have been a number of studies looking into a permanent site for Floriade over the last 10 years that have considered a range of different options. In relation to Glebe Park, that is one of the options that have been put forward for consideration. No decision has been taken to move Floriade to Glebe Park. Were any decision taken to

relocate the event to that location then there would be consultation with a range of stakeholders, including surrounding residents, before any decision was taken.

In relation to the 2016 Floriade event, we continue to be in negotiations with the National Capital Authority in order to stage the event in at least part of Commonwealth Park, if not all of the usual event footprint. When there is more information available on Floriade's future beyond 2016, when the government and the National Capital Authority have concluded our negotiations in relation to the event's future in Commonwealth Park, I will of course make that publicly available.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, has the government undertaken an analysis of the social, economic or environmental impacts of moving Floriade to Glebe Park or any other venue, has a conservation management plan for Glebe Park been undertaken, and will you make these reports public?

MR BARR: The government has in fact undertaken a number of studies, as I indicated in my previous answer, over the last seven or eight years, into various potential permanent locations for Floriade. Those reports were released publicly. I recall debating the shadow tourism minister on those particular issues in this place, maybe not in this parliament but certainly in previous Assemblies. So those issues have been extensively canvassed. I imagine those reports are still available online if the member is interested.

In relation to the specifics of Glebe Park, some initial work has been prepared on options, but it has not been finalised. Nor has any decision been taken in relation to Floriade in Glebe Park. Until we have reached a resolution with the National Capital Authority on access to Commonwealth Park, people should presume that the event will continue to be held there until we are otherwise advised by the National Capital Authority.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Chief Minister, what aspects of Floriade will be lost given that Glebe Park is a much smaller site than Commonwealth Park?

MR BARR: That is an entirely hypothetical question, but to the extent that I can provide some commentary on the Glebe Park options that could be considered, elements of the event would occur there and elements of the event would obviously have to occur in other adjacent locations. That could include, for example, utilising the National Convention Centre for the traders' village. That would be one potential option. But as I indicated in my response to Mr Wall's questions, at this point the government's preference remains to continue to be able to hold the event in Commonwealth Park. Recent comments from the National Capital Authority indicate that there may be some movement on the authority's part to allow the event to continue in that location with some changes in the way the event is delivered, particularly in the lead-up to the event and how quickly the event can be bumped out of the park to restore it to full public access, which I understand is one of the major concerns that the NCA has.

Equally, I must stress that the initial proposal put to the government by the NCA on what footprint within Commonwealth Park we could use would have seen the event significantly shrunk anyway. So the starting point for this entire engagement with the NCA has, from the ACT government's perspective, been unsatisfactory in terms of what they put to us initially. We have put back alternative proposals to continue the event in Commonwealth Park, and that would be our preference.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, what discussions have you had with the commonwealth government about renewing the lease for Floriade?

MR BARR: I have had a number of conversations, the most recent being in the fruit and veg section of Dickson Woolworths just last weekend with Malcolm Snow when we ran into each other doing the weekly shop. Canberra is a small place; you do run into people quite regularly. I have spoken with the chair and a number of board members of the National Capital Authority in relation to this matter. I have had extensive briefings with officials within the events area of ACT government, and I will continue to advocate for Floriade to remain in Commonwealth Park, but I do respect and understand the issues that the NCA have raised. We will see what we can do to address their concerns. But, ultimately, it is not our land; it is theirs. If there is a very strong view—and I believe there is—that the event cannot only be refreshed but also remain in Commonwealth Park, then that is exactly what the government will seek to achieve out of this next round of negotiations with the National Capital Authority.

Roads—projects

MS LAWDER: My question is to the minister for transport reform. I refer to an opinion piece of 29 September in the *Canberra Times* in which you refer to Canberra going on a “car diet”. You further stated:

... going on a road diet is challenging. As one of Australia's most car dominated capitals, we face constant pressure to build and upgrade roads.

Minister, is it part of your ministerial responsibilities to put Canberra on a “car diet” by delaying the building and upgrading of roads?

MR RATTENBURY: That was an opinion piece, and that is exactly what it is—my opinion on things. I was voicing a view and trying use an analogy to make the case about the fact that everything must be done in moderation. If I remember the full details of the opinion piece, I started by talking about chocolate cake and saying that chocolate cake is a great thing, and if you eat it in moderation it is not too bad for you, but if you eat too much of it, it is not good for you. That is exactly the point I was making about road construction: if we do too much of it, it is not good for a city. That is the point that I was trying to make.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, what road building and upgrade projects have been delayed as a result of your efforts as minister for transport reform?

MR RATTENBURY: Mr Hanson interjected referring to Cotter Road and the discussion we had on that recently. It was interesting to see how the remarks I made in this place were distorted by the members of the opposition. I stood in this place and I said the important thing is to make sure that we assess fully the needs of the road. At the time I cited vehicle movements per day and said the average number, the threshold where road experts start to get serious about needing duplication, is 18,000 vehicle movements a day. The figures I had at that time, the last figures that I had, were that that road was at about 13,000 vehicles a day. So I was simply making the point that when the Liberal Party walks in here and says we should duplicate a road they are not even looking at the criteria that road engineers use for duplicating a road—it is just a free-for-all.

The observation I was making about that is that it typifies how this party thinks about roads: duplicate them without any reference to the normal criteria that normal, common-sense people use. They just go for broke.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, come to order.

MR RATTENBURY: Further into that debate Mr Gentleman came in here with updated figures which pointed out that the number of vehicle movements per day on that road had grown to put it much closer—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson! Mr Coe!

MR RATTENBURY: Mr Gentleman did put some further figures on the table which pointed to greater pressure on that road than the data that I had available indicated. But that was simply my point—we should be looking at those sorts of measurements. This lot across the chamber went out and started running all sorts of lines about my complete opposition to that sort of project, whereas I sought to have a nuanced conversation, which I know is beyond my colleagues on the opposite benches. But that is what needs to happen on these sorts of issues.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, which specific road projects have been stalled or delayed due to your “car diet”?

MR RATTENBURY: Mr Gentleman is the minister responsible for roads, so that is a matter for him to consider.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, have any roads been delayed because of your grandstanding or lobbying efforts?

MR RATTENBURY: I have been perfectly clear in making the point that the reason we are trying to improve public transport in this town is to avoid the necessity for road duplications, and in some cases it is not even possible. If we look at Northbourne Avenue as an example, we simply cannot just build more lanes on Northbourne Avenue. It is not going to happen. That is why we need to have transport alternatives. That is the argument I am seeking to make. That is the argument on which members of the Liberal Party are seeking to stick their heads in the sand and ignore.

Refugees—resettlement

MS FITZHARRIS: My question is to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. Minister, could you update the Assembly on progress in the settlement of additional Syrian and Iraqi refugees into Australia and the ACT? How many people do you anticipate being settled in Canberra?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Fitzharris for her interest in this issue. As members know, the ACT government has given strong support to the federal decision to accept an additional 12,000 humanitarian entrants from Syria and Iraq. The Assembly has also shown unanimous support, which I believe is a good reflection of the Canberra community's response of compassion and support. The ACT government continues to work with federal counterparts with the aim of ensuring a smooth and efficient settlement process done in cooperation with other jurisdictions and with our respective communities.

I also welcome the Queensland government's announcement yesterday that it too will offer a compassionate and thought-out response for some 5,300 refugees. I have exchanged letters with federal ministers reiterating the ACT's offer to play our part and to seek the necessary information and assurances from them, which will help our work locally. I can inform members that the processing of people is underway and that Australia is likely to see a small number of humanitarian entrants arrive before Christmas.

Early next year we expect the rate of people arriving will increase and I am very confident that our local services and our community are ready to welcome those who will come to Canberra. I have held meetings with our local service providers and peak bodies and been guided by their advice. They have stated that we are ready and able to accept an additional 250 humanitarian entrants as an indicative number. This is over and above the usual allocation of about 150 people under the federal government's program for 2015-16.

These discussions have focused on some of the critical factors in successful settlements around people being able to find affordable housing, paid employment and, for many, learning English. In relation to employment, I have been heartened by the decisions of the Canberra Business Chamber, whose members have shown a strong willingness to employ and train new arrivals.

Union leaders have also expressed a willingness to be part of a city-wide effort. They can also play an important role in supporting people in new jobs and a very different workplace culture than they might have come from. History shows that most refugees bring a great desire to work and contribute to their adopted communities. I appreciate the willingness of local leaders to facilitate this as much as possible.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, how was this number reached?

MADAM SPEAKER: That is the 250?

MS FITZHARRIS: Yes, the 250.

MS BERRY: As I have said, the government has articulated the number of 250 people as the number our community can comfortably and sustainably settle. It is not a definitive number and the Assembly agreed last sitting that we would like to see the possibility of further intakes considered as this current resettlement program moves ahead. I also stress our commitment to working collaboratively with federal and state governments around settling people according to a time frame in a way which is best for them.

In arriving at the figure of 250 extra people next year we have taken into account the availability of affordable housing and prospects in our local labour market as well as the capacity of the relevant community service providers to meet the demands associated with the proposed additional intake. I have mentioned the Business Council and the pleasing response to its survey which suggests that job-ready people arriving in Canberra could be able to find employment within a short period.

In this regard the ACT has a very good track record and a proven approach in supporting refugees to settle and gain meaningful and sustained employment through workplace pathway programs such as the work experience and support program, employment pathways service and the home to work program. Indeed there has been national interest in our work experience support program which may be replicated in other jurisdictions.

In terms of housing, the need for the private rental market to be able to contribute to housing people who arrive through affordable rental properties is clear and, again, I have had productive discussions with the peak body, the Real Estate Institute. Our local services also run effective housing transition programs and I am confident that with the support of the federal government and the generosity of the Canberra community we can sustainably house the people who come to call our city their home.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, what role does the ACT government, community and business sector play in supporting these refugees when they come to our city?

MS BERRY: The ACT has successfully settled over 2,000 refugees since 1997 and has supported many more who have subsequently moved to Canberra after first settling in other places around Australia. I have touched on the role of community organisations and service providers, and I want to assure Canberrans that the system in place for this process is tried and tested.

There is no doubt that there are excellent services available in the ACT that respond to the settlement needs of refugees. The Refugee, Asylum Seeker and Humanitarian Coordination Committee, who I met with last month, represents around 35 community organisations, all working well in this field: the Migrant and Refugee Settlement Service; the Red Cross; Companion House; Canberra Refugee Support; the Multicultural Youth Service; and numerous church groups and many others.

We all understand that there will be challenges in the settlement process given the traumatic environment from which these people have come. However, our community service providers and other relevant support groups here in Canberra will rise to the task and provide the support needed, as they have done in the past.

The roles played by the government and the community and business sectors are crucial in achieving successful settlement for refugees choosing to live in our city. I am pleased that recent consultations with many community organisations and business representatives showed such a strong willingness to support new arrivals, not just with their immediate needs but also with a supported and sustained settlement into our community.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, what can Canberra residents do to directly support these additional arrivals as they arrive, and will there be an opportunity for them to donate directly to this particular cohort?

MS BERRY: Yes, there will be plenty of opportunities for Canberrans. They have certainly shown their willingness at various rallies and refugee support events, certainly in the last 12 months and this weekend. Another example of how the Canberra community is coming together to support refugees is the walk together, kayak together event, and the welcome to Australia event, which is on at 11 o'clock on Saturday. I encourage all members to get along to that if they can.

The Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services will be the peak body, if you like, who will be responsible for settling the Syrian and Iraqi refugees who come into the ACT. Very soon we will be working with MARSS on the different ways in which people can provide support. When I have spoken to MARSS representatives, the support that these people will need most will be friendship. They will need people to help them out with catching a bus, with getting down to the shops, with getting their kids to school and with learning what it is like to live in the ACT.

MARSS run a number of programs to get people in the ACT who want to support refugees in this way volunteer-ready and to make sure they have all the relevant

checks and so on so they can support these people. They are just about to run a program this week, on the 28th. We have asked if there is a possibility of running a future program in November so that we can advertise and have more people go along to that. Very soon we will have that information available for people who want to contribute, either through offering financial support or by becoming a volunteer and being a friend and a mate to these people when they arrive in our city.

Planning—Giralang

MR COE: My question is to the Minister for Urban Renewal. Minister, the residents of Giralang have been let down by the government's neglect of their suburb, most notably through the ongoing saga at the shops. Some residents and members of the Giralang Primary School community have established a committee to work towards an integrated Giralang community precinct. However, they have been disappointed by the lack of support from the government. The committee has raised questions about possible development of currently unused blocks in the vicinity of the school but has not yet received an adequate response from the government. Minister, what plans does the government have for the land adjacent to the school, including block 8 section 80 and the former scout hall at block 20 section 85 in Giralang?

MR BARR: I am not aware of specific plans the government has for those blocks; I will undertake an inquiry in relation to whether there are any proposals coming from any areas of the ACT government for those particular sites. I will take that as a question on notice and provide an answer in due course.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, what is the status of the ongoing saga regarding the Giralang shops, in particular the battle in the Supreme Court?

MR BARR: I do not have direct portfolio responsibility for that matter, as it relates, as I understand, to a legal dispute over a planning approval. I will seek an update in relation to where that matter is, but obviously it is before the court so it is beyond my control as to when they will reach a resolution.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, will the government provide additional parking in the vicinity of the Giralang Primary School?

MR BARR: Again I will seek advice from the Minister for Roads and Parking in relation to any requests that have been put to government around parking associated with the primary school and the redevelopment of the shops. I understand, of course, that as part of the development application that was approved there would be additional car parking in that immediate vicinity.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, will the government investigate ways to encourage active travel by improving pedestrian and bike linkages in the suburb?

MR BARR: I enjoy the irony of a question from the Liberals on active travel given that they are actively opposed to any improvement in transport in this city and demonstrate that time and time again with their carping, negative attitude towards this government's agenda to improve transport options. But in the spirit in which Mr Doszpot raises the question—with not even a hint of the irony associated with a question from the Liberal Party on active transport—the answer is yes, of course this government supports active transport options. We are actively investing in active transport options and we will continue to actively campaign for better transport options in this city.

Mr Coe: A point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order, Mr Coe.

Mr Coe: Madam Speaker, Mr Doszpot's question was specifically about infrastructure by way of pedestrian and bike linkages in Giralang, and the Chief Minister has not yet been relevant.

MADAM SPEAKER: I was contemplating that when the Chief Minister was speaking. I ask the Chief Minister to accord with the standing orders and be directly relevant to the question and relate his answer to pedestrian and bike linkages in Giralang.

MR BARR: As I was saying, Madam Speaker, before everyone opposite stopped listening, yes, the government is actively supporting active transport options, and we will continue to actively engage in the debate over the provision of active transport. We will continue to actively deliver active transport options in the city. When compared with the policy approach of those opposite, it is clear that the progressive side of politics in this city is the only side of politics—

MADAM SPEAKER: Be careful or I might exercise my options of sitting you down.

MR BARR: prepared to invest in active travel.

MADAM SPEAKER: Be directly relevant.

MR BARR: Be it in Giralang or anywhere in this city, there is one side of politics prepared to invest, and that is this side of the chamber. *(Time expired.)*

Oaks Estate—amenities

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services and also the member for Molonglo. Minister, as you would be aware, the residents in Oaks Estate, which is in your electorate, have been agitating for a number of services and recently received a \$20,000 grant for the construction of public toilets in Gillespie Park, Oaks Estate, under the federal government's stronger communities program, which requires matching dollar-for-dollar or an in-kind commitment. Minister, will you provide the additional \$20,000 for this community to be able to take up the grant awarded by the federal government?

MADAM SPEAKER: Before I call the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services I point out that, as the member for Molonglo, he does not have ministerial responsibility; it is only in his capacity as the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services.

MR RATTENBURY: Sorry, Madam Speaker, I got distracted by your interjection. Could I hear the question again from Mr Doszpot?

MADAM SPEAKER: Sorry, it was not an interjection. I did not interject.

MR RATTENBURY: I did not mean you interjected. My apologies. Could I have the question again?

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, as you would be aware, the residents in Oaks Estate, which is in your electorate, have been agitating for a number of services and recently received a \$20,000 grant for the construction of public toilets in Gillespie Park, Oaks Estate, under the federal government's stronger communities program, which requires matching dollar-for-dollar or an in-kind commitment. Minister, will you provide the additional \$20,000 for this community to be able to take up the grant awarded by the federal government?

MR RATTENBURY: Yes, I have had some contact with the Oaks Estate community over this matter and I can inform the Assembly that the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate did provide a letter of support for their application for the commonwealth grant. I have not yet been advised that that grant application was successful as we provided that supporting letter only late last week for a deadline late last week. So I am not sure if it has actually been a confirmed grant since I was last updated on this issue last Thursday but I can inform the Assembly that we have provided a letter of support.

Where the difficulty lies now is in resolving the cost of that public toilet in the sense that it is not clear that it can be provided for \$40,000, as Mr Doszpot suggests. So I have asked my directorate to work with the Oaks Estate community to identify a range of options in terms of dealing with the price of that facility and what type of facility might be suitable for the location. We need to be mindful of things such as disability access and also making sure the facility is vandal-proofed to a reasonable extent.

Territory and Municipal Services is working with the Oaks Estate community, and I highlight the fact that I understand the park has become very popular and this is a result of a government investment in the last couple of years of over \$300,000 to upgrade the park. The park has gone up in popularity quite a bit since that time, I am informed.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, do you stand by suggestions made by your office to residents that Oaks Estate is too remote for such services as toilets and buses?

MR RATTENBURY: I do not think my office has made those suggestions. There is a small population in Oaks Estate, and it is an area separated from the rest of the ACT's urban structure. That provides some challenges in providing services. What I can say is that Territory and Municipal Services has indicated that the provision of public toilets would not normally be the case in areas that are as isolated as Oaks Estate is, in terms of where the park is and the catchment of people for that park. Nonetheless, in recognition also of the popularity of the park and some of the challenges that the Oaks Estate community faces, we are actually going above and beyond to see if we can come up with an affordable solution for the Oaks Estate park. So I reject the assertion.

In terms of bus services, we have discussed this matter in this place before. I have had further discussions with the Oaks Estate community since that time, and I can inform the Assembly that ACTION buses have been looking at options as to whether ACTION can provide services more directly to Oaks Estate or whether we can improve the connections with the Qcity services out of Queanbeyan as a way of providing a better service to the people of Oaks Estate.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Your office has suggested to Oaks Estate residents that they could clean their own public toilets. Do you share that view?

MR RATTENBURY: The Liberal Party seems to have very good access to my office, Madam Speaker, but—

Opposition members interjecting—

MR RATTENBURY: As I said earlier, TAMS would not normally provide a public toilet for an area the size of Oaks Estate. However, they have been canvassing a range of options. I am not aware of what all the various conversations are, but I can inform the Assembly that options are being canvassed to try to make this a viable solution. I encourage both my staff and my directorate officials to be creative. I do not want them to just take the standard approach. I asked them to try and come up with all sorts of options to make things possible. If they have canvassed options that the Oaks Estate residents do not like, that is fine, but I think most people in Canberra would prefer that both my staff and the staff of the directorate canvass all sorts of options to try to get a good solution that can meet the needs of the community.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, is it the case that access to public toilets at the end of route stops is a prerequisite for ACTION drivers to drive to places like Oaks Estate?

MR RATTENBURY: I would need to take some advice on that. It is true that ACTION does need to provide bathroom facilities in a range of places for our staff. That is one of the ways we have been able to improve the running performance while installing new facilities, and are continuing to do so. Whether there is a specific requirement on how that applies to Oaks Estate, I would need to take some advice.

Crime—domestic violence

MS PORTER: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

An incident having occurred in the gallery—

Mr Rattenbury: Don't you point at me in the chamber.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! I cannot hear Ms Porter.

Mr Rattenbury: I am being heckled from the gallery, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: If there is any heckling from the gallery, that would be extremely disorderly. Members in the gallery need to remain silent. I call Ms Porter again.

MS PORTER: Minister, on 8 October you and the Chief Police Officer launched the new community safety and family violence teams to operate within ACT Policing. Can you provide the Assembly with an overview of these new teams?

MS BURCH: I thank Ms Porter for the question. As many in this place would know, one in three women, sadly, will experience violence in their lifetime. In the next 20 minutes, somewhere in Australia three women will have been assaulted by a current or former partner. Family violence is the most prevalent form of violence experienced by women anywhere. In this country this year alone, the cost of family violence has exceeded \$20 billion. This does not even begin to calculate the family violence that is not reported.

These figures are, indeed, alarming. This year, sadly, we have lost four members of our community to family violence. There has never been a more urgent time than now to focus our community and our resources on tackling this issue. On the eighth of this month I was very pleased to join with the Chief Police Officer to launch two new teams within ACT Policing to tackle family and domestic violence.

The family violence team and the community safety team are the new teams that were launched. The family violence team will undertake a coordination role to ensure that front-line response to family violence incidents is timely and comprehensive. This team will develop and deliver training to its front-line members in relation to family violence. Over the next six months, the team will deliver an intensive training package to all front-line workers.

The team will coordinate the existing mechanisms and responses to family violence to ensure that the restraints on offenders are appropriate and that offenders are held accountable. The community safety team will have a broader role of recidivist management, targeting of hot spots, managing major issues, and reducing the fear of crime and its impact. The community safety team will have a particular focus on supporting front-line officers investigating family violence crimes and assisting victims in order to protect their safety.

The team will identify and assist vulnerable families and at-risk families, providing earlier intervention by assisting victims who are applying for domestic violence orders. The team will also provide coordinated targeting of high risk offenders, particularly those who are on bail, parole or on orders to ensure their accountability.

Both the community safety and family violence teams have been drawn from existing ACT Policing personnel. They represent the breadth of our community policing, with officers skilled in response, investigations, victim welfare, legislation and policy reform, and intelligence and crime reduction.

Police cannot do this alone. It will involve working closely with a range of government and non-government agencies, all of which I know are dedicated to helping victims and their children to stay safe.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, can you tell us more about how these new teams complement and strengthen the existing work of ACT Policing in combating family and domestic violence?

MS BURCH: ACT Policing personnel currently undertake activities that focus on targeting and crime reduction activities, and these will be refocused, with priority given to supporting front-line officers as they continue to respond to family violence when it occurs. These new teams will operate alongside existing front-line police to ensure ACT Policing delivers a connected, coordinated and consistent response to family violence. Indeed the teams have already started doing this significant work in coordinating the approach to family violence. These teams will support front-line officers who will continue to respond to reports of family violence 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If we look at the figures that ACT Policing have, we know that by midday today, our ACT police officers had responded to four incidents of family violence here in our city. Put simply, I think that is four too many. The creation of these teams will support those officers who, on a daily basis, are managing and responding to these incidents. The teams will also support the criminal investigation detectives who continue to investigate the most serious offences. The establishment of the family violence team will support the pro-intervention approach to families suffering from violence through the enhanced review and coordination efforts that direct our family violence response and investigations.

The increased focus will strengthen ACT Policing's ability to respond to these incidents, with a focus on early intervention and support to victims, offender accountability, targeting intergenerational crime and targeting the link between family violence, drugs and mental illness. *(Time expired.)*

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, what are the new legislative reforms that will come about as a result of these teams, and how will this enhance police powers when responding to family and domestic violence?

MS BURCH: I thank Ms Fitzharris for the question. One of the key focuses early on for the family violence teams will be to critically examine existing policy and legislation to identify opportunities to better protect women and their children. ACT Policing will continue to work closely with key stakeholders to develop new legislative proposals to enhance police powers when dealing with family violence issues.

This work to date has seen the development of one of the most important provisions in the Crimes (Domestic Violence and Family Violence) Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 which now allows police records of interviews with victims to be admitted as evidence in chief for the family violence offences and all sexual offences. These particular reforms will enhance the protection of our most vulnerable victims and police will be gathering the best evidence very soon after the alleged offence has occurred.

The CPO believes the introduction of these teams will also provide greater support to victims whose matters enter in the criminal justice process and provide better investigative tools for police investigating these crimes. He has said this is not just a step forward; it is a leap forward for our front-line officers.

ACT Policing has been working with stakeholders to ensure that these new legislative reforms focus on intervention and the protection of women and children. The creation of our community safety and family violence teams ensures that experts are working alongside our front-line police and criminal investigators to ensure the delivery of a connected and coordinated response.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, how will these new teams work with existing community organisations and support government priorities on tackling family and domestic violence?

MS BURCH: I thank Dr Bourke for the question. There are many people and organisations in our community involved in the prevention of family violence. The family violence team will help strengthen the whole of government and partner agency approach to perpetrator intervention, legislative reform and information sharing.

ACT Policing has a strong and committed role in several forums related to domestic and family violence. The ACT Policing victims of crime team maintains a close working relationship with the Domestic Violence Crisis Service. ACT Policing is one of the primary stakeholders in the family violence intervention program, together with the government and the domestic violence service.

ACT Policing introduced the family violence perpetrator program, which commenced in September 2013, after identifying the need to provide support not only for the victims of family violence but also the perpetrators in an attempt to stop the cycle of family violence. The program is aimed at perpetrators regardless of their relationship or gender.

ACT Policing shares responsibility and funding for the pilot 24/7 intimate partner violence prevention contact service with the Canberra Men's Centre, and ACT Policing is working closely with other police forces across Australia to ensure best practices are delivered.

In closing, I am very pleased to recognise that ACT Policing is heavily involved with the White Ribbon Foundation. Each year ACT Policing encourages members of the public to swear never to commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against women. I thank ACT Policing for being such champions of the White Ribbon cause.

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

Supplementary answers to questions without notice Planning—Giralang

MR GENTLEMAN: Earlier, the Chief Minister took a supplementary question regarding parking near the Giralang school. I can advise that the school community has made me aware of concerns about parking arrangements near the school. To address those concerns, I have asked Roads ACT to work with the Education and Training Directorate and the school community to identify opportunities for improvements and inform the parents and carers of appropriate and safe behaviour when parking and driving near schools.

I understand that Giralang Primary School held a community forum on 23 September to discuss the school's traffic management issues and is working with TAMS to investigate longer term solutions. A detailed investigation is planned to be undertaken in relation to the parking supply and demand around the school; it is anticipated that this investigation will be completed before the end of November this year and the results will be discussed with the school and any directly affected residents as soon as results become available.

Transport—advertising

MR RATTENBURY: Yesterday I was asked some questions about the ACTION bus advertising policy. In light of the considerable interest in that issue, I present for the benefit of members a copy of the ACTION advertising policy guidelines, which

includes the guidelines that are in place, and have been for some time, and the amendments that were made effective as of 28 September. I table the following paper:

ACTION Buses advertising policy.

Auslan interpreter Statement by Speaker

MADAM SPEAKER: Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure. In response to the resolution of the Assembly of 24 September 2015, which referred a proposed amendment of standing order 210 to the committee for consideration, the committee discussed the proposed amendment, which would allow an accredited Auslan interpreter to come onto the floor of the chamber. The committee agreed to the change to standing order 210 and that the standing order would allow access to interpreters for all members, with the assurance that the interpreter is appropriately certified and with the cost for the interpreter to be met by the Legislative Assembly.

Standing orders—matters of public importance Statement by Speaker

MADAM SPEAKER: Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make another statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure in response to the resolution of the Assembly of 24 September 2015, which referred proposed amendments to standing orders relating to matters of public importance. The committee considered the proposed amendments, which would allow matters of public importance to be proposed by members of the public for discussion on a sitting Thursday. The majority of the committee did not support the proposed amendments to standing orders.

Transport—public

Debate resumed.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Planning, Minister for Roads and Parking, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations, Minister for Children and Young People and Minister for Ageing) (3.45): Canberra is a growing city; it is growing quickly as it becomes a vibrant and diverse international city. The population is expected to increase to over half a million people in the next two decades. This will present significant opportunities for growing our city and its economy; we must ensure that we do not make the mistakes of other cities by not investing in public transport infrastructure and futureproofing our city as it grows.

With the highest car dependency of any Australian capital city, our growing population will mean more cars on our roads and more congestion. It is essential that we tackle the resulting economic, social and environmental challenges by investing in leading infrastructure through building an integrated transport network.

The increasing costs of congestion and the burden of continually building major roads to keep pace with growth will steadily increase in the future and threaten the current high quality of life that we enjoy in this city. This will bring significant economic, social and environmental challenges. We cannot build our way out of these challenges only with more and more roads and parking. Proper investment and focus on public transport will be the only way to effectively manage congestion over the next 25 years. We heard in question time today, articulated by Minister Rattenbury, the Canberra Liberals' view on how to just keep duplicating major roads and arterials across the territory. It is unsustainable. I support many of Mr Rattenbury's views in that conversation.

We have heard from Infrastructure Australia, which has also recently noted future challenges. It found that without additional investment the cost of road congestion in the ACT will increase from \$208 million per annum in 2011 to \$703 million per annum in 2031.

The economic, social and environmental impacts of increasing travel times will have wide-ranging impacts on our city if we do not do something about it now. The government is investing in leading infrastructure to meet those challenges. Canberrans deserve a convenient, integrated, reliable, efficient and affordable public transport network to meet their needs for the future. The government is building an integrated transport network by ensuring that in the future light rail will be provided in corridors requiring high-capacity, high-frequency rapid transport services to connect key centres, supported by an integrated bus network and easy access by walking and cycling.

I welcome the release of the government's plan to improve the coordination of our public transport system. It is very important that public transport services across different transport modes are coordinated across the city. This will ensure that decisions are coordinated; that timetabling, routes and ticketing are complementary; and that future investment decisions support and maximise the performance of the entire public transport network.

The new transport Canberra agency will work to combine smart ticketing for light rail and buses and also help coordinate tram and bus routes around the city. Work is already advanced to ensure that there is a one ticket, one network approach across buses and light rail, to enhance the passenger experience and present an integrated and seamless system for users. Transport Canberra will be designed to promote strategic management capabilities, and it will be well placed to take this model forward. In particular, major changes to services need to be considered in the context of the role that ACTION has in providing coverage services in conjunction with rapid transport.

The light rail network plan lays the central framework for an efficient and integrated public transport network to support Canberra as it continues to grow. The plan explores how the light rail network could be expanded across Canberra in the future in a way that best services the city. Light rail is being considered in Canberra's busiest public transport corridors, where high-capacity, high-frequency rapid transport services are required. These corridors where light rail will be delivered over time

include the first stage between Gungahlin and the city; the parliamentary triangle; Woden to the city; Tuggeranong to Woden; city to eastern connections, including the Canberra Airport and Fyshwick; Kippax and Belconnen to the city; and Molonglo to the city. The government is eager for the community to have their say on the light rail network, and community consultation is underway until 11 December.

Transport Canberra's mandate is to deliver the ACT government's vision of a quality public transport system that is convenient, efficient, affordable, reliable and integrated. Its establishment will oversee opportunities to integrate both bus and light rail with other elements of the transport system and ensure smooth integration of bus and light rail into a convenient, efficient, affordable and reliable network—for example, with community transport, taxis, ride sharing and active travel agencies—to maximise the customer experience by looking at these connections across both bus and light rail.

The government will continue to build upon its recent successes and implement an integrated public transport network that meets Canberrans' needs now and over the next 25 years. In doing so, we will continue to put people at the centre of the public transport system and realise the transport for Canberra vision for a modern and efficient public transport system.

Investment by the government has provided significant additional infrastructure and services that have enhanced public transport access for passengers and enhanced journey options. Such measures include investing in bus shelter upgrades and a range of access options to maximise the use of walking and cycling and to relieve pressure on city centre parking facilities.

In terms of bus services, I am encouraged by recent progress to build further efficiency into the system and shorten travel times. Network 14 was launched in September last year to enhance the frequency and alignment of weekday and weekend bus routes. Network 14 provided enhanced services to Gungahlin, Molonglo and the parliamentary triangle, and added 10 per cent more bus trips to the weekday timetable, 18 per cent more bus trips on Saturdays and 31 per cent more bus trips on Sundays.

In 2014-15, over 17 million passenger journeys were made on ACTION buses. There were significant improvements through the parliamentary triangle, with an 18 per cent increase in services, including two new dedicated morning peak services from Woden and further services from Gungahlin. Other improvements have been realised to on-time running with the introduction of adjusted weekday timings in May this year and adjusted weekend timings in October this year.

We hear that the complexity of service and route options can sometimes be confusing for users, so the government has already begun the process of simplifying services and routes such that services both make the most of existing bus station investments and deliver services which are legible and easily identified. Examples include the improved alignment of weekday and weekend services throughout Gungahlin, Weston Creek and Tuggeranong Valley, where buses operate along the same roads on weekdays and weekends.

High-quality passenger waiting environments are also an important part of making transport safe, attractive and easy to use. Improved infrastructure which has been recently completed has included major bus stop upgrades to the Barton bus station, College Street and Belconnen Way. Further upgrades to bus stops, including the frequent corridor between Belconnen and Kippax, are underway, including an upgrade to bus stop waiting areas and connecting pathways.

The government also recognises the importance of a public transport system that maximises choice and provides access options to meet the needs of all potential users, such as bike and ride and park and ride. These facilities provide opportunities to extend the reach of public transport by encouraging convenient transfer to public transport and reducing overall car travel. Already the government has provided 19 park and ride facilities across Canberra. Madam Assistant Speaker Lawder, you would be aware of the park and ride that was developed for Calwell. When we first saw it built, it had very limited use, but recently it has been almost half full most days. Recent survey findings suggest that park and ride is a particularly popular choice for trips along the blue and red rapid, especially on corridors where users can transfer to public transport and avoid the cost of parking at the final destination. In many of these locations, additional Xpresso and feeder bus services are expanding the attractiveness and reach of the network and providing more opportunities to transfer between services.

Importantly, the government has taken steps in investing in the potential for funding contributions from the commonwealth, and recently submitted to Infrastructure Australia, for its early consideration, key public transport improvements for inclusion with its infrastructure priority list. Such improvements could potentially be combined with large-scale urban renewal, including high density development to promote productivity and economic growth around Canberra for 25 years.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (3.55): I am proud of this government's commitment to the livability of Canberra which, fortunately, more than half of us here understand. It depends on the practicality of getting around the city.

The fact is that Labor has a plan on the table to address our congestion problems and provide a sophisticated transport solution to Canberra's needs now and in the future. The Canberra Liberals have spent so long in opposition that they only know how to oppose for its own sake, in that mould set out by Tony Abbott. They have no suggestion for innovation or improving a model or a policy.

We know that the New South Wales Liberals, and indeed the federal Liberals now, are investing in efficient, modern, 21st century light rail. The Canberra Liberals are the Liberals that time forgot. They are always up for making a wrong call, preferring V8 Audis to Gungahlin rather than a high-tech light rail system to roll out across Canberra.

Prime Minister Turnbull has turned around the Abbott government's car-centric transport policy and now backs sensible transport options like the Gold Coast tram. Who do we have in the Canberra Liberals to speak up for Canberra? If any federal

minister would even listen to them, I bet the Canberra Liberals would be whispering to them, begging them, saying, “Whatever you do, don’t fund Canberra’s light rail.” Former Liberal Senator Gary Humphries would probably be a minister now in the Turnbull ministry, representing progressive policies in Canberra’s interests. Instead, Zed Seselja, as his reward for losing election after election, was able to overthrow Gary Humphries for the Senate seat. Senator Seselja won the seat with the backing of the Machiavellian anti-light rail Mr Coe and his young Liberal foot soldiers. They were eager to get Zed out of the opposition leader’s office, perhaps clearing the way for Mr Coe to make his move.

After the Abbott overthrow, Mr Hanson said, “So far, from the Canberra Liberals’ point of view, we are probably one of the most, if not the most, stable political party in the nation.” I might add they are the least successful too, and now the only known Liberal branch to oppose light rail. We will now forever remember Zed Seselja as yesterday’s man bobbing at the back of Mr Abbott’s posse on his way to his execution as Liberal leader. As he followed Mr Abbott out again, surely Canberra Liberals let out a groan as Senator Seselja marched off to political oblivion. The Canberra Liberals have hitched their wagon to the arch conservative, climate change denying far right of the Liberal Party whose only transport policy starts with a V8.

I think the 2016 ACT election will be about the vision for Canberra’s future, which is about much more than light rail. However, it looks as though the Canberra Liberals will stake their whole claim for government on being the anti-tram party. If the Canberra Liberals win office next year, that puts a sensible transport mix off the agenda for almost a generation. Mr Hanson as Chief Minister is not going to consider it. His successor, Mr Coe, the original “can the tram” man, could not embrace a policy he has spent so long attacking. Perhaps the potential Liberal leader after him is not even elected to the Assembly yet. All we know is that if the Canberra Liberals win in 2016 we will have years of congestion ahead, and no attempted solution they choose will involve light rail for a generation. Even with their mentor Tony Abbott gone off to the fringes of conservatism, I cannot imagine that the Canberra Liberals will embrace a less ideological future and join the sensible centre where light rail is an investment in Canberra’s future.

I do not support Mr Coe’s amendment. I commend my motion to the Assembly.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Mr Coe
Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne
Mr Hanson
Mrs Jones

Ms Lawder
Mr Smyth
Mr Wall

Noes 9

Mr Barr
Ms Berry
Dr Bourke
Ms Burch
Mr Corbell

Ms Fitzharris
Mr Gentleman
Ms Porter
Mr Rattenbury

Question so resolved in the negative.

Amendment negatived.

Motion agreed to.

Taxis and ride sharing

MR COE (Ginninderra) (4.04): I move:

That this Assembly calls on the ACT Government to respond to the devaluation of perpetual taxi plates brought about by the Government's ride share policy.

My motion today is simple but necessary. The Canberra Liberals firmly believe that the taxi industry plays a vital role in the provision of transport in the ACT. We do not say that the industry is perfect, nor do we say that the regulatory regime is perfect. However there must be some acknowledgement that there are thousands of Canberrans that depend on the industry for their livelihood and any policy changes will have serious financial and personal ramifications. In saying that, I welcome to the Assembly today a representative of the industry and also the owner of perpetual plates. I also welcome those who are watching via the web.

The opposition are not opposed to ride share services. We believe that there is a place for such services. However there has to be a level playing field. Unfortunately the ACT government has done the very opposite. It has created a situation whereby many, if not all, taxi plate owners will be in a worse position as a result of these changes.

The changes brought about are not gradual. They are sudden. With the stroke of a pen, Mr Barr's signature on a regulation, we will see return on investment for perpetual plates plummet. Whereas presently the return on investment is \$20,000 per year, the current annual lease rate, the amount will fall to \$10,000 and a year later to \$5,000, assuming that they are taken up. Therefore the return on investment will halve and then halve again. If the price to earnings ratio remains the same we can assume that the value of a perpetual plate will quarter; 75 per cent will be wiped out. Further to this, with the uncertainty in the sector, even at a quarter of the price plates may sell for even less if they sell at all.

As the government's own discussion paper shows, the value of perpetual plates traded over the last 10 years has been well over \$200,000. In fact, in 2014, just last year, eight plates were sold at an average cost of \$244,900. That means if the value of these plates has gone down by 75 per cent, approximately \$1.5 million has been stripped from families in last year's purchases alone. Like many investments, return consists of two components: an annual return which is the equivalent to a dividend and a capital gain or a capital loss in the value of the plates over time. Both have taken and will take a hit.

Taxi owners will receive less income and therefore the value of the plate will go down. Between 2004 and 2014, 146 plates were sold. They were sold as a commodity for approximately \$250,000. It is easy to say this in a speech in the Assembly or in the Chief Minister's office. It is easy to think these are just arbitrary figures. However my

reference of \$250,000 now being worth perhaps just \$60,000 means that there are 217 owners of plates, hundreds of families, who have had their family wealth slashed. For many this is their life savings being slashed by this government's decision. For many this is their retirement nest egg. For many it was the estate they were hoping to leave to their children. Is this fair? Is this what the Labor Party in Canberra stands for? I am amazed that in a party full of people that claim to be about justice, that claim to be about social justice, not one of them has the guts to raise this as an issue. Not one of them has the guts to say, "This is not right".

Let me describe a comparable example. Imagine if the government sold a block of land for \$250,000. Imagine a family puts all their savings into the purchase but then the next day the government declares that land is now free; that land is being given away. What would happen to the value of that block of land? Imagine trying to sell that block of land while all the other blocks are being given away. The truth is, if you could sell it at all it would be worth a fraction of the price that was paid. It would be worth a fraction of that \$250,000 for the block. In effect, the savings of that family would be eradicated.

This is the situation that 217 perpetual plate owners face right now. I know this is a complex area of government policy but that is no excuse for not recognising the damage that this policy is going to have on many Canberrans. I know that there is not necessarily a simple solution as there are some plates that were awarded to people at no cost but there were others—many, many others—that paid a great deal for them. There may not be a one-size-fits-all scheme but developing a scheme which recognises the lost value in perpetual plates should not be beyond this government. There are plenty of competent people in the Treasury, in the Chief Minister's department who could develop options.

I am the first to admit that any industry that is heavily dependent upon government regulation is at risk of changes in those regulations. However there is also an expectation—an expectation that is rapidly deteriorating—that this government will be fair. I do not think there is anyone that says there are not significant reforms that can and should be made in the taxi industry. However, like any other change in government policy it has to be done properly.

Mr Barr accuses the opposition of being a sovereign risk for the light rail contract, despite the fact that we would be exercising a termination clause in the possible contract and we are telegraphing it years in advance. Any consortia that go into the light rail contract go in with their eyes wide open about what the Liberal Party's intentions are should we be endorsed in October next year. I do not think it is sovereign risk. However, real sovereign risk occurs when governments change their policy and devalue decisions based on former policy.

The government's decision to throw out the regulatory system on which people trusted and made investments is sovereign risk. What the government is doing is saying that our rules and regulations in the ACT are worthless. The government is saying that you cannot and should not make investments in Canberra based on our regulatory regime. For a government that claims to be in favour of growing our economy, this escalation of risk is damaging to confidence in Canberra and damaging in confidence for people who seek to invest in Canberra.

This government seems to have an obsession with all things interstate. They seem to have a bias against Canberra and against the Canberrans who have taken risks, built up businesses, created wealth and opportunities and created employment. We owe it to Canberrans to be fair. As I have said before, I am not against ride share businesses; I simply think there has to be appropriate recognition of the devaluation brought about by this government's change.

In fact, I understand that a policy option for the recognition of the evaluation of perpetual plates was put to the government by the department. I would appreciate it if the Chief Minister in his speech would confirm this is the case and, if so, what was the proposal or what were the options put to the Chief Minister and put to cabinet by his directorate? What options were put forward for his considerations? What were the deliberations and why did they say no?

The government's discussion paper very clearly says in questions to consider, "How can we have a model that allows innovation but also recognises historic regulatory costs borne by current participants?" This has been a question that has been on the table for many months, since the government first mooted this idea: "How can we have a model that allows innovation but also recognises historic regulatory costs borne by current participants?" That question has been left unanswered. That question has been ignored. That was a question for which 217 owners of perpetual plates had high hopes, and this government has let them down. This is a government that claims to be about social justice. This is a government that claims to be for Canberra. In this move it is doing the very opposite.

Mr Barr may have ambitions to be perceived by Canberrans as modern. He may have a desire to differentiate himself from Ms Gallagher or Mr Stanhope. However he should not be doing this at the expense of hundreds of small businesses. Unfortunately this is a trend that is becoming more and more apparent. The truth is, the best reforms are the ones that are well implemented and take the community with you. This is not so in this circumstance.

Mr Barr and the government must recognise the impact of their policy on taxi owners, operators and drivers. He may claim that he is helping taxis by reducing the annual fee. However this decision is probably the primary contributor towards devaluation of the plate value. Mr Barr and those opposite should not be stubborn; they should not just sit back as life savings are wiped out. We call on the government to do the right thing, to support Canberra family businesses and to develop a package of support that recognises historic investments.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (4.17): I thank Mr Coe for raising this matter today. At the outset I say that the government will not be supporting Mr Coe's motion. I have circulated an amendment that indicates that the government will review how the introduction of ride sharing has influenced the price of perpetual taxi plates 24 months after the commencement of ride share operations in the ACT. I move:

Omit all words after “That this Assembly”, substitute: “agrees with the Government approach to review how the introduction of rides haring has influenced the price of perpetual taxi plates 24 months after the commencement of ride share in the ACT.”.

The government has acted swiftly to come up with a reform package in a policy area that many jurisdictions around the world have found difficult. We will be the first Australian city to successfully integrate ride sharing into our regulatory environment, the first capital city in the world to regulate for ride sharing before it comes into effect. It is the “for ride sharing” part of that sentence that is important because the reform package that we have crafted recognises the changes that are going on in the world around us and puts this jurisdiction ahead of the curve in adapting to and, importantly, taking advantage of, those changes for our citizens.

There are plenty of jurisdictions that have tried to block ride sharing. I do not think many of those efforts could be described as successful. The fact of the world and the fact of any industry is that change happens, and in our time on this planet change will be happening faster than ever before. The responsibility of government is to engage with and guide that change and to shape it to benefit our community. That is exactly what the government has sought to do.

The simple fact about the government’s reforms here is that they give consumers more choice. Let me be clear: my priority will always be consumers over producers in any service provision. It is about consumers. Without consumers, there is no industry, and I am surprised that those opposite have taken the position they have—to put the interests of a small minority ahead of the majority of Canberrans.

Supporting consumers and supporting consumer choice is what governments should be about—lower prices through competition, reducing the costs and the regulatory burden for those who wish to operate in this industry, and helping to level the playing field. That is what the government can do, and that is exactly what we have done here.

We want to provide appropriate protections for consumers and for drivers. I note that in Mr Coe’s contribution there was no significant mention of drivers, who are amongst the most exploited under the current arrangements. So it is no wonder that there has been a massive level of interest in participating in ride sharing in this city, and it is no wonder that I have been inundated, by about a hundred to one in the thousands of pieces of correspondence that I have received, in support of the government’s reforms.

Mr Smyth: Thousands?

MR BARR: Thousands of pieces of correspondence across email, social media and various other contacts, reflecting strong support for the government’s position here.

I understand and accept that there will be a group of people who are unhappy. It is rare in any public policy decision that everyone is happy. But let me be clear: I will always put consumer interests first, and that is exactly what we are doing.

Through this reform package we are looking to the future, not trying to protect an industry from an inevitable change. Change in industry, structural adjustments, technology—all of these things are commonplace across almost every aspect of our lives. And the idea that we can put our heads in the sand and not seek to respond to these changing circumstances, and that the advent of new ways of delivering services, whether they are delivered globally or locally, is somehow an attack on Canberra, as the opposition speaker put forward, is just farcical. They are just farcical assertions. Are we going to become the North Korea of Australia, and try to isolate ourselves from what happens in the rest of this country and the rest of the world? It is sheer economic lunacy, but it is what we have come to expect from Alistair Coe.

There is no doubt that these reforms will give Canberra consumers more choices and that prices will fall through competition. From later this week Canberrans will be the first people in Australia to be able to legally use ride sharing services. New operators will not just mean lower prices; it will also mean a much wider range of services and offerings. We are already seeing competitors to Uber wanting to enter our market. As well as through competition, government reforms will also lower prices by capping surcharges on the outrageous price gouging that we have been seeing in this industry for some time when it comes to electronic payments.

The economic modelling shows that ride sharing will offer a financial benefit to the Canberra community of around \$3.5 million annually after five years. The government's reforms, though, also go to reducing costs and regulations for taxi operators. I was determined, in undertaking this reform task, to remove unnecessary regulation wherever possible and that the level playing field that many advocated for to allow competition would be put in place. So that is why we have cut fees dramatically. As Mr Coe indicated in his speech, the annual taxi licence fee will be cut in half, to \$10,000, and in a year's time it will be cut in half again.

Under the government's reforms a range of important protections for the taxi industry will remain in place. For example, only taxis will be able to access taxi ranks and will be able to accept hailed fares on the street. We know that those two components of taxi work comprise about half of all work in Canberra today, and that will remain exclusively for taxis.

We are also seeking to reduce other areas of red tape to make sure that our regulations are about managing risks, not about managing businesses. For instance, we will remove the requirement for taxi drivers to wear uniforms. Whether or not staff wear uniforms is properly a matter for business, not for government.

Our reforms are designed so that our regulations focus firmly on safety—safety for the consumer and protections for drivers. Under our reforms any driver whose transport booking service does not let them drive for other services, so that they have an exclusive relationship with that transport booking service, will be considered an employee for workers compensation arrangements. This protection will be true regardless of how many shifts a driver drives. If you demand that someone drives exclusively for you then they are an employee for workers compensation purposes. It is as simple as that.

The government's commitment also is to closely monitor these changes. The taxi and on-demand transport industry is undoubtedly going through significant disruption around the world. The idea that we can pretend this is not happening and that there is not a response necessary is just madness. We have seen disruption happening, but the sort of disruption that is happening in this industry is happening in many others around the world. Just ask the newspaper industry, or booksellers. Those who have been involved in areas of regulated or semi-regulated service provision in many different industries need to embrace change. Think of Kodak, a major corporation that has struggled and fallen by the wayside as a result of technological change. In turn, even search engine and IT firms that were at the start of the tech boom have seen their initial boom move aside and others step into their place. That is the nature of change, and the pace of change is only increasing. The original business model for a company like Yahoo is obviously now out of date, and we see innovation and change as a constant feature in our society.

The ACT is in a better position to reform for that change than most. Unlike other jurisdictions, we have not issued a perpetual taxi licence in 20 years. What a good decision that was 20 years ago—a very good decision, and one that should have been taken even earlier, in my view. The fact that perpetual plate holders have bought into a highly protected market and received the benefit of operating in that highly protected market for more than two decades does not mean that the government is obliged to protect or sustain that business model forever. And anyone who invested on that basis should not have made that assumption. As Mr Coe indicated, regulations will change. Governments always reserve the right to change the regulatory environment. Anyone who invested on the basis that there would never be any change made a very bad call.

I do note, though, that when people benefited from the upside of regulation, when the value of taxi licences was increasing exponentially, as it has been in many jurisdictions around this country, I did not hear that many people, particularly on that side of politics, calling for increased taxation to capture that increase in value over a period of time. What goes up can come down.

The government recognises, though, that our reforms will change the taxi industry. There is no doubting that. Of course they will. Of course these reforms will mean change. That change was coming anyway, and coming at a rapid pace. That is why we have committed to actively monitor and review the impact of the reforms.

I hope we can deregulate further in the future. I think that is undoubtedly the direction of public policy in this country. It is what the new federal Treasurer has demanded of the states and territories—to implement the Harper competition policy reforms, one of which was to deregulate taxis and support the introduction of ride sharing services. It is a clear area of micro-economic reform for this country and one that the ACT is proud to lead. They are proud and important decisions, to lead in this area. But there have been umpteen reviews. The Productivity Commission has looked at this matter extensively over decades. The most recent analysis of competition policy priorities in this country, by Ian Harper, clearly articulated that this was an area that states and territories needed to move on.

We are the first but we will by no means be the last jurisdiction to move on this question. I note New South Wales are currently inquiring into these matters, as are a number of other states and territories. Change is inevitable. It has to happen for the benefit of consumers and for the benefit of the economy overall. Governments need to make decisions in the interests, and the best interests, of all. We need to balance competing interests and competing priorities. But if your starting point is that you want a better transport system for your citizens, you must back these reforms.

It comes as no surprise that the weasel words we hear from Alistair Coe once again demonstrate just how far behind and how lost in the past the Canberra Liberals are. Every effort to improve transport services in this city is opposed by the shadow transport minister—every effort. We see it time and time again—negativity for the sake of it; opposition for opposition’s sake; and never putting the interests of Canberra citizens first. That is what we get time after time. You name the transport reform and Alistair Coe is against it. That is exactly what we see time and time again. And here we are, with another private members’ day in the Assembly, and we have exactly the same negativity from the shadow transport minister. If he is not moving motions condemning investment in light rail, he is moving motions condemning investment in the future, in better transport services for Canberrans.

Let me be clear, in concluding this afternoon, that this government will back consumer interests, we will back protection for drivers and a better deal for drivers and that will be our priority in reform for the future. I have extreme confidence that that is the position that Canberrans support overwhelmingly, and we will see them vote with their feet when on Friday Uber enters into this market.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Justice, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Transport Reform) (4.32): I will not be supporting Mr Coe’s motion but I will support the amendment proposed by Mr Barr. Mr Coe’s motion asks that the government “respond to the devaluation of perpetual taxi plates brought about by the government’s ride share policy”.

There are several things to ask about this. First of all, I would like to know exactly what Mr Coe proposes the government do. “Respond” is not a very clear request. I listened very carefully to Mr Coe’s remarks and I also heard him do a press conference at lunch-time as I waited in the media cue. I heard a lot of concern but no clear proposition on what the actual response should be. If Mr Coe wants the government to pay for the plates or to compensate plate owners then his motion should be clear about that and he should be willing to state it and state how much he is prepared to pay for that.

The second question is about how the government should respond to the emergence of ride sharing providers which has been facilitated by rapid improvements in technology. If the Canberra Liberals have an alternative policy on ride sharing, one that is different to the regulatory environment introduced by the ACT government, I would very much like to hear it. This is the moment to stand up and say, “Actually, we have an alternative idea.” In fact it would have been better to have heard it even earlier. But if they have an alternative policy they should put it on the table. Let us hear it. Let us hear the specifics, because this is a real issue—it is on our doorstep right now—that the government has had to address.

Perhaps their alternative approach is to try the ineffective strategy of failed enforcement, to ban ride share, to try to prosecute individual drivers, and take their demerit points off them, as some jurisdictions have tried, to try the big-stick approach which has not had any success in any other jurisdiction—nowhere. What has actually happened in other jurisdictions is that taxi companies have been left with the existing regulatory system they have, and ride share providers have just been able to come in and operate with impunity—no costs, no regulation put in place. That is in stark contrast to the proactive approach that the ACT government has taken.

The approach in other jurisdictions does not really help taxi drivers, it does not help operators, it does not help plate owners, and it does not even help consumers. It just means ride sharing services operate under the radar. It gives none of the benefits to taxi operators that we have put in place, such as the reduced licence fees and a range of other red tape removals that the Chief Minister has spoken about.

Perpetual plate owners are not insulated from new markets anyway, because ride sharing continues to operate and continues to grow. Consumers are not guaranteed that their ride sharing driver or ride sharing vehicle has had important checks; whereas the ACT system ensures ride sharing vehicles and drivers will undergo accreditation and registration, including police checks, driving history checks, medical assessments, vehicle inspections and insurance. The ACT approach also protects drivers of ride share vehicles, ensuring they have access to workers compensation.

To create a level playing field and ensure taxi operators can exist in an environment with similar and comparable levels of regulation to those running ride sharing businesses, taxi licence fees are being progressively reduced.

It is widely recognised that the ACT has taken a smart and considered approach to ride sharing. We have acknowledged the reality of new technology and we have set up a measured regulatory regime to manage it. We are the first capital city in the world to regulate for ride sharing before it started operating.

I met with the taxi industry as the ACT reforms were being developed. They obviously had concerns about the reforms, especially about the detail. I can inform the Assembly that the task force in the directorate that was working on these reforms also met with the taxi industry on a number of occasions. We also received an extensive written submission. The government sought to use all of that information and the concerns identified by the taxi industry to level the playing field. They raised a number of specific concerns, and I think it is fair to say that many of those specific concerns have been addressed in the process of creating the regulatory scheme.

As I have touched on, government sought to reduce the regulatory requirements and cost structure for the taxi industry, whilst at the same time putting a range of regulatory requirements in place to ensure both a level playing field and a level of protection for consumers that our community expects us to have.

The Chief Minister has touched on this, but in terms of Mr Coe's observations about the value of a perpetual plate, it is worth noting that the taxi industry retains exclusive

access to both rank and hail services. That means taxis are the only operators allowed to pick up people from a taxi rank. They are also the only operators that are allowed to accept hailed fares off the street. My understanding is that in the ACT market that is around 50 per cent of all taxi fares. That indicates a significant value that has been retained exclusively for the taxi industry.

Moving to the specific issue of perpetual plate owners, I want to acknowledge that this is most likely a difficult time for people who have invested in these assets. They are concerned that the value of their asset will be devalued because ride sharing services are entering the market and licence fees are being reduced. Mr Coe seems to be suggesting that the government should provide compensation to perpetual plate owners. First of all, a threshold question is this: is any devaluation the fault of the government because it regulated a service that already existed and was already operating? I would say that it is not the government's fault. The government has done the right thing by ensuring fair and adequate regulation is in place to govern ride sharing services—services that emerged on their own as a response to technology and to the changing way that businesses work, and the changing way services are delivered.

I do not think the government is obliged to try to create a special protected market for perpetual plate owners, especially when that would entail ignoring other emerging technologies and markets, and ignoring a government obligation to make sure they are properly regulated for the sake of all stakeholders. It is also worth noting, as Mr Barr pointed out in his remarks, that, unlike many jurisdictions, the ACT has not issued a perpetual taxi licence in 20 years.

It is an unfortunate reality of investments that the world changes, markets change, and the value of investments changes in accordance with that. People have invested in video stores, now obsolete because of new technologies and products. The markets of newsagents are changing because of online publications. Personal computer markets have been changed by tablets. Transport providers and related businesses and investments are being changed by technology such as mobile phones and services such as ride share. That is the real issue.

The government has taken a proactive, broadly welcomed and by all accounts sensible approach to regulating this new area, one that gives a level playing field to all of the providers, including ride share and taxis. As Mr Barr explained, the government recognises that perpetual plate holders may be affected by the reforms. Other stakeholders may be affected by reforms as well. It is not possible to foretell exactly what issues will emerge as this is a brand-new environment. Because of this the government has committed to actively monitoring and reviewing changes in the industry over the next 24 months. The ACT Valuation Office will assess changes to perpetual plate market values over that period.

I think that is the best approach to take in this situation. We need to let these reforms take effect, to review them and then assess whether there are any areas that need further work. That is what Mr Barr's amendment proposes, and I will be supporting that amendment for that reason.

MR COE (4.41): I think it is fair to say that we on this side of the chamber are very disappointed with the government's response. Of course Mr Rattenbury and Mr Barr ducked and weaved throughout. They pretty much dodged the entire issue of perpetual plates. They spoke about ride sharing, they spoke about annual fees, they spoke about all sorts of things, even unregulated businesses such as IT start-ups, bookshops, newspapers, none of which are regulated by the government. This is a unique situation and it requires a bespoke solution. The government has 22,000 territory public servants of which a few were dedicated to working on the taxi industry innovation review discussion paper and the subsequent regulatory work that followed. Despite all those resources the government has not got an answer.

It is all very well for Mr Rattenbury to come in and say, "What would you do, Mr Coe?" Let us have a look at the amendment he is supporting:

... agrees with the Government approach to review how the introduction of ride sharing has influenced the price of perpetual taxi plates 24 months after the commencement of ride share in the ACT.

What does that mean, Mr Rattenbury? Does that mean compensation in 24 months time? Does that mean that a Labor-Green government in 24 months time would pay the difference between the current market rate and the market rate for a perpetual plate in 24 months time? Is that what Mr Rattenbury is saying? If he is going to have a go at the opposition that do not have the resources of government, that have not had a task force looking at this issue, and say that we should have all the answers, perhaps he should do some-soul searching too. Maybe he is a bit conflicted on this issue.

Maybe he feels a little guilty that there are 217 plate owners in Canberra that are going to have their lifesavings wiped out. He should feel guilty. Was he making a noise in cabinet about this? He claims to be a swinging vote. He claims to be in cabinet but not bound by cabinet. We have not yet seen him swing on an issue. We have not yet seen an independent Shane Rattenbury in this place. All he does is dovetail in behind this government.

There are numerous members of the Labor Party that are not in this chamber. I hope that they are listening right now in their offices. Each of them should also feel guilty that they are letting down hundreds of Canberra family businesses with this move, letting down hundreds of Canberra family businesses who are having their lifesavings wiped out as a result of this government's decision.

I said in my speech numerous times that the opposition supports ride share. We support the introduction of ride share in the ACT. I believe that it is unavoidable and I think to harness ride share is the right way forward. But that does not mean that we need to hang everyone else out to dry, and that is exactly what this government is doing.

This government has exclusive agreements or exclusive arrangements in many things. Regularly we see contracts go out for an exclusive supply of this, an exclusive delivery of X or Y. The government has exclusive services all over the place. Is the

government now saying that it is no longer going to have any exclusive supply arrangements? For years there have been bus companies that have been desperate to enter the ACT. In actual fact we have got a bus company in Queanbeyan that drives on Canberra roads every day and cannot pick up and set down in the ACT. Where is Mr Barr's reform for that?

Just yesterday he received a paper which said, "If you privatise ACTION buses you will reap \$47 million per year." Incidentally, if you gave \$200,000 to each of the perpetual plate owners it would be approximately \$25 million. Yesterday they got a paper which said they could save \$47 million every single year if they privatise ACTION. What are they going to do?

I respect the decision that Mr Barr made to keep ACTION in government hands. That is an entirely inconsistent argument with what he said earlier today, "We're for the passenger. We're for patrons. We're for consumers." That is inconsistent with what you said yesterday. So it is up to you—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Dr Bourke): Mr Coe, sit down please. Please address your remarks to the chair.

MR COE: Thank you Mr Assistant Speaker. Mr Barr is going to use this 24-month stay of execution as a hope that this issue will just fade away, a hope that these family businesses will just fade away and will no longer be a political issue. You can rest assured it will remain a pretty big issue for those couple of hundred families. It will remain a pretty big issue when they get \$150,000 wiped off their value on Friday as a result of this decision.

I will say it for about the fifth time: the opposition sees ride sharing as a part of Canberra's transport future but that does not mean you cannot recognise the historic contributions that taxis have made and the very important investments that they have made, too. As recently as last year eight plates changed hands for an average of \$245,000, and under the price to earnings ratio I mentioned earlier they may well be worth \$60,000 each as of Friday. Last year someone could have bought, in effect, a \$240,000 asset and on Friday it is potentially slashed by 75 per cent. That is a very real issue, at a time when this government is spending \$783 million on the light rail contract in addition to the \$50 million that they have already spent in-house on light rail, in addition to about another \$80 million we expect them to spend in-house on light rail before 2020, all to have a suboptimal public transport system from Gungahlin to the city, for a tram that is going to be slower than the current buses, for a tram that is going to force transfers and result in worse public transport options for people in Gungahlin suburbs.

I call on the government to support the motion and to recognise the investments that people have made here in Canberra. I call on them to go back to their task force, to go back to the directorate and seek advice about how a scheme can be tabled which recognises the investments that people have made. Some of those plates were given free of charge. Some of them did have some concessions attached to them. But many were bought at auction and relatively recently, as recently as 1995.

That said, it would have to be a bespoke solution. There are some complexities to this, but I call on them to use the resources of their government to put together a scheme which would give some confidence and some certainty not just for these Canberra families but also for future people who may want to invest in Canberra based on the regulations of this government.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

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

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

ACT Health—hospitals

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (4.55): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) in the past 12 months ACT Health has been plagued with mismanagement, strikes, unsafe practices, toxic culture, bullying, inappropriate personal relationships, loss of training accreditation, overcrowding, highest costs, lost millions, lack of transparency, worst emergency and elective surgery wait times; and
- (b) recent public reports of failures of ACT Health include:
 - (i) on 7 November 2014 the ABC reported:
 - (A) that The Canberra Hospital (TCH) could lose its accreditation as a teaching hospital amid accusations of a “toxic” culture of bullying in the maternity department;
 - (B) staff bullying had plagued the department since concerns were first raised four years ago; and

- (C) one senior staff member told the ABC the department was a “car wreck”;
- (ii) on 7 November 2014 *The Canberra Times* printed an article headed “‘Worst in Australia’ Canberra maternity unit under pressure”;
- (iii) on 24 February 2015 *The Canberra Times* reported that an audit found serious concerns about bullying, staffing arrangements and said patient and staff care could have been put at risk;
- (iv) on 27 March 2015 the ABC reported that a plan to resolve overcrowding at TCH's emergency department was being slammed as lacking intellectual rigour and being dismissive of contrary opinion and staff at TCH have reported close to 28 people waiting for treatment at one time with some being treated in nursing corridors;
- (v) on 30 April 2015 *The Canberra Times* reported that Canberra hospitals are the most expensive in Australia;
- (vi) on 5 May 2015 *The Canberra Times* reported that caterers were called into urgent meetings as relatives fear risk to patients due to poor food;
- (vii) on 14 May 2015 *The Canberra Times* reported that Simon Corbell has continued to deny planned bed numbers at the new University of Canberra Hospital were cut and at the same time ACT Health conceded bed numbers for new University of Canberra Hospital cut;
- (viii) on 19 May 2015 *The Canberra Times* reported senior hospital doctors begin industrial action as pay woes continued;
- (ix) on 17 June 2015 *The Canberra Times* reported that the Minister calls for an external review which comes after years of allegations of bullying, mismanagement and an ongoing toxic culture;
- (x) on 19 June 2015 *The Canberra Times* reported a damning report from the Auditor-General suggested errors in patient data collection had cost ACT Health up to \$3 million;
- (xi) on 23 June 2015 the ABC reported that the Canberra's hospital emergency department wait times are among the worst in the country;
- (xii) on 24 June 2015 *Canberra City News* reported that TCH stripped of a training accreditation (Urology) and the critical report is blocked from public release by the ACT Government;
- (xiii) on 8 October 2015 in a media release from the Minister Simon Corbell he admitted that TCH had inappropriate behaviours which have been “prolonged and normalised” and he admitted that “bullying, inappropriate interpersonal relationships, and emotional intimidation have been allowed to persist”; and

(xiv) on 20 October 2015 *The Canberra Times* reported that intensive care nurses at TCH complained of unsafe staff levels and a lack of confidence in hospital management and threatened strike action;

(2) calls on the Minister to explain:

(a) to the Assembly and the ACT community why the ACT public hospital failures are so systemic; and

(b) what his strategies are to address the failures; and

(3) calls on the Minister to report to the Assembly by 30 June 2016 on the progress of strategies to fix ACT public hospitals.

It is certainly not the first time that I have had cause to move a motion in this place about the situation that we find ourselves in regarding ACT Health and I have endeavoured to make this motion one that we can all support. It simply outlines public reporting of events that have occurred within the health system. There is nothing that is not on the public record that is in the text of the motion. It calls on the minister to explain why we have so many systemic failures. Some of them we addressed and in question time he said, in his words, they dated back to pre-World War Two. The motion asks for the minister's strategies to address these failures—I think that is a reasonable request—and asks him to report back on his progress by mid-June.

The reality is that there are very serious issues afoot in our health system. The motion lists a number of them, and I have deliberately referenced the public reporting lest people think I am making this up. These are all media reports, most of them from the ABC and the *Canberra Times*, that are referencing other people speaking about issues, be it the AMA, the ANMF, reports tabled by the government, such as quarterly reports and annual reports, or reports from other organisations—AIHW and elsewhere. There is nothing that has been made up or fabricated in any sense. These are genuine reports. There are a lot of them that tell a picture. Individually they are bad enough, but when you put them together it is clear there is a systemic problem.

Just this week, on Monday, we have seen the minister at loggerheads with the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, disputing their claims that there are critical shortages at the ICU, that there are staff shortages, and that the ANMF has lost confidence in the management. On Monday the minister refuted that outright. When the AMA has raised questions about the government's strategy to fix the widespread and systemic bullying in the system, he has disputed what the AMA says. So we have a real problem here, Mr Assistant Speaker.

I will go through a number of the issues, but my call on the minister is eminently reasonable. Why are we in this situation—he was happy to talk about that in question time on a number of fronts—and what is he doing? If he is not prepared to do that regarding our biggest area of financial commitment and, in my view, the most important service delivery area in the ACT government, then why not?

Minister Corbell has been Minister for Health for about nine months and was a minister before. He should be well able to address a number of these issues. I will go through them. One that we have raised before relates to the real concerns about the culture of the health system. We have raised this issue consistently. This became an issue of significance in 2010 with the bullying in obstetrics. We have seen it in neurology, we have seen it in the women and children's hospital, we have seen it in ED and we have seen it across elements of the hospital. Let me quote from a media release from the minister lest you think that this is not a problem:

The comprehensive review released today examined the structure, governance, leadership and interpersonal relationships and behaviours of doctors at Canberra Hospital, which revealed behaviour that was in some cases, inconsistent with ACT Health's organisational policies and expected behaviours. ... It is deeply disappointing to find that poor behaviours such as bullying, inappropriate interpersonal relationships and emotional intimidation have been allowed to persist for so long among some senior staff within our largest and most important health teaching facility.

It goes on:

Even more concerning is that these behaviours were prolonged and normalised, and that some junior staff feel they are not sufficiently empowered to speak up, nor that there were appropriate mechanisms in place for them to do so.

That is just shocking, and it is on the back of so many assurances that we have had that these issues are being addressed. There is a problem with the culture. Mr Corbell is not denying that; he is putting out press releases saying it is systemic. So it is not the opposition making wild allegations; it is the minister saying that this is a chronic problem.

We then have the minister's own strategic indicator report that has been released—this is the annual report—where we can turn to a range of indicators that show some pretty appalling results. The number of patients waiting longer than the recommended time frames for elective surgery is the highest in four years. It is going up significantly. In emergency departments, again, we are seeing some real problems there. In the ED, triage categories to be treated within clinically recommended times are way below satisfactory targets.

We can look at the comparison between the various hospitals as well. We can look at the Canberra Hospital. For category 3, which is the urgent category—patients that are meant to be seen within 30 minutes—only 39 per cent of patients are being seen within the time frame against a target of 75 per cent. I do not remember, I would have to say, a target that had a result with a '3' in front of it, where we are in the 30s. The minister may recall one but I certainly do not. It has been pretty bad, and I have seen figures in the 40s, but when we have now got only 39 per cent of people being seen on time—these are all deteriorations in the figures—that is a real problem.

I think there is a crisis in our ED, and there has been for a while. You can look at the evidence that came out from the data doctoring, a lot of the comments made by

Dr Hall, and the fact that the government has taken \$41 million out of the long-term restructure of the hospital and put it into a shorter term fix of the ED. When you look at the chronic overcrowding that we have seen, which has meant there is a logjam in the ED, there is no argument, I would think, that there is a crisis there. A lot of that is through the demand. The government says it is unanticipated, but there is no doubt that demand has gone up. It does not mean we have not got a real problem there. That is not an excuse—it is in part the cause—but it is a real problem.

We saw reports on the ABC in January about staff surveys and the government's refusal to release the staff surveys, again, for ACT Health. We saw in the *City News* a media report talking about accreditation not being met by the obstetricians and gynaecologists. There are *Canberra Times* reports where an audit found serious concerns about bullying and staffing arrangements and concerns that care could have been put at risk. The ABC on 27 March talked about an overcrowded ED and stressed staff. The ANMF president, Jenny Miragaya, said that the hospital had moved to code yellow status on multiple occasions—code yellow being internal disaster—and that “staff in the ED are under a huge amount of stress and strain because of this”. We have a report from the ABC on 16 April this year—“Canberra's hospitals long way off first world health system”—which states:

Canberra's hospitals are facing an impossible task to reach the level expected of a first world health system, the Australian Medical Association (AMA) has warned.

There is a quote from the ACT branch of the AMA that the territory is still below the benchmark on all measures:

They're targets that were set for being desirable of a first world country with a first world health system,” Dr Miller said. We set ourselves a task. We set ourselves a benchmark. We're not meeting those.

Now, that is pretty concerning. Again, this is not the Canberra Liberals saying this. This is doctors saying this. This is nurses saying this. This is the government's own report saying this. This is the minister saying this.

The ANMF, again, raised concerns about the number of subacute beds. The original plan was 200. It has been reduced down to 140. I have had occasion to bump into staff from the health system around the traps who are deeply embarrassed about this because it is a mockery. If the government had said, “We were going to have 200 beds and we've cut it; it's 140 and we're going to justify that,” then they could have had that debate. But they continued on with the facade, the fabrication, that there were actually going to be more beds. There were the desperate attempts by health staff to say, “The hydrotherapy pool is going to be counted as beds. The gym is going to be counted as beds. Consultation rooms are going to be counted as beds.”

There are professionals within our health system who have been humiliated by what this government did. They are appalled by what the minister did. Instead of making the case as to why he cut the 60 beds, the fabrication and the nonsense that he carried on with has caused humiliation at senior levels within ACT Health. That is the reality. I will not be indiscreet and give away the names of a number of the people who have

approached me about it, but you can understand why. That may reflect why the minister will not continue on as health minister in this place. It has been a dismal response to that issue.

Whilst we are spending \$1.4 billion on our health system, one of the problems is that the hospitals themselves are the two most expensive hospitals in Australia to run. I support the level of expenditure in health, but we want to make sure that every cent is going into treating patients, hiring nurses and employing doctors and not, as it is now, into running the two most expensive hospitals. The average cost of care for an acute patient is way above—76 per cent higher—that of other metropolitan hospitals in Australia. The difference in costs per annum is literally tens if not hundreds of millions of dollars.

There have been reports in the media about concerns about poor food. There have been concerns that reports are being delivered late. We have had industrial action by doctors concerned about disputes. When I have spoken to some of those doctors they have raised concerns about an appalling level of miscommunication and lack of communication. When we asked the minister today, “When did you last meet with the AMA?” the answer seemed to be, “A long time ago.” With this crisis of management and culture in our system, the minister is pointing fingers at the AMA without having even met with them any time recently. It does not auger well for the suggestion that we have a minister here who is committed to fixing the problem.

We have seen the KPMG review and the articles around that in June this year. We have seen the data errors from the Auditor-General’s report that talked about \$3 million lost. We have seen lost accreditation in urology, breaches of professional standards and so on and so on. My points are all ones that are publicly available. All I am really asking the minister to do is explain what is going on and outline his plan to fix it. I think that is pretty reasonable and I would be somewhat disappointed if the government did not think they could support this motion.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (5.10): I move the amendment to Mr Hanson’s motion circulated in my name:

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

“(1) notes:

- (a) the ACT Government delivers a high quality health care system and continues to prioritise improvements and the expansion of services and facilities;
- (b) the ACT Government has invested more than \$900 million in the Health Infrastructure Program that has delivered the Canberra Region Cancer Centre, the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children, the Adult Mental Health Unit, the three community health centres and two walk-in centres as well as numerous projects that are either underway or in the planning phases, including the new University of Canberra Public Hospital, the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm, the Secure Mental Health Unit and the Calvary car park;

- (c) the ACT Government is addressing increased demand on the Emergency Department by providing a \$23 million expansion that will deliver a further 1000 square metres of floor space and up to 21 additional beds, including acute beds, resuscitation beds/bays, Emergency Management Unit beds, Mental Health Assessment Unit beds and the paediatric streaming function;
- (d) the ACT Government is improving access to elective surgery by providing \$14.8 million over two years to provide an extra 500 elective surgeries and an additional 500 endoscopy cases;
- (e) the ACT Government, in recognition of the seriousness of the negative impact that bullying and harassment has on staff and workplace practice, commissioned in June 2015 an independent review of the clinical training culture at The Canberra Hospital and health services;
- (f) the ACT Government is a leader in its approach to tackling the national cultural issues associated with medical training by publicly releasing the review and establishing a committee that will implement all of the recommendations in the report;
- (g) that ACT Health's new director-general has publicly stated she will not tolerate bullying in the medical workforce;
- (h) a full survey of ACT Health services, against the 256 actions within the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards, conducted by 10 surveyors, resulted in unconditional accreditation with no exclusions; and
- (i) the ACT Government remains committed to further improving the health system and responding to the needs of staff and patients alike.”.

It is disappointing that the Canberra Liberals continue to present such a poor impression of our health system, given that it provides a very high level of care and treatment to many thousands of Canberrans and people in the surrounding region every year. Every day, our primary hospital, Canberra Hospital, is providing lifesaving care and treatment to our community. Staff within the hospital are making a difference in people's lives every day by providing highly specialised care, despite significant increases in levels of activity and demand.

As a jurisdiction we run an extremely busy health system. Every day we are providing greater levels of care on a more frequent basis to residents of our city and in the surrounding region. For example, our ED saw 130,000 people present for care last financial year. This equates to almost 360 people every day looking for emergency care. This alone is an increase of around 15 people every day from just 12 months ago. Despite this, we have managed to meet the increase in demand while still maintaining a “did not wait rate” of 5.2 per cent across two years. This reflects the continuation of our effort to see and treat people in the timeliest manner possible.

Mr Hanson highlights his concerns about performance in our emergency department. But it is worth highlighting that despite all these increases in activity, we have still managed over the last two years to improve—that is right, improve—the proportion of

patients who have a length of stay in the ED of less than four hours. Of course, when people come to the ED, more people require inpatient beds. In 2014-15 we provided over 344,000 bed days of care to almost 100,000 inpatients, an increase of four per cent on the number provided in the previous 12 months.

Meeting this demand is possible only through the continued investment of the government in relation to bed numbers and other capital works. At the end of 2014-15 there were 1,068 public hospital beds in our hospital system compared to just 670 when the Liberals were last in government. This is a 60 per cent increase in the total number of beds that are used every day to provide the necessary care and treatment to the people of the ACT and our surrounding region.

On top of this, the government has invested more than \$900 million in the most significant investment in Canberra's capital physical health care structure through our health infrastructure program. We are completing many significant and large-scale projects, including, of course, the Canberra Region Cancer Centre; three community health centres in Belconnen, Tuggeranong and Gungahlin; three walk-in centres in Belconnen, Tuggeranong and the Canberra Hospital; a mental health assessment unit; an adult mental health unit; the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children; Duffy House, home away from home accommodation for regional patients and their carers when they are receiving cancer treatment at the Canberra Hospital; a large extension to the emergency department intensive care unit involving a three-storey extension to building 12 at the Canberra Hospital; new operating theatres for Calvary and the Canberra Hospital; a PET ICT scanner, providing a new scanning capability not previously available in the ACT, with patients previously referred to Sydney or Melbourne for use of this technology; and new car parking infrastructure to help meet growth in demand.

Most recently, we have seen the complete demolition and rebuild of building 15 at the Canberra Hospital. This has been rebuilt into a dedicated outpatient facility that houses upgraded clinical spaces in a purpose-built environment. The layout of services and staff spaces in the building is unified with national and international healthcare practice to create more efficient service.

There are other projects that the government is investing in which are yet to be complete, including the fantastic Ngunnawal bush healing farm; the University of Canberra public hospital; the secure mental health unit; and the expansion of our emergency department, a \$23 million investment to increase the number of available beds in the ED by around 30 per cent. As a result of this expansion of the ED, there will be an extra 1,000 square metres of floor area; three more ambulance bays; 21 additional treatment spaces, including up to nine more acute beds for patients with severe conditions; three more beds or cubicles for less severe conditions; three more beds in the emergency medicine unit; and two designated paediatric consulting rooms. There will also be two more resuscitation bays and a new mental health short-stay unit.

The health infrastructure program brings healthcare services closer to where people live. It is about moving key front-line services out of the major health campuses into local facilities wherever possible. It is about healthcare workers who will provide care at specific points in the patient's journey and it is about using information technology

to support connected and coordinated care. The health infrastructure program is about creating new pathways through the health system which are better, smarter and more convenient for our community, by providing the right services for the right people at the right place. And it is working. After we built the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children, we saw a record number of women birthing in our public hospitals.

We also are providing record levels of access to elective surgery. In 2014-15 we provided almost 12,000 procedures. That is a 55 per cent increase since 2002-03, despite only a 17 per cent increase in our city's population. We are investing more into surgery. We will conduct over 12,000 procedures this year. In real terms, that is over 1,000 elective surgery procedures every month, and that is on top of providing for increasing demand for emergency surgery. We also are providing around 5,000 endoscopy procedures, performed across our public hospitals, with access increasing for this service every year as a result of government investment.

And we are providing alternative treatment options. Our walk-in centres have provided care on 33,000 occasions, compared to just 19,000 in 2013-14. The waiting time for public dental services is down to just four months, when a couple of years ago it was over 12. We are reporting that 99 per cent of women wait fewer than 28 days for a breast screen, up from 71 per cent in 2011-12, due to the reforms and strategic planning undertaken in that area of service delivery.

Our health system has supplied over half a million outpatient occasions of service. These services are provided by busy medical and clinical staff who are also caring for people in the inpatient setting. We are providing a very high quality of service. It is not, of course, remarked by those opposite, but ACT Health attained full accreditation against mandatory national health and quality health service standards in May this year. Not only did we receive full accreditation, but ACT Health received outstanding comments from the surveyors. A team of 10 surveyors assessed the safety and quality of all clinical services within ACT Health against the requirements of the national standards. The review report made specific mention that:

The ACT Health has a strong executive management team whose members provide active guidance and support to ensure compliance with the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards ...

The surveyors also commented:

Consumer engagement within ACT Health is extensive, well-established and is demonstrated through comprehensive partnership with consumer representatives through all levels of ACT Health.

ACT Health's strong culture of accountability was also demonstrated by all staff and was visible throughout the survey process. This was particularly evident through how staff approached risk management. The surveyors observed:

The Staff notification rate—
of risks—

has continued to increase in recent years and this is seen as evidence that risk identification and management has become embedded within the workplace culture.

Our health system is fully accredited against the mandatory national standards until 2018. This does not sound like a health service that is failing.

I am not going to stand here and say there is no work to be done within our hospital or healthcare system. There is. This is one of the most challenging services of public policy and public service delivery.

I acknowledge the recent KPMG report on the medical training culture and the need to make improvements in this area. I have made this a key focus. In response to this report, I established a clinical culture committee with key clinicians from within the hospital. The committee will be responsible for addressing this issue—which, as I observed in question time today, is not unique or isolated to our hospital but is endemic across all training hospitals across Australia. The first meeting of this committee occurred last night. I am confident that the group will make the changes necessary to improve our training culture. Canberra Hospital is not any different from other training hospitals; these issues stem from years—decades, decades upon decades—of training culture and behaviour, behaviour that needs to change. The problems will not be fixed immediately, but the government has established the framework to fix them, and we will continue to work at removing this form of inappropriate behaviour from the workplace.

Overall, we have a health service to be proud of. And the community agrees. In 2014-15 we received 3,501 compliments. This is more than 300 per cent of the number of complaints received for the same period. It clearly shows that the people of Canberra appreciate and recognise the value of our health service.

Access to service and timely delivery of service remain key priorities for me. In the weeks and months ahead, I will be making further announcements about how we continue to improve in this area of service delivery but today I simply signal that we have a health system we can be proud of. It has its challenges and it has its issues to be addressed, but it is not the picture painted by those opposite. I commend my amendment to the Assembly.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (5.22): It is clear that if you sit down and put “Canberra Hospital” into your favourite search section you can unearth quite a range of concerning stories. What we seem to have before us today is quite a list. I certainly do not want to minimise the issues before us today because it is clear there are serious issues within the culture of ACT Health and that these issues have had implications for both staff and accreditation and, at worst, patient care.

While I note, as Mr Hanson does, that these issues have been discussed in the media for some time each story was mostly focused on a single area or unit and each new story brought with it a government response that sought to address the individual concerns relevant to each area. In a system as broad and complex as ACT Health I

understand to a point the approach to date and also genuinely appreciate that quite rightly Health has been under great scrutiny from members of the Assembly, local oversight groups such as the Auditor-General and the Health Services Commissioner and the various accreditation bodies and that these processes must be given the respect they deserve in terms of identifying issues and offering recommendations to resolve them.

I also appreciate that in June this year following a range of discussions in relation to structure, governance, leadership and behaviours of doctors at the Canberra Hospital and health services the Minister for Health engaged KPMG to examine what has been going on more generally and to take a systemic look at the situation. This review had broad terms of reference and found that there are indeed cultural factors alongside more process oriented areas that need change.

The review also found that unfortunately these factors have similarities in other medical environments around the country that seem to accept or even condone some bullying behaviours. Noting as I have that there have been some concerns about the culture in the hospital for some time and that the findings are perhaps no major surprise I believe that the government has heard these concerns and recommitted to improving the system.

In September the Minister for Health publically released the review into the clinical training culture at Canberra Hospital, accepted all of its recommendations and announced the establishment of a leadership group of clinical staff within the Canberra Hospital and health services to lead the necessary cultural transformation. As Minister Corbell said at the time, and I agree:

It is deeply disappointing to find that poor behaviours such as bullying, inappropriate interpersonal relationships and emotional intimidation have been allowed to persist for so long among some senior staff within our largest and most important health teaching facility.

Even more concerning was that these behaviours were prolonged and normalised, and that some junior staff feel they are not sufficiently empowered to speak up, nor that there were appropriate mechanisms in place for them to do so.

I quote the minister here to illustrate that from my reading of the situation the minister has, on behalf of the government, fully recognised that it is not simply one unit here or one speciality area that requires a shake-up and that there is a more deeply embedded cultural problem that will require a dedicated strategic and long-term approach to solve.

It is on some trust that I take both the Minister for Health and the director-general at their word that this has started immediately. I think it is important to remember that the first step to dealing with a problem is admitting you have one, and it is clear from the very public discourse that the government recognises that there is indeed a systemic problem here. It also for these reasons that I will support Mr Corbell's amendment today as I note a more conciliatory tone in these health debates that carries with it acknowledgement that not all is perfect but that real work is happening to improve matters.

The same can be said, to a greater or lesser extent, on the other matters that Mr Hanson has raised today. I doubt there is a household in Canberra who is not aware that waiting times at the emergency department can be long and frustrating. But I would also hazard a guess that the vast majority of the 126,000 patients admitted in 2013-14 would say that once seen the treatment was more than satisfactory.

Also, it is worth repeating that, as reported in the same article Mr Hanson cites regarding waiting times, about 83 per cent of the ACT's emergency patients were seen within 10 minutes, which was above the national rate of 82 per cent. Further, as we all know, and as the Minister for Health notes in his amendment, the ED is about to undergo significant renovations and expansion. I do not pretend to have all the answers but I am also not hearing any specific ideas being put forth by the Canberra Liberals at this time that would address the ED wait times.

Certainly from a Greens' perspective we recognise the need to address both ends of the health spectrum, to work on preventive measures but also to make sure that our ED system works very effectively. As we come to the election next year this will be the time for Mr Hanson to put his policies on the table and I look forward to seeing what they are.

This is not a simple area of public policy, particularly when we also read that the ACT recorded the highest average annual increase in emergency presentations of any state or territory, with a 4.2 per cent jump since 2009-10, higher than the national rate of 2.6 per cent. At the risk of again repeating Mr Hanson's favourite media outlet, the very same report states that the AIHW found that there were 92,019 admissions to the Canberra and Calvary hospitals during 2013-14, an increase of 10 per cent in the past five years, with 18 per cent of recorded presentations involving New South Wales residents. Clearly there are pressures and strains on our health system and clearly we need to be smarter, more efficient and more cost effective in how we respond.

I do not agree with the Canberra Liberals that the ACT public hospital system is in systemic failure. Nor do I believe that something that has so many moving parts and interdependencies with outside influences such as the burdens of harm and social determinants of health that our modern society is facing can be dealt with by fixes. The hospital is not a broken toy that can be fixed. It is an essential service provider that deals with birth and death and everything in between.

I would have liked to have seen a perhaps more concrete commitment from Minister Corbell in regard to updates to the Assembly on progressing a range of these important initiatives and strategies. But I do accept that in the first instance the opposition will, of course, have opportunities to question the minister and his directorate during annual reports and estimates hearings processes, through question time and, of course, through debates and motions such as these.

I would also have liked to have seen something perhaps slightly more engaging and thought provoking from the Leader of the Opposition in terms of proactive policy or concrete asks beyond the longer than usual litany of negative complaints and a blunt fix-it approach but I am sure I am going to have to wait longer yet before we have that kind of debate.

I will be supporting Mr Corbell's amendment today. I acknowledge that he has been very upfront in acknowledging some of the particular cultural issues that are faced at the hospital. I know that he is committed to seeking to tackle key issues facing our health system and I look forward to hearing the progress that he makes on those matters.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (5.30): The opposition will not be supporting the amendment and unless I have only got half of it, it seems to have run out of puff. I do not know if the minister was in a bit of a rush but there is no "calls on" in the one I have got. I do not know if that is different from the one that others have got but it just seems to peter out without any call to arms or action or indication that the minister is going to do anything. It just notes a range of things.

Mr Corbell: You could amend it.

MR HANSON: I think the minister has confirmed it is just a list of things, a list of stuff, some of which is good, some of it not so good.

I briefly refer to the amendment. It says that the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children has been a success. I think it is a real mixed bag. There are certainly some good facilities there but it was opened with fewer beds than were previously available and has led to women being pushed out of the hospital literally four hours after giving birth; and such a desperate situation is emerging that the government has been considering allocating postcodes for where you can give birth in this town.

The amendment talks about the two walk-in centres. We know the problems that the walk-in centres have had; that the staff at ED said it has caused many of the problems there. If you refer to Labor Party documents from 2008, which I am an avid fan of, you will see that the government actually promised three. They said that they would have three walk-in centres. That was not true. But we are used to being a little disappointed by what this government says and what they deliver. They are a sort of a two-thirds type government. They promise certain things.

Mr Coe: They got three but not all at the same time.

MR HANSON: That is right—two-thirds of what they promise. What you can guarantee, though, is that they will always exceed on price, they will always exceed on cost and the time it takes to deliver.

The University of Canberra public hospital, the 200-bed to 140-bed promise, is one. There is the Ngunnawal bush healing farm. No doubt Mr Wall can illuminate that but if that is an indication of how this government does things that probably explains the state of the health system. The secure mental health facility is a facility that this government promised would be open in 2011. It is a facility the government promised would cost \$11 million. It is in the order of, I think, \$30 million now. These are some of the highlights that the government is putting forward.

The \$23 million expansion to ED is \$23 million that was taken out of \$41 million in the budget. There was \$41 million put in the budget to rebuild the Canberra Hospital. The government ripped that money out and said, “We’ve got an emergency, a crisis at the ED, let us put that money there.” Dr Hall, who runs ED, came out and said that this is nothing but a short-term solution, or words to that effect.

The government seems to be patting itself on the back by saying it has recognised the seriousness and negative impact of bullying and harassment. I have called on the government to explain what its response is. The minister’s amendment says, “We recognise that there is bullying and harassment.” Hoorah! At least they recognise it now because certainly for the past seven or eight years they denied it. They denied it for years, remember, with Ms Gallagher in here saying, “There is nothing to see here. This is just mudslinging. This is just doctor politics.” It turns out that we were right, that there is systemic bullying and harassment.

What is Mr Corbell’s response? It is, “We recognise it. We recognise its negative impact.” A great comment is that ACT Health’s new director-general has publicly stated she will not tolerate bullying. Good on her but really I would have thought that that would be reasonably implicit. I am surprised that it is notable that the head of any department would say that they will not tolerate bullying in the workforce. If that is unusual in Health I am a little surprised. I am surprised that it is a notable event in any government directorate to say, “We will not tolerate bullying.” That is surely explicit in everything that this government should be doing.

We will not be supporting the amendment. It does not satisfy the requirements of the motion, which were pretty reasonable, to explain why we have got so many systemic failures, many of which the government has alluded to, and to explain what the strategies are, to address those failures and to report back to the Assembly. It is an eminently reasonable motion.

The problem that we have is that time and time again what is happening is that the government is saying, “Don’t worry. Nothing to see here. Look at this shiny thing we built over here. Everything is all good. Trust me.” Again, Mr Rattenbury says, “I will trust the government.” That was the mantra in 2010 in obstetrics. That was the mantra in 2012 over the ED doctrine. It has been the mantra in the latest KPMG review.

What you have is a situation where the AMA has come out and said, “No. We don’t believe this is going to work”. So they clearly do not trust this government, this minister, to fix the problem. We have got the ANMF, the Nursing and Midwifery Federation, saying that there is a critical shortage of staff in the ICU and that they have lost confidence in senior management.

Instead of coming in here with a comprehensive suite of strategies to address the problem, the minister is staying mute and just putting in a pretty token effort of an amendment that has no action items at all other than noting a range of things occurring in health—some good, some bad, some really just routine business.

Let me be very clear: health is my number one priority. It is not this government's. It is not Mr Rattenbury's, it is not Mr Corbell's, but it is mine. Let me assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that if and when we are in government we will turn our attention to health and we will address these issues. We will be open about what we are doing. We will be honest about what we are doing. We will not cut hospital bed numbers and pretend we did not. We will not let bullying develop to a crisis point and deny it ever happened. If there are problems we will be open about them and we will respond. It will be our priority. I am disappointed that this government has not taken this opportunity to actually acknowledge some of the problems and outline their strategy to fix them.

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.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Animal welfare

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (5.42): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the RSPCA is a community based charity that works to prevent cruelty to animals by actively promoting their care and protection;
- (b) the organisation plays a vital role in investigating cases of animal cruelty and its mission enjoys overwhelming support from the Canberra community;
- (c) in the 2014-2015 financial year, the ACT RSPCA seized 799 live animals due to mistreatment;
- (d) in the same period, the organisation raided four homes where more than 90 animals were seized at each property; and

- (e) the RSPCA is enthusiastic to engage in cross agency communication with ACT Housing, mental health teams and the Australian Federal Police to drive down the incidence of animal neglect and cruelty; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) develop a long-term strategy for the delivery of animal welfare services in the ACT, including preventative investment and educational approaches. The strategy should be tabled in the Legislative Assembly by the last sitting day of March 2016; and
 - (b) legislate for improved animal welfare in consultation with key stakeholders. These matters should be progressed by the last sitting day in June 2016.

I am pleased to rise today to speak about animal welfare in the ACT and also the role played by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the RSPCA, in the context of our legal framework. Animal welfare is, of course, broader than the maintenance and care for companion animals, but in Canberra's largely urban environment pets are generally what we think of when we think of animal welfare in the ACT. At 63 per cent, Australia has one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world. Dogs and cats are the most common pets with 39 per cent of households owning a dog and 29 per cent of households owning a cat. For the most part, Canberrans love their animals and treat them as part of the family. The great majority of us are distressed to hear reports of animal mistreatment and are very supportive of the role that organisations like the RSPCA play in our community.

The RSPCA was established to promote animal welfare. It is an organisation created by the community and driven by strong community support. The RSPCA's history in Australia dates back to 1871 when a public meeting to discuss the ill treatment of horses in Victoria led to the formation of Australia's first Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Other states followed, with the RSPCA ACT formed in 1955. In 1923 the societies were given the royal warrant, becoming known as the Royal Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

In May 1980 the eight state and territory RSPCA societies agreed unanimously to form a properly constituted national organisation. Since its beginnings, the RSPCA has fought relentlessly against animal cruelty. It has witnessed dramatic and positive change in the way that animals are treated within our society and has persistently lobbied for and achieved improvements in legislation governing animal welfare. The RSPCA is now one of the most recognised and most respected non-government organisations in Australia.

I recently visited the RSPCA at their base in the Molonglo valley to drop off a cheque for nearly \$200 raised by people here in the Assembly for cupcake day for the RSPCA. It was great to see the work they are doing and to check on Elsa, the kitten that was badly burned when she was abandoned at the RSPCA in August. I was able to find out more about the kinds of pressures on their resources that they deal with every day.

Tammy Ven Dange and her team do a great job, whether it is rescuing kittens, shearing overgrown sheep or assisting dogs to find their forever home. We must help them to continue to do their good work. Animal management in the ACT is regulated through the Animal Welfare Act 1992, the Domestic Animals Act 2000 and the Nature Conservation Act 1980. The Animal Welfare Act regulates offences related to animals, such as animal cruelty, and is administered by the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate.

The act provides the framework for standards for the care and use of animals that achieves a reasonable balance between the welfare of animals and that of their owners. The act also has a range of enforcement powers to promote and monitor acceptable standards of care and protect animals from cruelty or welfare offences. In addition, the act allows the chief executive to appoint inspectors for the purposes of enforcing the act. Officers from within the RSPCA have been appointed as inspectors due to their outstanding knowledge of the types of actions or omissions of actions that constitute an offence under the act.

Under the current arrangement, the RSPCA operates an animal welfare inspectorate with responsibilities that include responding to and investigating allegations of neglect, suffering and the abuse of animals; referring for prosecution alleged offenders for breaches of the Animal Welfare Act 1992; and providing shelter and care for seized animals. The RSPCA ACT is also responsible for the provision of an animal shelter, which includes providing care for stray and surrendered cats, dogs and other domestic animals; housing seized, surrendered, stray and injured cats, dogs and other animals; and providing education to the ACT community to promote responsible pet ownership and the importance of animal welfare.

The RSPCA ACT is funded by the ACT government to provide these services. The current service funding agreement for 2015-16 provides funding of \$698,124. Work is about to commence on a new service funding agreement.

In addition to the work undertaken by the RSPCA ACT, the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate also have officers who are responsible for ensuring the welfare of animals in the ACT. The government is currently working on a broad range of strategies that include the delivery of animal welfare services in the ACT.

The ACT government has been at the forefront of the development of animal welfare legislation in Australia. In 2000 the ACT became the first jurisdiction in Australia to ban the tail docking of dogs, and this has subsequently been adopted in every other state and territory. In 2001 the ACT became the first jurisdiction to make the desexing of dogs and cats compulsory by six months of age unless a permit is obtained to keep them intact. Compulsory desexing for cats is now required in Western Australia, and in South Australia the government is considering legislation similar to that of the ACT after a community consultation came out in favour of the move.

A more recent example of ACT government reform, as you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, from all your good work, is the new animal breeding legislation to outlaw puppy and kitten farms in the ACT, introduced on 15 September 2015. Breeders will

now need to adhere to declared minimum standards covering areas such as the age at which a dog or cat can be bred, the number of litters they can have and the frequency with which they can be bred.

People found responsible for the intensive breeding of female dogs and cats can now be charged up to \$15,000 for an individual and \$75,000 for a corporation that exploits animals for the pet market. The ACT government has demonstrated an ongoing commitment to implementing sensible and progressive animal welfare legislation and this will continue into the future I am sure.

During this year's budget estimates process we heard from the CEO of the RSPCA ACT, Tammy Ven Dange. She outlined a number of concerns around the operation of animal welfare laws in Canberra, particularly around the perceived need for amendments to allow RSPCA officials to undertake their roles more effectively. The RSPCA provided the committee with a summary of key areas of proposed reform to legislation, including a civil bond process for violations of the Animal Welfare Act; changes to the Animal Welfare Act to allow for recovery of costs to be awarded as part of a guilty verdict, at least for medical costs incurred; limiting the number of animals in a residence; amendments to seizure powers; additional enforcement powers; minor amendments to current offences and new offences under the Animal Welfare Act; and clarification in relation to ancillary offences and penalty reviews.

The estimates committee agreed that the legislative issues highlighted by the organisation warranted further investigation. Ms Ven Dange went on to provide an overview of the recent activities of the organisation and some of the challenges they face. She explained that the RSPCA have been taking on more resource-intensive activities, such as animal control and enforcement, on behalf of the government, that fall outside the RSPCA's core work of prevention of cruelty to animals, and have been working to develop relationships with local organisations and rescue groups, but there are no comparable organisations in the ACT with the expertise and facilities of the RSPCA.

She advised further of the need for collaboration with similar NGOs and government around preventive approaches to animal neglect and abuse and cross-agency communication with ACT Housing, mental health teams and the Australian Federal Police. The estimates committee agreed that the work undertaken by the RSPCA should be commended and also noted the importance of collaboration and education and promoting animal welfare across the territory.

In light of this, the committee recommended the government develop a long-term strategy for the delivery of animal welfare services, including preventive investment and educational approaches. In the government's response to the report, it was noted that, given recent changes at the RSPCA, preparatory work on developing a long-term strategy for animal welfare services in the ACT is underway. This is great news, and I am pleased to have the chance to again reiterate today the need for a long-term strategy.

Investment is also important. We need to consider not only resourcing but also a more efficient use of the resources we already have. This can mean looking at improved preventative investment and education that sees fewer animals in danger in the first

place, ensuring different agencies of government and animal welfare organisations are sharing appropriate information and working together to prevent and punish abuse and neglect, and legislative reforms to ensure inspectors are appropriately supported by legal processes.

The aim of both the ACT government and the RSPCA is to proactively take steps to improve animal welfare rather than responding to terrible cases of cruelty when they occur. As always, prevention is better than cure, and long-term planning is key.

Canberrans love their animals and we hate to think of any animal being mistreated or neglected. But, sadly, it does happen. In 2014-15 RSPCA ACT inspectors did some amazing work in sometimes distressing circumstances with nine successful prosecutions compared with none the year before, 22 matters awaiting court decisions compared with three the year before, and 981 animals either seized or surrendered to inspectors this year.

In better news, for the second year in a row the RSPCA ACT had the highest number of kitten adoptions ever recorded, beating last year's record by 76 kittens, or nine per cent, and also had the lowest number of adult cats and dogs euthanased ever recorded. In addition, on a lighter note, in this week leading up to the Rugby World Cup final, I note that the discovery of Chris the sheep on Mulligans Flat was another opportunity for Australia and New Zealand to face off in a contest, and in this event Chris from Mulligans Flat won the day with the heaviest coat ever discovered on a sheep. So that is notch one up to Australia and let us see what happens in the final of the Rugby World Cup this weekend.

I know that the ACT government is committed to working with the RSPCA and other animal welfare groups to consistently improve outcomes for companion and agricultural animals in Canberra. I look forward to seeing what comes from the ongoing consultation process and trust that we will continue to be one of the most proactive jurisdictions with regard to animal welfare in the world. I hope members can support this motion today, and I look forward to further debate in 2016.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (5.54): The opposition is pleased to support Ms Fitzharris's motion today. The RSPCA is a community organisation that does a great job educating animal owners, preventing animal cruelty and, of course, looking after injured and lost animals too. The RSPCA in the ACT does a huge amount of work, much of which is usually undertaken by the government in other jurisdictions.

As I have previously said, the work of the RSPCA is an example of the way that private organisations and groups of individuals can stand up and often do a better job than the government could if they had to deliver those services. Where an individual or volunteer has a dedication and a commitment to a particular cause, they will often be more productive than would be a government agency. This principle can be applied to many areas where the government is currently delivering services in some instances.

The RSPCA relies on a dedicated group of paid staff and over 500 volunteers. Carers at the RSPCA look after more than 9,000 companion and native birds and mammals each year. Volunteers walk 20,000 kilometres each year while exercising dogs, and volunteer wildlife carers spend over 400,000 hours caring for injured native wildlife.

The RSPCA provides an animal shelter to care for domestic animals, a wildlife care facility, a veterinary clinic, a dog and puppy training school and education for pet owners. As mentioned in the motion, the RSPCA also plays an important role in preventing animal cruelty through its animal cruelty inspectorate. There are two full-time inspectors working in the ACT. Last year RSPCA inspectors investigated over 1,000 complaints of alleged mistreatment of animals. The inspectors seek to educate owners about their responsibilities to care for animals. In serious cases they may have to intervene by seizing animals or initiating prosecutions against owners who have neglected or mistreated animals.

The vast majority of pet owners look after their animals and value them as a part of their family. However, in cases where people mistreat their animals, there should be appropriate penalties and sometimes appropriate intervention in the event that there are mental health issues as well. Owners who are found to have mistreated their animals may receive a fine; in very serious cases, bans on owning animals can be imposed where this is appropriate. It costs \$100,000 each year for each RSPCA inspector.

Although the RSPCA does receive some financial support from the ACT government, the majority of its funds come from generous organisations and individuals who make regular contributions to support its work. Without the support of all these people, the RSPCA would not be able to provide the wonderful service it does. The opposition is of course pleased that the government takes a keen interest in animal welfare. We have been pleased to support legislative changes in the past few years and we will continue to work with the government in this space.

I am pleased that today's motion calls on the government to develop a long-term strategy for the delivery of animal welfare services in the ACT. I hope that in preparing the strategy the government will seriously consider additional funding but also new models of care and perhaps, in effect, the co-location of what is colloquially known as the pound with the RSPCA. If the Government wants the RSPCA to continue to provide services, it needs to make sure it is appropriately resourced.

The government should also clarify if it is going to deliver on its promise to the RSPCA through the provision of a new facility at Symonston. The RSPCA have been working from its facility in Weston for 60 years. These facilities are now dilapidated and too small for all the services that they provide. The government has promised on several occasions that it will provide a purpose-built facility for the RSPCA in Symonston. Most recently, Minister Rattenbury and Mr Barr announced in 2013 that the new facility would be available for the RSPCA in 2016. Mr Barr said that land had been made available by the LDA. Since that time, we have heard nothing about the new facility. Has the government dropped its commitment or is it still in the pipeline? I would very much appreciate if Minister Rattenbury could clarify exactly where this project is up to.

In conclusion, the opposition will be supporting this motion today. We recognise the great work that the RSPCA does on behalf of all Canberrans, and we call on the government to continue to do all they can to support this worthwhile organisation.

At approximately 6 pm, in accordance with standing order 34, the debate was interrupted. The motion for the adjournment of the Assembly having been put and negatived, the debate was resumed.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Justice, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Transport Reform) (5.59): I would like to thank Ms Fitzharris for her motion today and the opportunity to speak about the ACT government's commitment to animal welfare in the territory. Of course, being a Greens member of this place, animal welfare is an issue that I take a particular interest in.

Over the last 20 years, in the time that the Greens have been in the Legislative Assembly with animal welfare high in our priorities, much has changed. The ACT is now one of the best jurisdictions for animal welfare in Australia. Here in the ACT we do not have animals in circuses. We do not let people dock dogs' tails. We do not let people put spurs on cocks for fighting. We do not let companies produce eggs with hens in tiny cages. We do not force sows into stalls. And now, as a result of recent legislative reform, we do not let people overbreed with puppy or kitten farms—an item that was contained in the parliamentary agreement that I signed with the Labor Party in 2012.

It is interesting to reflect on the change in attitudes just across the past 20 years. Some of that change has come relatively easily and quickly; some of it has been more challenging. It took seven different bills over many years until we finally succeeded in outlawing battery hen farms. It is through the work of the RSPCA and other animal welfare organisations that the public are exposed to some of the horrific practices involving animals—puppy farms, greyhound racing and animal abuse.

I think this exposure has largely contributed to the shift in public attitudes towards animal welfare and resulted in a change in position amongst our legislators. Social media has also played a significant role in exposing these issues to the general population. Social media has certainly changed how the community pressures governments generally, and particularly for animal welfare issues. People can no longer pretend that they do not know what is happening as videos go viral and atrocities are exposed. I think technology and social media will play an even more important role going forward.

Certainly, as those changes happen and we reflect perhaps on the past, the RSPCA has played an incredibly important role in helping to drive some of those animal welfare reforms as well as providing a day-to-day care and inspectorate service for animals that are lost, injured or maltreated: the sorts of things that unfortunately do happen to animals.

I would like to highlight some of the specific elements of the important work that the RSPCA ACT undertakes alongside the ACT government. I would also like to acknowledge the work of other volunteer organisations involved in animal welfare in the ACT, including ACT Animal Rescue and Foster, or ARF, as they are commonly known, and Wildlife ACT, a newer group dedicated to caring for injured native wildlife in the territory.

Under the Animal Welfare Act 1992 the ACT government is required to provide animal welfare services across the territory. The government has engaged the RSPCA to deliver a range of legislative responsibilities on its behalf over a number of years under a service funding agreement. The ACT government committed an additional \$256,000 on top of the already allocated base funding of \$442,124 in this year's budget to assist the RSPCA in the work they undertake on behalf of the government—a total just shy of \$700,000. This is a considerable funding commitment and one that demonstrates the government's ongoing commitment to animal welfare in the territory.

An additional \$178,000 was also allocated in this year's budget to the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate specifically to improve the provision of animal welfare and animal management services in the ACT. Under the current arrangements the RSPCA is responsible for the provision of an animal shelter, which includes providing care for stray and surrendered cats, dogs and other domestic animals, and housing seized, surrendered, stray and injured cats and dogs. They are also responsible for an animal welfare inspectorate, with responsibilities which include responding to and investigating allegations of neglect, suffering and the abuse of animals, referring for prosecution alleged offenders for breaches of the Animal Welfare Act, and providing shelter and care for seized animals. A third area of responsibility is providing education to the ACT community to promote responsible pet ownership and the importance of animal welfare.

In addition to the work undertaken by the RSPCA ACT the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate has officers who are responsible for ensuring the welfare of animals in the territory. The government is currently working on a broad range of management strategies that include the delivery of animal welfare services in the ACT. Going to point (2)(a) in Ms Fitzharris's motion, which calls on the government to develop a long-term strategy for the delivery of animal welfare services, I can assure members that this work is underway. This work has been happening in discussion with the RSPCA. It would be fair to say that the RSPCA has been considering what the correct role is for itself, what services it would like to deliver into the future, what services government might be required to deliver and what level of funding goes with those services. There is a whole series of questions there, and I can assure members that that work is already underway. It is certainly not at a point of conclusion whereby I can provide a full update this evening but it must be completed in time for next year's budget, so I am quite happy to agree with the suggestion Ms Fitzharris makes of bringing something to the Assembly by the last sitting day in March 2016.

That will be subject to working with some external stakeholders. Members, I flag now that if by March it is not quite ready, I will update the Assembly and say, "It's going to take another two months or so." Clearly, it must be done inside this financial year. I can assure members that that will be the case, even if the timing is such that perhaps it is not quite done by the last sitting day in March.

Mr Coe asked about the facility at Symonston. He is correct that Minister Barr and I committed in 2013 to provide a significant sum to support the construction of a new shelter, for want of a better word, which would combine the RSPCA and the pound. The RSPCA and TAMS have worked together to come up with a service delivery

model that worked inside one facility. That money was allocated. The piece of land had been identified. What I can update the Assembly on is that it was actually the RSPCA who came to government and said, "We're not ready to proceed at this time." As members no doubt are aware, the RSPCA have experienced some difficulties in recent times, and their position to us was that they needed to get—to use a colloquial term—their own house in order. I do not mean that in a critical sense, but they needed to do some internal stabilising before we were able to continue the discussions on a new facility.

That issue will be very much part of the long-term strategy for the delivery of animal welfare services that today's motion calls for and that it sounds like the Assembly will unanimously agree to. That issue will be tied in to that. I can update Mr Coe and other members of the Assembly that that is the timing for us to have some clarity on that matter. With the RSPCA asking us to hold off, we have agreed to that, but we have also indicated to them that we are ready to go when they are. That is the discussion that will be resolved over the next six months.

When it comes to the issue of legislating for improved animal welfare, again, some work is underway in this area, and I would be pleased to provide the Assembly with an update. It is important that that work takes place in partnership with key stakeholders. As recently as yesterday, staff in the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate met with representatives of the RSPCA, including their legal representatives, and the Chair of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee to discuss proposed changes to the Animal Welfare Act.

The Animal Welfare Advisory Committee is established under the Animal Welfare Act to advise the minister on a variety of issues concerning animal welfare, including but not limited to the development of codes of practice relating to animal welfare, to provide advice about programs for the improvement of community awareness about animal welfare, and to advise the minister about any other matters. Certainly I have engaged with AWAC on a number of occasions in this term on animal welfare issues that have come up. I have taken the opportunity of having such a diverse organisation give me feedback on issues that have arisen. The committee consists of 11 members and they represent a broad cross-section of community views on animal welfare in the territory, including animal welfare organisations, the pet shop industry and the veterinary profession. I find that to be a very valuable committee. They certainly play an important part in any discussions around proposed changes to the Animal Welfare Act.

Earlier this year, partly in response to community sentiment in respect of animal welfare cases highlighted by the RSPCA, the government requested that targeted amendments be made to the Animal Welfare Act to promote and protect the welfare, safety and health of animals, ensure the proper and humane care of animals and reflect the community's expectation that people who keep or care for animals will ensure that they are properly treated. In addition I requested that a community education campaign be developed to increase awareness about basic and reasonable standards of animal care.

Again this demonstrates the government's commitment to strong animal welfare services across the territory in recognition of the social and environmental benefits that are forthcoming to the community. Work is progressing on this issue in a consultative manner with the RSPCA and AWAC, with a view to seeking further support for the proposed changes early in 2016. I am quite determined to not let this process linger. I want these reforms completed before we go into caretaker mode next year, before the Assembly finishes. My sense is that members in this place will be supportive of changes to update and improve the Animal Welfare Act. I am cognisant of the fact that there appear to be some shortcomings in the act that have been exposed by some recent cases, and I am keen to address those as soon as practicable. That is why I have the directorate working with the RSPCA and AWAC to come up with specific amendments.

Let me conclude simply by saying that I thank Ms Fitzharris for bringing forward this motion. I commend the work that the RSPCA has done in the ACT in working with the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate to progress the development of a long-term strategy for the provision of animal welfare services in the territory. This is very much a shared goal. Much work, as I have highlighted, has been undertaken by both parties. There is still quite a bit of work to do, but I expect that by the time we come back to this issue early in the new year, I will have significant updates for the Assembly, all directed towards maximising the protection of animal welfare in this city.

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (6.11), in reply: In the interests of time I will be brief. I would like to thank Mr Coe and the opposition for their support and, of course, their acknowledgement of the great work the RSPCA do here in the ACT. I thank Mr Rattenbury for his support and also for a very comprehensive update on the work that is underway on the back of a lot of discussions between the ACT government and the RSPCA and some of the work that we had undertaken in the estimates committee. It is great to hear of the collaborative work that is underway. I, too, note that in my visit to the RSPCA they explained to me that the relocation and co-location of the RSPCA premises was something that they had asked to be put on hold. They really needed time to think through a whole range of issues; indeed this very issue of some long-term planning on animal welfare services was key to that. I thank members very much for their support. I look forward to the update and hope that that collaborative work continues.

Motion agreed to.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

***Punuku Tjukurpa* art exhibition**

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (6.13): Recently I had the immense pleasure of launching *Punuku Tjukurpa*, an Artback NT touring exhibition at the Canberra

Museum and Gallery. *Punuku Tjukurpa* is an exhibition of works from the Maruku Arts archive at Mutitjulu near Uluru in the Northern Territory, featuring works created by three generations of Anangu people from the central and western deserts. The works feature designs burnt onto carved wooden forms, such as wooden bowls, spear throwers, shields, spears and beautiful carvings of desert birds and animals.

Engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures is one of the four key principles of the ACT government's art policy. In this spirit, the exhibition is providing opportunities for our region's Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities to experience and learn about some of the wonderful works of art being produced in Australia today.

Some of the artists, Rene Kulitja, Janet Inyika and Mary Pan, travelled all the way from the Pitjantjatjara lands to attend. I thank them for their great efforts in creating these works, and for making it to Canberra to attend the launch. I also thank Ms Louise Partos, executive director of Artback NT, whose organisation has managed this wonderful touring exhibition of national significance, and Mr Stephen Fox, the curator of the exhibition.

The exhibition is an invitation for all in the ACT to share in the culture, knowledge and law of Anangu. The exhibition's title, *Punuku Tjukurpa*, translated into Australian English, can be broken down as follows. "Punu" means anything made of wood, especially artefacts or implements. In addition, it means any living, growing tree or bush, a piece of wood or a stick. "Ku" is a word ending that indicates the owner or rightful user of something, the custodian or caretaker, such as objects or even places. And "Tjukurpa" indicates story, dreaming or law which gives meaning and significance to the lives of individuals or persons engaging in traditional cultural pursuits. The title of the exhibition, *Punuku Tjukurpa*, therefore describes the story and the law behind these works. Many of the objects in *Punuku Tjukurpa* have been provided with the *walka* technique, the application of marks or patterns using a burning hot wire.

It is an inspiring exhibition that has been organised and curated with real dedication. It brings the works of artists who live in locations remote from our metropolitan city into our lives. In doing so, it enhances our appreciation for these artists' cultural traditions. *Punuku Tjukurpa* provides a real insight into the passing down of skills and stories through many generations.

I would like to thank the artists for their wonderful work. I will read a quotation from one of them, Niningka Lewis:

It is good that our carvings should go out to the world for all to see. This is a good thing. People can see and understand how things are made and that we have a lot of memories [in our collection].

The *Punuku Tjukurpa* exhibition is a great showcase of Pitjantjatjara and Indigenous culture. I am proud of the work of both the artists and the ACT government, which contributed to making this exhibition possible. It is open until Sunday, 29 November in CMAG, just across from the Assembly, across Civic Square.

Cranleigh School

MR COE (Ginninderra) (6.16): I rise today to again place on the record my congratulations to the staff, families, children and friends of the Cranleigh School. Cranleigh is a wonderful caring community located in Holt and serves all of north Canberra.

The school provides educational programs for children from three to 12 years with developmental delays, autism and moderate to severe intellectual or multiple disabilities. There are currently approximately 96 students enrolled at the school. The school has many specialised facilities for its students, including a hydrotherapy pool, a gymnasium, a multisensory room, a sensory garden and outdoor play areas. The school has a partnership with Therapy ACT and collaborates with therapists and parents to develop individual learning plans. The school's motto is "achieving potential together" and the school values the contribution of parents and community members to the life of the school. The school community is enthusiastically led by the principal, Sue Roche, who has recently taken over the job in a permanent capacity.

A couple of weeks ago I was delighted to again attend Cranleigh's annual art show. The art show is an opportunity to view and purchase some outstanding artwork from local artists. The three-day event is run by the school, in collaboration with the Capital Chemist group and the Artists Society of Canberra, and raises much-needed funds for the school. This year was the 10th art show, and the funds will be used to create a new outdoor learning space and sensory garden. I understand that over \$30,000 was raised.

The art show was officially opened by Simon Elliott, assistant director at the National Gallery of Australia. Musical entertainment was provided by the Radford College jazz band, and hospitality students from the Woden School again did a wonderful job with the catering. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of many other people to the success of the event, including Kathleen Bowen, Carole Osmotherly, Anne Maree Vogt, Greg Sydney-Smith, Kimberly Ingram, Tammy Isbister, Ayesha Inoon, Laurie Fiddian, Sam Dahms, Robyn Fisher, Christina Dunne, Akka Ballenger Constantin, and Chris Holly. The art show committee this year was coordinated by Anne Dunstan and also included Sue Roche, Kimberly Ingram, Tammy Isbister, Jenn Dowdy-Pitt, Laurie Fiddian, Isla Patterson and Bev Gaykema.

I would particularly like to thank Anne Dunstan for her significant contribution to the Cranleigh community over many years. Anne has been a stalwart of the school, and her contribution to the school, through involvement in the art show and many other formal and informal positions, is inspiring. Anne and her family will be moving to Melbourne later in the year, and she will be greatly missed by the whole Cranleigh community.

The art show is just one of the many examples of the way the school is supported by businesses, community groups and others in our city. I would like to thank all the sponsors of the art show for their ongoing support for Cranleigh. The major sponsors were the Capital Chemist group, Aspen Medical, the Rotary Club of Hall, the Artists Society of Canberra, Kippax Fair, Paragon Printers and ArtSound FM 92.7. Other

sponsors include Sheldon Boxall, Paul Parsons, the National Gallery of Australia, the National Portrait Gallery, Cricket ACT, Col Ellis, Akka Ballenger Constantin, Kathleen Bowen, Carole Osmotherly, Anne Maree Vogt, ActewAGL, Isla Patterson, the El Khoury family, Sue Allen, Judy Power Thomson, Costco, Pam House, Michael Pitt, Exquisite Jewellers and Personality Plus Photography.

The Cranleigh art show is a wonderful example of the way the whole school community, local businesses and other community organisations come together to support a great cause. I again congratulate all those who were involved in this year's show, especially the students who exhibited their work. I encourage members to visit Cranleigh if they have an opportunity, to see the wonderful work they are doing. Finally, I want to extend sincere thanks to the staff at the school. They do an amazing job. They are all very special people and they do a great job serving our community. For more information about Cranleigh, I encourage members to visit their website at cranleighps.act.edu.au.

Transport—light rail

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (6.20): I will continue today with my aim of keeping members up to date with what electors in Ginninderra are saying about light rail. Ms Berry said here today that the Canberra Liberals do not consult on the issue, so I would like to spend a little time sharing some of the views that I have picked up over the last little while, and I will come back on a regular basis to update members on this.

Tina from Spence, when I spoke to her, said, "It's a lot of money to service only one area of Canberra." Julie from Dunlop said, "It is time to focus on some of the roads and public land in the older suburbs that are now looking very neglected and spending some money on the likes of Kippax—getting rather tired of hearing and seeing all the improvements to Gungahlin. Light rail is a complete waste of money and what will I get for the increase in my taxes to pay for it? I live in Dunlop."

Wanda, who is also from Dunlop, simply said, "No to light rail!" Bill from Latham said, "As a professional engineer for 35 plus years, I can assure you the costs associated with the current light rail proposal will blow out significantly well before the project is ever delivered, and the ACT rate payer will be left to cover up the bills. It is a great idea which we cannot afford."

Wendy from Fraser said, "Not required and too expensive. We don't have the population to justify it." Jan from Page was succinct: "Waste of money." Geoff from Fraser said, "Complete and utter waste of our money, not needed and not necessary." Marjorie from Spence said, "Light rail is not needed. More buses will be sufficient." "No to light rail," said Dianne from Florey. "That money needs to go towards hospitals first and schools second." Joan, who is also from Dunlop, said, "No to light rail. Money can be spent in a much better way around Canberra." Gary from Macquarie said, "Given the population of Canberra and scale of the endeavour the risk is an unacceptable and substantial budgetary burden for an infrastructure alternative that is at best 'nice to have' and that alone should give substantial reason for hesitation."

Dirk from Page said, “My say concerns the ability of a single person, belonging to a party that is claiming to be democratic and community concerned, to impose its will on a whole city, without reference to the people. I am talking about the exorbitant commitment to spend about one billion dollars on a light rail system that will benefit only a relatively small part of the population.” Paul from Hawker said, “Rail equals chaos for over four years during construction. Beautiful trees along Northbourne will be axed, major car parks around the city closed for over five years. It will affect Melbourne building business.” He said about Mr Corbell that “rail was unrealistic”. He continued, “Rattenbury controls policy. Used to be four greens; now just one. I cannot believe all eight Labor MLAs agree to this scheme. I suppose they dare not speak out.”

“No, no, no,” said Mary and Alison from Page. Anne from Higgins said, “The bus service in Canberra is below par in that there are no timely bus services. Buses are far more flexible than light rail. Bring in an express bus from Belconnen to Canberra Hospital.” “We are absolutely opposed to the extravagant expenditure on a light rail,” said Judy and Ken from Dunlop. “A mad decision,” said Frank from Charnwood. He went on to say, “The cost of establishing is now is too high. Light rail will not get people to where they want to go and has to be associated with other forms of transport. Why not spend money on our bus system or move to smaller, more flexible buses and bus services. If the government doesn’t abandon the light rail project I will be voting Liberal for the first time in my life.”

Annual silent sports challenge

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (6.24): Recently, on Wednesday, 14 October, I was pleased to participate in the annual silent sports challenge here in Canberra, at Parliament House, along with some fellow parliamentary colleagues, both local and federal, and to take on very tough competitors, the Deaf ACT netball team. It was part of the Silent Owls Cup match.

The annual silent sports challenge is a fantastic opportunity for deafness organisations to raise awareness of the large number of Australians who suffer from a hearing impairment; that is, one in six Australians have some form of hearing loss or a chronic disorder of the ear.

In this netball match, which unfortunately for me was held very early in the morning, participants who are hearing were required to wear ear plugs to simulate what it is like to be deaf or have a hearing impairment. You are also not permitted to talk. So it emulates the experience of the deaf participants who are the opposition in the match. It was quite a challenge for everyone, especially the more vocal members of the federal parliamentary sports group.

Experiencing opportunities like this achieves a greater understanding of the challenges that people who are deaf or hard of hearing face every day. We all had a great time. The chairman of the Deafness Forum of Australia, David Brady, brought to our attention the large number of Australians who suffer from some form of hearing loss. It is, as I said, one in six—currently over four million Australians. Being

deaf or hard of hearing not only affects the individual but their family and friends, so helping to create greater understanding of these issues is an important part of encouraging inclusion in our community.

I would like to thank my parliamentary team members: Senator Bridget McKenzie, Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, Senator Jo Lindgren, Senator Jenny McAllister and Senator Anne McEwen. I thank them for putting up with me. I had never played netball in my life, so I was potentially a bit of a challenge for them to deal with.

While the silent sports challenge is held around International Week of the Deaf, in January 2016 Adelaide will play host to the Australian Deaf Games. That has a variety of sports, including netball, baseball, cricket and touch football, to name just a few. The Deaf ACT team that we played against in netball will be travelling to Adelaide to participate. I wish them all the very best in their endeavours in Adelaide in January. It is likely to be quite a bit warmer in Adelaide in January than it was a few weeks ago in Canberra.

I would like to thank all of the Deaf ACT participants, including David Brady. As I said he is chairman of the Deafness Forum of Australia. Chloe Nash acted as umpire. Some of you may know Chloe from my office. I also thank Daniel Shannon, Greg Ophel, Sarah Ashleigh, who is only 15 years old, Diana Cuiffetelli, Tamara Hone, Aisha Hitaua, and Angie Baker, who is a hearing-plus coach.

While I participated in the silent netball challenge, during that week on other days there was silent touch football and silent Aussie rules, also against parliamentary teams. So it was a very successful undertaking and I enjoyed very much being part of it, despite the early hour of the morning. I think that our federal parliamentary colleagues appreciated the opportunity to interact with members of the deaf community and come to a greater understanding of the challenges that they face.

Parliament of youth on sustainability

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (6.28): I rise tonight to speak about a meeting I held in my capacity as chair of the planning, environment and Territory and Municipal Services committee with student ministers from the parliament of youth on sustainability. The parliament of youth on sustainability is an initiative held by SEE-Change where 162 students from 24 schools in the ACT this year gathered to present and debate their green paper proposals to tackle climate change. The youth parliament was held in June at the Australian National University.

Of the 43 proposals presented at the parliament, 11 were selected to be announced to our ACT Legislative Assembly colleagues, Minister Corbell, Minister Rattenbury and Ms Lawder. Of the 11 presented, the final six proposals were voted to be included in the parliament white paper. It was these final six proposals that I and our deputy chair, Mr Coe, were privileged enough to have had presented to us.

The student ministers who spoke to us ranged in year levels from kindie to year 12. All of the student ministers were impressively articulate and it was fantastic to see how passionate they were about their proposals. I mention three in particular that caught my eye.

Minister Bethan Pitt of Red Hill Primary School in the kindergarten to year 3 age group suggested that on 1 October every year everybody, if they want to, plant a tree. Bethan's proposal aims to tackle the issue of pollution in the atmosphere as trees absorb carbon dioxide and other potentially harmful gases from the air and release oxygen.

In the year 7 to year 9 group Minister Michael Bui of Daramalan College proposed that ACT primary schools adopt a campaign called kick down the habits. Michael's campaign is based on his theory that a lack of action on climate change stems from a lack of awareness about the impact of our individual and household resource use. Kick down the habits proposes to educate primary schoolchildren about their carbon footprint and the simple changes they can make each day to collectively reduce the amount of greenhouse gases produced in the ACT. This was a great proposal that looks at educating our younger generation on how to tackle climate change in a cost-effective way.

Minister Clea Porteous-Borthwick of Canberra Girls Grammar School presented one of the final proposals in the year 10 to year 12 group. Clea's proposal mandated that all new buildings constructed in the ACT be built with solar panels. With the ACT population predicted to increase by 114,000 people over the next 20 years, the ACT's energy consumption will also rise significantly. Clea's proposal would assist the government in achieving its current aim of a 90 per cent renewable energy target by 2020 and 100 per cent by 2025.

The other proposals presented by the student ministers included the promotion of locally grown produce, investment in renewable energy and the need to address the inevitable impact on human rights that climate change will have.

I congratulate all 162 students involved in the parliament of youth. In particular I commend the student ministers we had the privilege to listen to. I also acknowledge and thank SEE-Change for all of their work in putting this youth parliament together. Their initiative in encouraging young students to consider the impact their lives have on our planet is very admirable.

Climate change is known to be one of the greatest challenges we face. Our response must be immediate, effective and sustainable. It was promising to see how engaged and thoughtful the students were in composing and presenting their green paper proposals. I have little doubt that Canberra will be in very good hands by the time these student ministers and their contemporaries graduate from school and become community leaders in their own right.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.33 pm.