



# Debates

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**Wednesday, 14 December 2016**

**MADAM SPEAKER** (Ms Burch) 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.

## **Territory finances**

**MR COE** (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (10.02): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes regarding the state of the Territory's finances:
  - (a) over the last eight years, revenue has increased by 43 percent but expenses have increased by 61 percent;
  - (b) the operating balance in 2015-16 was a deficit of \$373 million;
  - (c) the operating balance has been in deficit since 2011-12;
  - (d) the Territory was a net borrower of \$631 million in 2015-16; and
  - (e) the Territory has been a net borrower since 2008-09; and
- (2) calls on the Government to provide to the Assembly by the last sitting day of this year:
  - (a) the Government's fiscal strategy;
  - (b) the year in which the Territory's net borrowing will cease; and
  - (c) the year in which the Territory's UPF net operating balance will be in surplus.

This is a government with very poor form when it comes to the management of the territory's budget. The ACT Labor government, like pretty much every Labor government in the country, overpromises and underdelivers. It is a government that loves to promise grandiose schemes, loves to talk about the vision of the month, but in reality very few of these are actually ever realised.

To understand the state of the territory's finances, the numbers that matter are not necessarily the ones that the government likes to talk about and they are not the ones that are often in the wishful thinking of the annual budget statement. It is, in fact, the ones in the consolidated annual financial statements, which are audited by the Auditor-General. These are the ones that this place should be focused on in particular.

They are the results for the whole of territory government contained in the operating statement which is presented on the first two pages of the audited financial statements. It looks at the whole of the territory, including general government services and public trading enterprises such as Icon and the LDA.

I also want to focus in particular on the numbers in the operating statement. The first is the UPF net operating balance, which I will call the operating balance. The UPF is the uniform presentation framework. This is the presentation of financial information which has been agreed upon by the commonwealth and all the jurisdictions.

It is important that we actually go by this UPF because this is actually something which can be compared between jurisdictions. The reality is that every jurisdiction does have its own accounting methodology. Whilst there are generic accounting standards there is still a fair bit of discretion as to how each jurisdiction does prepare their finances. So by using the uniform presentation framework we do actually have documents that can be compared.

In 2007-08 when Jon Stanhope was Treasurer the operating balance under the uniform presentation framework was a surplus of \$171 million. That shows, of course, that revenue exceeded expenses. Further, revenue from the sale of physical assets, which is primarily land, was greater than expenditure on new physical assets by \$87 million. Again, you have sales exceeding expenditure.

The territory was therefore a net lender by \$257 million. This is the single number that encapsulates the territory's finances. In effect, are they a net borrower or are they a net lender? It includes the operating balance and the sale and purchase of non-financial or physical assets. It indicates the financial impact of the ACT government on the ACT economy as a whole. It is, in effect, the bottom line in the operating statement presented on the first two pages of the audited financial statement.

Of course, in 2015-16 the fiscal responsibility—the surplus that we had under Jon Stanhope—is just a distant memory. In 2015-16, in contrast to the ACT being a net lender of \$257 million, we had a deficit of \$373 million. It is a significantly worse result—a \$544 million turnaround, in fact.

The operating balance has been in deficit each year since 2011-12. In that year, when Katy Gallagher was Treasurer, the operating deficit was a relatively small \$97 million. However, over the last four financial years, under Treasurer Barr, the operating balance has been in deficit by \$309 million through to \$646 million each year. The total of these four deficits is \$1.8 billion.

Further, in 2015-16, revenue from the sale of physical assets was less than expenditure on new physical assets by \$258 million. Again, that is in stark contrast to that under Jon Stanhope in 2007-08 when revenue exceeded expenditure by \$87 million. So we have a massive turnaround here.

The territory was therefore in 2015-16 a net borrower of \$631 million. It was a net borrower. We have gone from being a net lender under Jon Stanhope of \$257 million to now being a net borrower of \$631 million in the last financial year alone. That is an \$888 million turnaround since 2007-08. That is just in a single financial year that we are talking about in terms of that actual turnaround.

The deterioration of the territory's finances is primarily an expenditure problem rather than a revenue problem. Since 2007-08 the biggest source of operating revenue—commonwealth government grants—has increased by 43 per cent. The second biggest source—local tax revenue—has increased by 53 per cent. But expenditure has increased faster still at 61 per cent. Therefore, we are spending beyond our means. We are spending faster than our revenue is increasing.

In 2007-08 the territory had an interest bill of \$60 million. That has nearly tripled to \$172 million in 2015-16. We are paying \$172 million per year in interest, Madam Speaker. While some Canberrans experience hardship, the ACT as a budget is prosperous. The territory can afford to pay a bigger interest bill each year and for years to come.

But the point remains that, even though the Labor-Greens government has been receiving more and more public money, it cannot budget within its means. If a government as favourably placed as this one cannot manage this simple task, it is likely it is going to struggle with far more difficult tasks should they arise.

Of course, the evidence is in so many capital works projects that go well over budget. Things such as the Cotter Dam are, of course, indicative of just how bad this government's management of capital works has been. Then there are other issues such as *Skywhale*, the container village and numerous other things that all add up. On the one hand you have the government saying we need to be more efficient and you have the government making it ever tighter in certain agencies. Yet on the other hand you see them squandering money on so many projects that are simply not worth while.

There is also real doubt as to whether simply spending more money is actually getting better value for money and whether we are actually getting the increases in benefits as a result of this expenditure. For instance, in the past weeks we have seen three major international reports showing long-term decline or stagnation in ACT schools with regard to literacy and numeracy, especially in science and maths. Our results are different to those in states such as Victoria. Yet we spend far more. Victoria spends far less than we do, yet they get a comparable result. It does beg the question: what is the actual value for money proposition that we are getting with regard to our expenditure?

We have a government that largely is complacent when it comes to these issues. There is no sense in looking at the Education Directorate to ask why spending more and more is actually achieving less and less. It is possible that in actual fact so much of the spending is actually in effect stifling the bureaucracy, stifling teachers and stifling the progress of education. We have to make sure that any spending that does take place actually goes towards enabling teaching rather than disabling it.

The government of course claim that they are returning to a balanced budget but we never seem to get there. It seems always to be two or three years away. It has been two or three years away for about four to five years. We just never quite get there. Tomorrow never seems to come. They seem to think that the government is the only driver of this economy. They seem to think that only the government can actually

make things possible in Canberra. This was on full display just a couple of weeks ago when the Deputy Chief Minister was asked about Qatar Airways coming to Canberra.

Of course, the government was not aware of this and nor should the government necessarily be aware of this. It is in effect a private arrangement that they have come to. As long as they get commonwealth regulatory approval, they can in effect open up this market. When the Deputy Chief Minister was asked about this, she said, "I look forward to seeing their proposal."

Why would Qatar Airways put a proposal to the ACT government? Unless they actually do want some money for some reason or they do want some kind of favourable treatment, maybe they could put through a proposal. But inherent in the Deputy Chief Minister's comments was that everything has to go through the government, that the government has to be the linchpin for every commercial transaction.

The truth is that we should be allowing more businesses to transact business in Canberra freely. We should not have a government that meddles at every single opportunity, which is exactly what they like to do. Of course, this government, like so many Labor governments, seems to trumpet debts and borrowings as a kind of virtue. They claim that all the great infrastructure projects are funded by debt. Therefore, debt is a good thing and we should be celebrating debt.

They also have an excuse for being in debt at every stage of the economic cycle. When times are tough they say, "We need to debt fund projects." When times are good, they claim that that is the time to borrow money. There seems to be an excuse for debt at every single step along the way, but there never seems to be an excuse to actually repay this debt. That is why we are paying \$172 million per year in interest.

Another thing that I have spoken about before in this place, which I think is worth reiterating, is the fact that the ACT is an island in New South Wales. We have to be mindful of the fact that the policy settings that we have can, in part, be negated by what happens over the border in New South Wales.

Of course, the most classic example is that of housing affordability. We have land in Throsby that the LDA thinks is a great achievement to sell at \$1,000 a square metre. Meanwhile, you go just a few kilometres away in New South Wales and you are getting land at \$450 a square metre in Googong. How is it that land that is virtually the same, a very similar distance away from the city, is double the price? How is it double the price of land in Googong? Similar services, similar infrastructure, yet you have got double the cost. It does beg the question: why is it that they think they can get away with this?

Of course, as we have seen in the Throsby auction, they are struggling to get away with it at the moment. Yes, they did well in the first auction when they tried to set their prices. Then in subsequent sales there simply was not the interest. It does beg the question about whether the market has woken up to the fact that this is a government that is gouging them when it comes to land prices.

It is simply unfair. It is simply unfair that so many Canberrans simply cannot afford to buy a house in the city that they love. So much of it is due to this government's deliberate stifling of the land market. That is why we have developers over the border and councils over the border that are being competitive and offering a better product at a better price. That is why so many Canberrans are choosing to live over the border.

I believe that if the prices were the same, the vast majority of people would want to live in the ACT. But instead, because the land prices are so much cheaper, yet a comparable distance away, people are going to New South Wales because that is where they can afford to live.

This is a fundamental problem. It is a problem with our economy, but it is also a fundamental problem with equity in our society. That is why the issue of budget prudence is not just a fiscal question. It is actually a social question as well. That is why I think it is so important that we finally get a government that actually treats this seriously and actually puts thought into the load that they are going to ask future generations to carry.

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (10.17): I move the amendment to Mr Coe's motion that has been circulated:

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

"(1) notes:

(a) that the ACT Budget is on track to return to surplus;

(b) debt is manageable as evidenced by the ACT's AAA rating; and

(c) government debt has increased to fund productive infrastructure and asbestos clean-up associated with Mr Fluffy;

(2) notes the importance of the Government continuing to outline its fiscal strategy and the Territory's return to surplus in Budget documents presented to this Assembly; and

(3) calls on the Government to outline its plans in the 2016-17 Budget Review."

What a conservative rant from the Leader of the Opposition and the new shadow treasurer. It was very clear when the Liberal Party room made its decision to lurch even further to the right that there would be a shift in policy when it came to budget and to economic policy. We just all witnessed that in this ramble from the Leader of the Opposition in relation to the territory's fiscal position, performance of the territory economy, and his potted history of the ACT budget, completely ignoring the global financial crisis and completely ignoring the havoc that was wreaked upon the ACT economy by his partner in crime, the former Prime Minister Tony Abbott.

If ever you wanted evidence of the Abbott legacy on the Liberal Party and that style of hard-line fiscal conservatism, that aversion to any government role in the economy, you see it writ large in the speech we have just had from the Leader of the Opposition, firmly planting himself to the right even of Scott Morrison with that little 15-minute diatribe that meandered all over the place and never really came to the real issue that confronts the ACT, that is, how we can ensure that our economy continues to grow into the future and what government policy settings are necessary in order to ensure that growth and to accelerate it.

Let there be no doubt of the very clear philosophical differences that there now are between this side of the chamber and the new ultra conservative opposition leader. Mr Hanson, to his credit, in the last election campaign was on the record many times saying that he would not be attempting to bring the budget back into surplus any quicker than the government and that there would be no cuts. We all thought there was a little bit of pre-election posturing around those statements from the former Leader of the Opposition, and that has absolutely been confirmed by the man who would have been his treasurer had they been successful in October's election. He has now revealed his agenda for the ACT, and that is a smaller public sector. He would cut and he would cut hard in order to pursue an ideological agenda. He would look at this and the territory budget solely through the prism of an accountant, not of an economist interested in the broader economic picture.

The question the Leader of the Opposition needs to answer is: if the territory government withdraws or if we are a smaller part of the territory economy, what will fill that gap? What are we crowding out at this point in time? If ACT government infrastructure investment, if ACT government borrowings that he is so afraid of, were crowding out any private sector activity, he might have a point. But in the context of the projects that the ACT government is undertaking and the infrastructure facilitation and private sector investment facilitation that comes from the government's infrastructure program, if we were not going ahead with that there would not be both the signals and the environment for private sector investment.

The classic example of this is the government's investment in transport infrastructure and all of the private sector investment that is now flowing from our decision to invest in the light rail infrastructure. Just look at the transformation of Northbourne Avenue and all of that private sector investment, both on government land or former government land that has been sold and on land held by the private sector.

So there is an example of government borrowings for infrastructure to deliver a more functional city to make it easier for people to move around, attracting private sector investment, That is exactly the role of government. We could disagree on that, and the opposition leader can hold all of the conservative economic views he wants, but for the next four years, thankfully his views are largely irrelevant. That speech this morning demonstrates that the Liberal Party will not be playing any constructive role in economic policy debate.

There were a few interjections from the Leader of the Opposition earlier in relation to dates for return to budget balance and surplus, and I can make a couple of



observations on that. I noted with a certain amount of amusement the comments from the federal finance minister, Mathias Cormann, that he would not be setting any “artificial deadlines” to return the commonwealth budget to surplus. Similarly, given the impact of the commonwealth budget, as Mr Coe outlined in his speech on the territory budget, the trajectory of both budgets are intertwined.

I can make this observation: on the current trajectories, the ACT budget returns to balance and surplus before the commonwealth budget does, but the ACT is susceptible—very susceptible—to decisions that the commonwealth government takes. So if the commonwealth seek to sharply contract their role in the Australian economy, if that is their response to the risk to the national credit rating that is writ large at this point in time, we will see next Monday on the 19th with their mid-year update whether there will be any further contraction from the commonwealth, but that is the risk this economy faces.

**Mr Coe:** What contraction has happened here?

**MR BARR:** What contraction has happened here, the Leader of the Opposition interjects, demonstrating a breathtaking lack of understanding of the impact of the thousands of jobs that were lost.

**Mr Coe:** Yes, what’s the impact been?

**MR BARR:** We lost two per cent of our workforce thanks to decisions made—

**Mr Coe:** No, what’s the economic impact been?

**MR BARR:** We had a period of quite subdued, below-trend economic growth as a result of decisions taken in the 2014 commonwealth budget from which we are now emerging, and we are growing faster than the rest of the country as a result of the policy settings put in place by this government to invest in infrastructure and to support economic growth. Yes, we have taken a deliberate policy strategy to use the territory budget over this period to support our economy, to keep people in work and to keep our economy growing. We have utilised our infrastructure program and we have utilised our recurrent budget to keep people in work, to keep a high level of community services, and to ensure that we kept our economy out of recession. We succeeded, and we will be talking more about that in the next motion this morning.

But what Mr Coe has outlined, when he then moved on to other areas beyond the budget, is an agenda from the Liberal Party to cut education spending because he does not believe it is worth investing in our children. He believes the territory’s education system is underperforming and it is his belief that we spend too much on education. That is what he said in his remarks earlier. That he is just in that instance parroting the federal education minister is disappointing.

You want further examples of decisions from the commonwealth government that negatively impact on the ACT? How about Barnaby Joyce’s decision to relocate the APVMA to his electorate in Armidale? I think less than 10 per cent of the staff are actually going to move, and that decision failed the business case test. It is going to

cost the commonwealth more to move this agency than they will get in any benefits back, and the impact for the ACT is significant.

*Mrs Jones interjecting—*

**MR BARR:** And that the peanut gallery, the Muppets over there, interject on this even when they oppose Barnaby Joyce's decision—

**Mrs Jones:** Point of order, Madam Speaker. I do not know that being referred to as a Muppet is particularly parliamentary language. I certainly do not think my intellectual capacity is that of a Muppet.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mrs Jones. Chief Minister, just be mindful of your language.

**MR BARR:** Indeed, I withdraw, Madam Speaker. I would not want to be ungracious to the *Muppet Show*.

**Mrs Jones:** Point of order. Madam Speaker, I do not appreciate being referred to again as part of a Muppet show, and I do not think that the women in this place should have to listen to that.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Chief Minister, the tradition is just simply to withdraw.

**MR BARR:** Indeed. I withdraw, Madam Speaker. The point, though, is that those opposite interject on me for pointing out a stupid decision from the federal government that they agree is a stupid decision. The Leader of the Opposition has at least had the courage to go on the record and go, "That was a very bad decision." It is a very bad decision, and it is another example of the sorts of decisions the federal government has been taking that are detrimental to the ACT.

One of the good things about the last four or five years has been that our economy has diversified and that we are more resilient than we were, for example, 20 years ago when the Howard government was elected and sent our economy into recession with the decisions they took. We certainly learned the lessons of that experience, and we used our budget in that time to keep the ACT economy growing. If we had not done that, there was nothing else out there that was going to achieve that. So I am very happy to have that debate.

Fiscal austerity, a smaller economy, higher unemployment, lower growth rates, recession—that is Alistair Coe's recipe for the ACT. That is the fiscal direction he wants to pursue for the sake of saying in one particular year that he had a lower budget deficit than the Labor Party would run in government. What an outstanding achievement for the people of Canberra! What an outstanding achievement—more people out of work, a lower growth rate and a recession. Extraordinary that that is the policy prescription.

But on many levels I am happy for that contrast. Let that be the debate over the next four years, but we will continue to respond to the current economic circumstances and

use our budget, our investment decisions, as a tool to fuel economic growth, to support secure jobs in our economy and to respond to the various social and economic challenges that are before us.

I note that in his contribution Mr Coe completely overlooked the cost of the Mr Fluffy buyback and the borrowings the ACT government had to undertake in order to meet that significant expense. Yes, that is a significant factor in our debt levels. We borrowed a billion dollars from the commonwealth because they would contribute nothing to a problem that was created when they were running the territory. This government stepped up to address the issue. But, yes, we took on a billion dollars of debt in order to do that. But would you have done anything different? Are you saying today that you would not have borrowed that money to address this issue? I think from everything that transpired in the last four years the answer to that is they would have done exactly what the Labor government did.

So let us be clear about what our debt is and how we are paying it back, but also how, compared to all other jurisdictions, it is manageable and fits within the metric of a AAA credit-rated jurisdiction. Only the ACT, New South Wales and Victoria amongst the Australian states and territories hold the highest possible credit rating. So let us not have a Joe Hockey-style, Tony Abbott-style debt panic, when our debt levels are entirely manageable. I urge members to support my amendment. (*Time expired.*)

**MS LE COUTEUR** (Murrumbidgee) (10.32): I wish to move my amendment to Mr Barr's amendment:

Insert before paragraph (1):

“(1) notes, regarding the state of the Territory's finances:

- (a) over the last eight years, revenue has increased by 43 percent but expenses have increased by 61 percent;
- (b) the operating balance in 2015-16 was a deficit of \$373 million;
- (c) the operating balance has been in deficit since 2011-12;
- (d) the Territory was a net borrower of \$631 million in 2015-16; and
- (e) the Territory has been a net borrower since 2008-09;”.

Basically the amendment puts back Mr Coe's first set of notes which Mr Barr's amendment removes. As far as I am aware, all of the notes in Mr Coe's amendment are statements of fact. They may not be statements of fact that Mr Barr wishes to hear, but that does not mean they are not statements of fact and reasonable for a motion.

If we are going to take the line that we are not going to have considerable notes at the beginning of motions, I would say we would have to take a red pen through most of the notice paper. I note the second motion, Ms Cody's, has longer notes than Mr Coe's, and Mr Parton's also has a lot. Everyone has a considerable amount of notes. There are issues if the notes become excessive, but taking this notice paper as a

fair average of the quantity of notes, then Mr Coe's notes could not be described as above average. They are, in fact, below average, so I do not support removing those notes.

However, I am happy to agree to Mr Barr's amendment which changes basically the timing for reporting back for the government as to what will be happening with the budget. There is going to be a 2016-17 budget review. That has been scheduled already, and I do not think there is a big problem with waiting until that time to hear in more precise detail the answers to Mr Coe's questions.

Looking more broadly at Mr Coe's motion and Mr Barr's response to it, the Greens are largely more sympathetic, understandably, with the government's views than Mr Coe's views. Clearly it is important that we have over the economic cycle a balanced budget. I do not think anybody in this room would suggest that over a period of time this was not a priority. However, the other thing that is very clear is that, certainly in the short term, it is not the only economic priority.

Mr Coe may or may not be aware, but around the country many types of council have been doing surveys of their residents to ask them what would they like to do: would they like to pay more rates and have better services or would they like to pay less in rates and have fewer services? The answers in general have been fairly clear: people are happy to pay for good government services.

That possibly could be regarded as the outcome of the recent ACT election. It is not a Liberal government; it is a Green-Labor government. We both had an approach of saying there are government services which we think are important, light rail being front and centre of the election campaign. We both said that these are things we think are important. We both said we believe—and clearly the population of the ACT agreed with us—that investing in good public transport and better health and education systems were worthwhile investments. The ACT population absolutely thought they were worth it, and that is why they voted for the government they voted for.

While I agree with Mr Coe that what he is talking about is very important and should not be neglected—and that is why my amendment will put those notes back in—I cannot agree with the general premise that budget surplus is the most important economic issue for the government. The most important economic issue for the government is creating a Canberra that in the short, long and medium term works for the people of Canberra. That will include financial responsibility, but it also includes, as Mr Barr said, supporting employment and creating the services and infrastructure the people of Canberra have made it very clear they want their government to provide.

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (10.37): The government will not be supporting Ms Le Couteur's amendment. Whilst Ms Le Couteur has stated that, as far as she believes, the figures contained within Mr Coe's motion are in fact accurate, I am not sure that that necessarily reflects any context in relation to what has occurred in that period. Also, statements around the operating balance in particular fiscal years do not take into account long-term gains from our superannuation

investments and do not reflect the published headline net operating balance for that time.

The government is not prepared to support a series of statements that are not factually based, or at least are contested in terms of their presentation. They have no context whatsoever in relation to the prevailing economic circumstances. Ultimately, they detract from the amendment that I have moved, which outlines the context of the fiscal trajectory for the territory, the manageability of the territory's debt, the reasons for the debt increase in recent times—notably associated with the Mr Fluffy clean-up costs—and a decision by government to fund infrastructure. There is a reflection that the fiscal strategy was outlined in the budget six months ago and will be updated in the midyear update early in 2017 and then further presented to the Assembly in the 2017 budget. We will, through the budget review, respond not only to what the commonwealth does next Monday in its midyear update but also use our midyear statement to begin the implementation of a range of government election commitments and parliamentary agreement items and to further outline our fiscal strategy and our agenda to continue to drive the ACT economy through this next phase of economic growth.

I know we will go to this matter more broadly when we debate the next motion, but it is worth reiterating that our economic performance over the last few years has not been by accident; it has come about as a result of good public policy by the territory government in order to keep this economy out of recession and keep employment growth at the strongest possible levels. The result is that unemployment in the ACT is 3.4 per cent. Frankly, to me, that measure is equally as important as what the headline net operating balance is. I would take no pleasure if unemployment was 10 per cent and we were running a surplus. That would demonstrate poor economic management. The lower the unemployment rate, the better the measure of performance of the ACT economy.

For those reasons I urge Assembly members to support my amendment and to oppose both Ms Le Couteur's amendment and Mr Coe's original motion.

**Ms Le Couteur's amendment to Mr Barr's proposed amendment negated.**

**Mr Barr's amendment agreed to.**

**MR COE** (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (10.42): In closing, Madam Speaker, let me say that we have heard an interesting contribution from the Chief Minister. He now pitches himself as this great progressive reformer, yet in other circles he pitches himself as being this great fiscal conservative who is trying to get the ACT back on the path to surplus.

In actual fact, if you look at the stated fiscal strategy in the budget, it pretty much is everything that I have just said. The difference is they are not actually implementing it. It says:

This budget confirms the Government's planned path to surplus ...

It talks about “temporary deficits”. We have certainly had a few temporary deficits. It goes on and on about the need to make sure that we have a balanced budget. That is exactly what I was saying in my motion. The difference is that this is a government that is all rhetoric and does not actually live up to the reality of what its stated fiscal strategy is.

The government say they have a path to surplus, but of course in 2011 that path to surplus was a surplus in 2013. In 2012 it was in 2015. In 2013 it was in 2015. In 2014 it was in 2017. In 2015 it was in 2018. In 2016 it was in 2018. I wonder what it will be next year. What will be the path to surplus, and what will be the excuse for why it has been pushed back another year? There will be another excuse. Who knows what it will be? Surely, the asbestos excuse is running out. Surely, the public service excuse is running out. Surely, 10 years on, the GFC excuse is running out. They are still in the Great Depression excuse. There is another excuse every day, which just goes to show that this stated fiscal strategy in the budget is absolutely worthless. What does it mean when they say this:

The Government has remained committed to a fiscal strategy that achieves a strong operating balance over the medium term, offsetting temporary deficits with surpluses in other periods.

When is that surplus actually coming? It is listed here as being in the strategy. We have “temporary deficits”. We have had quite a few temporary deficits. In actual fact, we have not had a surplus under Treasurer Barr. At some point, with a bit of luck, we might get a “temporary surplus”, but I think it will be a stretch to expect that to come under this Treasurer.

Of course, there is the fact that the Chief Minister is actually contesting the figures contained in the notice paper. He is actually contesting them. He said, “Those figures are contested.” It is interesting that he should contest them, because they are actually in the audited financial statements as published by the government. If he wants to go to the uniform presentation framework, on the first couple of pages of those audited financial statements, he will see where these figures come from. They are not made up. These are real figures in the audited budget statements. So it is all very well—

**Mr Barr:** But they exclude the superannuation internal adjustment.

**MR COE:** That is why it is called the uniform presentation framework, so that it can be compared to other jurisdictions.

**Mr Barr:** Other jurisdictions have different arrangements for their super, and you know that.

**MR COE:** You can choose to concentrate on the headline, but the truth is that the headline does not include many other things, including, of course, trading enterprises. If you look, Madam Speaker, at the budget statements for Icon, it is all very well to say, “That’s a trading enterprise; it doesn’t count.” No; that is what we are on the hook for. It is all very well for the Chief Minister to pick and choose what figures he

wants, but at the end of the day what matters to taxpayers is what they are actually on the hook for, what they are actually liable for. That is what the UPF accurately describes.

There are issues with superannuation. One of the issues, of course, is the bogus discount rate that we have in this budget. There is an absolutely bogus discount rate that suggests we have a \$3 billion correction every year, and it is wrong.

**Mr Barr:** It is a 30-year liability.

**MR COE:** Are we suddenly going to get to six per cent? Tell me, Chief Minister, when we are going to get to six per cent. I would happily welcome the Chief Minister's contribution to this debate to tell us when we are going to get to six per cent. We are nowhere near six per cent, and because we are not near six per cent, that is why we have a \$3 billion correction every single year. That is why our budget statements are so distorted. Hopefully, the Treasurer will make a statement at some point today and tell us when the ACT superannuation liability will return to a discount rate of six per cent. It will certainly not be next year, the year after or the year after that.

**Mr Barr:** You're going on the public record and making that prediction, are you? You are a clairvoyant on the bond rate, are you?

**MR COE:** Well, it is interesting—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Excuse me, just because you two gentlemen are sitting very close together, there is to be no conversation, thank you.

**MR COE:** because this is in effect what his own officials said in the estimates hearing last year.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Coe, direct your comments through the chair, please.

**MR COE:** Sure, Madam Speaker. The truth is that there are many different figures contained in this budget, but we have a government that is fixated only on the headline net operating balance. That simply does not give a true indication of what the liabilities are for the people of Canberra.

The Chief Minister also spoke about what crowding out is occurring. Well, there is a lot of crowding out occurring in residential construction. A huge amount of crowding out is happening there. Thousands of homes have been almost literally crowded out into New South Wales. That is a very clear example of the crowding out that is happening in our economy as a result of this government's levers.

Not only is there a one-off capital injection that we forgo, but also there is ongoing revenue that we forgo. Yet for all time these residents just over the border are highly likely to be using our hospitals, our schools, our roads and many other services. We can try to have federation agreements that address this, but nothing would be simpler than actually to have these residents who are using ACT services living in the

ACT. Unfortunately, as a result of this government's settings, we have pushed all of these people across the border, and that is a great shame. It is a great shame that this government's legacy is pushing thousands of people outside Canberra.

Ms Le Couteur also made note of the fact that people are happy to pay more to get more in return. That is dependent on being able to actually pay more. We have tens of thousands of households in Canberra that are struggling. As I said a few weeks ago, I think we have a real risk of having a two-pace society in Canberra: one pace that can keep up with the ever-increasing costs of living, including the rates hikes; and another that is falling behind. And that is not just a financial problem; that will grow into being a significant social problem. It already is one, but it will grow to be a very significant social problem. We heard yesterday in the minister's maiden speech about Washington DC. That should be a very real example for people in the ACT. We have to make sure that we do not become a tale of two cities, like Washington DC has become.

I will conclude as I finished in my opening remarks. This is not just a question of finance; this is a question of social policy. It is about making sure that we are not indebting future generations. If the Chief Minister is so committed to high employment levels, you simply cannot keep having deficits, because we all know that deficit after deficit, mounting debt, will lead to higher unemployment. We must be very careful. I am very disappointed that the motion has been amended, but I am glad that at least we have had an opportunity to have a meaningful discussion on this very important issue.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

## **Territory economy**

**MS CODY** (Murrumbidgee) (10.52): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that the ACT economy continues to perform strongly in a challenging national and international economic environment;
- (b) that the ACT Government used the Territory Budget to support the local economy, and to support jobs, during the Commonwealth's employment and expenditure cuts;
- (c) that this strategy worked, as evidenced by recent economic data showing the strength of the economy:
  - (i) growth in economic activity, as measured by State Final Demand, in the Territory was the highest in the nation, growing at an annual rate of 6.4 percent;



- (ii) growth in the economy, as measured by Gross State Product, in the Territory was the second highest in the nation, growing at an annual rate of 3.4 percent;
- (iii) the ACT's unemployment rate is the lowest in the nation, at 3.4 percent;
- (iv) that retail trade is the strongest in the country;
- (v) the number of commercial building approvals and residential building approvals are increasing; and
- (vi) service exports have increased by 65 percent since 2010, which is well above the national average of 34 percent;
- (d) that the Territory retains a AAA credit rating, one of only three State and Territory jurisdictions in Australia to have this highest possible credit rating;
- (e) that the ACT Government infrastructure program in the coming four years will be around \$2.9 billion;
- (f) that the Territory is leading the nation in delivering taxation reform, through abolishing unfair and inefficient taxes;
- (g) that commercial stamp duty will be abolished for property transactions valued under \$1.5 million from 1 July 2018; and
- (h) that by the end of the second stage of taxation reform in 2021-22 stamp duty will be halved for the buyer of a \$500 000 home;
- (2) further notes:
  - (a) the risk to this strong economic growth through further Commonwealth expenditure and employment cuts; and
  - (b) the risk to the ACT's credit rating by the Commonwealth Government being put on to negative watch by Standard and Poor's; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to:
  - (a) continue supporting the Canberra economy and encouraging jobs growth;
  - (b) continue providing funding for the world-class services Canberrans deserve and expect, particularly in education and health;
  - (c) continue taxation reform to make taxes fairer, simpler and more efficient; and
  - (d) continue to support vulnerable Canberrans.

Madam Speaker, fellow members of the Assembly, I rise today to table an important motion on the future of Canberra. It calls on all members to show bipartisan support for maintaining a strong ACT economy. Since our election in October the ACT has continued to show strong economic performances over a range of data sets and indicators. It is one of the strongest in Australia. The government is performing well, and bipartisan support on continuing the essential work on tax reform, red tape reduction and infrastructure investment is important to continue this growth.

This contrasts greatly with the coalition federal government's budget situation and an economy that could be heading to a recession. As such, the ACT economy should be held as a shining light of how to deal with constant, Liberal-led job cuts. The Assembly should note these strong performances, which I will go into in a few moments, and urge the territory to maintain its AAA credit rating whilst continuing to support local jobs growth in all sectors of the ACT economy. As a Labor MLA I will always work towards ensuring there are growth, opportunity and fairness in our community. This particularly includes economic stability and opportunity for all Canberrans across all trades and industries.

The most recent example of the ACT economy's strength came last week when state final demand figures showed the ACT economy grew by 6.4 per cent over the last 12 months. State final demand is a measure of the overall demand in the economy and a solid way to measure how a local economy is travelling. The dollar figure growth in our economy is 955 million over 12 months. This is the highest of any jurisdiction in Australia. It is a similar situation with gross state product, which increased by 3.4 per cent over the past year. This is more than double the 2014-15 result. It is proof our economy has weathered the storm from the commonwealth government's job cuts because of the work this government has done to diversify our economy.

A strong economy means strong job creation in all sectors of industry. Employment across the ACT grew by nearly 8,000 jobs over the last 12 months. I am not an economist, I have never pretended to be, but I know what a strong economy does for the people of Canberra. It creates jobs. It pays people's mortgages. It keeps businesses being able to pay their rent. It keeps businesses wanting to employ and train the next generation. Our unemployment rate is 3.4 per cent, the lowest in Australia.

The Barr government is creating jobs, whether in city-defining infrastructure projects such as light rail or through significant investment in our higher education sector. People in Canberra are happy. This is why they re-elected the Barr government in October, with a larger majority than previously. This is why they are spending more at our shops. They have confidence in the direction the local economy is going. Retail trade in the ACT grew by 8.3 per cent last year. That equates to more staff at local grocery shops, more small businesses growing and more opportunities for innovation for Canberrans.

Commercial and residential building approvals grew significantly last year as businesses and investors saw the government's strong economic plan and voted accordingly at the ballot box. But this is more than people liking what they see. It is about the plumber who can readily find work or the plasterer who can feed her family. It is about helping working Canberrans with their everyday lives.

This motion goes to the heart of the Barr government's strong fiscal strategy and responsible management of the territory's finances, balancing sustainable rates and charges with high standards of service delivery. The ACT government has led the nation for years in delivering taxation reform and has now successfully taken this reform package to two elections. Through abolishing and phasing out unfair and inefficient taxes such as insurance tax and stamp duties, household bank balances are better off and the government balance sheets are unhindered.

I see a strong economy as being about more than numbers. It is about the services the government provides and the infrastructure it builds. The government is building a new public hospital to better care for people in our community, renewing our public housing stock across the city so that people have more comfortable places to live that are more accessible and safe, delivering new roads and new infrastructure from Gungahlin to Tuggeranong and investing in a world-class integrated transport system to keep our city moving. These are but a few projects. To list them all would take all the time we have here today. Strong economic management is at the heart of everything we do. This is not something that seems to be said about the federal government.

Last week our national economy recorded its first drop since 2011. It contracted by 0.5 of a per cent. The Liberal Party across the lake do not know how to run an economy. All they do is cut, cut, cut. Now they are cutting the economy for now and the next generation. The cuts to training today will make the next generation poorer for a lifetime. And this could hurt us. We need to be wary of the impact of this on our economy as we develop policies throughout this parliamentary term.

The Liberal Party opposite is very similar to its federal counterparts. It did not support any of the measures in the ACT budget. It did not support economic diversification. It did not even bother to form an election policy to deliver key skills to Canberrans through the CIT. We are better than that. The ACT government I am a part of will stand up for all Canberrans and make decisions that will further strengthen this economy.

We will build light rail, creating thousands of long-term jobs for local businesses over the next few years. We will bring the world to Canberra and act on the benefits of international flights. And we will continue to make progress with our taxation reform schedule to make taxes fairer, simpler and more efficient for all Canberrans. We will always support projects here in the ACT that build a better Canberra and support local jobs. That is strong economic management. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

**MR COE** (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (11.01): The opposition welcomes another opportunity to discuss financial matters here in the Assembly, this time on the economy as distinct from the budget. Management of the economy, despite what the Chief Minister might claim, which I do acknowledge includes rare and considered interventions, is a key responsibility of government. And there is much to celebrate in our economy. We have entrepreneurial people; we have an enterprising business sector; and we have many other advantages that put us in good stead.

It can and should be said, of course, that we are the beneficiary of considerable commonwealth expenditure and in return for this spending here in the ACT I believe that Canberra as a city and Canberrans as people deliver a great service to the nation in the form of the public service, including the defence force. Any honest assessment of the ACT's economic health should acknowledge the commonwealth's role.

This motion highlights that growth in economic activity, as measured by state final demand, is the highest in the nation. Something that was missing from the leader's speech is that state final demand is primarily comprised of commonwealth government expenditure—about 60 per cent in fact—and in the last five years commonwealth expenditure has increased by about 25 per cent. That is one of the things which lie behind our healthy condition of state final demand: a 25 per cent increase in commonwealth expenditure relative to the ACT. We have to acknowledge that. Of course we welcome the investment in the ACT. Why would we not welcome investment in the ACT?

The difference is that, according to the picture which is being painted by the Chief Minister, the commonwealth has been cutting expenditure in the ACT. It is quite the opposite. Over the last five years it has increased by 25 per cent. That is a massive increase, especially when you consider that that makes up 60 per cent of our state final demand. That is a big portion of a big percentage, meaning it has had a very positive impact on our economy.

The other major driver of the ACT economy is business. Mr Barr and his government seem to think that they are the only drivers in the economy and they think they are the only ones that seem to create any opportunities. But it is enterprising people that go about their daily lives making things, delivering services, that really contribute to our economy enormously. Whilst there are many indicators in the economy that are encouraging, it is important that we acknowledge that there is room for improvement and much of this improvement requires decisions which the government is unwilling to make.

As I mentioned earlier, we have had major reports showing that we are stagnating with regards to literacy and numeracy, and we cannot get complacent with regard to education. We hear the government talk all the time about education being the future, whether that be vocational or tertiary. Of course it is but we need to make sure that we actually are moving ahead rather than stagnating.

Despite spending far more per student than any other state, with exception of the Northern Territory, our results are very similar to those of Victoria. We also do not have the tyranny of distance that some other jurisdictions have. Whilst Victoria's economies of geography are somewhat better than those of other jurisdictions, ours in the ACT is better yet. To that end we should be able to drive some efficiencies from the economics of population density.

Education is a fundamental driver of economic prosperity and we must keep looking to our education results so that we can make sure that we are investing wisely. If we do have declining results in reading, maths and science over a long period, then we do

have cause for concern. We have to make sure that we are giving the teachers the resources but more importantly, I think, that we are empowering them to actually do what they do best.

Another area of government policy where the government refuses to look critically is land. High land prices, fuelled by government restrictions on the release of land, and in particular land for detached housing, are driving many productive Canberrans across the border, and that undermines our economy significantly. The latest HIA housing scorecard shows the ACT had almost four times the number of multi-unit dwelling starts compared with detached dwellings. In the ACT there were approximately 1,000 detached dwellings compared to 3,840 multi-unit dwelling starts. This figure clearly shows a poor mix of land supply in the territory when compared nationally.

We have to ask the question, as we have been asked by numerous people of late: what level of preparedness does the ACT have to actually manage this land price issue? We certainly cannot have policies that push people into negative equity. We do need to have a long-term strategy for this but at this stage the government have not given any indication that they do have a long-term strategy to manage the cost of land.

The Treasurer repeatedly claims that we are returning the budget to balance, that is, returning the budget to a surplus. But what this actually means is anybody's guess, as has already been discussed today.

Unfortunately this motion seems to want to deflect attention from the budget to the economy as a whole, and it is the budget which is the primary control that the ACT government has. To that end we, as an Assembly, have a very important role—a special role in fact—in scrutinising this government when it comes to expenditure and revenue and the management thereof. It is worth repeating that, over the last four financial years under Treasurer Barr, the operating balance has been a combined deficit of \$1.8 billion. In 2015-16 the territory was a net borrower of \$631 million. The deterioration of the territory's finances is primarily an expenditure problem, not a revenue problem.

The failure to control the budget is a risk to our economy. Good economic indicators for the ACT reflect the role of the commonwealth in the nation's capital, the entrepreneurialism of business and the hard work of our people. Our government here in the ACT could certainly do more to get out of the way of businesses and allow more investment in the territory, especially in the residential construction sector.

Rather than trying to take credit for all commonwealth spending, yet then blaming the commonwealth whenever there is any detraction, we have to make sure that we have a much wiser and considered approach. We have to look at this as a broader system and the ACT government, rather than trying to pit us against the commonwealth, should in fact be trying to work more closely with the commonwealth so that we can ride this journey together.

The opposition welcomes the opportunity to discuss the budget and the economy, as we did earlier today. The opposition is keen to be constructive and work with the government to ensure economic prosperity for all Canberrans.

**MS LE COUTEUR** (Murrumbidgee) (11.10): I agree it is great that we have so much time to discuss the ACT budget and have possibly a slightly broader discussion than before. The Greens will be supporting this motion, but in my speech I will note some different views about it.

Yes, clearly we agree that the economy performs strongly in the challenging national and international environment, and we remain very pleased that the ACT government has used the territory budget to support the local economy and, in particular, to support jobs. I think the Assembly is unanimously agreed that jobs are a very important thing for all of us.

But I will talk a bit more about (1)(c)(i), which says:

growth in economic activity, as measured by State Final Demand ... was the highest in the nation, growing at an annual rate of 6.4 per cent ...

This is where we need to look carefully at what we are measuring, what it is actually achieving for the people of Canberra and how sustainable it is.

The small audience that I had last night for my adjournment speech will have heard that I noted that the average person in the ACT uses resources which would take 6.9 global hectares to produce. There is a concept of a sort of average hectare of land over the world, and there are people who study how many resources people use and how large a space is required. The ACT figure was 8.9 hectares for the average ACT resident in 2011-12. I will note that that will go slightly down by 2020, one hopes, because 20 per cent of that was down to energy consumption, and clearly, with the ACT's 100 per cent renewable electricity, that will be reduced. However, that is 3½ times the world average.

Probably even more concerningly, if everyone in the world had the same consumption patterns as the people in the ACT, we would need somehow to have five worlds. We do not have five worlds; we only have one. It is really important that our economy is changed so that we do not require five worlds to support us, because we do not have them. The bottom line is that we have a finite world and we need to adjust how our economy grows and changes to live within the limitations of a finite world.

As I mentioned before, I am very pleased that we are supporting jobs and very pleased that the ACT's unemployment rate is the lowest in the nation, at 3.4 per cent. Also, of course, the Greens have been supporters of taxation reform and some of the taxes that have been abolished: the insurance taxes, which you would have to agree was a totally good thing to do, and removing stamp duty, which, in the long run, should lead to more equitable taxation.

In terms of the things that this motion calls on the ACT government to do, we are in agreement. As I said, we support full employment, point (3)(a). We certainly support funding for the world-class services that Canberrans deserve and expect, particularly in education and health. The one I am probably most in support of is to continue to support vulnerable Canberrans. Some 2,000 people in Canberra on an average night

are homeless. That is not good enough. We have the second-highest rate of homelessness of any Australian jurisdiction, and 10 per cent of Canberra households are apparently living in poverty. That is something where we should be able to do better.

I talked a bit about the GDP. One of the things about the GDP is that academic studies have been done. Specifically, being a Canberran, I will reference studies done at the Crawford school at ANU. Dr Ida Kubiszewski, who is a senior lecturer there, did a study comparing an indicator called the genuine progress indicator, a relatively broad indicator which looks at environmental and social factors as well as economics, to GDP and a range of other indicators for 17 countries. She found that since 1978 GDP has increased significantly. We all knew that. But GPI has flatlined and has not increased significantly.

Dr Kubiszewski's studies further found that the global economy has tripled since 1950, but global human wellbeing as estimated by the GPI has been flat or decreasing since around 1978. I must stress that I am talking globally here, not just about the ACT, because we simply do not have these figures for the ACT or even for Australia. Dr Kubiszewski says:

Since 1978 we have been in a period of “uneconomic growth” where the GDP measure of the economy is growing, but social well-being is not.

Dr Kubiszewski says, interestingly, that GDP and the GPI began to grow in different directions when global per capita earnings hit \$US6,500 per year. After that the GDP kept on going up but the general progress indicator levelled off or, in some places, decreased. Interestingly she says that 1978, which is when the divergence happened, is around the time that the human ecological footprint, which is what I was talking about earlier when I mentioned global hectares, exceeded the earth's capacity to support life on it. Other global indicators such as life satisfaction also began to level off around that time.

GDP was never created as an indicator of social wellbeing or social harmony. It was an indicator that economists put together to try and compare the economic activity from one year to the next. There were well-known issues with this in terms of externalities, pollution, using up capital, using up our natural resources. None of that is taken into account in the GDP. I am not suggesting that GPI is the answer to all questions, but we need better indicators.

One reason I would say that we really need better indicators is this. I would reference, as I did last night, two recent international elections, the referendum on Brexit and the US election. In both cases we had the overwhelming economic advice from the establishment that those particular choices were not going to lead to better economic outcomes for the people of the UK or the US. But it is pretty clear from the commentary that the people of the UK and the US, or a number of them, saw their economic circumstances quite differently from the measures of GDP. They have been going up—maybe not as strongly as people would like, but they had been going up in both of these economies—but considerable numbers of people thought that their world was not getting better, that the world they lived in was not getting better despite

the GDP going up. And clearly quite a lot of them thought that the world was, in fact, getting worse.

We need to start looking more closely at what people really want, and it is not just more things. One of the statistics I will quote to you is this. In looking at it from a health point of view, loneliness has been calculated to be as bad for our health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. That is pretty horrible. We have major government campaigns telling us, "Do not smoke." We tax. We have ads on every cigarette box saying, "Do not consume this." But we do not put the same sort of effort into creating a society where people are not lonely. It is something you can see. We all know we are happier with friends and family, and it affects our lifespan. These are the sort of things that I would like to see us pay more attention to rather than just looking at our material consumption. There are other things, like our diet. We know that if we ate more fruit and vegetables we would be healthier and thus happier. It would even cost the economy less, cost the government's budget less, because we would not spend so much time in hospital.

Basically, as I said, the Greens are in support of Ms Cody's motion. We just think it has a narrow view of the ACT economy, and we would like to see a wider view, with this Assembly looking at what is, in the long run, sustainable for Canberra and what is, in the long run, going to make the people of Canberra happier and healthier.

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (11.21): I thank Ms Cody for putting this motion before the Assembly today. It will come as no great surprise that the government will be supporting Ms Cody's motion.

I want to focus my comments today on the areas of the territory economy that are performing above the national average. We have had some discussion this morning in relation to both state final demand and gross state product as aggregate measures of the performance of the economy. On both of those measures, we are leading the nation or, in the case of gross state product, coming a close second to New South Wales. We are well above the national average.

These broad measures aggregate what is happening in a range of different sectors of the territory economy. I think it is important to drill down, to have a look at what are the factors that are underpinning both a more diverse territory economy and those areas that are driving increased employment.

We have seen employment growth in the territory much stronger than we have experienced in recent years, and certainly employment is growing faster than in the rest of the nation. Importantly, in the ACT, overwhelmingly that jobs growth has been in full-time secure work as opposed to the part-time casual work that we are seeing as a growing trend in other parts of the country. This is not only important for the stability of household budgets. In the longer term, when looking at the health of the territory economy, it is important that these full-time secure jobs that are being created are more sustainable in the long term and are in sectors of the ACT economy that are more nationally and internationally exposed.



As I outlined yesterday in the Assembly, this is fundamental to the long-term economic future of the territory. We will not grow wealthy or wealthier as a community by buying and selling from each other. A city of 400,000 people lacks the capital and lacks the economic base on which to grow wealthy if we do not engage with the rest of the Australian economy and, even more importantly, the global economy.

The most important statistic contained within all of the positive figures that are outlined in Ms Cody's motion, which I draw members' attention to, is at dot point (1)(c)(vi), which says:

service exports have increased by 65 percent since 2010 ...

That is service exports from the ACT, what we are selling to the rest of the world. They have increased by 65 per cent since 2010. The national increase over that period was 34 per cent. We are seeing ACT exporters. It is predominantly in services: we do not have a significant manufacturing base in this city; we are a service economy. But with what we are exporting, the diversity of those services continues to increase, the range of countries and new markets that we are selling those services to continues to increase, and the level of employment in those industries continues to increase. That is fundamentally important for the long-term economic health of this community.

I will focus on that and where the government can assist through infrastructure investment and through commercial partnership facilitation. The most practical example of this is the direct international flights to Canberra Airport. There has been investment from the airport in infrastructure, support from the territory government by way of tourism assistance, and persistence in relation to approaches to airlines to open up this destination for direct flights. That provides opportunities for freight from Canberra and the region to get into South-East Asia markets more quickly and more cost-effectively, and the tourism potential for this city is finally starting to be realised on a scale I think most people are not aware of.

The last 12 months saw the single largest number of international and domestic visitors in the history of the ACT visit Canberra. The single largest number of people ever visited the ACT, before the international flights started. This gives us a sense of the base on which we are building towards an economic contribution from the tourism sector of \$2.5 billion to the territory economy by 2020. This sector employs 16,000 Canberrans. There are around 215,000 Canberrans in work, 16,000 of them in this sector alone.

The other stellar performance for the ACT has been higher education. Higher education exports, through our five universities and the Canberra Institute of Technology, have been growing faster than the rest of Australia, and employment in the education sector continues to grow strongly. It is our single largest export earner.

What has also been encouraging has been the growth in professional service exports. Many companies establish themselves in Canberra to sell to the Australian government. The Australian government is the single largest purchaser of goods and

services in the Southern Hemisphere, and through the various free trade agreements that have been struck by both sides of federal politics over the last 15 years we now have access to the market for government services in some of the world's largest economies. For example the United States market for government services is larger than the Australian economy. It is an extraordinary opportunity for us to continue to see ACT businesses do a great job in providing services to the Australian government in a wide variety of areas, from defence and national security to cyber security, the business of government administration. This is something that this city specialises in. We were established for this very purpose.

Whilst we have had some commentary from the Leader of the Opposition deriding the role of the public sector, both in our economy locally and in the Australian economy nationally, I think it is important to acknowledge that we are international best practice. When it comes to public administration—what happens here in Canberra, and the sorts of services that are delivered by this government and by the Australian government—the people of Canberra and the people of Australia are international best practice. The export of those services and the companies that support government in providing those services is an amazing economic development opportunity for our city, particularly when you think of the internet of everything, the digitisation of so many government services. That transition that is occurring here and nationally is also occurring internationally, and there is an amazing array of market opportunities for us. That indicates to us that the current economic development strategies are the correct ones, and we continue to focus our efforts as a government, particularly in the economic development sphere, on supporting our exporters.

The Leader of the Opposition made one other remark that I do need to contest in relation to the government's economy policy settings and their alleged impact on private investment in housing. When you look at the components of state final demand for the September quarter, you see that private investment increased over the year by 10 per cent, but what was in fact driving that growth in private investment was a 39 per cent increase over the last 12 months in private investment in dwellings, new and used.

What we are seeing in a growing economy, an economy growing by 6.4 per cent as measured by state final demand, is that a big contributor to that 6.4 per cent growth was a 39 per cent increase in investment in housing, private investment in housing. For the Leader of the Opposition to be suggesting in his remarks that somehow there is some sort of capital strife, that the government's policy settings are driving away private investment in housing in Canberra, is factually incorrect. The details of that—a 39 per cent increase in the last 12 months; a 97 per cent increase in building approvals—demonstrate that private investment is coming. I commend Ms Cody's motion to the Assembly.

**MS FITZHARRIS** (Yerrabi—Minister for Health, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (11:31): I have pleasure in rising today to speak in favour of this motion, not least because it is Ms Cody's first motion in the Assembly. Congratulations to her. I will make a brief reflection on some comments both in this debate and the previous one about the role of government in the economy. We heard yesterday various views from different new

members about the role that government can play in the economy. Certainly, our economy is made up of many components.

The Chief Minister has outlined some of those, but it seems to me that the new Leader of the Opposition has a view that government should retreat from the economy, that government should be benign in the economy, that government—particularly this government—does not understand the components of the economy that drive growth and that provide jobs.

He obviously was not listening yesterday to Ms Cody herself who spoke about her own experience in small business and he does not understand that Labor people clearly understand small business. Labor people on this side of the chamber have run small businesses. They understand the importance to families and to workers of having a strong small business sector.

This government understands implicitly the strong need to diversify our economy, as the Chief Minister has outlined on many occasions and again this morning. It is one of the most striking features of the ACT economy, commented on not only by private sector peak groups in Canberra but around the country and by economists around the country.

We have every opportunity here for government to play an important facilitating role, an enabling role, and to partner. If the opposition continues to retreat, continues to be fiscally conservative, continues to believe that the government can play no important role in generating innovation, in generating jobs, in generating economic growth and opportunity, then I fear for the future of the ACT under any future Liberal government.

Speaking today about the economy, as the Chief Minister has said, we cannot have this debate without talking about the importance to the economy of our tertiary education sector. Madam Assistant Speaker, you know it very well. When we talk about the need to diversify our economy, our higher education sector is showing the way.

While the federal Liberal government cut public sector jobs and tried their hardest to move agencies out of town—I acknowledge the local opposition here to that; I hope they have some success, as I hope our federal members in the federal parliament do as well—this government is looking to create jobs and give Canberrans an opportunity to stay and contribute to our community.

Each time I attend an event in my role as Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research, there are a number of people who say to me that the opportunities now in Canberra through our tertiary education sector and through our private sector have never been there before. They have great faith that their children will be able to learn and work, grow businesses and thrive in our diversifying economy.

Our tertiary sector not only provides the skilled workforce necessary to drive our economy forward; it is a major employer in our city, as the Chief Minister has said, and a reason why so many people come here and stay. Each year, over 44,000 post-secondary students go through our universities and registered training

organisations, including 12,000 international students, demonstrating the strength of our education exports. There is also a similar number of interstate students.

This generates billions of dollars for the ACT economy. One in nine Canberrans are either employed by or attend one of our tertiary education institutions, and the government is committed to ensuring these organisations can continue to thrive and continue providing a world-class education. This will allow the sector to attract students, staff and academics to Canberra and provide more job opportunities in the territory.

Canberra is renowned for its strength in knowledge-based smart industries, including government services, information and communications technology, space and the spatial sector, and defence security and cyber security. The ongoing strength of these industries, which have public and private sector applications, underpins the economic and social wellbeing of our community and requires the ACT to build and retain a skilled workforce with the ability to engage, particularly with science and technology.

Our government's on-the-ground approach to innovation, as demonstrated by the establishment of the CBR Innovation Network, is already reaping rewards. I note that many members here went to the final monthly event of the CBR Innovation Network. I know that many members of the opposition were there, which was great. I did not see the opposition leader asking the government to retreat from the CBR Innovation Network.

Just recently the department of industry's chief economist released a new report on innovation in Australia, with Canberra retaining its position as one of Australia's leading areas of high-innovation activity. Nothing could demonstrate more the strength of diversifying the economy than Canberra leading the nation on high-innovation activity.

The commonwealth defence white paper released earlier this year committed the commonwealth government to spend \$17 billion of defence's capital budget on the development of capabilities in intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, space, electronic warfare and cyber security. Canberra has a significant capability in these areas and we have appointed former ACT senator Ms Kate Lundy as the ACT's defence industry advocate, building on her local industry advocate role, with a clear remit to maximise the benefit to Canberra's economy from this federal government expenditure.

Just recently, I was at the UNSW Canberra campus to announce \$750,000 in funding for two projects to support the development of the space and cyber security sectors in Canberra. UNSW Canberra will receive \$375,000 for the development of a space mission design facility. This ACT government commitment to establish the facility will see additional funding of \$425,000 from UNSW Canberra for a total project funding of \$800,000. In the second project, UNSW Canberra and ANU will jointly receive \$375,000 for the development of space-based quantum communications.

These projects cement Canberra's leadership in the space and security sectors and will ensure that Canberra receives a significant proportion of the \$17 billion that the

defence white paper allocated for the development of these capabilities. At that event it was particularly noted that this investment, coupled with partnerships with other investment, meant that UNSW Canberra and the ANU were able to attract highly skilled academics to come here because of the joint investment and the confidence that they have that the ACT government understands all the opportunities that their sector provides.

Canberra is already leading Australia in the development of the space and security industries and the potential for Canberra's space economy is enormous. Estimates put the value of the global space economy at \$314 billion. Canberra is perfectly placed to have a growing share of this enormous market. We have also worked with the Canberra Innovation Network and its chair Tony Henshaw to establish the Canberra cyber network as a collaborative approach to the development of the cyber industry in Canberra.

The network is now ready to take on the role of the Canberra node of the cyber security industry growth centre once the commonwealth finalises the nodes for the industry growth centre. We will also continue to support other key areas such as international education, Canberra's largest export earner. A few months ago the Chief Minister launched our international education strategy Canberra: Australia's education capital.

The strategy points out that, with at least one in nine people engaged with an education or research institution and a \$2.7 billion value add to Canberra's economy creating approximately the 16,000 jobs that have been mentioned, Canberra can rightly claim to be Australia's education and research capital. Indeed, the growth in international student numbers is largely responsible for the ACT's 7.5 per cent annual growth in service exports over the last five years.

Certainly, no conversation about our tertiary sector could be complete without a discussion about the important role of vocational education and training. Like our universities, they are employers and economic contributors in their own right. They also play a key role in facilitating our local economy and driving its growth.

The very infrastructure of our daily lives is all underpinned by the work of highly trained people who received their education from our many local RTOs, including the award-winning CIT. CIT is the ACT's largest training provider and our only public provider. It is a significant contributor in the higher education, training and research sector, delivering around 85 per cent of publicly funded vocational education and training in the ACT.

Recognition nationally this year for CIT has been exceptional. CIT was the most awarded registered training organisation at the 2016 Australian training awards and we should all be proud of this achievement. The ACT government is committed to ensuring CIT's success, which is why we introduced a CIT board last year. This was a key government strategy to combine public and private sector expertise to ensure the ongoing success of CIT.

The diversification of Canberra's economy relies on a high performing tertiary education sector that can capitalise on opportunities and deliver the training and education we need to drive our smart economy forward. I support the motion today.

**MS CODY** (Murrumbidgee) (11.42), in reply: Firstly, I would like to thank all the speakers in support of my motion today. I would also like to respond to a few points that some of the speakers raised. This motion is a very good motion. It supports the ACT economy. We have worked hard to ensure that we have a strong economy here. I believe our opposition leader mentioned that the federal government is a huge contributor to the ACT economy. I do not believe that that is the case anymore. The federal government cuts, cuts, cuts, as I have already mentioned in my initial address.

We cannot rely on the federal government public service. This town was built on the public service. This town became a public service town. We do not see that anymore. They are abusing their employees. They are sacking them. They are cutting the employment rates in the ACT economy. The Barr government is ensuring that we are working very hard to deliver infrastructure projects like light rail. It is building our economy. It is ensuring that we will have jobs well into the future. It is ensuring that our jobs will then flow on to support our small and local businesses.

I, as a small business owner, as Ms Fitzharris has mentioned, know what it is like to ensure that we continue to have great local support. The Barr government is working on ensuring that we work hard to protect that. As noted in part 1(h) of my motion, the Barr government is working to make housing more affordable for local Canberrans. We are halving the cost of stamp duty for a buyer of a \$500,000 home in the ACT.

That means that our Canberrans have more money in their pocket to help support and educate their children. We have a growing and wonderful CIT, as Ms Fitzharris has also said, which supports our economy by employment, by ensuring that our children and people in the ACT are well educated and have a choice to do what they would like to do.

These things all support our economy. They support the fact that the ACT, under the Barr government, has had a growing and strong economy. We need to ensure that this continues. We cannot sit here and watch a Liberal government come into power and take away all of the things that we have worked so hard to ensure that we deliver on.

As announced in the election, the Liberal Party suggested that they would destroy the light rail project. That would mean the loss of at least 3,500 jobs in the ACT. That would hinder our economy. It would make it very difficult for the ACT economy to have the great and strong growth that we are seeing today.

Madam Assistant Speaker, I would again like to thank everyone that stood and supported my motion today. I also thank those in the opposition that did not necessarily see the benefits of what our government is doing in the ACT. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Greyhound racing**

**MR PARTON** (Brindabella) (11.46): I move:

That, in regard to Canberra's greyhound racing industry, this Assembly:

(1) notes:

(a) that this industry:

- (i) generates or attracts in the order of \$1.8 million of economic activity for the ACT;
  - (ii) has over 400 participants in the ACT in addition to those from the surrounding region;
  - (iii) has more than 50 local people dependent on it for their livelihood; and
  - (iv) claims a 37 year history of operations without a single allegation being reported;
- (b) this Government has provided no evidence of any breaches of conduct or other stipulations placed on it by law or by other agreements or protocols, or evidence of convictions for such;
- (c) Canberra's greyhound racing industry claims a perfect record for protecting animals and fighting cruelty; and
- (d) a former Minister for Racing and Gaming has been reported as saying there hasn't been any evidence that anything inappropriate has occurred in the ACT; and

(2) calls upon the Government to:

- (a) explain what conversations and engagement it has had with the ACT greyhound racing industry;
- (b) advise this Assembly of the outcome of any consultation it has undertaken;
- (c) give the ACT greyhound racing industry a fair go;
- (d) allow the ACT greyhound industry the benefit of natural justice that all others in the community are entitled to;
- (e) foster this industry to grow and prosper in the way it does for the Canberra Racing Club, the Canberra Harness Racing Club and other sporting and community endeavours in the ACT; and
- (f) avoid decisions that would imperil the wellbeing of those Canberrans dependent on the greyhound racing industry and that would deny its patrons a legitimate sporting pastime.

This motion brings to our attention some very serious issues and principles of equity and entitlement to natural justice. To me, this is a blow struck against the very Liberal ideals that have seen me come into this place to represent the people—the ideal that we should all be able to make choices about our lives, about what we enjoy doing and how we conduct ourselves, and that it is not for governments to determine what pastimes we should engage in.

I want to know what comes next. After you have stopped greyhound racing, what do you go about banning next? Indeed, I have got a cracker of an idea. How about you ban fundraising chocolates from workplaces? We could ban the evil Freddo frog. I have read this morning that that is the case. I can mention to those on the other side that if they still wish to indulge in Freddo frogs I have got a secret stash in my office. If you want to, just come and knock on the door. There is a password, and that is “freedom”.

Seriously, what is next after greyhound racing? Do we close harness racing? Do we remove the thoroughbreds? Do we stop flyball? Do we stop the sheepdog trials and sled dog racing? Do we remove sniffer dogs from airports? Do we remove police horses? Here is an idea for you: how about we aim for the Canberra show to be animal free by 2020? There is a great aspirational target if you are looking for one. Then we could move on and ban bacon and eggs, and we could truly make Canberra great again. Seriously, I am gobsmacked.

The Labor-Greens government has embarked on a mission to arbitrarily terminate a legitimate and valid sporting industry within the ACT, and I am dismayed. This is an industry that articulates and seeks to uphold high standards of animal welfare as evidenced by its current welfare strategy. It is committed to further reform of its already high standards, standards that are in the public domain for all to see. It is highly transparent with its operations and activities. Its annual reports, corporate governance documents and constitution are all visible and available to the public. Indeed, everything it does is visible and available to the government, or to the public at least.

If those from the other side bothered to actually go out to Symonston one Sunday night and have a look, I am certain that they would be pleasantly surprised. Perhaps they would be unpleasantly surprised to learn that what they are planning to do to this sport is unwarranted. I know a lot about greyhound racing, and let me tell you: I did not learn it all from watching an hour of *Four Corners*. Speaking of the *Four Corners* program, which rightly brought national outrage, I must point out that much of that outrage was centred around the deplorable practice of live baiting.

Please allow me to enlighten members from both sides about the practice of live baiting. Live baiting involves connecting a live animal of some description to a mechanical lure and allowing greyhounds to chase and ultimately catch it. The deplorable practice of live baiting requires a mechanical lure. In the ACT we have one mechanical lure, just one. It is located at the racetrack in Symonston and it is under constant video surveillance. Every single time that lure is in operation, its operation is videoed and kept.



We know with 100 per cent certainty that the deplorable practice of live baiting has never occurred in the ACT and never, ever will occur, because everything involving the mechanical lure is filmed. If every other greyhound jurisdiction conducted themselves in the way that the ACT operation does, we would not have seen the problems that nearly led to the banning of greyhounds in New South Wales.

The report from the inquiry into Greyhound Racing New South Wales released earlier this year is massive. It is hundreds and hundreds of pages. It makes virtually no mention of the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club. Was this because the club here at Symonston fell outside the inquiry's terms of reference? No, not at all. It is quite simply because there is no story to tell in the ACT. There is no evidence. At this stage I must pay tribute to the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club chief veterinary surgeon, Dr Tim Mather, who has been primarily responsible for implementing many of the measures that have seen our greyhound racing club lead the field by many lengths in the animal welfare race.

We are going to reward them by cutting them off at the knees. The Canberra model is a beacon. It is a bright, shining ray of light representing a 21st century greyhound operation. If this was truly about animal welfare, Symonston would be the very last track in the country that you would close. The threat to cut funding to greyhound racing is not about animal welfare. It has got nothing to do with it.

If funding through the MOU is not continued, I can tell you that by hook or by crook the local club will probably still find a way to continue racing but they would be forced to do so on a reduced basis. With such a savage cut in funding, it is highly likely that the level of veterinary support would be compromised. So cutting the funding to the ACT greyhound racing industry is about animal welfare because, in effect, this Labor-Greens alliance would be creating animal welfare problems by knowingly cutting back the veterinary support that that sport needs to be safely run. Ultimately, when the track at Symonston needs improvements in the future, under the Labor-Greens funding model it is quite likely that those improvements could not be done, which would put a question mark over safety and welfare for those much-loved greyhounds.

The only animal welfare issues in this whole argument are being created by this Labor-Greens alliance because of this ideological pursuit of this legitimate sport with a hundred per cent record on the animal welfare front. I think they would probably battle on without the funding.

Option 2—and I was having discussions with some people in Queanbeyan about this, by the by, in the last couple of days; I spoke to some people who are quite high up over the border and who believe that if somehow push came to shove and the greyhound industry here decided it was all too hard and folded—is that they would probably just build another greyhound track in Queanbeyan. That is five, seven kilometres from Symonston. What would we have achieved? What would the point have been if they are just running around six or seven kilometres over the road and New South Wales, Queanbeyan, is getting all the economic benefit from it? What would we have achieved?

All we would have achieved is that we would have crushed these people who love their dogs. That is all we would have achieved—nothing else. Whatever we do, greyhound racing will continue. They have got five years to sort out all of the drama in New South Wales. Whatever decision is made here, greyhound racing will continue.

The ACT greyhound racing industry has a significant presence within our community. It has about 50 people dependent on it for their livelihoods. It generates about \$2 million of economic activity. It has about 400 participants, will stage over 50 meetings this year and employs three veterinarians for those events. In 2015 some 5,300 greyhounds participated in meetings here in Canberra and other events, including various trials. Of those 5,300 participations, seven animals were diagnosed with catastrophic injury and, based on veterinary advice, had to be humanely euthanased. That represented 0.13 per cent of race participants.

The ACT greyhound racing industry has been with us for 37 years. In that time, along with many other sporting organisations, it has played a vital role in the diversity of leisure and sporting pursuits in what is a wonderful Canberra community. It has served to enrich the social fabric of Canberra with a dedicated cadre of supporters and fans both in Canberra and in the surrounding region.

The value of this industry is not only recognised by its supporters. A few short years ago, in response to the ICRC report into the ACT racing industry, the government said:

The Government recognises the economic and social contributions the racing industry—

including greyhounds—

provides to the ACT community.

It is bewildering to think that this particular sporting activity has been put under threat without any evidence pertaining to the ACT being furnished by its detractors and it is frightening to think that an elected government, a government responsible for governing for all Canberrans, has set out to attack this community body.

As far back as July, a former minister was reported as acknowledging that there was no evidence that anything inappropriate had occurred in the ACT, and since then I have not seen any evidence. No evidence has been brought to the attention of the ACT greyhound industry. No evidence has been produced by this Greens-Labor government. We seem to be doing this all on hearsay. There is no record of breaches committed or charges being laid against the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club.

If this government wants to be in the business of banning particular practices, they should go through the proper process involving the gaming and racing commission and a full inquiry into greyhound racing in the ACT. We all know why they are not going to go down that road. I know. We know. You all know. They know. We know that any such inquiry would not find sufficient evidence to warrant a banning of the sport. We all know.

We all know that if proper process was followed for this sport, which is loved by battlers from the suburbs—by the people who just do not quite fit into the Chief Minister’s vision for the coolest little capital because they do not sip lattes in Braddon, they do not wear designer spectacles and have hipster haircuts—and if we gave the Canberra greyhound industry the right to natural justice, they would survive because there is no clear reason why any elected official could bring about their demise. When did the Labor Party become so elitist? When did they make the call to abandon their roots?

The Canberra Greyhound Racing Club has clearly stated its commitment to animal welfare and is seeking to upgrade its standards even further by, for example, the installation of additional security cameras to ensure no illegal activities can take place on this site, strengthening compliance measures, providing events for older and slower dogs, the replacement of track padding to enhance animal safety, and several other measures. In this regard, I seek leave to table the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club’s current welfare strategy to place on the public record this industry’s commitment to animal welfare within its area of activity.

Leave granted.

**MR PARTON:** I table the following paper:

Canberra Greyhound Racing Club—Board of Management—Welfare Strategy—  
November 2015.

The ACT greyhound racing industry has demonstrated its willingness to respond, adapt, improve, innovate and, most importantly, comply and be transparent in regard to that compliance. All it asks for is a fair go and a fair hearing and not to be condemned in the way it has been. There are people’s livelihoods at stake, and the future of a longstanding sporting body in its entirety is at risk from prejudice. Even a former minister is reported as saying there is nothing wrong.

In conclusion, I ask of this Assembly: are we going to forcibly deny the ACT greyhound racing industry an entitlement to natural justice, arbitrarily condemn this valued body, condone and compel the demise of a legitimate and valued community organisation?

**MR RAMSAY** (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for Regulatory Services, Minister for the Arts and Community Events and Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (11.58): The government will not be supporting the motion moved by Mr Parton. I move the amendment to the motion that has been circulated in my name:

Omit all words after “Assembly” first occurring, substitute:

“(1) notes:

- (a) the NSW Government’s Special Commission of Inquiry into the Greyhound Racing Industry, and the resulting McHugh Report which details widespread animal cruelty in the NSW greyhound racing industry;

- (b) the ACT greyhound racing industry's close links with the NSW greyhound racing industry through both regulation and participation;
  - (c) *The Canberra Times*' coverage of the deaths of at least three greyhounds due to injuries sustained while racing in the ACT this year; and
  - (d) the ending of ACT Government subsidies to the ACT greyhound racing industry at the conclusion of the current MOU and taking transition steps to end the operation of the industry in the ACT are commitments within the Parliamentary Agreement;
- (2) recognises the Government's commitment to:
- (a) actively supporting affected workers during this transition including through support to retrain;
  - (b) achieving the best possible animal welfare outcomes for the dogs involved; and
  - (c) working positively and collaboratively with people in the ACT greyhound industry as we transition to ending the operation of the industry in the ACT."

The government, through the parliamentary agreement, has committed to end government subsidies for greyhound racing at the expiry of the current MOU that it has with the ACT racing industry, which includes the greyhound racing industry. The government has also committed to take active steps to transition to end the operation of greyhound racing in the ACT, including supporting affected workers and putting in place the best possible animal welfare measures for the dogs involved.

This reflects the government's deep concern at the findings of the New South Wales special commission of inquiry into greyhound racing in that state, as well as the clear implications for greyhound racing in the ACT.

Prior to the election the Chief Minister was very clear that \$1 million per year in public funding for the ACT greyhound racing industry would end when the current MOU with the racing code ends on 30 June 2017. The government does not believe that it is appropriate any longer for \$1 million of taxpayers' money every year to be given to this industry. In fact the government believes that ending this funding is in line with ACT community expectations and was clearly endorsed by the people of Canberra in this year's election.

Of course, we recognise that for those directly involved in greyhound racing in the ACT ending the operation of the industry here will have a significant personal impact. That is why we want to work closely with the industry on the timing of this transition and the details of the support package to manage both the animal welfare issues and to assist those transitioning out of the industry.

I will be meeting with representatives of the ACT Greyhound Racing Club next week to begin what I believe and what I hope will be a collaborative working relationship. I

am committed to working positively with the industry in a way which delivers the best possible outcomes for those currently involved. I look forward to the opportunity to work together on what I hope will be an appropriate and sensitive transition package.

I know that the industry would prefer to continue to operate in the ACT and has put forward a proposal to expand the ACT greyhound racing industry. I expect that the industry will also see the reduction of greyhound racing in New South Wales as an opportunity for the growth of the industry in the ACT. The government does not agree. The New South Wales inquiry conducted by Michael McHugh QC not only disclosed widespread animal cruelty but made the assessment that the industry has not demonstrated that it is capable of reform. The inquiry found:

... such is the culture of the industry and some of its leaders that it is no longer, if it ever was, entitled to the trust of the community.

The terms of reference for the inquiry included evaluating whether the governance, integrity and animal welfare standards of the greyhound racing industry could be appropriately addressed to permit the industry to continue to provide an ongoing economic and social contribution to the community. The commission noted:

In the last 40 years, many countries in the Western world have increasingly recognised that social institutions—whether industries, corporations, businesses or organised sports—must answer to the wider community for their behaviour and that they have a “social licence” to operate only so long as they perform in accordance with public expectations.

The New South Wales government response to the commission’s findings was that the industry had lost its social licence to operate. It had failed to demonstrate that it could address the issues confronting the industry, and the New South Wales government’s decision was to end the industry in New South Wales. That was a decision which resonated with very many in the Australian community, including here in the ACT.

The ACT government does not consider that following the New South Wales government’s backdown on its decision would, on the basis of the evidence of the report, be prudent, ethical or in line with the expectations of the broader ACT community.

The case made in the McHugh report that the industry has lost its social licence to operate remains as compelling as it was when New South Wales took its initial decision to end the industry. The findings that justified that decision have not changed. For example, there is evidence of the extent of live baiting, acceptance within sectors of the industry of this practice and a failure of the industry to address this practice, which was known to senior officials to be occurring. There is evidence about the rates of injuries and deaths in racing greyhounds, and the sanitisation of information about this by stewards in order to reduce the scrutiny of the industry. There is evidence before the commission that between 50 and 70 per cent of greyhounds whelped were deliberately killed because they never were, or no longer were, capable of being competitive racing greyhounds. They are simply classed as “industry wastage”.

There is evidence showing that 40 per cent of greyhounds whelped never make it to the racetrack. There is the finding that Greyhound Racing New South Wales has not been able in the past, and is unlikely in the future, to appropriately address the problem of wastage. Greyhound Racing New South Wales told the commission that it needs over 7½ thousand greyhounds whelped in a year to meet its racing schedule. There is the finding that it is not a viable proposition to rely on rehoming to eliminate wastage. The commission estimated that, at best, it might be possible to rehome around 20 per cent of greyhound pups. And there is the finding that the economics of the industry will ensure that the cycle of birth, a short period of racing, if at all, and destruction will continue for the foreseeable future.

This afternoon Mr Parton has asked, “What next?” implying that there should be no limitations on freedom. It is, sadly, a misunderstanding of the natures of freedom in a modern and civilised society. It is appropriate—in fact, it is necessary in a civilised society—for limitations to be placed on bare freedoms in the face of health, safety and welfare. We can look to example after example in our history where this has occurred.

I am aware that the ACT greyhound industry considers that, as the McHugh report was focused on the New South Wales industry, it is not representative of the ACT industry. I am aware that the ACT industry claims it has a strong record of animal welfare, and has said it has a perfect record on protecting animals and fighting cruelty. However, the fact is that many, if not most, greyhounds who are raced in the ACT are a product of the New South Wales greyhound industry. Oversight of the ACT industry is conducted by Greyhound Racing New South Wales. Greyhound Racing New South Wales licences the very small number of ACT trainers and provides stewards for ACT races.

Despite the opposition’s assertions, it is simply not realistic, nor is it possible, to separate the ACT industry from the New South Wales industry in a way that would distance the local industry from the interstate findings and enable the local industry to be sustainable. The findings of the McHugh report are matters that we cannot simply avoid or wish away.

I note the comments this morning by the Leader of the Opposition in another debate that the ACT is an island within New South Wales. The opposition is asserting that there is no evidence to suggest the problems shown to exist in the McHugh inquiry report exist in relation to ACT greyhound racing. This is neither accurate nor realistic. I am advised that there is information that shows that trainers who have had their licences suspended or been fined in New South Wales for breaches such as doping have trained dogs that have also raced in the ACT.

There have also been a number of greyhounds euthanased from racing at Canberra meets. From January to March 2016 records show there have been two; in 2015 there were seven; in 2014 there were three; in 2013 and 2012 there were five each. A *Canberra Times* report in September this year referred to three more in the preceding weeks.

In view of the commission's findings about the governance afforded by Greyhound Racing New South Wales, including the poor prospects for reform of the industry, and the significant participation in ACT greyhound racing of New South Wales based dogs, owners and trainers, the ACT government does not consider that ACT greyhound racing can be divorced from the New South Wales industry, or that the ACT industry's claimed animal welfare record justifies the continuation of the ACT industry.

The government also has concerns about the suggestion that the ACT industry should be expanded to compensate for the clear scaling back in New South Wales. This would inevitably result in more animals from New South Wales being raced in the ACT. Nor do we believe it is appropriate that the ACT should be required to fund the oversight of the industry as an alternative to oversight by Greyhound Racing New South Wales.

I understand that the ending of greyhound racing in the ACT will have a personal impact on those involved in the industry. I do not intend to play divisive politics with people's lives. I appreciate that those in the industry have experienced a long period of uncertainty as to their future, and even now the details of the new New South Wales arrangements are not fully known. I understand that this would have been particularly frustrating and distressing.

The ACT government has now clearly set out its intentions in the parliamentary agreement. I wish to work closely with the industry on the implementation of those intentions and on how the government can best support that transition process.

**MS LE COUTEUR** (Murrumbidgee) (12.09): I thank Mr Parton for his motion today, and I thank Minister Ramsay for his amendment today. This is an important discussion that the ACT should have.

The ACT greyhound industry is small, exploitative and expensive. The issues concerning greyhound racing came to prominent national attention in February 2015 when the ABC program *Four Corners* exposed the widespread animal cruelty in the Australian greyhound racing industry. To a large extent this conversation here today is still part of that wash-up from the live baiting scandal exposed by *Four Corners*. Of course, the other thing, from an ACT point of view, is the justification, if any, for subsidising this industry. The two issues are both driving the conversation in the ACT.

After *Four Corners*, Australia-wide the industry went on the defensive as various governments commissioned inquiries. The New South Wales government convened a broad-ranging special commission which ultimately produced the McHugh report. Members will be well aware that the ACT greyhound industry is regulated by Greyhound Racing New South Wales. Members will also be aware that the vast majority of greyhounds raced in the Canberra greyhound racing industry are bred and trained outside ACT borders.

The McHugh report detailed the animal cruelty widespread in the New South Wales greyhound industry. The McHugh report estimated that between 48,000 and 68,000 greyhounds were killed in New South Wales over the past 12 years because they were considered to be too slow to pay their way or they were just considered to be unsuitable for racing. This mass slaughter of greyhounds is euphemistically called “wastage”, and Mr Parton’s motion did not consider that.

The greyhound industry in the ACT is inextricably linked with the New South Wales industry that the McHugh report exposed as cruel and exploitative. For Mr Parton to believe that these problems stop at the border is disingenuous at best.

The RSPCA has advised us that seven trainers linked to live baiting in New South Wales have raced here in the ACT at least once. At least one trainer from Victoria linked to live baiting has raced here as well. The New South Wales special commission of inquiry revealed an email in which the Greyhound Racing New South Wales Chief Steward, Clint Bentley, directed stewards to produce misleading injury records in order to reduce the public backlash. I understand that is the same steward who has been steward for at least 11 races at the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club since 2014.

There is also evidence of the use of banned substances in greyhound racing conducted in Canberra. Since 2010 four trainers have been penalised for the use of prohibited substances while racing here in Canberra. Trainers found guilty of using prohibited substances in the past are still competing in Canberra. All of this evidence is publicly accessible and it refutes Mr Parton’s claim of an unblemished animal welfare record. The *Canberra Times* has covered at least three greyhound deaths from injuries sustained while racing in the ACT and the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club has not been transparent about how many dogs are euthanased due to wastage and oversupply. The list goes on and on. The reality of the greyhound racing industry contradicts Mr Parton’s motion.

I believe that Mr Parton has also overstated the economic benefits of this cruel industry. The Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission’s 2011 *Investigation into the ACT racing industry* report estimated the economic contribution of the ACT greyhound industry in 2009-10 at \$472,984. The 2014-15 financial statements of the club showed only eight employees with a combined wage expenditure of well under \$300,000. So I do not think it is at all obvious that the greyhound racing industry makes the economic contribution suggested in the motion. In fact, as I mentioned earlier, and as Minister Ramsay also mentioned, the situation in the ACT is that the industry receives around a million dollars a year in taxpayer subsidies, and that is essentially propping up an industry based on animal exploitation for entertainment.

Mr Parton talked about people having the choice to do what they wanted. Yes, people have choices, but there are also issues of animal cruelty, and this is an issue where there clearly is animal cruelty. I do not think that we should be saying that people have a choice when it comes to animal cruelty. If people want choices, there are many other choices. If their choices are around gambling, greyhound racing is not the only



form of gambling. If their choices are around liking greyhounds then they can like greyhounds. No-one is stopping anyone having a greyhound as a pet. In fact, there are many greyhound rehoming organisations which put a lot of work into supporting greyhounds as lovely pets, as lovely animals. I think that Mr Parton's statement that this was around the fun police and a nanny state is just not correct.

Members will note that the current parliamentary agreement, as Minister Ramsay noted, between the ALP and the Greens includes a commitment to terminate the subsidy at the end of the current funding arrangements. Of course, we are very pleased about this. We understand that the subsidy is largely used to provide prize money for the greyhound races. Analysis of ACT Greyhound Racing Club data shows that between 2011 and 2015 only 6.4 per cent of all winnings were awarded to ACT-based trainers. That is less than \$50,000 over five years that was returned to ACT-based trainers as winnings, and that is with a government investment of a million dollars a year.

The Greens are committed to seeing the end of this exploitative industry in the ACT. We believe that it is the greyhounds that deserve a fair go. We reject any calls for this outdated and cruel industry to grow. It should be wound up as soon as possible. The parliamentary agreement includes a commitment to actively support the transition steps required to end the operation of the greyhound racing industry, including animal welfare and training support.

The Greens are committed to supporting people in the industry to transition away from racing. We want to see a just transition plan, led by the government, that supports both the workers and the dogs. I believe it is important that we start consultation with the industry as soon as possible, to ensure that there is a smooth process. It is also vital that we work with the animal welfare organisations in the ACT to ensure that we have enough supports in place to be able to foster the many dogs that will be seen as surplus as the industry winds down.

The ACT has a long tradition of leading on animal welfare reforms, and the Greens are very proud of the contribution we have made to these animal welfare gains. When the ACT Greens first put forward legislation to ban sales of puppies in pet stores, people said we were trying to "ban the sale of puppies". When we banned sow stalls, people said we were wasting time because there were not any here, failing to recognise the significance throughout Australia of a jurisdiction actually leading, and introducing legislation like that. Of course, we are very pleased—and I personally am very pleased—that the legislation to ban cage eggs has finally been passed, because I was one of the many Green MLAs who moved for legislation on this.

Looking at greyhounds, Australia is one of only eight countries left in the world that still allow greyhound racing. It is well overdue to end this cruel practice. We should probably look at why the other countries have banned it.

**Mrs Jones:** Every other country?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** There are only eight countries in the world left that allow greyhound racing. Why have other countries in the world banned it? I think it is around animal cruelty. As I said we are committed to animal welfare. We do support

Minister Ramsay's amendment, and clearly we support the parliamentary agreement which will end subsidies to the industry and will lead to a transition out of this industry.

**MR PARTON** (Brindabella) (12.19): In closing, I want to respond to some of the things that have been said, and speak to the amendment. The minister spoke of the New South Wales special commission of inquiry into the greyhound racing industry, the McHugh report. Again this does not link it at all to evidence in the ACT because there is none. What we heard from the minister was selective quoting of information in order to prop up what is an unviable argument, if you look at the facts. We are talking here about guilt by association. By doing so we are also creating uncertainty for all of the racing codes in the ACT. I am also appalled by the lack of consultation.

Ms Le Couteur spoke of the wastage figures. In the McHugh report, those wastage figures have been proven now to be absolutely incorrect. The reality is that 6.9 per cent were humanely euthanased for a number of reasons. It is a lower rate than you would find out at the RSPCA, for example. With respect to other allocations of dogs, 55.4 per cent remained with owners and trainers or were rehomed, and 25 per cent died from natural causes.

In closing, I want to say that this is obviously a very emotional issue for a number of people, and some of them are with us here today. I have enormous respect for both Ms Le Couteur and Mr Ramsay. I have known them for a long time, and I would hope that you can examine this issue further. I would dare you to stare these people who are here today in the face and tell them that they are cruel to their animals, because they are not. I would urge you, as we suggested in a conversation yesterday, to go and speak with Dr Tim Mather and to go out to the greyhounds. One of the first things that will strike you when you go out to Symonston is the number of wagging tails that you will see, because the dogs are just loving it.

At this stage of the game, I wish I could go to a commercial break but I cannot, so I do not know how I should close this now. Madam Speaker, you might have to get me out of this mess.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** If you have finished speaking, just resume your seat.

**MR PARTON:** All right.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 10

Noes 8

Mr Barr  
Ms Burch  
Ms Cody  
Ms Fitzharris  
Mr Gentleman

Ms Le Couteur  
Ms Orr  
Mr Pettersson  
Mr Ramsay  
Mr Steel

Mr Coe  
Mr Doszpot  
Mr Hanson  
Mrs Jones  
Mrs Kikkert

Ms Lee  
Mr Milligan  
Mr Parton

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

**Sitting suspended from 12.26 to 2.30 pm.**

## **Ministerial arrangements**

**MR BARR:** The minister for climate change is absent from question time today attending a ministerial council. I will endeavour to assist members with any questions in Mr Rattenbury's portfolios.

## **Questions without notice**

### **Gaming—Casino Canberra**

**MR COE:** My question is to the Minister for Economic Development. Minister, when did your directorate first become aware of Aquis's plans to redevelop the Canberra Casino, and what role have executives in your agency played in evaluating the proposal?

**MR BARR:** The exact date, I imagine, would coincide with when Aquis made public to the stock exchange their intention to acquire the Canberra Casino; that would have been when it was first made public. I will need to check with the directorate as to whether there was any contact made prior to that time.

Members who were not here in the previous Assembly might be aware that Canberra Casino was for sale for some time and Aquis, as part of an expansion of their activities—

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MR BARR:** in Australia—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson, I know it is very early in the Ninth Assembly, but your interjection habits of the Eighth Assembly will not be greeted with any great favour in the Ninth Assembly. Please refrain.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MR BARR:** Thank you. I did perhaps invite some interjections from the former Leader of the Opposition, but he said he would only interject if I said something silly. I was simply saying—

*Members interjecting—*

**MR BARR:** I am not sure—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Chief Minister, there is no encouragement in reply.

**MR BARR:** I am not sure that outlining that Aquis made public their intention to the stock exchange qualifies as a statement that would prompt an interjection from the former Leader of the Opposition. As I said yesterday, I am delighted that in spite of the election result he still has some fight. He is one of the few on that side who still want to carry on past battles.

But back to the subject of the Leader of the Opposition's question. In relation to plans for the Canberra Casino, Aquis made their intentions very public, as they are required to do as a publicly listed company in this country.

**MR COE:** Chief Minister, have you met, whilst abroad, with the owners of Aquis or their representatives?

**MR BARR:** I would need to check the record on that. I held a number of events in Hong Kong and Singapore on a previous trade mission, where Austrade—

*Members interjecting—*

**MR BARR:** They were lunches, where Austrade facilitated—

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MR BARR:** Jamie Briggs knows a bit about that. One of my favourite Liberals; that is right. The one who called you guys economic lunatics.

**Mr Hanson:** You model yourself on him.

**MR BARR:** Not at Stormies, Madam Speaker; not at Stormies. But I digress.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I think you do, Chief Minister.

**MR BARR:** Austrade facilitated a number of events where I spoke, and there would have been 50 people in the room. I cannot be certain exactly who attended and what connections they may or may not have had to Aquis. But I was presenting on investment opportunities in the ACT more broadly. There was an open invitation to companies who were interested in investing in Australia. Many companies attended those various events in both Singapore and Hong Kong. And that is exactly what you would expect the economic development minister to do whilst abroad: present opportunities for investment in their jurisdiction. That is exactly what I did, at an open invitation event organised through the Austrade network.

**MR PARTON:** Can we ask: what work is being done to revalue the casino licence?

**MR BARR:** That is an interesting question. I am not sure that there would need to be any work done to revalue the casino licence, but I will check with the regulator to see whether that is necessary. It is a private sale from one private owner to another. Given the lecture we got this morning from the Leader of the Opposition in relation to government involving itself in private-commercial transactions, it is fascinating to get this line of questioning today.

## **Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority—proposed relocation**

**MR STEEL:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Can the Chief Minister outline the impact of the decision by the federal government to move the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority to the Deputy Prime Minister's electorate? How will this affect the ACT economy?

**MR BARR:** Yes, I am pleased to be able to provide some information to Mr Steel, and I thank him for the question. I think it is universally agreed, even by those on the other side of the chamber, that this is one of the worst decisions made by a federal government in living memory.

**Ms Fitzharris:** And that is saying something.

**MR BARR:** The minister is right. That is saying something. But in this case, it goes close to being true. It is a bad decision for the agency; it is a bad decision for Canberra; and it is a bad decision for the sector. You do not need to listen to me. You need to listen to the National Farmers Federation, to CropLife Australia, to Animal Medicines Australia, who all opposed this very bad decision from the Deputy Prime Minister.

All of these peak industry bodies are, of course, headquartered in Canberra. The Deputy Prime Minister's decision will undoubtedly disrupt what is a niche and specialist industry. The move raises the prospect of a considerable deterioration in the agency's capacity to perform the functions that the Australian people have entrusted to it.

Reports are that fewer than 10 scientists in this regulator will move to Armidale; fewer than 10. So this agency is effectively being gutted and moved to Armidale—pork-barrelled into the Deputy Prime Minister's electorate in one of the most blatant political decisions that I think we have seen in this country in recent times.

The impact, as estimated by the commonwealth's own business case, is that Canberra will lose 365 direct and indirect jobs or 0.2 per cent of total employment in the territory. Of these job losses, nearly 190 come from the APVMA itself and 176 indirect jobs are lost to the economy. The ACT is \$155 million worse off as a result of this pork-barrelling exercise.

**MR STEEL:** Chief Minister, how is the government ensuring Canberra's economy is supported in the face of ongoing cuts by the federal Liberal government?

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MR BARR:** The Leader of the Opposition interjects, "Ongoing cuts". Well, yes, they are ongoing, and this is another example. Even he will not try to defend this decision. What we are doing is focusing on the role the territory government can play in supporting the ACT economy at this time and continuing that support into the future.

Canberrans voted overwhelmingly for this economic direction. Let's be very clear about this: two months ago all Canberrans were given a very clear choice about the future of economic policy, infrastructure policy and social policy in this city, and they returned this government with a bigger majority than we had four years ago. They did so because we have put in place the policies that have led to very strong economic growth in the territory and to the lowest unemployment rate in the nation, and we have plans for the future to continue to diversify our economy, to invest in the infrastructure that our city needs and to support the private sector to grow. We will continue to do that through taxation reform and regulatory reduction through the economic development portfolio and in promoting investment, both nationally and internationally sourced, into our economy.

We are proud to do that because we believe in Canberra. We believe in our city's future, and we are prepared to do the hard work to achieve a better future for all Canberrans. That will be our focus in economic development over the next four years.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Chief Minister, how does that contrast with the government's policy around public service jobs?

**MR BARR:** It is very clear that, of the two governments in Canberra, only one is committed to this city's economic future. Only one is committed to the strength of the public sector in this city. The prospect of further cuts that might emerge from next Monday's midyear economic update from the commonwealth government and what they are foreshadowing in their budget next year ought to be a cause for concern for those of us who are supportive of Canberra and supportive of our city's role as the centre of public administration in this country.

We generally know we have hit on the raw nerve of those opposite when we start getting the interjections and they are all running away from the legacy that their political party has left for this city.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Please stop the clock. Mr Hanson, I have asked you to refrain from interjecting. Whilst we understand this is vigorous debate, I think you have been described as the most frequent interjector, and I do ask you to show some level of restraint. Chief Minister.

**MR BARR:** Thank you Madam Speaker. As I was saying, those opposite continue to run away from the record of their federal colleagues in relation to this city. It is disappointing to see, in this decision from the Deputy Prime Minister, that the business case was set aside, common sense was set aside and the worst of pork barrelling has come to the fore.

The contrast is that we will support the continued moderate growth of the ACT public sector to provide essential services to this community and we will provide for the maintenance of real wages for public sector workers in this territory. That will go to support many small businesses and will ensure that the ACT economy continues on this growth path.

**Alexander Maconochie Centre—security**

**MRS JONES:** My question is to the Chief Minister, who has assumed responsibility for questions to the Minister for Corrections today. Minister, in September this year two men escaped from the Alexander Maconochie Centre. How was it that they were able to escape from our prison?

**MR BARR:** I think this matter was canvassed in this place prior to the election. You or one of your colleagues asked a similar question of the corrections minister at that time. The issues associated with that incident are the subject of a significant security review, and I will leave it to the minister to provide further information in relation to the response of Corrective Services. Suffice to say I am not going to detail publicly exactly how those two inmates managed to have a brief burst of freedom, for obvious reasons. Suffice to say that Corrective Services are responding appropriately to the issues raised in that incident.

**MRS JONES:** In the interests of completing the question, minister, what actions have been taken to ensure that inmates cannot escape from the AMC?

**MR BARR:** As I indicated in my initial response, there has been a security review initiated. The works associated with the additional capacity and extra infrastructure inside the prison, I believe, have reached or are very close to reaching completion, so the specific issues associated with the incident earlier in the year have been addressed. But, as I say, I will leave it to the minister to provide a more detailed response, no doubt when he next appears before the relevant Assembly committee.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Chief Minister, how committed is your government to making sure that our community is safe from threat to the community?

**MR BARR:** Very committed, Madam Speaker.

**Waste—management**

**MS LE COUTEUR:** My question is to the minister for transport and community services in relation to the FOY Group's proposal to develop a plastic liquid petroleum processing facility. Can you tell the Assembly if the FOY proposal is consistent with the ACT government's waste management policy and advise whether the government will facilitate FOY Group's accessing the ACT waste stream.

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Ms Le Couteur for her question and I know of her longstanding interest in waste management policy. It is certainly the case that the FOY Group have, as members will know, submitted an EIS, which is subject to planning processes—both the EIS and, subsequent to that, should it reach that stage, a development application. As members will also know, the waste management feasibility study, which has just commenced its second stage, is looking at how we develop waste management practices and pathways that lead us toward reaching our recycling targets, in particular, set out for 2025. If there are proposals that enable waste to be recycled and reused in a clean and sustainable way, we will welcome them in the ACT.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Minister, are you aware of the reasons that the FOY Group did not receive approval to operate in New South Wales from the New South Wales EPA?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** No, I am not.

**MS LEE:** Minister, can you advise whether the government has made any inquiries or asked any questions about the harmfulness or not of emissions arising out of this waste plant?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Certainly that is the subject of the environmental impact statement, which is not my responsibility. I understand that submissions for that closed last month.

### **Health—investment**

**MR PETTERSSON:** I have a question to the Minister for Health. Minister, how will the ACT government meet the growing demands placed upon the health service and ensure that services are provided to Canberrans when and where they need them?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. Of course the growing demands on our health system and the way in which we meet those demands were subject to considerable debate throughout the recent ACT election, and that is why I feel very privileged to be here today as the Minister for Health. We also knew throughout the election campaign that the community had a strong sense of how fast we are growing—almost 5,000 new people each year—and we need to plan for this growth across all our infrastructure needs.

It is important to this Labor government that we deliver the care when and where people need it. Under our 10-year health plan we are modernising our health services, making sure we can deliver those services when and where they are needed and making sure we have the health infrastructure we need to meet the future health needs of Canberrans. We will continue to invest in health infrastructure and in health services right across our city. We will build new nurse-led walk-in centres and improve access to bulk-billing doctors. The Centenary Hospital for Women and Children will be expanded, and planning will soon get underway to build the new, world-class surgical procedures, interventional radiology and emergency centre, or SPIRE for short, on the Canberra Hospital campus. We recognise that much of the population growth in our city will occur north of the lake, so detailed planning will also commence early in this term to consider future north side hospital facilities.

We also need to make sure we can keep people out of hospital where it is clinically appropriate to do so. The capacity of our hospital in the home program will benefit from the \$40.2 million election commitment we made to fund more nurses and doctors and expand into community health centres as well as into people's homes. This will mean around 3,000 more patients a year can receive health care, while relieving pressure on our hospitals. In response to the growing demands on our health services we are developing a clinical services framework which will set the principal strategic planning tool for future health services.



We are focused on providing a range of healthcare options right across our city for Canberrans where and when they need them.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Minister, what role will preventative care play in the delivery of the government's 10-year plan for health?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Preventative health care will play a major role in the delivery of healthcare services under this term of government. The government is committed to preventative healthcare approaches that protect the health of Canberrans. This forms another important part of our long-term investment in health care. We will develop a preventative health strategy and appoint a preventative health coordinator to focus on keeping Canberrans healthy and out of hospital.

The coordinator will be responsible for developing preventative health strategies with a focus on addressing smoking rates, alcohol consumption and obesity, the burden of disease and reducing the growing incidence of chronic healthcare conditions. The appointment of a preventative health coordinator will drive a more effective alignment of prevention programs across ACT government and the private and non-government sector to start reducing the main causes of chronic disease.

We know that the majority of the burden of disease experienced by the community extends from chronic conditions. About a third of this burden is potentially preventable by reducing lifestyle factors like smoking, poor physical activity, poor diet and the unhealthy use of alcohol, as well as physical factors like obesity, high blood pressure and high cholesterol levels.

We have made significant investments in prevention which have yielded some important wins like children drinking fewer sugary drinks, adults increasing their levels of active travel and slowing the growth in obesity among children. But we must build on this work and consider ways to strengthen it by looking at what has been working well and what has not.

Long-term investment in preventative health programs will help Canberrans stay healthy, help our community thrive and ultimately assist the health system to remain sustainable into the future.

**MS CODY:** Minister, what improvements are being made to the delivery of emergency care for Canberrans?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Ms Cody for the supplementary question. The ACT government will make sure that Canberra's public hospitals continue to provide excellent emergency care for patients in and around the ACT. It is a little-known fact, as I mentioned yesterday, that the Canberra Hospital emergency department is one of the 10 busiest emergency departments in Australia. In the last financial year ACT public hospital emergency departments recorded 135,307 presentations, a four per cent increase when compared to the same period last year. But we are working to address pressures in our emergency departments, and the recent expansion of the Canberra Hospital ED will increase the capacity by more than a third.

Patients are already benefiting from the improvements the government has made to emergency care at the Canberra Hospital ED. The number of patients completing their emergency department treatment within a four-hour period has significantly increased. The daily average was around 63 per cent more than a year ago; in June this year the result had lifted to an average of almost 74 per cent.

So far this year we have seen the opening of key areas of the ED expansion: the new mental health short-stay unit, paediatric streaming, a new discharge stream and the extra emergency medicine unit. The resuscitation area also now has two additional bays that have the ability to be used for negative pressure isolation if required. Upgrades to the triage and main waiting areas have been completed. They are a huge improvement, and ED medical imaging equipment has been installed and will soon be fully operational. This will be the final component of the rebuild and it will open before Christmas.

I should also point out that a new emergency department will be built next to the SPIRE centre, allowing the existing emergency department to be dedicated to women and children. Work on this scoping study, as I mentioned, will start early in 2017.

### **Alexander Maconochie Centre—methadone program**

**MS LEE:** Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Health. How many times have prisoners been placed on a methadone program when they were not addicted to heroin?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Thank you for the question. I will take that on notice and provide the Assembly with more detail. It may well happen within the prison environment.

**MS LEE:** How many times have prisoners been prescribed methadone for pain?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I will take that one on notice.

**MRS JONES:** Again, perhaps operating in corrections as well, what action has been taken to review methadone use at the AMC since the Moss report? If no action has been taken, then why not?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I will take that on notice. I certainly know the government is focused on implementing the recommendations of the Moss report.

### **Domestic and family violence**

**MS CODY:** My question is for the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence. Minister, can you please advise the Assembly of the work being undertaken to reduce family violence in our community, in particular the significance of the recent 16 days of activism global campaign.

**MS BERRY:** I thank the member for her question. Unfortunately, domestic and family violence remains an issue that continues to affect our entire community,

something that the member reminded us all about yesterday in her first speech. Domestic and family and sexual violence are overwhelmingly perpetrated by men against women in their homes and many children witness and are affected by this violence. We know that we must continue to build on better ways to change this reality.

After the election in October, one of the great things that our government did immediately, led by our Chief Minister, was to clearly articulate our firm commitment to tackling and eliminating domestic and family violence in our community. We did this through the establishment of a dedicated portfolio, a ministry that has been created for the first time in the ACT specifically for the prevention of domestic and family violence, which I have carriage of. This action ensures that we stand out as one of the most committed and progressive governments across the nation on this matter. This decision follows on from Labor's commitment through the 2016-17 budget, which provided a dedicated funding stream and allocated \$21.42 million to the safer families package.

On 25 November, which many of us know is the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and also White Ribbon Day, the world began to observe 16 days of activism, which is a global campaign against gender-based violence. The campaign ran until last Saturday, 10 December, which was Human Rights Day. The significance, of course, is that the 16 days of activism are designed to raise awareness about and reduce gender-based violence in our community and across the world.

In the ACT, the Canberra community participated in a social media campaign designed to raise awareness, educate and talk about how we can all play a part in making our community safer.

**MS CODY:** Minister, how does the 16-days campaign contribute to making families safer in the ACT?

**MS BERRY:** The 16 days of activism campaign provided us all with the opportunity to join together locally, across Australia and around the world to raise awareness about the need for collective action and talk about what action we could take to ensure that we all live free from violence. As I said during the campaign, I believe that if we work together, we can stop the violence that is happening in our community.

Real change takes a whole-of-community effort. We need to start the conversation to build understanding and change attitudes. Over the 16 days the ACT government participated in this global campaign in a number of ways: through a dedicated social media campaign that included messages from personalities such as Allen Tung, Amanda Whitley, Camille Young and our coordinator-general, Jo Wood, as well as others in our community who are all working together to do their bit to eliminate violence.

The campaign colour is orange and we did our best to reflect this across our campaign. We encouraged members of the community to wear orange—if ever there was a time to make orange look good, this was it. In this vein, we were able to have a number of

Canberra landmarks also don orange, such as the Carillon, the Telstra Tower and the new Majura bridge.

Across the ACT there were a number of community events held—launches and morning teas—all enabling us to spread the 16 days message. Over the 16 days I was also able to talk at the launch of the women’s legal centre’s domestic violence program, which provides a service to women who have experienced domestic or family violence.

Last Friday I invited about 50 Canberrans, many of whom work on the front line to reduce violence in our community, to come together to celebrate how far we had come and to look to the progress that we needed in the future. As a final push, last week at COAG on 9 December, which was the last working day of the campaign, domestic and family violence was on the agenda. It is important that we keep this debate going—(*Time expired.*)

**MS ORR:** Minister, can you provide more information about the ACT’s safer families package?

**MS BERRY:** Thank you for the supplementary question on this important issue. As I said, through the 2016-17 budget we made the first big commitment to this area through a \$21 million safer families package. This is how we plan to ultimately deliver a safer community for everyone. Importantly, we now have a dedicated minister to lead this issue.

We are already making some great progress through the delivery of the safer families package. In late November, we appointed the first full-time Coordinator-General for Family Safety to drive the cultural change and lead reform in partnership with government agencies, non-government services and the Canberra community. I know that this position has been well received in the community, and I look forward to hearing more good things as she progresses through the initiatives.

We have also commenced work on the development of the ACT’s first family safety hub, to provide a multi-agency service response, including safety risk assessments and safety plans, coordinated support, including case management and referral pathways, as well as information sharing. We know that creating this hub is complex and it will take some time to get it right, but I believe we are on the way to achieving the outcome that we want.

The office of the coordinator-general will be working across the government on this issue, and she will also engage with our state and federal counterparts to ensure that we are getting the best outcomes nationally. Having a dedicated portfolio clearly represents our commitment to addressing family violence and ensuring that our community continues to become safer for everyone. It also presents us with the opportunity to tackle this situation of violence once and for all: a whole-of-government and whole-community response. The ACT is a small but dynamic city, and I know that if any place can drive change for our vulnerable, particularly in this area of policy, the ACT can.

### **Gungahlin—public school places**

**MR MILLIGAN:** My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood. Minister, parents are advising that there is a shortage of places in primary schools in Gungahlin, particularly in new suburbs such as Franklin. What is the government doing to address the shortage?

**MS BERRY:** I thank the member for the question. In June last year the ACT government tabled its report on school capacity and I refer the member to that report. With particular reference to Franklin, I might have to come back to the Assembly with detail on that specific school. But the report on school capacity is available for you to refer to.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Minister, what is your advice to parents of young children living in Franklin as to where they can enrol their children?

**MS BERRY:** I would advise parents in Gungahlin to have a look at all the public schools and all the schools that are available for enrolment but also to go to the education website which is the best place that they can get information about where they can enrol their children.

**MR COE:** Minister, what are the specific plans for the expansion of Franklin school as per what you announced in the election campaign? Specifically is it about expanding the kindy to year 2 or is it about lengthening the school to year 6?

**MS BERRY:** I will have to get some detail back to members about what the future plans for school capacity across the city are. Of course in Gungahlin we have a community that has been growing faster than any other community in the country. Indeed, in all our schools we need to have a look at the shifting and changing behaviour of our community. We never thought that people would start moving from the suburbs into higher density accommodation. So we have to look at the capacity of the schools currently in the city because human behaviour is changing. This is a challenge for any government to be able to manage.

**Mr Coe:** What was your election promise?

**MS BERRY:** I have responded to the question. They keep interjecting. I have said that I will provide detail, and I will.

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MS BERRY:** You have asked about school capacity. So I am trying to respond to that. I have responded to the question.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** There is no need to respond to the interjections, minister.

**Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—grants programs**

**MS ORR:** My question is to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. Minister, can you please provide the Assembly with further details about the current round of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grants

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Ms Orr for her question and her interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs. I am delighted to talk about the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grants program, which I announced the opening of earlier this month. The 2016-17 grants program has three streams with a total of \$200,000 in funding available. The three streams are cultural grants, leadership grants, and a scholarship program to support employment.

Under the cultural grants scheme, individuals can apply for up to \$3,000 and organisations up to \$5,000 to assist in a program or event that will promote wider understanding of the cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the ACT community.

The aim of the leadership grants stream is to provide financial assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people so that they can undertake learning activities to enhance their leadership skills and abilities. Under this stream individuals can apply for up to \$3,000 and organisations up to \$10,000.

Under the scholarship program, individuals can apply for up to \$5,000 to undertake study and training that will enhance and support their employment prospects in the ACT and further develop the skills needed to sustain a career.

All three grants programs work towards fostering an engaged and connected community in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is valued and celebrated. These grants programs demonstrate the ongoing commitment of the ACT government to the aims of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement 2015-18 by working with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to improve cultural and educational outcomes to share a positive vision for the future of our community.

Applications close at 5pm on Tuesday, 31 January, and I would encourage all eligible applicants to consider submitting an application. (*Time expired.*)

**MS ORR:** Minister, what outcomes for the ACT's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community have been achieved following previous grants rounds?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary question, and I apologise that I will have my back to her again. Madam Speaker, the 2015-16 grants program supported some very exciting community projects and I am pleased to share some examples with you.

The Tuggeranong Community Arts Association received a grant of \$15,000 towards its documentary on the life of Ngunnawal elder Aunty Agnes Shea, whom I am sure

we all think of with great fondness. This project is an important living history which shares stories of the Ngunnawal connection with our region and the wider ACT community. The film, titled *Footprints on Our Land*, was made by acclaimed documentary film-maker, Ms Pat Fiske. The film shows Aunty Agnes as a survivor, an advocate for her people and a much-respected and loved figure of reconciliation in the ACT.

Another project funded under the leadership grants was for \$6,560 to 2XX FM to provide an announcement and presentation workshop for aspiring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander broadcasters. Namadgi School, YWCA Canberra and Carers ACT were also awarded grants through the leadership stream, with the funding being used for a range of activities designed to develop the leadership skills of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Another example of what has been achieved by a cultural grant is the Capital Woodland and Wetlands Conservation Association's establishment of the Jerrabomberra wetlands bush tucker garden. This natural resource will be used to educate Canberrans, particularly school groups, about native plants and the traditional uses of bush tucker.

I am very pleased to say that the training and employment program related activities were successfully supported in 2015-16, with almost \$69½ thousand of scholarship grants. (*Time expired.*)

**MS CHEYNE:** Minister, what outcomes would you like to see following the 2016-17 grants?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Ms Cheyne for her supplementary question. The aim of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grants program, as I said, is to encourage and support ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents to undertake study and training and to promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in the broader community. The outcome I hope to see from this grants round is the funding of projects and initiatives that will empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans, create confidence and self-esteem and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

With the 50th anniversary of the 1967 referendum and the 25th anniversary of the Mabo High Court decision, I would especially encourage community organisations to consider applying for a grant for community events that celebrate these two important cultural milestones in our nation's history.

In respect of the scholarship grant stream, I look forward to continuing to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to be fully engaged in opportunities for lifelong learning, particularly those community members wishing to undertake vocational and tertiary education and training.

Last Friday, I spent an enjoyable evening at the graduation ceremony for the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre's certificate II and certificate IV graduates. These young, and some not-so-young, people represent the future of Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander leadership in our country. I encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans to apply for these grants programs and to participate in activities like that that are going to strengthen their leadership skills and their capacity to stand up for their community into the future.

I look forward to announcing the details of the successful grant applications next year, and I encourage all members in this place to speak with their local communities about what they may be able to apply for and achieve under this program.

### **Trade unions—workplace health and safety funding**

**MR HANSON:** My question is to the Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations. Minister, has the government implemented the recommendations of the 2014 review into the WHS liaison officer funding allocated to Unions ACT?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** Thank you very much, Mr Hanson, for your question. I am going to have to take that question on notice. I can tell you that we have looked into that but I have not got the information with me at this time.

**MR HANSON:** Thanks, minister. Given that one of the recommendations of the 2014 review was that a further review be undertaken in three years time, could you advise the schedule for that next review and when it will occur.

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** Thank you again for the supplementary question. I have now found some more information. An annual grant is provided to support UnionACT's work health and safety awareness activities, as you are aware. Specifically, the grant enables UnionsACT to engage one or more persons to assist in raising and increasing awareness of work health and safety issues and resources in territory workplaces, facilitating access to work health and safety training for employers and employees, providing other work health and safety services advice and support to employers and employees, and undertaking research into work health safety and related matters. The agreement has been the subject of two independent reviews, as you noted. Both reviews supported the effectiveness and continuation of the grant.

**MR COE:** Minister, when will the next review take place; what value for money is being received for the \$371,000 budgeted for the next three years; and has any of the research which has been undertaken by UnionsACT actually been published?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the supplementary question. I will have to take the last part of the question on notice, in regard to whether the research has been published. I can advise the Assembly that in July 2016 the funding mechanism was converted to a deed of grant for a period of three years, from 1 July to 30 June 2019. This change was responsive to a recommendation in the previous independent review. Going to the first question I was asked, the total funding amount over this grant period is \$371,394.



**ACTION bus service—sustainability**

**MRS KIKKERT:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services regarding ACTION bus services. Is the current ACTION budget sustainable and what cuts to services are being developed?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Mrs Kikkert for her question. Certainly ACTION under the Transport Canberra agency is a very sustainable operation. As members will know, we have made investments this year and we also, prior to the caretaker period in the last Assembly, made significantly more investments in the ACTION bus network. We have seen innovations, for example, the city loop service, which is very successful, carrying 350 people each weekday around the city, a service not previously available which we have funded.

We also have innovated with the new Nightrider service where not only are we taking more people home at night in the December period but we are partnering in a really innovative partnership with Uber to get people what is commonly called the last mile home.

We are planning to increase the number of people in Canberra who choose to walk or cycle or catch an ACTION bus. We plan to do that by providing them with a more appealing service and giving them real opportunity to leave the car at home and catch public transport. Of course, over all that is an integrated transport system, and key to that will be building light rail stage 1, getting underway with the planning of light rail stage 2 and integrating our bus network into the light rail network as well.

**MRS KIKKERT:** What is the rationale for changing the livery of ACTION buses, and is it your plan to change the livery on all existing buses or just for new ones as they are delivered?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Mrs Kikkert for the supplementary. Certainly new buses will contain new livery but on many occasions you will see buses with a lot of different livery operating around the city. That is a legacy issue of buses being bought at different times. Members of the previous Assembly will have been familiar with the relaunch of the Transport Canberra agency. The city loop bus, which you will see operating around the city, has some new and exciting and quite a dynamic design. We are certainly looking to be able to expand that across the fleet as we bring new buses into the fleet, which we are expecting to do in the very near future.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, when will the city loop bus be cancelled?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** There are no plans to cancel the city loop.

**Cycle paths—signage**

**MR DOSZPOT:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. The *Canberra Times* reported on Monday, 5 December the very sad story of Ravinder Singh from Monash whose family pet dog was killed by a cyclist on a shared path near her home as she and a friend were out walking with a two-year-old girl in a

pram. During the 2015-16 estimates hearings, Roads ACT Director, Mr Tony Gill, outlined the importance of promoting good and acceptable behaviour on shared paths and improving behavioural sign posting across the shared path network. The committee recommended that the government consider installing behavioural signposts around Lake Tuggeranong and Emu Inlet, as well as line markings for the benefit of pedestrians and cyclists. The government agreed with this recommendation. Minister, could you advise the Assembly if these works have been undertaken? If so, what is the status of these works?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Thank you, Mr Doszpot, for the question. I certainly sympathise with the family who lost their pet and would take the opportunity to encourage everyone on all our paths and all our roads to be considerate. I certainly remember that, Mr Doszpot. I was a member of that committee that made that recommendation. My understanding is that there is work underway to improve signage across a number of paths. I do not know the status of any particular improved signage around Lake Tuggeranong but I will take that on notice and come back to the Assembly.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, it would be good to know how many signs were installed, and where, but what powers does a ranger have to control behaviour on shared paths, and how often does a ranger patrol shared paths?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Mr Doszpot for a supplementary question. I will take that on notice but, again, to the extent that we could all do with being a bit more considerate just a bit more of the time, it would prevent incidents like this on our roads, on our footpaths and on our cycle paths. I will take the specifics of the question and come back to the Assembly.

**MRS KICKERT:** Minister, what are you and your department doing about shared paths to ensure that a terrible situation does not happen again?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Certainly, our path network, our shared paths and our on-road and off-road cycle paths will be a priority for me in this term. They are part of building an integrated transport system. They are part of keeping us active and healthy. The Labor Party made a number of commitments to improving shared paths, footpaths, both in terms of maintenance and upgrades and in terms of building new footpaths. We invest in footpaths every year. We invest in their maintenance and we invest in their upgrade. One showcase election commitment that Labor made was to build the Belconnen bikeway, which will provide a showcase in Canberra for off-road segregated cycle lanes. This will mean that cyclists in and around the Belconnen town centre, pedestrians in and around the Belconnen town centre and traffic in and around the town centre will be segregated. This will provide a real opportunity not only to increase walking and cycling and make it more comfortable, but also to make it safer in the Belconnen town centre.

### **Access Canberra—government transactions**

**MS CHEYNE:** My question is to the Minister for Regulatory Services. Can the minister please outline to the Assembly how the government is improving people's transactions with government?

**MR RAMSAY:** Thank you to Ms Cheyne for the question and for her ongoing and clear dedication to making sure that life is easier and more practical for her constituents. The government is absolutely committed to making sure that all of its services are easier, simpler and faster for Canberrans to use. Our aim is to ensure that we enable Canberrans to do business with government in the way that works best for them.

Access Canberra offices across a wide variety of previously separate functions have now come together and are working together more than ever to ensure that clear and consistent advice and assistance are provided to the public and to businesses through streamlined processes. As just one example, Access Canberra now has a coordinated inspection program for events such as the Christmas in the city markets that are being set up just outside this building right now. This coordinated inspection approach reduces the amount of time that event organisers need to spend in dealing with government officials, as nice as government officials are.

Access Canberra continues to provide flexibility in its approach to regulatory enforcement by supporting those members of our community, who may be struggling financially, to manage finances through a variety of options including entering into payment plans, undertaking social work or entering a social development plan and, in exceptional circumstances, seeking a waiver of the infringement notice penalty. We have been working to help our customers to interact with us in the simplest way possible, with those requiring birth, death or marriage certificates—something I have had some practice with in the past—now being able to apply on line; this is reducing the need to attend a shopfront.

So we will continue to streamline our processes to provide seamless interactions for the services that we provide and make it easier for the public and for businesses to deal with us.

**MS CHEYNE:** Minister, are you able to tell the Assembly more about how the new Access Canberra website will make it easier to do business with government?

**MR RAMSAY:** Thank you, Ms Cheyne, for the supplementary. As Minister for Regulatory Services, one of the first things that I did was to launch the new Access Canberra website on 7 November this year. The new site structure was improved by paying close attention to the feedback that we received from the Canberra community and from businesses, again to ensure that we meet their needs. Access Canberra now delivers approximately 60 per cent of its transactional services digitally, which is fast and efficient, and still maintains accessibility issues for those who are less able to interact online.

The new website brings together consolidated information and the ability to complete more transactions online than ever before. It is now easier to find information online for business and regulatory services. Again, as one example, there are now interactive small business checklists. These help small businesses to find information that they need to comply with Australian consumer law and to comply with food business regulations. The website uses a smart form technology which enables Access

Canberra staff to respond quickly to requests online by automating the gathering and the processing of information. A key feature of the new website is a live web chat assistant, enabling those who need help on the website to interact with an Access Canberra representative online.

The new site is a key step in the government's ongoing goal to make it easier for Canberra residents and businesses to interact with Access Canberra so that they can meet their obligations efficiently and effectively. We will continue to seek input from key stakeholder groups to look at ways that we can further streamline the site.

**MR STEEL:** Minister, how are Access Canberra shopfronts continuing to provide a consistent and modern service?

**MR RAMSAY:** I thank Mr Steel for his supplementary. Access Canberra is undertaking a relocation and a renewal of its shopfronts to help provide better counter service and to work towards being able to offer a genuine one-stop shop for all Canberrans' service needs. The existing Access Canberra Woden shopfront is relocating to the brand new Access Canberra service centre in the Cosmopolitan building in the Woden interchange in February 2017. The new Woden service centre will offer a number of new services, faster transactions and touch screen terminals so people can complete their transactions easily online. Payment at the new service centre will be electronic using debit or credit card, helping to speed up transactions.

The Access Canberra Fyshwick shopfront will close and cease operations on 23 December. Services that have been previously offered at that location will be available at existing Access Canberra service centres in Tuggeranong, Gungahlin, Belconnen and the new centre in Woden when it opens.

Land titles and revenue services have moved from Fyshwick to Dame Pattie Menzies House in Dickson and are collocated with the Access Canberra environment, planning and land shopfront. These services have been available at the new shopfront since 1 December and make it easier to access these services all in one location.

This government's commitment to service is clearly demonstrated on the web, at the shopfront and all throughout its regulatory services. But we are continually looking to improve our services and will continue to make it easier for Canberrans to interact with us.

### **Electricity supply—Mitchell**

**MR PARTON:** My question is to the Minister for Economic Development. Chief Minister, I have become aware of the administrative problems faced by Baldwin Distilling, regarding their situation accessing electricity at this Mitchell business. Baldwin Distilling is a locally owned small business and the only distillery in Canberra to make bourbon. I can tell you that your first mouthful of their bourbon will change your life, and it is never to be mixed with Coca-Cola! The Chief Minister spoke this morning of our need to sell products and services outside the territory and Baldwin Distilling are a classic example of a business doing just that. They are kicking goals. They have had a tremendous struggle to access electricity at their

Mitchell property. At present the business is paying more than \$2,500 per week to hire a generator to power the site. Chief Minister, what discussions have you, your office or the planning directorate had with Mr Baldwin, and why has this issue with electricity not been rectified?

**MR BARR:** It is good to see that the habits of doing live-read ads have now been brought in to the Assembly. Once a talkback host, once a commercial radio host, always a commercial radio host! In fact you did that one better than the ones you did in the studio with me, as I recall. But good on you, and thank you—

**Mr Coe:** You've been doing a live-read for Aquis for a long time.

**MR BARR:** Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition shouldn't give up his day job; he is not a comedian. As we go to the matter of substance, I do thank Mr Parton for raising this matter. Yes, there are, as I understand, a number of complexities associated with the electricity supply to this particular business. I understand that the relevant agencies—in this case that would be ACTEW—are seeking to work with the business owner—

*Members interjecting—*

**MR BARR:** Indeed; on the regulatory side as well. I will need to get an update on exactly where this particular issue is at. There may be a dispute, as I understand it, over the cost associated with the necessary electricity supply for the business. But I do appreciate the point that Mr Parton has raised about this particular business adding something to this sector of the ACT economy, and it would be pleasing if both the regulatory framework and the practical outcomes around electricity can be resolved to everyone's satisfaction as soon as possible, not least so that we do not get more live reads from Mr Parton.

*Mr Parton interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** You have not had the call, Mr Parton, so resume your seat. A supplementary, Mr Parton.

**MR PARTON:** Chief Minister, given the entrepreneurial nature of this business, I think it is extremely important for me to ask the question: why is your government making it so hard for this business to operate?

**MR BARR:** I do not believe that that is the case and I do not think—or I hope, anyway—that the member is suggesting there be any shortcuts in relation to electrical safety. Given the range of issues in this particular field of production and in this particular area—let us not forget that we have had incidents in this industrial area that caused significant damage to other surrounding businesses—I think it is important that an electricity connection is made safely and appropriately.

I am not an electrical engineer. I do not profess to have a complete understanding of all of the supply issues associated with this business but, given that it has been raised in here, I will seek some further information from the regulator and, indeed, from the electricity company as to when this issue can be resolved.

**MS LEE:** Chief Minister, will you commit to doing something to resolve this issue prior to Christmas, or is the government expecting the business to have a dark and dry Christmas?

**MR BARR:** No, I would not wish a dark and dry Christmas on anyone, Ms Lee. I must say that if there is a way to adequately resolve this issue to the satisfaction of the regulator in terms of electrical safety, the electricity company and the business before Christmas that would be a great gift to everyone in the community, to the business, to those who might enjoy the product and to those who still like reading live ads in the Assembly.

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

### **Supplementary answers to questions without notice Gungahlin—public school places**

**MS BERRY:** Mr Milligan asked a question regarding school capacity in Gungahlin. The government has committed to increase capacity at the Gold Creek senior school and at Franklin school. There is no decision about what that capacity would look like or whether it would change the application of the school. We will have a conversation with the community about that. We will also be building a new P-10 school in Molonglo, we will accelerate feasibility and design work for a new school in Gungahlin, and we will commence planning work for a new school in west Belconnen at Ginninderra.

### **Community Services Directorate—disability services providers**

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** During yesterday's question time I was asked a number of questions by Ms Lee and Ms Kikkert regarding the provision of disability and therapy services in the ACT. I can confirm that 64 disability service providers were previously funded by the ACT government to provide specialist disability services prior to the launch of the NDIS in the ACT. As at 30 September 2016 there were 321 service providers registered with the NDIS. I can also confirm that 58 staff previously employed by Disability ACT and Therapy ACT are still working in government. This includes 25 staff members who currently work at the ACT Child Development Service.

### **Canberra Hospital—bed occupancy rates**

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Mrs Kikkert and Ms Lee asked me questions yesterday about bed occupancy. There were three questions taken. Mrs Kikkert asked whether the Canberra Hospital had been operating at or above 85 per cent, and if so for how long. I can inform the Assembly that since the time I became Minister for Health on 1 November 2016 until 10 December, occupancy and overnight beds at Canberra Hospital averaged 92 per cent. Occupancy ranged between 85 and 98 per cent over this time.

There was a second question regarding OHS matters. I can advise that the ACT public service of course is committed to promoting, achieving and maintaining the highest levels of health and safety for all its employees. The ACT public service nursing and midwifery enterprise agreement provides terms and conditions for nurses and midwives that reflect flexible working arrangements and demonstrates a commitment to providing employees with a work-life balance.

The agreement also addresses issues related to fatigue, with specific clauses linked to rest breaks following on-call night duty and overtime. Clause 94 of the agreement addresses the issue of reasonable overtime, stating that an employee has the right to refuse a request to work overtime, having regard to the employee's fatigue management. Eighteen days of personal leave is available to nurses and midwives to enable them to be absent from duty because of illness, injury, family member support, and for extraordinary and unforeseen circumstances. Personal leave supports the territory's commitment to a healthy workplace and workforce.

When Canberra Hospital is functioning above its capacity, management uses contingent staff, which includes casuals, overtime and agency staff, to provide the additional resources required to ensure safe staffing. The ACT health fatigue management policy provides overall direction in the proactive management of staff fatigue and outlines roles and responsibilities for managers and for staff.

The final question from Ms Lee was: since I have become Minister for Health has the hospital been operating at or above 100 per cent capacity? It has not, but I also note, as was noted in the last quarterly report, that some years ago the target indicator for hospital occupancy moved from 85 to 90 per cent, and we are considering revising that now in light of improvements we have made within the hospital.

## **Land Development Agency**

**MR COE** (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (3.37): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes, regarding operations of the Land Development Agency (LDA):
  - (a) the Auditor-General published in a performance audit, Report 7/2016:
    - (i) manipulation of documents requested under Freedom of Information;
    - (ii) a lack of transparency, accountability and rigour in processes; and
    - (iii) major issues around integrity and probity at the LDA;
  - (b) the former Commonwealth Auditor-General, Ian McPhee, was to conduct a review into the Agency; and
  - (c) on 29 September, the day before the Auditor-General's report was published, the Chief Minister announced that the functions of the LDA would be split into two agencies; and

- (2) calls on the Government to provide to the Assembly by the last sitting day of this year:
- (a) the changes to governance arrangements that have been made since the Auditor-General's report was published;
  - (b) the progress of the McPhee review; and
  - (c) the details of the announced split of functions from the LDA.

As is well known to members of this place, the opposition has been probing the government about numerous integrity issues for some time, not the least of which is this very serious issue which became apparent over the last year or so. Through numerous freedom of information requests, questions on notice, questions without notice, title searches and other sources of information, the opposition was able to piece together what was, I think, a bad deal for taxpayers, in particular, with regard to land adjacent to Glebe Park.

The background to this story is particularly important and might be particularly interesting for people who are new to this place. It goes back some time; in actual fact, it goes back to when Ms Le Couteur was in this place last. In 2011 Ms Le Couteur put a question to the then minister, Simon Corbell, and his response regarding the block of land in question was:

The obligation is on the developer, the owner, to construct a car park for public access to Glebe Park as well as to service the adjacent Glebe Park apartments and to provide a million dollars worth of landscaping works as part of that activity as well.

He went on:

We will follow that through with the usual compliance activity and options that are available under the relevant planning legislation.

He went on:

It is not permitted to be used for residential development. The government does not support its use for residential development. The government will not consider any change to the territory plan that permits residential development or indeed any other development beyond that which has already been granted under the lease.

It is an important point, because it is up to the government to actually grant any lease variation. Fast forward about three years, and we are at 14 June 2014. It was at that time that Mr Barr as Treasurer signed a notifiable instrument about how land is to be purchased in this territory. That direction, called the planning and development land acquisition policy framework of 2014, states at 2.1:

All proposed acquisitions are to be assessed against the principles and associated tests provided in this Land Acquisition Policy Framework. All tests must be followed for an acquisition.



### 2.2.1 of that determination states:

The following thresholds and decision makers apply to all LDA land acquisitions: a. below \$5 million – agreement by the LDA Board with advice to the Minister for Economic Development or the Minister responsible for administering Chapter 4 of the Planning and Development Act 1997 ...

Of course, that was Mr Barr at the time. Just a couple of months later on 25 August we now know that a valuation was done on this block of land adjacent to Glebe Park. The first market valuation put a value at between \$950,000 and \$1,050,000. For some reason, that valuation was not accepted, and about a year later in May 2015 a second valuation was sought. The difference is that this second valuation, which was called a “valuation advice”, I should state, was based on 122 units being constructed, and, therefore, a value pre-GST or excluding GST of \$3.6 million to \$3.8 million was set. It begs the question: why did the government think this was a fair valuation given they would have had to have approved any variation to the lease?

Anyway, there was a valuation in August 2014 that put the value at \$1 million. There was another valuation a year later which put the valuation at closer to \$4 million. A couple of months later the LDA board approved an approach to when Mr Barr’s determination for strategic acquisitions should apply. You would think it would have been pretty straightforward. When it says, “The following thresholds and decision-makers apply to all LDA land acquisitions,” you would think there is not too much wriggle room. However, the LDA board thought, no, they would like to give themselves some wriggle room, so they decided when “all LDA land acquisitions” actually means “all land acquisitions” and when it means “some land acquisitions”. That was obtained by freedom of information. It was quite a battle, to get that information through FOI. As you can imagine, the agency was not thrilled to release that information.

We now know that on 8 September 2015 a payment of \$4.18 million was made to Glebe Park Pty Ltd. The following day the lease was surrendered for \$3.8 million and a surrender of lease document was issued. A couple of weeks later on 24 September 2015 the opposition lodged our first inquiry in this place by way of question time. A few weeks after that on 5 November 2015 the LDA staff gave different accounts of whether Glebe Park was a strategic acquisition or whether it was some other form of acquisition—another form of acquisition that does not actually exist in the notifiable instrument.

A few weeks later on 23 November 2015 Mr Barr claimed that the purchase of the block was, in fact, business as usual. It was not a strategic acquisition; it was business as usual as if it is business as usual for the government to go and spend \$4 million buying blocks of land around the city. About six months later Mr Barr denied there were any anomalies regarding this acquisition. In a committee hearing on 22 June I asked Mr Barr the following:

**MR COE:** Are you aware of any anomalies with the three parcels of land that she has highlighted?

**Mr Barr:** No, I am not.

**MR COE:** You are not aware of any anomalies at Glebe Park or at the two sites by the lake?

**Mr Barr:** No.

That in itself was fascinating, because by that stage the Auditor-General's inquiry was several months into its investigation. I then asked:

**MR COE:** Are there any positions or executives at the LDA whose role is untenable in light of the investigations that are underway?

**Mr Barr:** No.

Madam Speaker, we now know that the problems with this block of land are extremely serious. The opposition had a fair hunch there was a significant problem; that is why we did the title searches, that is why we asked the questions on notice and the questions without the notice and made the freedom of information requests. But there are numerous other problems which the Auditor-General highlighted in her report of late September this year.

A couple of weeks before the election, report No 7 of the Auditor-General was published. The report gave a scathing assessment of the government's arrangements of the Chief Minister's agency. The Auditor-General highlighted the manipulation of documents under FOI, a lack of transparency, a lack of accountability, a lack of rigour in processes and major issues around integrity and probity at the LDA. And this has been under Mr Barr's watch for years.

Something that was a revelation in the Auditor-General's report was the story about the FOI being doctored. It was only in retrospect that I found this out. One of the freedom of information requests that I submitted went to the LDA. The LDA found the documents they were to release, did not like that they had to release them and then doctored one of those documents and gave me a copy of the doctored document. It is a pretty serious offence.

In fact, it is quite possibly a breach of section 346 of the Criminal Code, which states that a person commits an offence if they make a false document with the intention that that person or someone else will use it to dishonestly induce another person to accept it as genuine and, because that person accepts the false document to be genuine, dishonestly obtains a gain, causes a loss or influences the exercise of a public duty. It could very easily be argued that my role here is that of a public duty, and I understand it is for that reason why the AFP are investigating this very issue—that is, whether Mr Barr's agency has committed an offence of the Criminal Code due to doctoring documents before releasing them under freedom of information.

These are the sorts of issues that Mr Barr has been presiding over. Firstly, they are buying a block of land that had a value of \$1 million and no right for residential development. They then valued it for 122 apartments being constructed on it, despite

the fact the lease said that could not happen, and then paid \$4.2 million for it. Once the opposition was on the case, they then tried to put up as many roadblocks as possible to prevent the opposition from getting the information and went as far as actually doctoring information before releasing it to us under freedom of information. It is a pretty serious integrity issue, and Mr Barr seems to gloss over it as if there is nothing to see here. It goes to the integrity of the government.

Just a day or two before the Auditor-General's report came out the Chief Minister said he was going to split the Land Development Agency. Despite the fact that just a few weeks earlier he had said there were no problems whatsoever and everything was fine, a day or two before the Auditor-General's report comes out the Chief Minister says, "Oh, actually, there are some issues at the LDA, and I'm going to split the agency." He then appoints a reviewer—a former commonwealth auditor-general, Ian McPhee—who I gather has done an investigation of some sort; however, at this stage, I do not believe it has been made public.

The Chief Minister has been at the desk post election for about six weeks already, and we are very keen to know exactly what has transpired in this time; in particular, what is the progress of the McPhee review. What are his findings about the operations, especially of the governance arrangements at the LDA, the agency that Mr Barr has been presiding over for some years? That is why paragraph (2) of my motion calls on the government to provide to the Assembly by the last sitting day of this year—that is, by tomorrow—the changes to the governance arrangements that have been made since the Auditor-General's report was published, the progress of the McPhee review, and the details of the announced split of functions from the LDA.

I note that there is a fair chance the government will be proposing legislation tomorrow which will facilitate the split of the LDA. However, that will not come into effect until that legislation is passed. The Chief Minister and the government have had nearly 10 weeks or so since the Auditor-General's report was published; they have actually had a lot more time than that because they would have seen an advance draft of the Auditor-General's report. So they have had a lot of time to get some governance arrangements in place. I do not think the government should be given the latitude of hiding behind the legislation they are tabling tomorrow and perhaps hoping to pass in February. They should have taken action already, and to that end I hope the government agrees with this motion and will give a genuine update on the progress of the review and what arrangements have changed since all this information came to light.

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (3.51): I move the amendment circulated in my name:

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

"(1) notes, regarding operations of the Land Development Agency (LDA):

- (a) the Performance Audit Report No 7/2016—*Certain Land Development Agency Acquisitions*, undertaken by the Auditor-General;

- (b) the report commissioned by the Director-General of Economic Development and published on the LDA website by former Commonwealth Auditor-General, Mr Ian McPhee AO PSM, *Governance Framework Review Economic Development, Land Development and Procurement and Capital Works Divisions*; and
  - (c) reports in *The Canberra Times* of 13 September 2016 of the Chief Minister's announcement, at the ACT Property Council leaders' debate, of the Government's intention to create new entities to deliver urban renewal and greenfield land development in the ACT;
- (2) notes the Government's programme of business in the Assembly this Thursday includes the delivering of a Statement regarding its plans for the LDA's functions and the new urban renewal authority; and
- (3) calls on the Government to deliver this Statement."

I have to say from the outset that there is no doubt that the conclusions drawn in the recent Auditor-General's report into particular LDA transactions are serious and they are indeed receiving serious attention. Members will be aware that the LDA is a separate entity with its own governing board. It is responsible for the agency's operations and performance.

Members would also more than likely be aware, given the publicity during the election campaign, that following the tabling of the Auditor-General's report, I wrote to the chair of the LDA board seeking urgent advice on the auditor's findings and expressing my concerns. In response, the chair acknowledged that the processes, practices and lack of record keeping identified by the auditor in her report did indeed need urgent rectification. The LDA has acknowledged the seriousness of the audit findings and the need for significant improvements in process and practice.

In addition to the Auditor-General's report, many months ago the government commissioned the former commonwealth auditor-general Ian McPhee to review governance frameworks for the LDA and other parts of the Economic Development portfolio. This report is publicly available on the LDA website. It has been for months. The review was commissioned well before this process and was completed some time ago.

It has been the subject of media reporting. Jack Waterford wrote an article on it, Madam Assistant Speaker. I am surprised that the Leader of the Opposition has not seen that. My amendment to his motion firstly notes the fact that the performance audit was undertaken and refers to the earlier commissioning of the former commonwealth auditor-general Ian McPhee to look at not just the LDA but also at procurement and other areas within Economic Development.

That report is publicly available. There is an assertion within the Leader of the Opposition's motion that the day before the Auditor-General's report was released I made public comments and announced for the first time that I would institute changes to the LDA. I do not believe that the Leader of the Opposition was at the leaders debate between Mr Hanson and me at the Property Council about three weeks earlier.

I foreshadowed those changes there. They were reported on in the *Canberra Times* on 13 September. It might have even been the front page headline at that time.

So many, many weeks in advance, I foreshadowed changes. That is, again, noted in my amendment. As the Leader of the Opposition indicated in his remarks, the government business program tomorrow includes a statement from me regarding plans for the LDA's functions in the future and the new urban renewal authority.

As I have said publicly since the election, changes will come into effect from the beginning of the new fiscal year in 2017 in relation to both the new urban renewal agency and changes to the LDA. Necessary legislation is being prepared and will be debated by this place prior to the commencement of the new financial year. I will obviously outline more tomorrow in relation to those matters.

I return to the McPhee report, which is available on the LDA website. It reflects an examination of internal business processes and it assessed all aspects of the LDA's operations. The LDA board has also commissioned a separate and comprehensive process review. It has considered the recommendations of all three and has put in place through its governance and business process implementation program over 30 actions spanning all aspects of the agency's operations, including procurement practices, valuation, record keeping practices, risk management, reviewing and establishing policies and processes, and a review of the land acquisition framework.

I am advised that the actions have been prioritised by the board with 10 high priority actions to be completed by the middle of 2017. These particularly focus on improving the land acquisition processes; improving valuations policy and procedures; developing policy and procedures for employment arrangements for former staff; enhancing protocols and practices around obtaining legal advice; clarifying delegations under relevant acts; and, importantly, communicating expectations around staff responsibilities and obligations.

Prior to the election I did indicate the government's intention to replace the Land Development Agency with two specialist dedicated entities. One will focus on leading and facilitating the critical transformation of the CBD and the Northbourne corridor. The other will be focused on the equally important task of developing new suburbs to continue to meet demand for housing in our city. This is a deliberate decision; it is founded on a statement of ambition for our city that I released in March of this year to put us on the right footing for the CBD renewal that we aspire to and a continued focus on suburban estate development.

The time is right now for the government to move to a new phase of project facilitation around the Northbourne corridor and Civic. Undoubtedly the election resolved conclusively the question of light rail in this city. The delivery agency is necessary to ensure that both the Northbourne corridor and CBD renewal are achieved within the government's time frames and with outcomes that reflect high quality urban design and sustainability. This is a key responsibility of the new agency.

But the time is also right, as we have acknowledged, to refocus and redouble our efforts on new suburban development to ensure that there is a ready supply of new and affordable home sites in suburban communities to meet the demands of a growing population. Members may have seen me on television about 1,000 times during the five weeks of the election campaign pointing out that our city's population is growing by more than 5,000 people a year. We will need to continue to release new suburban estates and to continue our focus on urban infill. The work that is conducted by the LDA remains relevant and important. It certainly will support the functioning of these new entities during the transition period.

It is absolutely critical to public confidence and trust in the work of ACT public sector agencies that their operations are conducted properly and that they are open to scrutiny. Good public sector governance is about getting the right things done the right way and delivering this standard of performance on a sustainable basis.

It would be fair to say that discussion about public sector governance often focuses on structure charts, organisational frameworks and policy documents. These are undoubtedly important elements but to focus on them, in a way, is to focus on the bricks and mortar that make up a building rather than analysing, understanding and utilising the building itself.

Governance frameworks are in and of themselves a foundation on which good public services are based. Sound governance frameworks start, though, with an absolute clarity of vision, purpose, powers and functions and then call up uncontested requirements for promoting accountability, sensible engagement with risk, transparency in decision-making, genuine stakeholder engagement, integrity and probity, stewardship of the public interest, efficiency, and a focus on specifying and, of course, monitoring performance outcomes.

The government is moving to deliver these critical city and future building tasks through the establishment of the new portfolios—urban renewal and suburban development—in the ministry that I announced following the conclusion of the caretaker period and the formation of the new government.

The vision that we outlined in our statement of ambition earlier this year is the vision that we will prosecute and deliver over the next four years. We are now well upon our path to delivering those outcomes but must continue to provide the right focus, resources and expertise to lead, facilitate and manage this transformation of our city's CBD—the gateway corridor to our city—as well as ensuring that we continue to offer genuine affordable housing choices across the city.

The changes that we have already outlined and the further detail that will come tomorrow and in 2017 with a view to these new structures being in place for the commencement of the fiscal year 2017-18 will obviously progress over the coming months. I will have more to say on this tomorrow and in the new year. I commend my amendment to the motion to the Assembly.

**MS LE COUTEUR** (Murrumbidgee) (4.02): I think this is a really annoying situation to find ourselves in with this just-circulated amendment to the motion. Both the original motion and the amendment have virtues. I think it is really frustrating in terms of good process that this turns up so late and there is no easy possibility of putting the two together.

If you look at the first part of Mr Coe's original motion, what he has noted is basically what the Auditor-General said in her executive summary, which I have in front of me. The only real change would be that the Auditor-General said that without these, the integrity and probity of acquisition processes cannot be demonstrated. So whether that is a major issue or just an issue is debatable but I am not sure if anyone has got the knowledge to debate whether it is major or not.

Going through paragraph 1(a), the motion seems to be entirely factual with the one value judgment being whether it is major or not. Subparagraph (b) clearly is factual. Subparagraph (c) I suspect is factual but is only part of the fact. I assume that Mr Barr's amendment, which has an earlier date of 13 September, is also correct and that this is one of these things that were announced on a number of occasions. But I have not followed it well enough to know how many times it was announced.

In relation to paragraph 2 where the motion calls on the government to provide information, clearly the government has foreshadowed that it will make a statement regarding its plans for the LDA. So that will clearly happen and Mr Barr is correct that the McPhee review is in the public arena and has been for some time. So I think what we really would like would be a combination of these two motions—basically Mr Coe's motion with the updates from Mr Barr's amendment. Yes, this is a really annoying situation to be in.

I am very pleased that Mr Coe brought forward this motion today. One of the reasons I am particularly pleased is that yesterday I asked Minister Barr a question about the LDA, the Auditor-General's report and the discrepancies between the report and evidence provided at committee hearings about acquisitions under \$5 million and whether they have been approved by the LDA board. Mr Barr said I should refer to the public record.

I have referred to the public record and I do so again. On 5 November 2015 the CEO and the CFO appeared before the Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services. The transcript records that Mr Coe, the deputy chair, asked Mr Dawes, the CEO, in regard to the Glebe Park acquisition:

How many valuations were there? What did they come in at?

That is on page 20 of the transcript. Mr Dawes does not answer either of these questions and solely describes the informal valuation advice, which came in at almost four times the value established by the only formal valuation advice, as if it was a formal valuation.

Mr Coe then asked Ms Cicolini, the deputy CFO, with regard to the acquisitions:

Therefore, surely everything under \$5 million has to go before the LDA board?

That is at page 21. Ms Cicolini says:

Yes, and it does.

This is contrary to the findings of the Auditor-General in regards to all four of the acquisitions discussed in her report. Again, in the response to questioning by Mr Coe, Mr Dawes repeats Ms Cicolini's assertion that "the board signs off on all of these". That is on page 2. This relates to land acquisitions. It is an explicit reference to the Glebe Park land. But the Auditor-General states on page 22 of her report:

The land acquisitions considered as part of the audit were not approved by the Land Development Agency Board. This represents non-compliance with the requirements of Planning and Development (Land Acquisition Policy Framework) Direction 2014 (No 1) (Land Acquisition Policy Framework) (Notifiable Instrument - NI2014-264)—

I note that Mr Barr referenced this in his comments—

which came into effect in June 2014, which requires land acquisitions up to \$5 million to be approved by the Board.

We have an issue here: one thing has been said to the planning committee and another thing seems to be what actually happened. That was my question yesterday. I am still wondering what actually is the situation here. The Auditor-General clearly states her conclusion about the lack of transparency, accountability and rigour for the process used in acquiring the three sites and the two associated businesses considered in the audit.

I also asked about the one formal evaluation. Yesterday I was told I should refer to the public record. I have and there was only one formal evaluation provided. The discussion paper that provided the informal valuation was deliberately altered to appear as a formal evaluation. I assume that that is the thing that Mr Coe refers to in his statement. The situation is, to put it mildly, unsatisfactory.

While the Auditor-General's findings do not point to any explicit corruption, they do suggest a culture of cosy relationships and an environment that lacks transparency at the least. It is clear from the Auditor-General's report that the LDA has gained too much power and has lost touch with the community. This is something that needs to be addressed.

Obviously I am pleased that the Minister for Economic Development will tomorrow outline the restructure of the LDA. I look forward to seeing how the restructure will enable future transactions to be accountable and transparent. Given that what he has talked about so far is just separating greenfields versus infill, I do not know how these things are going to get addressed. I guess that I, like everyone else, will wait in



suspense until tomorrow. I also do not know how the issues of the past are going to get addressed.

The Greens certainly do support the role of a government land agency. We believe there needs to be greater enforcement of the legislative powers to ensure that planning is done strategically and in consultation with the community. The Greens are committed to improving transparency in government. We believe that the community should have more information about how government decisions are made and how they were made. This is one of the things that were really clear in the election campaign. This is what the community wants. I am sure every member here heard that when they were doorknocking. I certainly heard it multiple times every day I doorknocked.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER** (Ms Cody): Ms Le Couteur, may I ask you to speak up a little? Some members are finding it a little difficult to hear you.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Sorry. I know I am a soft speaker, but I thought I was getting agitated enough that I would be loud.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Thank you so much.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Thank you, Madam Assistant Speaker. Basically, we need to take the planning process out of the hands of big business and developers and put the community back in the centre of the process. That would remove a lot of the questions that we have about the processes that the LDA went through or did not go through and whether there were cosy relationships or not.

Something is not right. However, we do think the government have a role in urban land development. Clearly, they could address market failures. Clearly, one of the things they could do, but unfortunately the LDA has not done in the ACT, is provide demonstration projects. I would love to see the LDA doing demonstration urban infill projects. I know that they have thought about these, but I do not think this has happened for an awfully long time. Once upon a time ACT Housing did some very nice demonstration urban infill projects, but that space appears to have been vacated by the government.

The new LDA board we hope will have broader expertise than the current one. It has a lot of people who are, you could say, well connected within the industry. They are skills that are required. But they are not the only skills that are required. We really would like to see someone who has skills and expertise from the social and affordable housing sector. Affordable housing, or rather the lack of affordable housing, is one of the big problems in the ACT. It does not seem to be something that the LDA, as currently constituted, is assisting in.

We would also like to see someone with expertise in innovation and design excellence. As I was saying earlier, there is a real role for the LDA and other government land development agencies to lead the way in terms of good development and redevelopment in our city. We would like to see a community representative because, after all, the LDA is looking after very important assets for the community. They are creating new communities in Canberra.

I think I have to say that I am not supporting Mr Barr's amendment. I would be very happy to see an amalgamation of Mr Barr's amendment and Mr Coe's motion. I cannot see the purpose in overwriting it all by something else. I think that the statement needs to be clearly made that the Assembly feels that there have been problems with the LDA—the Auditor-General's report makes it clear that there have been problems—and that the Assembly is very concerned. We are also very concerned because the questions we ask on this are simply not being answered.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

Noes 9

Ms Berry	Ms Orr	Mr Coe	Ms Le Couteur
Ms Burch	Mr Pettersson	Mr Doszpot	Ms Lee
Ms Cheyne	Mr Ramsay	Mr Hanson	Mr Milligan
Ms Cody	Ms Stephen-Smith	Mrs Jones	Mr Parton
Mr Gentleman		Mrs Kikkert	

Question resolved in the negative, in accordance with standing order 162.

**MR COE** (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (4.18): To conclude debate on this motion, I welcome the Chief Minister's and Ms Le Couteur's contributions. I am, however, disappointed that the Chief Minister somehow found the motion on the notice paper objectionable. That, in part, goes to the very issues that the LDA has highlighted, the fact that there is a culture in this government that does not support transparency, a culture that does not support probity. That is why we had a situation whereby the Auditor-General said there was a lack of transparency, a lack of accountability, a lack of rigor in processes, and major issues around integrity and probity at the LDA, and how we saw an FOI doctored before it was provided to the opposition, all in the Chief Minister's agency.

It is pretty outrageous that the opposition puts in a freedom of information request, the government does not like the information it was going to provide, and then doctors it and gives it to the opposition and does not tell us. We only find out when the Auditor-General exposes it on 30 September. In actual fact, it was many months, if not a year, later that we found out. In actual fact, the opposition still has not had that freedom of information request complied with. We still have not had the original document provided. This government is still left wanting when it comes to providing this document.

**Mr Barr:** There is a one-word difference.

**MR COE:** Mr Barr says there is only one word different. If only one word was different, I do not think the AFP would be investigating it right now. It is a very

serious issue. It is a very important word. That is why section 346 of the Criminal Code has potentially been breached here. The government potentially has sought to dishonestly obtain a gain, cause a loss or influence the exercise of a public duty.

That word was critical as to whether it was a valuation or not. With regard to acquisitions and with regard to procurement in general, there are processes that are meant to be followed. Getting valuations is part of that. If you have a situation whereby documents perhaps do not even include the word “valuation” or other such words, it potentially has a huge impact as to whether the document does in fact comply with the relevant procurement legislation.

That is why the motion is on the agenda today, and that is why we are so keen to make sure that we get answers to many of the unanswered questions. For example, we still do not actually know why the higher of the two valuations was accepted. We still do not know why a third valuation was not sought, given the huge variation in the two valuations that were received. One was \$1 million. The other was \$3.8 million. Surely, in a situation such as that, there would be questions asked, and a third valuation would be sought.

We still do not know why the government did not pursue a compulsory acquisition if they did not like the way in which the negotiation was going. At the same time, elsewhere in town the government were doing compulsory acquisitions. They were doing acquisitions under the Land Acquisition Act 1994 on Northbourne Avenue.

We still do not know the details of the stated delegation which allowed for the acquisition. We still do not know whether Aquis have had rights or options on this block, and whether that was a motivator for the government acquiring the block. We still do not know the plans or concept design for the so-called stormwater improvements, meant to be the reason the block was acquired in the first place. It just so happens that it is next to the casino. There is a wonderful artist’s impression for a grand new casino on this block, yet the government claim they have acquired it, spent \$4 million acquiring it, so they can do stormwater reticulation on this site. Honestly, do they really expect us to believe this? It is interesting that you would pay all this money, yet have no plans for it. No plans exist for this stormwater reticulation arrangement. If they do, they should have been provided under freedom of information. It is all very well for the Chief Minister to say that the documents exist, but they have not been provided to the opposition.

This goes to the core issue here, Madam Speaker. There are serious integrity issues. I note that Ms Le Couteur talked about the role of developers and the potential issues there, to take a step further as to the role of developer donations or contributions. Quite frankly, I do not think any of that is relevant here. What is relevant here is that a basic government process that had nothing to do with developers, a basic government process, was corrupted. It is as simple as that. There were rules in place. There was a determination signed by the Treasurer. There were meant to be all these procedures in place to give taxpayers some comfort that their money was being spent properly.

We do not need more rules in this space. We do not need more regulations, necessarily. What we need is for the existing ones to actually be enforced. That is one

of the fundamental problems with the ACT as a jurisdiction. We are often very good at making rules, often very good at making policies and legislation, but too often we are very poor at actually enacting what is on the statute book.

We have a corruption of processes here. That is in effect what the Auditor-General found. It is very disappointing that, despite the severity of these issues, rather than having the Chief Minister come here, accept that there are major problems and let a motion such as this go through, he tries to tone it down. He tries to in effect belittle this as an issue.

Millions of dollars of taxpayers' money has been spent, perhaps unnecessarily, especially when you consider that the first valuation was \$950,000 to \$1,050,000, a huge variance from the \$4.2 million that was actually paid. There are very serious issues here. There are many questions that still need to be answered. The opposition will be using every avenue at our disposal to try to get answers, because we think the taxpayers of Canberra deserve that, at least.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

Noes 9

Mr Coe	Ms Le Couteur	Ms Berry	Ms Orr
Mr Doszpot	Ms Lee	Ms Burch	Mr Pettersson
Mr Hanson	Mr Milligan	Ms Cheyne	Mr Ramsay
Mrs Jones	Mr Parton	Ms Cody	Ms Stephen-Smith
Mrs Kikkert		Mr Gentleman	

Question resolved in the negative, in accordance with standing order 162.

## Social inclusion

**MR STEEL** (Murrumbidgee) (4.30): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes that Canberra is a progressive and inclusive city;
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to continue to deliver its progressive and inclusive policies for the ACT, including:
  - (a) the continued support and funding for the Safe Schools program in the ACT;
  - (b) measures to prevent the harassment of women accessing health care services;
  - (c) establishing a regulatory environment for ride sharing services like Uber;

- (d) establishing the 100 percent renewable energy target;
  - (e) establishing an Office for Mental Health; and
  - (f) the largest ever investment in the renewal of public housing; and
- (3) calls on the Commonwealth Parliament to:
- (a) remove the *Euthanasia Laws Act 1997* (Cwth) to enable debate on voluntary euthanasia laws in the Territory; and
  - (b) bring on the debate on marriage equality for a free vote in the Commonwealth Parliament.

The ACT is a progressive and inclusive place and, at the October 2016 election, the people of the ACT elected a progressive and inclusive government. I am proud that in my electorate of Murrumbidgee three progressive members were elected. This is an opportunity for the ACT government to continue to deliver progressive and inclusive policies, including the continued support and funding of the safe schools program in the ACT, measures to prevent the harassment of women accessing healthcare services, establishing a regulatory environment for ride-sharing services like Uber, establishing a 100 per cent renewable energy target, establishing an office for mental health and the largest ever investment in the renewal of public housing the ACT has ever seen. Many of these policies are contained in the parliamentary agreement for the Ninth Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory.

The government's commitment to inclusion in our city is also outlined in the social inclusion statement—a cohesive approach to providing opportunities for all Canberrans to fully participate in our community.

The ACT Labor government is committed to ensuring that our schools are inclusive for all students, regardless of who they are. We believe that no child or young person should be bullied, harassed or discriminated against because of their sexuality. In the past few weeks, we have had a tragic reminder of how important making our schools safe for everyone is. The devastating death of Tyrone Unsworth in Brisbane, and the subsequent reports of the treatment he suffered from his fellow students and how it weighed on him personally, is the starkest example of what can happen when young people do not feel assured of their own identity and bullying among young people is not confronted head-on.

We already knew before that incident that teens dealing with issues of identity are at a greater risk of suicide and self-harm, and the safe schools program is designed to provide appropriate support to prevent and to minimise harm. Thankfully, around 24 schools in the ACT have joined the Safe Schools Coalition. Fundamentally this program recognises that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, intersex, queer and other students exist in schools and that this is an important starting point to be able to include them in our schools. The participating schools are dedicated to delivering safe and inclusive learning environments for same-sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students, staff and their families. Those on this side of the chamber will work

with the Safe Schools Coalition to ensure their valuable work continues in Canberra schools because teachers were asking for these resources in order to effectively support student welfare.

There are alternative views by others on this program, but I am pleased to say that support for the program has come from the New South Wales Liberal MLA Bruce Notley-Smith, who has said that critics of the program should:

... go to the website and have yourself a look, spend hours trawling through it ... and then come back and see and tell us specifically [what] they have a problem with.

Unfortunately Canberra Liberals such as Senator Zed Seselja have seen fit to attack this important anti-bullying tool and I hope to see a firm rejection of that view from those opposite in their support for the safe schools program today.

Of course, no person should be subject to harassment, whether it is in a school or whether they are accessing health care. That is why we supported legislation to declare exclusion zones around approved abortion facilities where photography and video, harassing, threatening or intimidating behaviour are prohibited, continuing our history of recognising the autonomy of women and allowing them the freedom which should naturally be their right. Women in the ACT still have more freedom to make their own medical decisions than women anywhere else in the country.

Moved initially as a private member's motion by Minister Rattenbury and strongly supported by the Labor Party, exclusion zones are a proportionate response to the problem of harassment, which recognises that when women have made their choice they should not have to be intimidated, ashamed and humiliated while they are at their most vulnerable by those that disagree with them. It is also an example of how our two parties have worked together in the past to deliver the progressive change our city needs and how we will work together over the next four years to support the most disadvantaged people in our community.

The ACT government is committed to delivering an integrated transport system that is accessible and affordable for all Canberrans, whether it is light rail from Gungahlin to Woden or more rapid bus services, and also our commitment to active travel. The ACT was the first government in Australia to create a supportive regulatory framework for ride-sharing services, making personalised transport services cost-effective for Canberrans for whom taxis were too expensive and inconvenient, and fostering competition in the ride service industry. The ACT government is also leading the way on this issue and broader economic reform, reducing stamp duty to make homes more affordable for Canberrans and abolishing insurance taxes.

The government's commitment to a progressive Canberra is reflected in our policy to make our city one of the most sustainable in the world. That is why the ACT Labor government introduced the most ambitious greenhouse gas reduction target of any jurisdiction in Australia. We have legislated an emissions reduction target of 40 per cent by 2020 and we have committed to a 100 per cent renewable energy target by 2020. We are already contracting the renewable energy we need to meet this

important target and taking further steps through our action plans. Just in the past weekend, Minister Rattenbury announced the finalisation of funding agreements for the Crookwell 2 and Sapphire wind farms, which will power 90,000 Canberra homes. Not only are the people of Canberra now provided with clean, renewable energy but this policy delivers jobs and economic benefits by way of \$400 million in local investment facilitated by our reverse auction process, which requires firms to invest in ACT businesses in the long term.

Whether it is dealing with harassment outside abortion clinics or preventing people in our schools being bullied, a key part of being a progressive and inclusive government is looking out for the most disadvantaged and disenfranchised in our community, and this extends to our renewable energy strategy. As a party of working people, we recognise that the effects of climate change are already being felt and it is those with the least financial resources that will struggle the most to adapt to a changing environment and suffer the greatest from its adverse economic effects.

The community's understanding of mental health is growing and it is an issue that our government is taking seriously. We will take the step of establishing an office for mental health in government to oversee health services and provider funding, develop a strategy that sets targets for suicide reduction and provide more support for young people. I was particularly proud of Labor's commitment during the campaign to build a 12-bed adolescent mental health unit here in the ACT as an extension of the centenary women's and children's hospital. This builds on Labor's track record of delivering targeted health services and facilities for specific groups.

I know that this is an issue that many people in our community care about because we are currently sending our young people down to the South Coast for treatment, away from friends and family. This purpose-built facility will mean that our youngest Canberrans get the support and treatment they need to get well without having to sacrifice their ability to participate fully in our community.

The Labor government recognises that a good, secure home is fundamental to inclusion in our society. That is why Labor has always invested in social housing and homelessness services. I remember that the last time the Liberals were in government in the ACT they cut 1,000 public houses from the system, leaving some of the most disadvantaged Canberrans without shelter. Our difference in approach could not be greater. We are investing in the biggest renewal of public housing since self-government through our \$550 million program, replacing 1,288 dwellings home for home and creating 2½ thousand jobs in the process. In doing so we are learning from historical ACT government social housing investments by more evenly dispersing these dwellings throughout the community rather than concentrating them in small, dense clusters, which we know exacerbates social problems.

We will also build a second Common Ground at Dickson to provide long-term, high quality housing options for people on low incomes and a solution for people who experience chronic homelessness. And to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people we will invest \$4.4 million in housing for older persons, consulting with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and the broader community. As a result of our investment in homelessness services, the

ACT has the lowest rate of homeless persons who are sleeping rough compared to other jurisdictions. But we know that there is more work to do to ensure that all people have a roof over their heads, because housing is critical, before we help to address all other social issues.

We are also continuing to take steps to cut stamp duty through progressive taxation reform to ensure that young people can get a foot in the housing market here in the ACT and have the same opportunities as their parents and to support older people who may want to downsize to move into more manageable properties to help them age successfully.

Of course, we must also continue our advocacy to ensure that our federal parliament also reflects the aspirations of our inclusive and progressive city. During the campaign I spoke with many members of the community who wanted to see reform on voluntary euthanasia. Many of them were terminally ill and wanted to have quality palliative care but also the option to die with dignity if the circumstances arose where that was appropriate.

In 1997 the Liberal Party's federal legislation to amend the self-government act undermined the self-determination of the people of the ACT by removing our ability to legislate on matters of euthanasia. As a result, the ACT has not been able to progress reform on end-of-life issues, despite the excellent work of former member Mary Porter.

But reform is on its way in other jurisdictions, with South Australia holding a narrow conscience vote and in Victoria the Andrews government establishing an expert panel to bring forward legislation next year. This is an opportunity for members of this place to call on the federal parliament to allow us to have our democratic right to have the debate here in the ACT.

We must also continue to push the case for marriage equality for LGBTIQ+ Canberrans who for too long have had the right of recognition of their love for another person frustrated by the federal parliament. The ACT has had a long tradition of advocating for and giving a voice to members of the LGBTIQ+ community before other jurisdictions have had the courage to stand up for them against bigotry.

In 2009 the ACT became the first place to legalise same-sex civil partnership ceremonies. It is also why the ACT was the first jurisdiction to have marriage equality, because we, as a Labor government, believe that all people, regardless of their sexuality, should be involved in our society and included in all of our society's institutions.

While we had marriage here in the ACT for a short time, this was challenged by the Liberal government. This has left a deep scar in our community and we now have a role here to be advocates for the federal parliament to allow a free vote on marriage equality. We in the Labor Party also believe that LGBTIQ+ Canberrans should not have to beg for their rights in a degrading \$170 million national plebiscite. That is the opposite of inclusive.



The ACT Labor government is reflecting our city's progressive and inclusive values through our policy agenda, whether it is in mental health, housing, exclusion zones around abortion clinics, managing the effects of climate change on our environment or, as a basic condition, ensuring our schools are safe for all children. We took to the election a comprehensive suite of policies which reflect our progressive and inclusive city, and we will deliver on them in the next four years with our parliamentary partners. We will also continue to advocate so that the federal parliament must act for Canberrans by delivering progressive policies in its areas of responsibility but also to allow us to legislate in ours. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (4.44): I thank Mr Steel for raising this important matter today, and I thank him for his passion for and commitment to a more progressive and inclusive city. I need to put on the public record that I do not believe Mr Steel's election was mundane; I think it was the result of an incredible amount of hard work. I always thought it would be the case, and I am delighted to welcome Mr Steel to the Assembly. What we have just heard gives members an understanding of the sorts of values and commitment that he will bring to this place and to this city to make it more progressive and inclusive.

It is an important motion that goes to the type of city and community that we are, and what we aspire to be. Let us be very clear, Madam Speaker; just two months ago Canberrans voted overwhelmingly for a progressive and positive vision for this city, a city that is inclusive and a city that is welcoming. I am particularly proud of the socially inclusive community that this city has, and I am proud that this government has a long track record of promoting that social inclusion. It is a strong social inclusion agenda that has achieved amazing things in this place for this city over the last decade. Let me be clear that this approach will continue and will pick up pace in the Ninth Assembly.

This government has delivered so many reforms to address formal barriers to inclusion and has put in place many protections to promote inclusion within our community. It started way back in 2004 with the ACT Human Rights Act, which was the first of its kind in Australia. It means that we have a legal imperative, not only a moral one, to do everything we can to ensure that all citizens can be active participants across all aspects of our society. This is also supported by a strong Discrimination Act that supports the identification and elimination of discrimination in our community.

The government introduced further amendments to strengthen this act in the last Assembly. The amendments introduced new protected attributes, including intersex person status, records of sex being altered, and subsection to domestic and family violence have also been acknowledged, amongst other reforms. These amendments reflect changing community values and recognition that individuals may be the subject of discrimination on multiple grounds.

Whilst we all know that legislation provides a legal framework to allow people in our community to feel safe and to participate, it is not, in and of itself, the end of the story.

Day-to-day interactions have a great impact on our lives, self-worth and our outlook on life.

As we have discussed in this place before, particularly in relation to bullying in schools, 80 per cent of homophobic and transphobic bullying involving LGBTIQ young people occurs in the school environment. These young people are three times more likely to experience depression than their peers. These statistics are alarming, shocking and demand a response. They emphasise the need for inclusive support and education in our schools.

That is why the government that I lead will always support the safe schools program. We are incredibly disappointed by the attitude of the Neanderthal conservatives in the right wing of the Liberal Party and National Party. Their attitudes to this program have shamed even progressive Liberals into kowtowing and modifying what is a very effective program. We reject that approach. We, like Victoria, will go it alone on the safe schools program because it is so important. We continue to fully fund the program and the work of the Safe Schools Coalition to create inclusive and positive environments for same-sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students in Canberra.

I have spoken in this place before about this issue, and I can claim a little bit of personal experience about what it is like to be gay in a Canberra high school and still in the closet. That was back in the 80s—I am showing my age a little now—but the issues that I confronted, sadly, are still there, and the evidence supports this for many students in Canberra schools in 2016. That is disappointing, and it needs action and a response.

Whilst we are proud to celebrate many achievements in terms of equality in this jurisdiction, we continue to hear too many stories of bigotry, harassment and societal pressures that are preventing students from being able to get on with their education. As Mr Steel indicated, the tragedy of a 13-year-old boy committing suicide because of homophobic taunts from his classmates over a long period in a Queensland state school demonstrate that this is a real issue in Australian schools today. It requires leadership from government, and it requires leadership in the community—and particularly in school communities—to prevent these sorts of tragedies from occurring. Tyrone Unsworth was 13 years old. It is not an isolated story. It is a disgraceful indictment of what is happening in our school communities. It demands a response from government and it gets one here in the ACT. Whilst ever I sit in this place, and particularly in this role, this government will fund that program.

Mr Steel also spoke at length about a range of other important social inclusion objectives for the government. I certainly commend him for raising many and varied examples, such as safe access to abortion services, our work on the office for mental health, the largest-ever renewal of public housing, our renewable energy target, and our innovative work in terms of demand responsive transport.

I would like to focus the remainder of my remarks on points (3)(a) and (3)(b) of Mr Steel's motion. Firstly, the time has come for the commonwealth parliament to revisit their 1997 legislation and enable all states and territories to enact laws in relation to voluntary euthanasia. I understand that the Victorian parliament will

shortly consider a bill, and it may well be that Victoria becomes the first Australian state or territory to move on this issue. If that happens, this outrageous commonwealth intervention in the democratic rights of territories will be untenable, and it must be removed. This place should decide the laws for the Australian Capital Territory on this issue.

Secondly, it was interesting to hear from the conservatives within the Liberal Party. Mr Parton indicated that he supports marriage equality because he is sick of the debate. I welcome his support; thank you for that. My one little bit of advice would be to probably think of a more positive reason to support this affirming change to the law of Australia than that you are sick of talking about it. Think about perhaps the opportunity to extend to a group of Australians, who to this point have been excluded from this institution, the opportunity to be part of something that so many Australians value very dearly.

When this place legislated for marriage equality and those weddings took place, the sun rose the next day. The only thing that changed was that many people were a lot happier. There were some fantastic family events that enriched the lives of hundreds of Canberrans. That is what changed with that piece of lawmaking in this place, and that would be replicated across this country, not just for thousands and thousands of same-sex couples but for their families and their friends. Once you include that group, Madam Speaker, you are talking about an overwhelming majority of Australians. There are not many Australians now who do not, in their own family or in their broader friendship circle, know someone who is in a same-sex relationship and want to support them to get married. This is something that should happen, and I commend Mr Steel for his motion today.

**MS LE COUTEUR** (Murrumbidgee) (4.55): Madam Speaker, as you would expect, the Greens will be supporting this motion today, and I am very pleased to support the first motion of my fellow Murrumbidgee member. I also want to congratulate him on his endorsement of much of the progressive Greens agenda which continues to contribute to and improve the progressive, modern city that we have the privilege of living in and representing.

I note that many of the things that Mr Steel talked about have been or will be achieved either through one of the parliamentary agreements—we are now up to the third parliamentary agreement—or through the work of the Greens MLAs. In particular, I note the work of my colleague Mr Rattenbury both as a member of cabinet and as a crossbencher.

The motion raises a number of very important policies that contribute to making Canberra one of the most progressive places in the country, and demonstrate the important role that the Greens have played in the Assembly over two decades. I am really proud that after 20 years of speaking up about various things, the Greens have made a difference. The ACT now has the strongest legislated climate goals in the country, and we have government investment in wetlands, which improves water quality and amenity for local wildlife. We are still the only place in Australia to have allowed same-sex marriages. Admittedly, that did not last. Of course, there is the ban on caged hens and sow stalls. We are also transitioning to a sustainable transport plan

that services all people, no matter how they wish to get around. We are improving community consultation. We are improving services for mental health. I could keep going at great length but I will concentrate on a few issues.

Establishing the 100 per cent renewable energy target is something that is particularly dear to my heart. As I have said on many occasions, the reason I stood for election as a member of this place is because I think climate change is the biggest issue for Canberra and the world. If we do not fix climate change, it does not really matter in the long run what happens to the rest because our environment is going to become so different, so changed, that it will be overwhelming for us and all other species.

When I entered this place in 2008, the Greens were the only party that was calling for an emissions reduction target of 40 per cent by 2020. We led the debate; we established a committee to set the ACT's climate change targets. This was part of the first parliamentary agreement. The Greens and Labor, in the face of significant criticism from the Liberals, passed legislation and set targets, and they both took a 90 per cent renewable energy legislation target to the 2012 election. Subsequently, this was increased to 100 per cent in 2016, and I am very pleased to say that, as we all know, the ACT is on track to meet that target ahead of time, which is really great.

Obviously, there is still a lot more work to be done on renewable energy and climate change, and that impacts on planning, on transport, on what we do with waste—on a whole heap of things that happen in the ACT. The Greens are really up for this challenge. On that, I would have to say that I am incredibly pleased that my colleague Mr Rattenbury has the honour of being the ACT's climate change minister. I think that the ACT, from that point of view, is in very good hands.

One of the other things that Mr Steel talked about and which I am very pleased about is the renewal of public housing. Mr Steel probably is not aware that in our first parliamentary agreement in 2008 one of the things included was an aspirational target of 10 per cent of ACT housing to be public housing. We have not reached that, and it was clear that it was an aspirational target. But I want to put on the record that the Greens have been pushing for more public housing for as long as there have been Greens in the Assembly to push for it.

I would also like to acknowledge the passion and commitment that Minister Berry has brought to the role, and her work in supporting the much needed renewal of our ageing and out-of-date housing stock. Her work has been a continuation of the commitment that Minister Rattenbury secured from cabinet in 2014 when he had the privilege of being minister for housing. This commitment to have an overall increase in housing stock was the first such explicit agreement since the Rudd government's stimulus package after the GFC, when a lot of money was spent on public housing, and the ACT was a significant recipient of it.

As part of the 2014 decision, we were also pleased to see an ongoing commitment to rehousing the tenants that may be moved as a result of the urban renewal program along Northbourne Avenue to within 800 metres of the light rail corridor, where possible and appropriate. Clearly, not every tenant wants to remain there, but for those who do, and with an eye to the future social mix that our city should strive to maintain,

it is essential that they are not forced to live on the fringes of Canberra. Of course, the Greens do recognise that in many ways—social, environmental and financial—many of the older, large-scale multi-unit developments are not suitable for the nearly 30,000 vulnerable members of our community who are public housing tenants. So I am really pleased that the public housing renewal program is continuing. I think that one of the real tricks to making sure that it works well is genuine community consultation.

One of the other things Mr Steel mentioned was euthanasia laws. Of course, the ACT Greens have been campaigning for the repeal of the Andrews bill for years. It is something that personally is quite close to my heart. My mother spent 11 years in a nursing home. I have to say that the standard thing that my husband and I would say when we were leaving left was, “Thank God we’re not getting old,” because the conditions there were horrible. It was horrible hearing so many people screaming in pain. That is what they were doing. You have to think there must be a better way for end of life than spending years in pain.

The current Andrews bill is undemocratic, discriminatory and treats us as second-class citizens. Earlier this year, one of the things I was doing was soliciting for people to sign a petition to the federal government to repeal the Andrews bill. It was tabled in the federal Senate by the Greens leader, Senator Richard Di Natale. If anyone is interested in this issue, there is another petition on the Greens website—[actgreens.org.au](http://actgreens.org.au)—if you wish to sign, because we really want to get rid of this law. As I said it is undemocratic and discriminatory.

The Greens have for a long time supported the concept of voluntary euthanasia. Just last week we were really pleased to welcome the Victorian government’s decision to allow a conscience vote on dying with dignity. That was one of the things that prompted us to relaunch the petition. I note the very close result in South Australia, where the parliament was split and the motion was only lost on the casting vote of the Speaker. It is clearly something that Australians feel strongly about, and I think it is something that the ACT should be in a position to debate.

Another issue that was mentioned was bringing on the debate on marriage equality for a free vote. Again this is something the Greens have fought for basically forever. We have had a strong history on this. All Greens MPs have always stood up for marriage equality, and always will. This week is the anniversary of the annulment of the ACT’s act by the High Court, which is unfortunate. As someone who fairly recently has married, I would like any couple who wish to undertake this happy state to have the right to do so, as I have had the right to do so.

I will not talk for much longer. I just want to say that the Greens are very proud of and pleased with the contribution we have made to a more progressive, sustainable, compassionate and just Canberra. We are really pleased that the parliamentary agreement embodies so many of the things that we took to the election. The support by Mr Steel and Mr Barr bodes well for a successful Ninth Assembly.

**MR COE** (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (5.04): The opposition finds the structure and nature of this motion a little bit perplexing. It is very hard to say that it is

a sincere attempt to bring together the Assembly when it is so obviously being used to try to wedge members of the Assembly. To put all of these issues in the one motion and to introduce it as progressive is, in effect, either trying to wedge the opposition or is actively trying to make it such that we either do not support it or that we have issues with it.

The opposition, of course, accepts that these are very significant issues, and I think they do warrant genuine discussion. But, quite frankly, the idea of putting serious issues such as bullying and harassment in the same motion as ride sharing, to me, is a bit disingenuous. I do not think it really fits with the very serious nature of the subjects listed in paragraph (2).

The opposition is very happy and very eager to engage in these discussions, especially on issues such as the safe schools program, where there are obviously mixed views in the community. We know that 24 or 25 schools have signed up to this. A lot of schools have not. And there are different views and different opinions in the community. This Assembly is the rightful place to have these discussions. This Assembly is the right place to canvass the different views held in the community so that we can make sure we have effective programs that seek to stamp out bullying.

Again, the idea of putting that very serious issue in the same motion as ride-sharing services or the mention of integrated transport, is to me, a bit of a stretch. To me, it seems this is far more about the politics of trying to wedge the opposition rather than trying to unite the Assembly on what are some very significant issues.

As I said the opposition is very keen, happy and willing; we want to engage in a meaningful and significant way on these issues. We do think we need to combat bullying in all its forms. We do need to support women. We do need to manage the environment. We do need to have better transport options. We do need to look at what mental health services we have and how we deliver them. We do need to look at public housing and numerous other things, and we should be doing this in a meaningful and substantial way. But the idea of putting them all in the same motion and introducing them as being progressive, makes it seem to me as if it is more about the politics than the actual issues.

I certainly encourage the member, and, indeed, any member of this place, to bring back any of these issues with more specific or more concrete proposals in terms of what they are calling for, especially here in the territory; that would be good. I think we would then have a much more meaningful discussion.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Kurrajong—Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, Minister for Justice and Consumer Affairs, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Mental Health) (5.08): I thank Mr Steel for bringing this motion forward. It is a great opportunity to talk about some issues that are very dear to my heart and very dear to the hearts of many supporters of the Greens who have great passion in relation to some of the issues we are discussing here today. Ms Le Couteur has already made some comments. I would like to touch on a few of the other topics that were covered in Mr Steel's motion.

Canberra is earning a reputation as being a progressive city. Our city's reputation is changing overall; the progressive politics and the way some important issues are approached here in the ACT are helping to break down some of the stereotypes about Canberra and show the rest of the country and, in many cases, the rest of the world, that Canberra is a very progressive city, one that is willing to embrace new ideas, one that is willing to be a frontrunner on issues, to try things out. That is great for our city in terms of our reputation. It enhances our sense of who we are as a city and encourages more people to come here as visitors and potentially as permanent residents.

Regarding some of the specific points in Mr Steel's motion, I particularly want to talk about the safe schools program. With the Chief Minister, I was pleased to provide dedicated ACT government funding for the lead partner, Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT, just before the election period. Unfortunately, we had to do that because we saw the federal government, or at least some members of the federal government, take quite an ill-considered approach to the program.

Having been education minister last term, it was clear to me, from going around to schools and talking to teachers, the people at the coalface, as well as students, how valuable this program was. To a person, they said to me that it was a great program that had a real impact for people who were vulnerable—people who were perhaps uncertain about their sexuality and were looking for support—but also helped other students broaden their understanding and their empathy, because the program talked about issues that are not always easy to talk about and that some people do not know much about. In having those discussions in the classroom, empathy and understanding were built. With all of the jargon you can use to describe programs, for me that is the simple way of talking about the strength and the importance of the safe schools program.

We could also cite the statistics. Mr Barr made some remarks in his speech about the number of students who report being bullied in school, for a range of reasons. The safe schools program is not the be-all and end-all when it comes to that, but it is certainly part of the suite of responses that we need to improve behaviour, to improve acceptance and understanding in our schools. A child who is being bullied is more likely than not to have poorer education outcomes. They do not feel safe at school. They are not concentrating, potentially, because they are distracted by bullying and the like. These social conditions are a very important part of a child's learning success.

It was a shame that the ACT government had to step in. As I say, I think that probably some of the key advocates against this program in the federal parliament have not gone into a school and chatted to kids about how some of these things are playing out. I would encourage them to do so if they have not.

When it comes to measures for preventing the harassment of women accessing healthcare services, I was very grateful in the last Assembly to receive support in this place for my private member's bill on this matter. It is an important matter. This came from the community, from people who had felt harassed when they went to access medical services, legal medical services. They felt that they were being judged.

Frankly, anybody who is going to any sort of medical service does not want to have to turn up and be stared at. They do not want to experience catcalls, to be made to feel small or to be made to feel like some sort of second-class citizen when they are going for a medical treatment. That is what this is all about.

I welcome the fact that a majority of this Assembly was able to support this legislation. It was a tricky issue in the sense that the right to protest is a very important one. Freedom of speech is extremely important in this city. But I think we got the balance right in simply providing a specific geographic zone, what you might call an exclusion zone or a privacy zone where people can access the medical facility in the city without having to run the gauntlet, whilst leaving the rest of the ACT for people who have a disagreement with that issue to go and protest, be it outside the Assembly, in Garema Place, at the bus interchange or on the lawns of Parliament House—all those places where you can go and protest in Canberra. There remain plenty without getting that very direct, very personal privacy-breaching confrontation that was taking place outside the medical facility here in Canberra.

I thank Mr Steel for reminding us of that. I think it was a worthwhile reform. Interestingly, in the course of the campaign, when you get out and meet a lot of people, I was honestly surprised at how many people brought this up. A lot of people would say, “It’s a bit of a marginal issue.” I was surprised by the number of people who noted it and really welcomed the passage of that legislation.

There is the establishment of a regulatory environment for ride sharing services like Uber. That is quite different from the last matter we were discussing; it goes more to reflecting on the willingness of the ACT to move quickly to embrace new opportunities. The introduction of legislation for ride sharing is one of those examples where the change has provided greater diversity in transport services and greater affordability in transport services.

I have met people who have said, “I never used to take a taxi, but now I am able to afford Uber, so I will use that.” I have met some people who have said, “I will take the bus now, because I know that if I happen to miss the last bus, I can afford to get Uber home, whereas perhaps I could not afford a taxi before.” I was interested in that social response to our reform: people were seeing a range of transport opportunities opening up for them. That is very positive. Something like the arrival of ride sharing in the ACT is a great example of where, when you take an opportunity, other things spin off that you may not have anticipated. That was one of those examples.

Establishing an office of mental health was a policy that the Greens were pleased to take to the election. I am pleased that it has come through in the parliamentary agreement. It is something we will partner with the Labor Party to deliver. I am particularly pleased—members, I am sure, have noticed this—that, for the first time, this government has created a specific portfolio for mental health here in the ACT. This is recognition of the seriousness of the issues and the significant impact that mental health concerns have in our community.

This provides an opportunity to both scrutinise this area of service delivery much more thoroughly and drive the changes that are needed. An office for mental health



has the opportunity to do that. I will talk more about that tomorrow, so I will not take the time today, but it is an initiative that I think will make a real difference on the ground here in Canberra for people with mental health issues.

There are a range of quite progressive issues that are not in the parliamentary agreement and on which perhaps we have not reached agreement in this place yet. I look forward to progressing some important issues through the course of these four years. One is the issue of medical cannabis. We started a significant discussion about that last term, and I think we have made a lot of progress. I look forward to seeing the arrival of that program in the coming calendar year so that people in Canberra who are suffering can access that.

In the area of drug law reform, we have a lot to do. We have a vast range of areas to tackle. Pill testing is one place where we can make significant progress. There are people in Canberra who want to do this, who have the capability. This is a very important harm minimisation measure where, with some careful work and some thoughtful approaches, we can offer a very important reform that will potentially save young lives in our city.

We need to do work to clean up political donations and restore the strong donation laws in the ACT. The ones we had before the 2012 election were far preferable to the ones we have now. I look forward to the fact that tomorrow, assuming the Assembly agrees, we will establish a select committee to look at a range of electoral issues. This is a topic we should be discussing there. We saw the Labor and Liberal parties come together last term to widen the scope of political donations. I think that was a regrettable decision, one that I hope we can correct in this term.

Finally, we need to make significantly more progress on poker machines. They are addictive and manipulative. Individual punters cannot bear the sole responsibility for the damage that these machines do to people, their families and the community. As a government, as the leaders of this community, we need to stand up and take responsibility to combat the addictive and deliberately manipulative nature of these machines. We have so much more we can do. There are two issues that the Greens particularly have spoken about: one-dollar maximum bets and mandatory precommitment. These are the two key issues identified by the Productivity Commission, and we need to move forward on them.

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Women and Minister for Sport and Recreation) (5.18): I would like to thank Mr Steel for bringing this motion forward today. I know that I will probably be repeating a lot of what has already been said from this side of the chamber, but the motion goes to issues that I feel strongly about, that matter deeply to many in our community and that the ACT government has continued to step up for in our community.

I first want to talk about safe schools. We know that one in five lesbian, gay or bisexual Australians currently experience depression. This is more than triple the national rate. One in three from this community experience an anxiety-related

condition. As many of those in this Assembly are aware, Safe Schools Coalition Australia is a national coalition of schools dedicated to creating safe and inclusive learning environments for same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students, school staff and families. The coalition provides a framework for schools to address issues that same sex-attracted, gender diverse and intersex students face at schools.

The Safe Schools Coalition have rightly identified that the school is the place where most homophobic and transphobic bullying takes place. Seventy-five per cent of students experience abuse or discrimination, 80 per cent of that abuse occurs at school, and 81 per cent do not feel as though they are supported in their school. They recognise that bullying based on gender and sexual diversity has particularly traumatic effects, including high rates of self-harm and suicide. Having inclusive school environments assists these young people to be themselves in the schoolyard. These positive impacts have a rolling effect on the outcomes of whole school communities. That is why the ACT government has committed to funding safe schools regardless of the restrictions the commonwealth might seek to impose. I am proud to be the education minister who will be implementing this commitment.

On marriage equality, I have strongly supported the call in this motion for the federal government to allow a free vote of federal parliament. We have debated this issue at length, and I have spoken numerous times about people who I know have bravely put themselves forward to be representatives of this change. I remain committed to achieving it for them and so many others. We passed a law for equality in our community, and this was taken away. Most recently we passed a motion which would have put ACT support behind the case for change had the proposed plebiscite gone ahead. I am pleased it has not, but the need for change remains greater than ever.

In March last year, the issue of safety for women accessing legal termination services returned strongly to our collective consciousness. As Minister for Women, I wrote to those who were conducting the protest to ask that they come and direct their messages to lawmakers here in the Assembly. As consecutive Labor governments have done in the ACT, we have preserved and protected the rights of women to choose, and we have articulated the reasons why. We have repeatedly done this. The government took an extremely cautious approach to limiting the ability of people to make their views known in public. I am conscious of the different views on those rights here in this place, but the law has been in operation for a while now, with broad community support. This is another sign of a progressive government that I am proud to refer back to, and another area of policymaking where the strong presence of women in this place is so important.

Finally, on public housing renewal, the government has picked up where we left off with this major renewal program. Work is progressing on hundreds of new public housing dwellings. At the end of the financial year, more than 120 new dwellings were already occupied, 465 were in the process of being constructed or purchased, and due diligence and early design work was underway for another 500 dwellings in various locations around the city. Those numbers have increased since then, and the government is continuing to talk with housing tenants and surrounding communities about how the program is rolling out right across the city.

I have opened a number of new housing developments now, and the quality of these homes is outstanding. They are unrecognisable as public housing—modern, efficient, adaptable and welcoming, both for tenants and for neighbours who have welcomed new people into their communities really well. I remind the Assembly what an important stimulus program this is providing for our local building industry. The \$550 million investment is boosting the construction sector by creating more than 2,500 jobs over the five-year life of the program.

Madam Speaker, progressive and inclusive government takes many forms, and this motion points to just a few examples of the record that this government is proud of. I am pleased to support the motion, and I restate my own commitment to these principles in this new Assembly.

**MR STEEL** (Murrumbidgee) (5.23), in reply: I thank Minister Rattenbury, the Deputy Chief Minister, the Chief Minister and Ms Le Couteur for their support for the motion.

In response to some of Ms Le Couteur's comments, I remember the target of 10 per cent public housing here in the ACT. We here have the greatest level of public housing in Australia, but there is more work to do to increase the level of housing. I remember that as a result of the nation building and jobs plan many years ago, one of the great projects the ACT government was able to deliver in public housing was for older people in Kambah. It was a result of the fantastic consultation that went on at the time. That can be emulated in the future.

It is a great shame that we have not heard from many members of the opposition on this motion today. It would have been an opportunity for each of them to say where they stand. This motion covers many areas of reform that are really important for people in this city. These were issues raised with us as candidates during the election campaign. The subject matter deserves to be addressed. You would at least expect that these issues would be given the dignity of a response. Even if the opposition do not support certain elements, they could have explained which elements they are not supportive of and maybe even have tried to amend the motion to remove the areas they did not agree with. There is no need to be scared of a suite of policies. In many of these areas there is a genuine opportunity to work together, particularly to send a message to the federal government that we want them to get on with it, as Mr Parton himself said yesterday.

Way back when, Mr Hanson supported marriage equality in his maiden speech, but often it seems the noes have it. Imagine what a powerful message it would send to the federal parliament if this whole Assembly said, "Get on with it and enact marriage equality."

We have a great example of members working together in South Australia to put forward a vote in a private member's bill on voluntary euthanasia. It was a Liberal member who moved that bill. It was narrowly defeated, but it has been a catalyst for change. Why can't we at least call on the commonwealth parliament to allow us to have that debate? I know that our federal colleagues on the Labor side are supportive

of removing the Kevin Andrews legislation, which Senator Katy Gallagher tweeted about recently.

The truth of the matter is that the Liberal Party will not be drawn on these issues. They will argue process and not talk about the actual policy, because the public would see what they feared at the election, that we have the most conservative opposition in Australia, an opposition that is not aligned with our values for our progressive and inclusive city.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Alexander Maconochie Centre**

**MRS JONES** (Murrumbidgee) (5.27): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes regarding significant security failings at the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) that:
  - (a) there have been a number of security breaches at the AMC over the last two years;
  - (b) in May 2015 inmates posted footage of a fight within the gaol to social media;
  - (c) in May 2015 using mobile phones inmates found to be posting selfies on Facebook;
  - (d) in May 2016 a prisoner died whilst in custody at the gaol; and
  - (e) in September 2016 two prisoners escaped from the gaol;
- (2) also notes that:
  - (a) over the eight years of operation the gaol has had the following reviews including recommendations undertaken into its performance:
    - (i) the Hamburger Review in 2011;
    - (ii) the Burnet Review in 2011;
    - (iii) the Auditor-General's report into rehabilitation of male detainees in 2015;
    - (iv) the Human Rights Commissioner's report into human rights compliance of the care of female detainees; and
    - (v) the Justice and Community Safety Committee reported into sentencing, looking at some of the throughcare and other issues around detainees sentencing and release;
  - (b) overcrowding and capacity issues are ongoing;

- (c) detainees participation and completion rates of training courses or therapy are unfortunately low; and
  - (d) industry placements for job training are extremely limited at present; and
- (3) calls on the Government to:
- (a) collate the recommendations of all the abovementioned reports and publish a list of all recommendations detailing those recommendations which have:
    - (i) been undertaken and completed;
    - (ii) commenced being worked upon; and
    - (iii) not yet been acted upon; and
  - (b) report this information annually to the Assembly via the Justice and Community Safety Committee.

I am really pleased today to speak to the motion on the notice paper in my name calling for a consolidation and regular reporting into unending issues at the Alexander Maconochie Centre, otherwise known as our prison. As the new shadow minister in this area I have a range of concerns to start off with about the operation of the facility and what is being achieved there. I also have some concerns about the safety and wellbeing of the prison population as well as staff, and the number of serious security breaches that are starting to concern members of the community who rightly have high expectations of this facility.

Over the past eight years, since the prison's "glorious" opening, we have heard from the minister that, despite plans for it to be a groundbreaking facility—and there were very high hopes, I am sure, amongst many for respecting of rights of detainees as well as the outcomes for them and for their families—the centre has been beset by some issues. I am concerned that the government has had lots of opportunities to address safety and security as well as other issues at the prison but has not seemed to have achieved the whole work yet.

Firstly, let us look at some of the security concerns that have made their way into the media and that have become public. In 2015 there were a range of breaches with inmates who had managed to smuggle mobile phones into the prison and used the mobile phones to post selfies on Facebook. Inmates also used the mobile phones to film a fight between other inmates that was then uploaded onto social media.

This is concerning on various levels: the fact that there were phones; the fact that there was unrestricted access to the internet; the fact that there was a fight; the fact the fight was filmed; the fact that the film was uploaded to social media. Each of these issues is a serious security concern and need to be addressed. It must be asked: once the fight was on social media, what span did it have, who viewed it, what was the impact of it and was the footage removed? It is a serious issue.

Another serious security concern is that of the tragic death in custody in May this year. Issues of security are not just about keeping the broader community safe from people; but also about ensuring that those who are incarcerated are safe whilst they are in prison. They are sentenced to having their freedom removed, not their safety.

The corrections management general operating policy of 2009, which was the time of the prison's opening, stated that:

The AMC is to be a secure and safe place that will have a positive effect on the lives of prisoners and corrections officers. The management and operation of the AMC will be in accordance with human rights principles and will give substance to the dictum that prisoners are sent to prison as punishment, not for punishment.

Not my words, the words of the now 15-year-old Labor government's own manual. There are a range of questions that need to be addressed with regard to this issue, and clearly the current series of reviews into this particular event, as well as others, has not been completely concluded. However, the prison has had numerous reviews into its operation, some of them public and, no doubt, some of them in the hands of government.

As my motion states, over the eight years of operation, the prison has had the following reviews, including recommendations undertaken into its performance: the Hamburger review in 2011; the Burnet review in 2011; the Auditor-General's report into rehabilitation of male detainees in 2015; the human rights commissioner's report into human rights compliance of the care of female detainees; and the Justice and Community Safety Committee report into sentencing looking at some of the throughcare and other issues around detainees' sentencing and release.

I also note that overcrowding and capacity issues continue to some extent. In relation to my comments on overcrowding, I refer to the end of last year with the additional prisoner accommodation opening and being full within a month. I would love to be enlightened about that problem not being ongoing.

Detainees' participation and completion rates of training courses are unfortunately low. I have anecdotally received information that detainees are signing up to courses so that they can get a library card—which is in and of itself a good thing—but then not attending those courses because they can maintain their library card even without attending the courses.

**Mr Rattenbury:** Outrageous.

**MRS JONES:** Well, that is just anecdotally what I have been told. So, anyway, that is just an additional—

**Mr Rattenbury:** So it is bad they want to go to the library? Come on.

**MRS JONES:** No, it is bad that they are not completing their education courses, minister. Industry placements for job training are rather limited at present, but I

understand they are growing, and so I am looking forward to hearing from the minister about it.

What measures have been enacted? What recommendations have been followed through to completion? What has the minister done to ensure that the AMC does not have another death in custody? What review was conducted to ensure that security measures have been increased as needed? The most recent security breach at the jail was in September this year when two inmates escaped. My understanding is that they simply propped up building materials left in the yard between the fences against the fence to climb over it. I have also heard stories about drugs being ferried into the prison through cut-open tennis balls being thrown over the fences. It makes a mockery of the concept of security that such matters have not been addressed in over eight years.

I do not come here saying these things are absolutely certain, but I need to bring to the attention of the minister the things that I have heard

**Mr Rattenbury:** But you're willing to say them without any evidence.

**MRS JONES:** I do not have access to the prison as the minister does to find out all the details. Well, it is very funny to laugh at me, thanks, minister. I know this is your go to when you do not like what I am saying.

The question has been asked how this could happen. Minister Rattenbury was quoted in the media as saying:

This is obviously very concerning, something has gone wrong here, we need to get to the bottom of what has gone wrong and make sure that it doesn't happen again.

I would agree with Mr Rattenbury on that very point; we do need to get to the bottom of what has gone wrong and absolutely make sure it does not happen again. This is why I am calling on the government to:

- (a) collate the recommendations of all the above mentioned reports and publish a list of all recommendations detailing those recommendations which have;
  - (i) been undertaken and completed;
  - (ii) commenced being worked upon; and
  - (iii) not yet been acted upon; and
- (b) to report this information annually to the Assembly via the Justice and Community Safety Committee.

I am confident that Mr Rattenbury will shortly stand to speak against my motion to some extent, telling us that the number of cases of contraband in the AMC is much lower than in other jurisdictions, trying to tell us that there is not an issue here—

perhaps—but that he is doing all he can so that such security breaches should fully be avoided, that there are more reviews on the way and that he is taking it all very seriously. However, what Mr Rattenbury—in fact, all of us—must remember is that we are here to address the issues that are arising in our prison. After eight years of operation and numerous reports, surely there has to be some responsibility taken by him and the government for the failings. The place is not completely functioning properly; it is neither rehabilitating people nor keeping them properly safe. We should see a full list of what can be done and what has been done and what has not been done.

Mr Rattenbury has a history of picking and choosing recommendations—as I suppose every government minister does—of reviews addressing issues within the jail that support his world view. I know he was working very hard on a needle and syringe program, but then we saw people escaping out over the fences. So—can I just ask that the minister stop laughing at me? I actually find it offensive, to be honest.

**Mr Rattenbury:** Fair crack.

**MRS JONES:** Fair crack? What is funny about what I am saying? What is hilarious about it?

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Steel):** The minister will refrain from making any comments or sounds.

**MRS JONES:** Thank you. In April last year the Auditor-General finalised the report into rehabilitation of male detainees at the AMC and Minister Rattenbury stated that while these concerns are real and need attention, the government has reservations about the Auditor-General's report. It seems the minister is sending mixed messages on what should be addressed within the AMC. During the last Assembly when Mr Wall called on the government to develop a new strategy to deter and defect contraband entering the AMC Mr Rattenbury was not supportive of it.

I again remind the minister that after two inmates escaped in September this year you agreed there was a need to get to the bottom of the security issue, and I am hoping that we are. I am calling on this new Assembly to recognise that there are very real needs to get safety and security right and to deal with capacity, industry and education issues in this facility for the safety of those incarcerated, for their futures and for the community at large. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Kurrajong—Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, Minister for Justice and Consumer Affairs, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Mental Health) (5.37): I am happy to support the intent of Mrs Jones's motion today despite the content and range of her speech. I am happy to bring these issues to the attention of the Assembly and have a serious discussion about them in this place. I have circulated an amendment to the motion which I believe represents a more contemporary understanding of the current situation at the AMC and a practical approach to achieving Mrs Jones's objective, which is to ensure that the Assembly and the ACT public remain informed about changes that are underway at the AMC.



The AMC is a unique jail in the Australian corrections landscape and that perhaps is why we have one of the most reviewed jails in the country. Since its opening in 2009 there have been numerous reviews and audits, both internal and external, covering everything from clothing and detainee menus to general operations, treatment of women detainees and, more recently, rehabilitation.

As noted by Mrs Jones, some examples of recent reviews include rehabilitation of male detainees at the AMC, an Assembly inquiry into sentencing, a human rights audit on the conditions of detention of women at the AMC, the Burnet report into drug policies and services at the AMC, an independent review of operations at the AMC and a review of governance including drug testing at the AMC. These reports alone delivered 328 recommendations and many more findings or conclusions. Further, ACT Corrective Services and the Justice and Community Safety Directorate are as we speak considering the recommendations of three other reports: the Moss review, the standing committee's inquiry into the Auditor-General's report and, finally, a deep and broad review of security operations as a result of the recent escape from custody of two detainees.

It is evident, as the Auditor-General herself has noted, that we have one of the most closely watched correctional facilities in the nation. The external oversight of ACT Corrective Services is governed by multiple agencies with legislative power to consider matters that arise at the AMC. The current agencies and statutory positions that provide oversight and that can and do proactively investigate issues are the ACT Human Rights Commission, the ACT Health Services Commissioner, the Discrimination Commissioner and the ACT Public Advocate, as well as the ACT Ombudsman and the Auditor-General.

ACT Corrective Services holds regular oversight agencies meetings where many diverse matters are discussed and complaints may be resolved without further escalation. All of those oversight agencies that I just mentioned are actually invited to that one meeting so that they can talk to each other, they can talk to Corrective Services. I think that forum provides a high degree of transparency to those oversight agencies and potentially avoids some unnecessary duplication so that they can focus their resources into the issues that need to be explored.

Additionally, official visitors are appointed by the minister for justice under the Official Visitor Act. There are two official visitors, including an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander official visitor appointed for the purpose of the Corrections Management Act 2007 as well as a mental health official visitor for the purposes of the Mental Health Act 2015, which covers the AMC as a defined visitable place.

Beyond these structural oversight agencies, the Corrections Management Act allows a judge, a magistrate or a member of the Legislative Assembly to enter and inspect the AMC at any reasonable time. Mrs Jones did make a point about not having access. I am happy to facilitate any briefings that Mrs Jones wants from my agency. I am happy to facilitate a visit to the AMC for Mrs Jones and any of her colleagues within reason at a time requested. There are always some provisos around that. The jail is not an easy place to come and go to but I am more than happy to facilitate that.

To be honest, I thought that Mrs Jones's speech was an interesting one. I did laugh at a few of Mrs Jones's assertions because after five weeks of holding the portfolio she made some pretty powerful assertions. At this point I do not recall any briefings taking place. Mrs Jones said, "I've heard stories about this and I've heard stories about that." If we are going to come into this place and make strong assertions on the basis of stories, we are going to have to expect a little bit of reaction.

I am interested at the standard that Mrs Jones and her colleagues have just set, that it is upsetting and offensive for somebody to laugh while a speech is being made. I will remind them of that next time they shout somebody down across this chamber with the sort of interjecting we have seen from this team for most of last term.

*Mrs Jones interjecting—*

**MR RATTENBURY:** She is doing it again now. She is interjecting. We have just had Mrs Jones complain because someone laughed at an assertion she made without any facts.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER** (Mr Steele): The minister will resume his seat. Mrs Jones, please stop interjecting. Minister Rattenbury.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Thank you. We have now seen the standard that it is not okay to laugh but interjecting is fine, and we will see from the opposition through the course of this term that they not only interject, they team interject at times so that you cannot even hear yourself speak in this place. It is an extraordinary double standard set in the first sitting week of the term. I will be interested to see how they carry it forward for the rest of this term.

Let us return to the AMC. Other officers of government are authorised under inspection laws such as the Crimes Act, the Emergencies Act, the Food Act, and the Public Health Act to also enter the facility in certain circumstances. Detainees are also able to seek external review of decisions made by the Director-General of the Justice and Community Safety Directorate, or their delegate, in relation to procedures affecting their management of the AMC. Further, ACT Policing undertakes independent investigations into allegations of criminal behaviour that occur in the AMC.

I simply outline all of these opportunities to indicate that this is a heavily scrutinised facility, as it should be. I think the fact that people lose their right to freedom and are confined in a closed facility necessitates a high degree of scrutiny.

I can say it is a bit overwhelming sometimes when there are so many reviews going on—and they do take significant effort to both answer the questions that the reviewer has and then to respond to the recommendations—but Corrective Services has a constant program of responding to these various reviews and it does take resources. There is a debate to be had there because those resources are not actually then dedicated to making some of the reforms that undoubtedly need to be made in the facility.

Mrs Jones's motion and the amendment I have proposed highlight that it can be difficult for the community and the Assembly to effectively keep track of the government's activities in implementing the agreed recommendations when so many reviews have occurred, which in and of themselves have contained a manageable 10 recommendations in the Auditor-General's report to over 100 in the Hamburger review. As I have said, these can certainly take some considerable time to respond to when you think of how many recommendations there can be.

It is for this reason that I now move the amendment:

Omit all words after "(1)", substitute "notes that:

- (a) the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) has been the subject of numerous reviews, standing committee inquiries and audits since opening in 2009;
- (b) the ACT Government has a responsibility to respond to these reports in a variety of formats, and these responses are a matter of public record;
- (c) some of the recommendations from these reviews that were agreed to by the ACT Government over eight years may no longer be current or have ongoing relevance to the security and good order of the AMC;
- (d) the Minister for Corrections will provide an update on recommendations that have been agreed to by Government that relate to the operations of the AMC to the Chair of the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety in May 2017; and
- (e) the Minister for Corrections will make a statement to the Assembly by the last sitting day in May 2017 on these issues."

I believe that amendment will result in information to the Assembly that is helpful and transparent and that updates the Assembly on the progress that has been made on those recommendations. I indicate that I am sure some of them will need ongoing work because they do take time to follow through. But I do not shy away from the negative or problematic issues that have in many cases been the genesis of these reviews.

The tragic death of Mr Freeman in custody and his treatment and care while in the AMC is of ongoing concern to me and the government, and we will continue to work hard to address any issues that require further action. We still have a coronial process underway on that matter. There are further findings potentially to be made and we must be mindful of that. But certainly the findings of Mr Moss are now being actively worked on across the government for as rapid a response as we can make when we have to collaborate across a range of agencies and we will continue to monitor the coronial process as it unfolds.

As I have mentioned, ACT Corrective Services is also taking the first and only escape from the AMC extremely seriously and took immediate steps to minimise further incidents of this nature. It was regrettable. After an 18-month construction project on

site, to be right at the finishing stages of that and have a situation where detainees were able to take advantage of that construction process to facilitate an escape is incredibly disappointing and embarrassing. But it is a real shame because, given how successful that project had been, it was an unfortunate incident to have happen right towards the end of the project.

There are, of course, both inevitable and avoidable difficulties facing every correctional system in the country, and we are not immune from these. I notice, for example, that Mrs Jones spoke extensively about mobile phones being used to post selfies on Facebook and film a video. She expressed some concern about both phones and fights. But unfortunately both of these things do happen in jail systems. Even the Goulburn supermax, the one with the absolute highest maximum security in all of the New South Wales correctional system, has phones smuggled into it. It is an ongoing problem and I will be happy to have Corrective Services staff brief Mrs Jones on the changing technological opportunities that detainees are taking advantage of to get around existing security systems. These are very challenging. It is an arms race in that sense and we are continuing to strive to keep up with that arms race.

I also note that Mrs Jones made reference to continuing overcrowding and capacity issues. I can assure Mrs Jones that, since we opened the additional accommodation facilities, accommodation is not an issue and that we do have adequate capacity at the AMC. I am very pleased about that. It was clear that we needed additional capacity at the AMC and I think many of the challenges that we have faced at the AMC have come about as a result of the accommodation pressures that face the facility.

We have a multi-classification jail. We have high rates of necessary separation due to the close relationships people have in this community where many people know each other and where that can provide security concerns, and we have seen examples of that in the past. These have all been real challenges but the new accommodation not only provides additional capacity but I believe is better designed to enable greater degrees of separation so that security can be better managed within the AMC.

I simply put it like this: I think the corrections system is at the end of what I consider to be its first chapter. Later this week or quite soon we will have completed the work on the industry facilities at the AMC and a range of other facilities on site. Through the course of my term as corrections minister I believe that we have been able to put in place some of the key building blocks for the completion of that facility—the additional accommodation and the provision of prison industries. These are essential facilities.

I believe that, with the completion of those facilities, we close the first chapter of the AMC. We get to the end of the first chapter. I do not want to say “close it” because I am not trying to close anything. I believe we have reached a point in the journey where we have got to the end of that first chapter and we are now starting a second chapter where we have got the jail we need. We are now starting to focus on a range of other issues; that we will continue to strive to improve that facility and to pursue the high aspirations that the government has and that our community rightfully has for the operation of a modern correctional facility in the ACT.

We have further work to do. ACT Corrective Services does need to undertake further change and I am happy to share with the Assembly and the ACT community not only how far we have come in responding to the recommendations of the many experts and oversight agencies but also what we are doing now to improve service delivery and what we are planning to do in the near future to further realise the potential of the jail as a place of secure rehabilitation and to enhance the broader operations of our relatively young corrective services system. It is only eight years since the AMC was opened.

There is work to be done. There are things that will crop up from time to time that will require response but what I can assure the Assembly is that ACT Corrective Services and I as the responsible minister are committed to responding to those issues as they arise and dealing with them as effectively as possible.

**MR HANSON** (Murrumbidgee) (5.51): I am delighted to stand here and support Mrs Jones and her motion. This is a very serious issue that she has put forward and her motion is a very reasonable one. I share her concern that after raising issues such as a death in custody, drugs in the jail, security issues—a range of issues—rather than responding to them, I think, in a considered way, Mr Rattenbury chose to laugh, giggle, dismiss throughout his speech.

He concluded his speech today by saying Corrective Services “will deal with things that pop up from time to time”. This is how he sees issues such as a death in custody, something that just pops up as an issue from time to time. Drugs that are coming into the jail, the bashings that we have seen, and the capacity issues that have just been disgraceful: to dismiss this by saying, “Oh, the jail’s only been open for eight years,” is not good enough. How long is it going to take? How long is it going to take before the time for excuses runs out for this government? Simply saying it is only eight years old is an inadequate response. It has been a somewhat arrogant response.

My staff has printed out a range of articles in the past couple of years, which I have brought down here with me, about the range of very serious issues that have been litigated publicly, from bashings to jail escapes, to a death in custody, to drug issues, to misuse of carriage services and so on. It is no wonder that what we have seen is people who are close to this issue, people who are expert in this issue—be it Jon Stanhope who set this jail up with great dreams, great intent, amongst others—have been disappointed by the reality, and it is a reality that seems to be dismissed by the attitude of the minister.

Indeed, Julie Tongs who runs Winnunga Nimmityjah—I am sure many of us would know her—expressed her disappointment at the minister’s response to the unfortunate death in custody, citing it in an article this year as too little too late. We have seen the *Canberra Times* editorial that poor decisions continue to haunt Canberra’s jail. Another editorial was that AMC was failing drug addicts. These are not just concerns that are being raised by the Canberra Liberals. These are concerns that are being raised by experts. These are concerns that are being raised by people who are close to the jail and who are certainly not Liberal stooges—Mr Jon Stanhope, Ms Julie Tongs and others who recognise the problems of this jail.

What Mrs Jones has asked for today I think is a reasonable request. As she will indicate no doubt in closing, we will be supporting the amendment. But it is disappointing that Mr Rattenbury has sought to water the motion down, because it is not a particularly political motion. Mrs Jones notes a number of issues that have occurred that are a matter of fact. She lists a range of audits and inquiries that have been conducted that are a matter of record. She talks about issues that are on the public record.

Although we got a response from the minister—rather than coming into this place and owning up to the issues and saying, “Yes, there is a problem,” and detailing in a substantive way a consolidated response to all the reviews, to the inquiries that have occurred and what is the way forward for this jail—what I fear again is that it will be all sunshine and lollipops. As Mr Rattenbury said, these are just issues that pop up from time to time. A death in custody is not an issue that just pops up from time to time, nor are bashings, nor are escapes, nor are misuses of carriage systems. They are serious issues.

I am disappointed that, rather than acknowledging the problems and that it is a difficult environment—no-one is disputing that—and dealing with the problems head on, what we have seen again is this dismissive attitude from Mr Rattenbury: his laughing at Mrs Jones throughout her speech. These were not just interjections. It was dismissive of the serious issues that were being raised. Yes, we are going to have banter with each other and we can have interjections, but I think when we are dealing with substantive issues like deaths in custody, to behave the way Mr Rattenbury did is not helpful as a minister.

I commend Mrs Jones for bringing this matter before the Assembly. I am sure she will have much to say about the Alexander Maconochie Centre as we proceed, because it is important that we get this right. It is important that we take it seriously. It is important that the many inquiries and reviews that have been conducted are implemented fully and are not just dismissed, because many of the people that we are dealing with have done bad things. There is no doubt about that. Many of them have done bad things, but that does not take away our obligation to make sure that this jail is run properly, that it is secure and that it is a safe place for the prisoners, the remandees and the staff.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Kurrajong—Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, Minister for Justice and Consumer Affairs, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Mental Health): Under standing order 46 I wish to make a personal explanation.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER** (Mr Steel): You may proceed.

**MR RATTENBURY**: Either mistakenly or otherwise, Mr Hanson has just suggested that I laughed when Mrs Jones raised the issue of a death in custody. I think that Mr Hanson has made a mistake. I certainly would never laugh at such a matter. I laughed at some other assertions that Mrs Jones had made but the death in custody is a deeply tragic event, one that I am personally very troubled by and one that we would certainly never make light of in this place. I simply want to be absolutely clear about

that. The response to that is being taken very seriously. I know it has been very traumatic for many people in Corrective Services as well who take their responsibilities very seriously.

**MRS JONES** (Murrumbidgee) (5.58): I rise to speak to the amendment and close. It was interesting to listen to the minister's response to this motion. Firstly, as Mr Hanson pointed out, it is not a complicated motion or one particularly intended to damage or anything like that. It is just a straight-bat motion saying, "What are all the recommendations that have been made? Which ones have been acted upon and which ones have not?" There are a number of issues, and this is well known.

Secondly, in the last term I came into this place with things that I wanted the minister to agree with, and he said, "You didn't consult with my office." This time I consulted, carefully, with his office. Yet still what was experienced by me was a bit on the mocking side, especially because, in the middle of my speech, I actually addressed the fact that I was being laughed at and it continued. So yes, maybe there are double standards. Sometimes we all make mistakes. Sometimes I am sure I make mistakes. But I did not find it a particularly good way to conduct a debate.

Thirdly, I find it unusual that Minister Rattenbury, who has now had this portfolio since January 2016, has not acknowledged any failing. There are failings. They are not just failings of a department; the minister has to take responsibility. He manages to give speech after speech in this place where he essentially says, "It's complicated." Nobody is claiming it is not complicated; we are simply asking for clarity on what the recommendations have been, which ones have been acted upon and which ones have not.

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

**MRS JONES:** I also ask the question: is it untrue that drugs are coming in over the fence? Yes. Again, I will go back to what I said originally: I do not have the same access as the minister does to what goes on in the prison. That is simply a statement of fact. Yes, I will seek a tour—again—of the facility that I have toured already, and I will seek a briefing. I will be very pleased if the minister is happy to organise it.

It is interesting that the minister describes it as embarrassing that people have got out of the prison. It is not embarrassing. Embarrassed is how the minister feels. It is stressful for the population who live in the area. My grandmother, over 100 years ago, chose not to buy a house near a prison because of fear of exactly the same thing happening. It is unacceptable in this day and age that we cannot maintain the basic security of people.

I am glad to hear that the minister believes that bed occupancy rates are reasonable at the moment. I will be happy to receive some more information about that.

I will, nonetheless, despite the way the debate has been conducted, support the amendment, because I think it is an improvement on the situation that we have got and it does show a certain willingness from the minister to do what perhaps should

have been done in January 2016, which was collating all of this information together and bringing it to the Assembly. The Assembly and the people of the ACT have a right to know what is going on in this area when there are constant failings.

I just reiterate that bashings, deaths and a technology arms race are not things where you can say, “Oh, we can’t fix it.” I know it is difficult; no-one is claiming it is not. The attitude of the minister needs to be, “We are going to do everything in our power to resolve this”, not “Well, it happens elsewhere and so it’s fine.” That is not good enough for the families of the people in the prison, if they have experienced bashings. It is not good enough for them and it should not be good enough for the minister. I would love to see the minister standing up a bit more and saying, “I’m going to do everything in my power to resolve these issues.” That would be very refreshing.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

## **Adjournment**

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

### **Diwali Mela festival Lifeline fun run**

**MR RATTENBURY** (Kurrajong) (6.03): I would like to take the opportunity in the adjournment debate today to congratulate a number of community groups on recent events that I had the good fortune of attending. The first was the Diwali Mela festival held on Sunday, 6 November at Albert Hall. I know a number of other members attended but I do not have a full list of who they are, so I shall not, at the risk of leaving somebody out, mention them.

Quite a few MLAs attended. It was an all-day festival. I know people came and went at different times, and it was certainly a terrific festival. The day’s program culminated with grand fireworks, which I missed, but I gather they were very spectacular. I was certainly pleased to participate in the lighting of the traditional lamp and to make a brief address to the gathering with Minister Stephen-Smith, who was there at the same time that I was there.

Diwali Mela is a spectacular Indian community festival to celebrate the famous festival of lights. It symbolically celebrates a victory of good over evil and is the most popular festival in India. It has been celebrated every year in Canberra since 2003. All the various community organisations of Indian cultural background work together to support the festival, and it was certainly a terrific program of cultural performances, great food and a friendly atmosphere.

I would particularly like to thank Lakshman Prasad—otherwise known as Lucky—and the organising committee for their significant effort in putting this major community event together.



The other community event that I particularly want to mention is the Lifeline fun run, which took place around Lake Burley Griffin on Saturday, 5 November. There were nearly 1,000 participants on the day, including me, although, having just come out of the election campaign, my fitness was somewhat sketchy; nonetheless it was great to participate.

**Mr Hanson:** Excuses!

**MR RATTENBURY:** Exactly. It is an excuse, I know; nonetheless it was true. The time that I ran the 10 kilometres in is a clear testament to that.

This event was first held a couple of years ago on Majura Parkway. What I am really pleased about is that it is not just an event for runners; the many walkers and joggers are very welcome at this family event, now being held, as I said, on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin. It is a real community-spirited event but with a serious message behind it as well, in seeking to raise vital funds for Lifeline.

It is an event which helps them to continue to meet their ever-increasing demand for crisis support and suicide prevention services. I would like to thank all of those people who turned up and participated, and who spent money on entering the race, which went to that very worthy charity. This year the event was supported by Icon, and I thank them for their support of that event. I would also like to congratulate the team at Lifeline and the new race director, Brad Edge, on their organisation of the event. It ran very smoothly, despite the fact that unusually in Canberra at 6.30 in the morning there were extremely strong winds and many of the tents were being blown away at the time. To all the volunteers who helped out on the day, thank you for your contribution as well. I look forward to the event taking place again in 2017.

### **Tara Costigan Foundation**

**MR PARTON** (Brindabella) (6.06): I had the great pleasure of attending the launch of a fundraising calendar for the Tara Costigan Foundation last night at the Rex Hotel. I thank my good friend Michael Costigan for all the work that he is doing with the foundation.

When we learnt the news of Tara's untimely and brutal death, I think we all shed tears, each and every one of us. Our youngest daughter, Anna, was a classmate of young Riley Costigan. Tara had been in to the school for a show and tell with the new bub in the days prior to the tragedy. So for our youngest, in particular, the incident really hit home drastically. I think every person in this city cried. There were those of us who cried, but there were others who also found the strength to do something about an ongoing situation which is untenable for a civilised country such as ours. I commend the work of the Tara Costigan Foundation. I would like to note that this eye-opening calendar—because it is a bit of an eye-opener—is retailing around town for a bargain \$25. It is the Holly Boudoir calendar, supporting the Tara Costigan Foundation. Well done to photographer Holly Franklin, who is carving out quite a niche for herself as a photographic artist.

## Global Goals dialogue

**MS CHEYNE** (Ginninderra) (6.08): On 15 November I had the honour, along with my colleague Mr Steel, of attending the Australian National Dialogue for the Leave No One Behind partnership run by Global Goals Australia. This dialogue was part of consultation to inform the implementation of the sustainable development goals in Australia. It is important for all levels of government to work to implement the sustainable development goals. Once the consultation is completed, Global Goals will prepare a report to the United Nations and all Australian governments, and members of every parliament, including members of this place. I encourage you to read it and to inform yourself about this important global project, but you are already quite well informed.

Building on the success of the millennium development goals announced in 2000, the sustainable development goals—or SDGs—range from reducing poverty, hunger and inequality to promoting strong economic growth, sustainable cities, and cheap, clean energy. The education goal established under the SDGs is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Under each goal is a set of specific targets. I particularly want to draw the attention of the Assembly to target 2.4 under the education goal, which states that by 2030 countries should ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education. Thanks to the concerted campaigning and lobbying efforts from charities, businesses and early childhood groups, the United Nations has now recognised the critical function that early learning has on children's early development and the future prosperity of nations.

Early childhood development is important not only for preparing young children for primary school but also to help address many other objectives of the sustainable development goals. Education is crucial to creating equity and maintaining the egalitarianism we all associate with the Australian identity. Thanks to the recent research into economic equality, we now understand the significant impact that education inequality has on future wealth gaps.

The first five years are a critical time, Mr Assistant Speaker, to tackle equality early in life before this disadvantage manifests and becomes more difficult to overcome. As my, and your, federal colleague the Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP has pointed out, an affluent five-year-old has the same vocabulary range as an adult living in poverty. By providing equitable access to quality early learning for all children in our community, regardless of wealth, we can start to break down the connection between a parent's income and their child's future income. In this way an active early childhood development policy can act as a great equaliser in our community.

We also know that early learning pays dividends for the economy. It is an efficient cost-reduction measure in the long run as it reduces the need for future government expenditure in later life on welfare and juvenile justice. Children engaged in early learning, especially from vulnerable backgrounds, have amplified language and

cognitive skills providing a strong foundation for later learning in primary, secondary and tertiary education. This, in turn, makes people more employable and better equipped to deal with the advanced workforce of the 21st century.

Attaining gender equality is also one of the sustainable development goals. Expanding access to early childhood education is also a critical factor in improving workplace productivity in our economy. By giving families the freedom to re-enter the workforce earlier than they could have on their own, we can tackle the task of achieving full employment and, importantly, achieve greater gender parity and workforce participation, as it is disproportionately women who leave paid work to raise children during their early years.

I am pleased to see the very important work that Global Goals Australia has been doing on the implementation of the sustainable development goals and I look forward to seeing the final report delivered to the ACT government and members of this Legislative Assembly in the future.

### **Terra Madre**

**MS LE COUTEUR** (Murrumbidgee) (6.12): I rise to talk about Terra Madre, which is Slow Food's annual day to celebrate local eating, sustainable food production and agricultural biodiversity. It has been held on 10 December every year since 2009. Slow Food is a global, grassroots organisation working towards the goal that everyone in the world should have access to food which is good for them, good for those who grow it and good for the planet. It was formed, I think, in Italy, given its name and my knowledge of it, in response to the concerns about the disappearance of local food cultures and traditions. It now involves communities from 160 countries working together to build connections between people and the foods that they eat. Some of their initiatives include protecting food diversity by saving endangered foods, advocating for the rights of Indigenous people to grow food and fighting food waste.

We are lucky in Canberra to have a local group, the Canberra Capital and Country Convivium, a group of people who are passionate about local food in our Canberra region. We have got a very active local food movement here in Canberra, and it is most obviously manifest in the two big farmers markets. The Capital Region Farmers Market at EPIC has been held every Saturday for over 12 years. I used to go there every week when I used to live on the north side. Of course, on the south side, there is the Canberra farmers market which is not quite as old—only 10 years old—and it has just moved into the Canberra College. It is a great new site, and I really enjoy going to visit there.

Recently, of course, there has been a resurgence of interest in growing your own food, community gardens and the value of sourcing seasonal produce direct from local farmers. I am really pleased that one of the things the ACT government has supported is community gardens. I know there is a huge unmet demand for them.

I would also like to make a quick mention of some of the other Canberra groups which are part of our local food movement contributing to part of the global movement: See Change shares skills for more sustainable living, and I used to be on

the committee; Urban Agriculture's City Farm, who very fortunately are just setting up in a new location in Dairy Flat Road; Lyneham Commons after 18 months have their fruit trees planted and it is looking good with companion plantings et cetera; Canberra Organic Growers Society have been around for a very long time—I am afraid I do not know how long—but they are real stalwarts of community gardening and organic gardening; the Canberra Environment Centre, which does a lot of training and runs a very nice community garden, which it shares with the childcare centre next to it; the Food Co-op, which has been around since the 1970s as an adjunct to the university, provides comparatively cheap, organic food.

Of course, these days many schools are doing this sort of thing. There is the Alexander community garden movement, of which we have many in Canberra. Of course, I would like to thank the farmers in the ACT region. It is called the capital region; we are extending out into the region around us. It is a great place for growing some foods, and some farmers have made incredible strides in terms of local production in places where I would have thought it was impossible, I must say.

### **National disability insurance scheme—innovation expo**

**MS LEE** (Kurrajong) (6.16): Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. One of the great advantages, as you would probably know yourself, in being elected is that we get the opportunity to be invited to a lot of community events. The one thing that I want to mention today is the opportunity I had to attend the NDIS innovation expo at EPIC on Saturday. There were many local Canberra service providers out there providing many different services in the disability sector, including cleaning, laundry, a florist as well, occupational therapy, and even yoga. Looking at some of the different therapies and getting to know the sector, which I am unfamiliar with, was a great experience.

It is great to see all these organisations working together to bring about a smooth transition into the NDIS in the ACT. Some have raised some concerns in relation to the transition, and I will ensure that I continue with a dialogue with the minister and the directorate to ensure that those issues are looked at. I look forward to continuing discussions with all service providers as well as users to ensure that the transition in the ACT to the NDIS is as smooth as possible for all Canberrans in need.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

**The Assembly adjourned at 6.19 pm.**