



QUESTION TIME
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

Tuesday, 22 June 2021

This is an **EDITED PROOF TRANSCRIPT** of question time proceedings that is subject to further checking. Members' suggested corrections for the official *Weekly Hansard* should be lodged with the Hansard office as soon as possible. Answers to questions on notice will appear in the *Weekly Hansard*.

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Questions without notice:

Business—ChooseCBR scheme	1
Business—ChooseCBR scheme	1
Environment—Monaro Rock quarry	2
Business—ChooseCBR scheme	3
Municipal services—Charnwood shops	4
Energy—batteries	6
Business—ChooseCBR scheme	6
Business—ChooseCBR scheme	7
Business—ChooseCBR scheme	8
Health—COVID-19 vaccination rollout	9
Business—ChooseCBR scheme	11
Business—ChooseCBR scheme	13
Business—ChooseCBR scheme	14
Work health and safety—psychosocial hazards	16

Questions without notice

Business—ChooseCBR scheme

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Business and Better Regulation. Minister, in your statement this morning regarding the problems in the ChooseCBR scheme, you said:

It may have been possible that a person may have registered with more than one email account if they had access to more than one mobile phone.

Minister, why did you not put in place something similar to the New South Wales requirement where people had to use, for example, a licence or a Medicare card to register?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Ms Lee for the question. As I noted in the ministerial statement, the risk was considered to be low, particularly in terms of the overall value of the scheme, which was \$2 million. What we did put in place regarding verification was something that is common right across businesses—particularly retail stores, for example—but also in different government departments as well. Given the overall value of the scheme, this seemed to be a reasonable check for us to have in place, especially noting that in New South Wales it is integrated with the Service NSW app. That is how people are providing the details of their identification. We do not have a similar app—yet, at least—in the ACT. Given the numbers of customer registration and the high demand and interest in this program, the amount of time for manual checking would not have been reflective of the overall value of the scheme and, indeed, may well have cost more than the scheme in terms of the administration value. That was the risk assessment that was undertaken there.

MS LEE: Minister, how will you determine how many people registered multiple times, in your review of the scheme?

MS CHEYNE: That remains to be seen. That is exactly why we will be commissioning an independent reviewer so that this can be done comprehensively. At the moment, it may not be possible at all for us to be able to verify the individual registrations, but this can certainly be open to being looked at through the review.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, can you guarantee that no one fraudulently misused this scheme under multiple phone numbers?

MS CHEYNE: As I have outlined in the ministerial statement and through several media interviews already, it may have been possible for a person to have registered with more than one email address and more than one mobile phone. It would have been a considerable effort on these individuals' parts if that is true. But if Ms Castley or anybody in this place has specific allegations, they should raise them directly with the ACT government so that they can be checked.

Business—ChooseCBR scheme

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Business and Better Regulation. Minister, your statement this morning said that you were aware that the scheme did “see vouchers claimed at what would otherwise seem to be unusual hours”. One constituent who was tracking the program online shared with the Canberra Liberals that vouchers were being redeemed en masse between midnight and 6 am. Can you categorically rule out misappropriation of funds?

MS CHEYNE: I have already addressed this in my ministerial statement this morning. We are aware that there were very genuine businesses undertaking very genuine transactions. I detailed this—

Mrs Jones: I have a point of order. Madam Speaker, the minister refers to her statement this morning, but the question was separate to the statement this morning. It was, “Can you categorically rule out misappropriation of funds?” I have read the statement from this morning.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think the Minister’s response is appropriate to the scope of the question. Minister, you have more time.

MS CHEYNE: Again, as I noted in the ministerial statement, there is a process underway, where we are looking at the transactions that were undertaken between 18 and 19 June.

MRS JONES: Can you categorically rule out misappropriation of funds?

MS CHEYNE: That is a matter for the review.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, given that you have acknowledged there are serious questions to be answered, when will you give us the answers?

MRS JONES: When the review is completed. In addition to that, as you noted, with my almost 50-minute statement this morning I went to some lengths to answer as many questions as I had answers to, but I appreciate that there are most questions out there, including questions that we have. That is exactly why I have commissioned a review.

Environment—Monaro Rock quarry

MR DAVIS: My question is to the Minister for the Environment and it relates to the proposed quarry development on Monaro Road, just across the ACT border. Minister, a number of my constituents in Tuggeranong have contacted me about the proposed quarry development on Monaro Road. They have voiced concerns about health, environment and noise issues. What is your understanding of the proposed quarry development?

MS VASSAROTTI: I thank Mr Davis for the question. Yes, we are aware of a proposal for a quarry in the Royalla area, which is actually located in New South Wales, and it is about two kilometres away from Tuggeranong residents. We understand that it will probably produce around 750,000 tonnes of hard rock each year.

We do not have any formal information regarding the proposal, but we understand that it has been identified by the New South Wales government as a state significant development, so it will be assessed by the New South Wales Department of Planning, Industry and Environment instead of the Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council.

We understand the planning and assessment process is at a fairly early stage, and that the New South Wales government will issue environment assessment requirements that will describe what the proponent must do and must include in any environmental impact statements. If an application is lodged, it will be notified by the New South Wales department. That will then provide an opportunity for the community and stakeholders to provide comments on the proposal.

We have contacted the council, and they have provided some information that the proposal is likely to require access through territory land, so there will be formal engagement regarding that at the time. We will continue to keep a watching brief and, when the process goes forward, we will be engaging formally, because we know that there will be environmental and other concerns.

MR DAVIS: Minister, given that the quarry is, as you stated, just two kilometres away from residential homes in my electorate of Brindabella, and that concerns constituents greatly, what can the ACT government do to respond to those concerns?

MS VASSAROTTI: I thank Mr Davis for the supplementary question. When that consultation process occurs, EPSDD will be seeking advice from various parts of the ACT government. That will include the EPA and also the conservator in particular. I have asked the directorate to keep a watching brief on this and engage wherever possible in relation to the environment and the environment protection issues. There are particular issues around dust and noise. It is two kilometres away, so we think that the dust issue will probably be okay, but we will continue to engage in that. In particular, we will work with the conservator around impacts and issues for local residents.

MS CLAY: What should constituents do to have their feedback heard, and who should they contact?

MS VASSAROTTI: I would encourage local constituents to engage with active campaigns that are happening at the moment. We understand there is a “Royalla hard rock quarry proposal opposition” website, with suggestions about what to do and how to engage with New South Wales ministers. Constituents should continue to keep engaged with the issue. As I said, we will be keeping a watching brief on it and will engage when required.

Business—ChooseCBR scheme

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Business and Better Regulation. Minister, in your statement this morning you said, “there is no indication at this point of any misuse of funds”. Minister, have you verified the legitimacy of all ChooseCBR transactions, and how can you claim that there has been no misuse of funds if you have not yet verified all of those ChooseCBR transactions?

MS CHEYNE: Without specific allegations, I really do wonder here what the Canberra Liberals are playing at, which does seem to be an attack on businesses as a whole. What exactly do they mean by “misuse”? As I have said repeatedly, if they have specific allegations, they should be putting those forward. We are going through a process. As I said in the ministerial statement, we have not identified misuse. If they have a specific allegation, they should raise it.

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, under the standing orders, there is a standing order about not answering questions—about not debating the subject. The minister there is debating it in terms of the substance. We asked a very clear question, and I would ask her to be directly relevant and not actually debate the question.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Hanson. You have more time to go directly to the question, Ms Cheyne, if you want.

MS CHEYNE: As I said at the end of my answer just then, we have not identified misuse. We are still undergoing our checks of the transactions that occurred on 18 and 19 June. As everyone is aware, there are a considerable number of transactions. It is the second working day after the scheme closed. That work is ongoing.

MR HANSON: Minister, who will be conducting the review into ChooseCBR and when will it be completed?

MS CHEYNE: Who has not yet been determined. We will work through that. But, as per my amendment to the motion, which should be circulated in my name, the intention is that the review will be completed and publicly released by the last sitting day of this year.

DR PATERSON: Minister, could you please outline what will be included in the review?

MS CHEYNE: The review will be independent and it will be comprehensive. It will include a review of the program’s design, including technical issues that we encountered in implementation. It will include the spread of activity of businesses and consumers. It will include an evaluation of the stimulus impact, to determine if something similar would be—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: I would not respond to interjections, Ms Cheyne.

MS CHEYNE: I do not plan to—would be appropriate in the event of a further economic downturn, and any other relevant matter.

Municipal services—Charnwood shops

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, I was glad to hear that you and Minister Berry went to Charnwood shops recently and inspected the pavers at the shops, and it is great to hear that the shops will receive some maintenance and upgrades to the unsafe footpath. When will these upgrades be

completed?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. I acknowledge that I have been to Charnwood a couple of times recently, mainly to play soccer, but I had the opportunity to go and visit with Minister Berry to look at the shops and some particular issues there that TCCS has been working on for some time. We understand the importance of local shopping centres to the community as important community hubs. We want to make sure that they are accessible and safe for people to use.

The issues that have been caused there have related to the growth of trees. As I've noted in the Assembly in question time before, tree roots can cause significant damage, and that is the cause of the damage with the pavers, some of which have been marked up in a little bit of guerrilla urbanism to show where some of those defects are. Transport Canberra and City Services is, where possible, repairing those defects. However, the reality is that, without significant tree removal, it is unlikely these issues will be rectified in the medium or long term.

We are planning to go out for consultation with the community on the future of the trees there, and how we might be able to manage the problem. We have undertaken significant work in the last financial year with the placement of permeable surfaces around the trees to allow for some of the root growth. But, obviously, it has not provided a longer term solution, so we want to talk to the community about what that might look like, particularly in the area near the Woolworths entrance.

MS CLAY: How are constituents kept informed of the progress on their concerns once they have reported a safety issue in their neighbourhood, like an unsafe footpath?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. In this particular circumstance City Services will develop options and engagement process with the local community and business owners and then we will engage with them through a variety of ways. We will be doing that through the Charnwood resident associations, we will put out information to the community on posters and the new billboard that we constructed there relatively to provide details about how they can have their say on this issue and how we can make sure we have safe access to this very busy local shopping precinct.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, why did it take WIN News for you to visit Charnwood, rather than before when I and other constituents have raised this issue with you? Can you not think or act for yourself?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question, but I reject the premise of her question and her political rhetoric. I have been to Charnwood on a number of occasions; this is the most recent occasion. TCCS has been quite responsive to many of the issues there and that has resulted, over the last few years, in tree removal to rectify some of the issues and in the planting of trees which are less likely to have the same problems with roots disturbing the pavement there at Charnwood.

Work has been undertaken over a period of time. However, it is obvious now that that work will not resolve the long-term issues and so we need to have a broader conversation with the community. We will have that conversation with the

community once some options have been developed about how we can manage this issue in the longer term. That is the approach that we are taking—not playing politics, like Mrs Kikkert.

MADAM SPEAKER: Before I give Mr Pettersson the call I remind members that all questions should be asked according to the standing orders and with a level of respect, even those that are jumped from the floor at an impromptu moment.

Energy—batteries

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, can you please outline how the first loans from the Sustainable Household Scheme will be administered to Canberra households looking to benefit from rooftop solar panels, household battery storage and other sustainable investments?

MR BARR: I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. As I am sure members are aware, the scheme provides zero-interest loans of between \$2,000 and \$15,000 to eligible householders which can be repaid in a period of up to 10 years. The scheme guidelines have been released. They set out the objectives and parameters of the scheme in more detail.

As I have flagged on multiple occasions, the scheme will be rolled out in a phased approach over a number of years. In the first phase, eligible households will be able to apply for interest-free loans for household solar and battery storage, with other components, such as EVs and charging infrastructure, heating and cooling systems, and energy-efficient appliances, being progressively rolled out and included in the scheme in the coming months.

In the coming days, the first group of home owners who registered their interest in the scheme and who have participated in an Actsmart workshop will be invited to take part in the scheme. We will seek feedback from this first group before the scheme expands to other eligible home owners in the coming financial year.

MR PETTERSSON: Chief Minister, how many households in Canberra will be eligible for the scheme?

MR BARR: Approximately 150,000.

DR PATERSON: Chief Minister, what has been the community and industry reaction to the scheme so far?

MR BARR: There has been significant interest. More than 5,000 households have already registered. I can advise that the most popular products are rooftop solar, with 3,800 registrations, and battery storage, with 3,100 registrations. Interestingly, around 1,600 individuals have now expressed interest in purchasing an EV, which I can report would effectively mean a doubling of the number of EVs currently registered in the ACT. This response from ACT households, along with the 44 registered businesses, demonstrates a high level of enthusiasm for the program.

Business—ChooseCBR scheme

MR PARTON: My question is to the minister for business. My question is about how the government calculated spending on ChooseCBR vouchers. Before the government shut down the scheme, the ChooseCBR website stated that \$255,000 out of \$1,689,385 had been redeemed. That totals \$1,944,385, which is more than \$55,000 less than the \$2 million your government allocated. Minister, how come your government's numbers do not add up?

MS CHEYNE: Earlier this morning I detailed that throughout Wednesday and especially on Thursday, as issues were being identified, the vendor was applying fixes to those issues. As the fixes were applied, other issues were emerging. One of those issues occurred with the “ticker”—I think that is what Mr Parton is referring to here—in how the values were appearing on the “ticker”, which I think we all noticed and wondered what was going on. There was a rolling amount of back-end fixes, but each fix was emerging with a new problem.

That is what led to our taking the scheme down. Despite what the “ticker” was showing on the website, the vendor has given us assurances that all transactions were recorded accurately. For those who might not know or did not see the dashboard version of the system for businesses, it did indicate that businesses had to enter the total transaction amount, as well as the discount that they were applying. That is where we have the transaction amount that has come through. Of course, that gets verified through the random checks that we have been doing.

MR PARTON: Minister, why did the ChooseCBR website report so many instances of fluctuating spending amounts that increased and decreased at different times?

MS CHEYNE: I regret I do not have an answer to that. My advice is that due to the tinkering that was occurring on the back-end, it was affecting the “ticker”. As to the technical explanation behind that, I simply do not have that answer. I would hope that the review would reveal that to us, probably in quite technical terms.

MS CASTLEY: A supplementary, Madam Speaker. Minister, was your government counting the total voucher amount of \$100, for instance, in its voucher spend on the website, or just the 50 per cent government component?

MS CHEYNE: I am not sure I understand the question, but I will see if I do in responding to it. The “ticker”, and how it was calculating, was reflecting the voucher that had been redeemed, not the overall transaction amount.

Business—ChooseCBR scheme

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Business and Better Regulation. On day two of ChooseCBR, Deakin IGA posted a note stating:

WE ARE NO LONGER ACCEPTING CHOOSE CBR VOUCHERS.
THE SYSTEM IS UNRELIABLE AND CAUSES TOO MUCH DISTRESS
FOR OUR STAFF AND CUSTOMERS
WE APOLOGISE FOR TRYING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROGRAM.
PLEASE UNDERSTAND THIS IS OUT OF OUR CONTROL.

Minister, how many businesses across the ACT pulled out of the ChooseCBR scheme because of its litany of areas of failure?

MS CHEYNE: I do acknowledge the experience that businesses were going through. Deakin IGA certainly was not alone. It was very well publicised, I think, because the photo that had been taken was distributed and shared widely. I do apologise that that was the experience for businesses, particularly on that day two, because especially the website for consumers was working incredibly well but the back end was not working very well for businesses. That is where I think a lot of this distress and frustration was really hitting a peak.

We understand that just six businesses withdrew from the scheme, but once the scheme was back up and running again on Friday, 18 June, that three businesses returned to the scheme. I have received anecdotal evidence that Deakin IGA was one of those, but I would need to get that double checked.

MR MILLIGAN: I have a supplementary question. Minister, how much money did ChooseCBR cost businesses as distressed staff were forced to clean up after your government's mess?

MS CHEYNE: I partly reject the premise of the question. I think for many businesses this was a scheme that they willingly took part in. We had set out the terms and conditions of participating in the scheme clearly. But, absolutely, this was not the experience that we had promised them, and I have apologised unreservedly for the experience of business owners and staff.

MS CASTLEY: I have a further supplementary question. Minister, have you personally spoken to Deakin IGA and the other businesses and apologised for causing distress to their staff and customers?

MS CHEYNE: No, I have not spoken to those individual businesses. However, I have apologised publicly, and we communicated regularly with all businesses, including keeping them up to date on what was occurring. Those businesses that did withdraw were specifically reached out to by the ACT government, acknowledging that we understood and respected and regretted their decision to withdraw but that if, at any time, they wished to come back to the scheme, we would work with them to make that happen. So, while I did not directly get in touch with each of the individual businesses that withdrew, they did receive direct and bespoke communication from the ACT government.

Business—ChooseCBR scheme

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Business and Better Regulation. Minister, on page 12 of your statement this morning, you stated that work is still continuing to manually process vouchers which were accepted while the scheme was struggling in its first 24 hours. Additionally, you stated that money was saved by cancelling advertising. You also said that additional money was spent on technicians repairing the problems found during the shutdown and repair of the scheme. Minister, how much extra money was spent on technicians to repair the scheme?

MS CHEYNE: This was also detailed in my ministerial statement, in that those costs are still being compiled.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, how much money was saved by cancelling advertising? Was there a fee involved?

MS CHEYNE: Again, this calculation is also being compiled. Yes, I suspect there would have been some cancellation fees with our advertising buys, but we had planned, if we needed it, a considerable marketing campaign, so there were savings there.

DR PATERSON: Minister, could you detail exactly how many vouchers were redeemed in the full rollout of CBR, and the average voucher value?

MS CHEYNE: There were 59,000 transactions that occurred, with 30,000 registered customers, and the average voucher value was \$34.

Health—COVID-19 vaccination rollout

DR PATERSON: My question is to the Minister for Health: can you please provide the Assembly with an update on the status of the COVID-19 vaccination rollout from the ACT?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Dr Paterson for her question. The COVID-19 vaccination program rollout continues to progress very well in the ACT. We are ensuring that the rollout continues in an efficient and, above all, safe manner. Further to my ministerial statement, as of this morning the total number of vaccine doses administered through ACT government facilities was 73,745. Almost 25,000 people have been fully vaccinated through ACT government facilities and more than 31,000 overall in the ACT. Of course, that includes both ACT residents and those from surrounding regions and interstate, so for ACT residents, around 25,000 people have now had two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

We know that older Canberrans are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. The ACT government continues to work with residential aged-care facilities on ways to increase vaccination of workers and on identifying workers who are willing to be contacted directly by the vaccine booking team to make an appointment at the Garran mass vaccination clinic. The Chief Health Officer has also written directly to each residential aged-care facility manager to encourage greater uptake of vaccinations for their workforce, and our team continues to liaise with residential aged-care facilities to ensure that this very vital workforce is getting the opportunity to be vaccinated and is encouraged to do so.

We also know that people with disabilities can be particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. As a result, we have made arrangements for an access and sensory clinic at Garran, which has been very well received by the Canberra community. Since opening on 27 May the clinic has administered 320 vaccines to eligible individuals, and feedback has been extremely positive.

DR PATERSON: Minister, following yesterday's announcement, what impact will

the additional Pfizer clinic have on the rollout?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Dr Paterson for the supplementary. Of course yesterday I was pleased that the Chief Minister and I were able to make the announcement about the new Pfizer hub at Canberra Airport. This additional hub is another important step in ensuring that eligible Canberrans are able to access vaccinations as soon as possible.

The new Pfizer hub at Canberra Airport will open on Tuesday, 29 June and will initially be able to offer about 1,500 doses a week, and this number will rise to around 3,000 in the coming weeks. The opening of the additional Pfizer hub is particularly welcome given the recent advice from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisations, or ATAGI, and the Therapeutic Goods Administration, which recommended that people aged 50 to 59 years should now receive the Pfizer vaccine if they haven't already received a first dose of AstraZeneca.

People who are aged 50 to 59 are now able to book their Pfizer vaccination, and I encourage them to do so. Eligible Canberrans are able to make vaccination appointments online through the MyDHR digital health record platform or by calling the ACT government COVID-19 vaccination booking line. We, of course, acknowledge, that not everyone can book online, and we continue to operate the phone booking line from 7 am to 7 pm seven days a week.

ACT residents who are 60 years and older also have the option, of course, to contact a participating general practitioner to book their appointment, and there are more than 70 participating GPs and commonwealth-led respiratory clinics administering AstraZeneca vaccines to those people eligible in the ACT. Of course, we have seen some cancellations at Calvary clinic as well, so anyone who does want to book an AstraZeneca vaccine, I would encourage them to do so and now is a good time to get on with that.

MS ORR: Minister, what advice would the ACT government give to those people who have already received one dose of AstraZeneca who may now be hesitant about receiving a second AstraZeneca vaccine?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary question. It is a really important question. The ACT, of course, is currently implementing the advice of the Australian government for people who have already had the first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine without any serious adverse effects. It is important that individuals receive the second dose of the same type of COVID-19 vaccine, including adults aged under 60 years of age. ATAGI noted in their advice on 17 June that people who have had the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine from AstraZeneca without any serious adverse effects can be given a second dose, including adults under 50 years of age as well and under 60 years of age.

The ACT government, following national cabinet and advice from states and territories, has accepted the advice of ATAGI that the use of the Pfizer vaccine is generally now recommended in adults under 60 years of age who have not had that first AstraZeneca dose. But we have also accepted ATAGI's further advice that people who have had the first dose of AstraZeneca without any serious adverse effects

can be given the second dose to complete their course. That includes all people aged under 60. This is supported by data indicating a vastly lower rate of thrombosis and thrombocytopenia syndrome—or TTS—following a second COVID-19 AstraZeneca dose compared to what was already a very small risk associated with a first dose..

Regarding mixing of vaccinations, including AstraZeneca and then to Pfizer, which we know is a question that is being asked, ATAGI has advised that there is not yet the requisite evidence on the effectiveness of mixed schedules for different vaccines, but ATAGI and TGA will continue to review the evidence object that issue. I note that ATAGI does not have any current approvals in place in relation to that.

Business—ChooseCBR scheme

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Business and Better Regulation. Minister, you have repeatedly stated that the ChooseCBR scheme was a business stimulus program, yet of the 4,000 eligible businesses only 797 made any money. Of those 797 businesses which benefited, almost 180 businesses redeemed fewer than 10 vouchers and so would have made an average of about \$150. A further 200 businesses redeemed fewer than 50 vouchers, so would have made approximately \$750. Minister, wouldn't it have been simpler, smarter and cheaper to divide the \$2 million between all eligible 4,000 businesses so that each received \$500?

MS CHEYNE: As Ms Lawder rightly points out, it is a stimulus scheme. Stimulus is not defined as just the minimum voucher transaction that occurred in store for these businesses. It achieved a raft of things, including that it allowed people a greater awareness, I think, of businesses—both near to them and far—that they might not have otherwise been aware of. There were people who were exploring more, which is exactly what we encouraged them to do. There were people who may not have had a chance to use their voucher during the quick time of the uptake of the scheme but still used the map function and the search function to understand what other businesses are out there.

In addition to that, the people who were able to get to those businesses and use those vouchers may have been spending more. We already know that the overall economic impact was more than double—it was about 2.6—with \$5.1 million injected into the economy. I think that those relationships—the new relationships between businesses and customers—even if they have not quite started yet, will be ongoing. The scheme was not just to do with the immediate financial injection of the voucher but was also about these ongoing relationships and the ripple effect.

MS LAWDER: Minister, beyond the \$2 million of taxpayer money that less than 800 businesses benefited from, what was the total amount of taxpayer dollars forked out on ChooseCBR?

MS CHEYNE: It is a bit exasperating that I spent quite a lot of effort on a ministerial statement that seems to have not been listened to or read. As I stated, we are \$203,000—

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker—

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister, resume your seat.

Mr Hanson: The health minister just answered a Dorothy Dixier that was the subject of a ministerial statement she made this morning. I have many examples—and I am happy to bring them into the chamber—of where ministers have read verbatim in answer to—

MADAM SPEAKER: Your point of order?

Mr Hanson: To be directly relevant, and that to try to bat a question away by simply saying “I made ministerial statement this morning” is not appropriate. She needs to answer the question, not refer to a previous statement which members may or may not have been present for.

MADAM SPEAKER: Given that you were on your feet within 20 seconds, Mr Hanson, I am sure the minister would have got to the point. She is just making reference to information currently available.

Mr Barr: Ten seconds.

MADAM SPEAKER: Ten seconds.

Mrs Jones: It was not about whether she was going to get to the point.

MS CHEYNE: I made the ministerial statement. It is a comprehensive ministerial statement to answer questions that people have.

Mrs Jones: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister, please resume your seat.

Mrs Jones: The question was about how much money has been spent on the program. We have not yet heard a single thing about how much money was spent on the program.

MADAM SPEAKER: No, because most of the time has been consumed with points of order. Minister.

MS CHEYNE: I could simply refer the opposition to the ministerial statement.

Mrs Jones: It was not in the statement.

MS CHEYNE: It is in the statement—\$203,000 was allocated to the scheme, including for the trial and the full rollout. I have said already, in answers to other colleagues, that the full costs are being compiled.

MRS JONES: Was the stress and cost of being in the scheme worth it for the 178 businesses that would have made an average of about \$150 out of the scheme? And how much money will the review cost?

MS CHEYNE: I appreciate that there are two questions in that. I do not have an answer yet about how much the review will cost. I commissioned that in the last 24 hours. When I have more detail on that, I will share that detail. I am happy to share that detail.

If Mrs Jones could perhaps tell me what the first part of the question was, that would be useful.

Mrs Jones: Was the stress worth it?

MADAM SPEAKER: There is a tad of being hypothetical in that question.

MS CHEYNE: Madam Speaker, I addressed this in response to Ms Lawder's question. There are broader benefits here to businesses. As I stated in my ministerial statement this morning, one of those is increasing awareness of businesses right across the city so that people can look, explore, find more, engage more and develop more of those relationships, which does seem to have been one of the key benefits of this scheme.

Business—ChooseCBR scheme

MS CASTLEY: Madam Speaker, my question is to the minister for business. The Canberra Liberals understand that during the trial in December, your government discovered there were a small number of businesses who were doing the wrong thing. Minister, what did those business do wrong, and what action did you take?

MS CHEYNE: There were 33 businesses who participated in the trial—I will get to the specifics of your question but just to give the broader context—who were asked to provide further information about their transactions. Generally, compliance was very good with the terms and conditions.

There were three businesses in the Belconnen region where a pattern of questionable transactions was identified. The combined value of the vouchers from this questionable pattern of transactions across the three businesses was \$5,355, and the total value of the vouchers redeemed across the three businesses was \$6,156. We did not recover this funding because the cost of recovering the money outweighed the actual amount of money in question, but we did make the decision to exclude these three businesses from the full rollout.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, what measures did you put in place following the trial to ensure that businesses did the right thing when ChooseCBR was relaunched?

MS CHEYNE: There was considerable communication with businesses about how the scheme worked, what they needed to record and have available and, under the terms and conditions which businesses agreed to—just like consumers did when they signed up to it—they had to keep a record of transactions for the purposes of checking.

As I identified during the trial, our process of auditing and doing these checks was a useful exercise, in that we did see patterns of questionable transactions. We did approach businesses, and businesses readily responded, for the most part, and

provided that evidence of transactions. We continued doing that through the full rollout of the scheme, and we are continuing to look at those transactions that occurred over 18 and 19 June.

MRS JONES: Minister, given that a pattern of questionable transactions occurred in the trial, how can you be so absolutely certain that \$5.1 million has been injected into the economy, yet you have no idea what the stuff-ups of the scheme have cost?

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Cheyne, do you want her to repeat the question? Perhaps without the colourful language, Mrs Jones.

MS CHEYNE: Thank you, Madam Speaker, I don't know what the question is.

MRS JONES: How do you know \$5.1 million has gone into the economy when you do not know how much the stuff-ups have cost?

MS CHEYNE: Because we know what the overall transaction value was, compared to the voucher value. As I explained in a previous answer, this is what businesses had to put forward in their dashboard to claim the voucher. So we were able to keep a record of that, and that is how we have determined these calculations. Businesses are asked to verify these transactions, and compliance is high.

Business—ChooseCBR scheme

MR CAIN: My question is, unsurprisingly, to the Minister for Business and Better Regulation: this morning you revealed for the first time that less than 20 per cent of the 4,000 eligible businesses actually made money from the scheme and benefited from ChooseCBR customers coming through the door. You claimed that this was “a very strong take-up from business”. Minister, what do you say to the 80 per cent of eligible businesses in the ACT who did not receive any benefit from this scheme?

MS CHEYNE: Twenty per cent take-up is high, and it is consistent with schemes that have occurred elsewhere, including with our neighbours in New South Wales in terms of business take-up.

Members interjecting—

MS CHEYNE: To the businesses that did not participate in the scheme, my message to them through you, Madam Speaker, is please know we did make every effort to advertise the scheme. I detailed that at length in my ministerial statement this morning, including business-to-business engagement and ACT government-to-business engagement. It was widely advertised through government and other marketing material and we did seek to reach out to businesses so they could participate.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat, Minister. Members at the central table! Mr Barr and Ms Lee!

Mrs Jones: Madam Speaker, I ask Mr Barr to withdraw the inference that he made across the chamber that Elizabeth Lee has never done anything with her life.

MADAM SPEAKER: One, it was not across the chamber because I did not hear it.

Mr Barr: I did not say that.

Mrs Jones: He inferred it.

Mr Barr: And Mrs Jones should withdraw. I said, “You have not done anything in government.”

Mrs Jones: That is not what you said.

Mr Barr: That is what I said.

Mrs Jones: You said she has not done anything. That is total nonsense.

Mr Barr: And then you jumped in before I could even finish saying, “in government”. And that accusation is unparliamentary. You cannot use a point of order to make an acquisition like that.

Mrs Jones: I did not make a point of order. I said I asked the minister for her opinion. I did not make a point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Jones, enough! Sit down. I did not hear Mr Barr. I was trying to get both Mr Barr and Ms Lee to remain quiet because I was having difficulty hearing the minister respond to Mr Cain’s question. So let me see what I can hear on *Hansard* and if I can come back. But I certainly remind people, whether it is through supplementary questions or the argy-bargy across the chamber, to have respect and regard for each other. With that, I will call Mr Cain.

MR CAIN: Minister, why do you think that more than 80 per cent of businesses voted against ChooseCBR by not bothering to participate?

MS CHEYNE: I reject the premise of the question. We had really good participation rates from businesses. I detailed this morning how excited businesses were to participate, including one particular business that Mr Cain talks about in here all of the time, which he has conveniently chosen to ignore. We had good participation rates, particularly for the size that the scheme was and particularly given that this was a one-off scheme. I absolutely reject the premise of that question.

DR PATERSON: Minister, can you outline why ChooseCBR was an important program for Canberra businesses?

MS CHEYNE: As I have noted, ChooseCBR was a business stimulus scheme. Its primary purpose was to stimulate spending in businesses. It had two aims: to get customers exploring more, visiting businesses that they might not have been aware of or otherwise spent their money with, and, when they were in store, to be spending more as well. It was not a voucher scheme where we sought equitable distribution of

vouchers or vouchers for everybody. What it was was a scheme where we wanted to ensure that money was flowing to businesses but also at a rate of stimulus where people had to spend their own money to use the voucher.

Our economy is performing very well; all of the statistics point to that. But it has been lumpy and there are some sectors doing better than others, and there are some businesses within what otherwise seem to be highly performing sectors which report that they are struggling. So this scheme, as identified through some of the quotes I used this morning, generated excitement for our small businesses. It generated greater awareness, it generated new spending and it generated spending above the \$2 million of the funding that we had put to the scheme—being a \$5.1 million injection into the ACT economy into local businesses and local jobs.

Work health and safety—psychosocial hazards

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety. Minister, what is the ACT government doing to prevent psychosocial injuries in the workplace?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Orr for her question, for her strong interest in workplace safety across the ACT, and also for the work that she did in bringing the motion on workplace sexual harassment and psychosocial hazards to the Assembly a few months ago. Work is progressing well on this motion because, unlike the Federal government, we do not promote people who have been accused of sexual harassment. Instead, we are working to develop a culture of safety and accountability in workplaces across the ACT.

PCBUs have an obligation under the work health and safety legislation to provide safe workplaces, and this includes providing protections for psychological health as well. This duty requires, where practical, the elimination of exposure to psychosocial hazards, including sexual harassment. However, we must also work to focus on addressing our psychological health risks or hazards under supporting work health and safety regulations and the codes of practice.

At the recent meeting of workplace safety ministers, I was pleased to vote in support of amending the regulations under the model work health and safety laws to deal with psychosocial hazards. This was an important first step in moving towards protection against psychosocial hazards, as Ms Orr has mentioned in her motion. This was a key recommendation of the Boland review—an important win for workers across Australia.

MS ORR: I have a supplementary question. Minister, has WorkSafe ACT implemented any measures to assist workplaces regarding psychosocial injuries?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary question. WorkSafe ACT is taking psychosocial hazards very seriously, and this work is being led by the work health and safety commissioner. As part of the joint initiative by work health and safety regulators, WorkSafe has contributed to the development of the People at Work risk assessment tool. People at Work is Australia's only validated and evidence based psychosocial risk assessment survey tool, with benchmarking that measures

psychosocial hazards and factors. People at Work can help workplaces comply with their health and safety duties, better manage work-related psychosocial hazards and factors, and prevent psychological harm. It is a free online tool that helps people understand their rights and obligations around psychosocial hazards in the workplace.

WorkSafe also works closely with the national regulator Safe Work Australia on the development of guidance materials. Safe Work Australia has published a guide to preventing workplace sexual harassment to provide detailed information for employers on practical ways to prevent sexual harassment at work. The commissioner and her team at WorkSafe are doing an excellent job in keeping Canberrans safe at work.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how is the government improving workplace safety in the building and construction sector, including in residential construction?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Pettersson for his interest in workplace safety across Canberra as well. The government has always stood up for workers and their rights to come home safe from work. We know that the building and construction industry can be dangerous. This is why we need strong workplace protection laws. The government has committed to establishing industrial manslaughter as an offence under the Work Health and Safety Act. WorkSafe ACT has also recently hired two new inspectors to increase their capability in dealing with the serious safety issues in the construction industry.

I am aware of the work being done by industry groups in conjunction with WorkSafe ACT about safety on residential construction sites. This follows the deaths of two workers on residential sites last year, and it has come about because of dangerous and dodgy practices still being rife within the industry. It is pleasing to see these industry groups speak out on this important matter, and I look forward to their support as this government works to strengthen workplace safety. Improving safety in the sector will assist in improving the building sector itself, and I will continue working to achieve this aim and acknowledge Mr Pettersson's strong passion in this area.

I thank those who advocate for workers' safety, as well, and stand strong in solidarity with workers to ensure safety for everyone. I am proud to say that I will always be on their side and on the side of workers.

Mr Barr: Further questions can be placed on the notice paper, Madam Speaker.