



QUESTION TIME
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

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Wednesday, 8 June 2022

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Ministerial arrangements

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (2.00): Regrettably, Minister Steel has advised that he has tested positive to COVID and so, for obvious reasons, will be absent from question time. He is getting a PCR test to confirm, but it is likely that he will not be present for the rest of the sitting week as well. I will take questions in Minister Steel's portfolios.

As I advised the Assembly yesterday, Minister Vassarotti is also going to be absent from question time today. The previous arrangements—questions to Minister Gentleman in relation to building and environment matters and to Minister Berry in relation to housing and homelessness matters—remain in place today.

Questions without notice Canberra Institute of Technology—board

MS LEE: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Skills, which of course the Chief Minister will be taking. Minister, you have referred to the Canberra Institute of Technology Act 1987 multiple times in relation to the \$8.87 million worth of CIT contracts. You repeatedly said that CIT is accountable to its board. Minister, who is the board accountable to? Section 7 of the act vests ultimate authority over CIT in the minister, and CIT receives the majority of its funding, as you are aware, from ACT taxpayers. I have already read the act, which is why I have referenced it, so please do not respond in that way! Who is the board accountable to?

MR BARR: The board has accountability as outlined under the act and under the various acts that are referenced in the CIT Act. I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition is aware, if you go to the tail end of the act, that the board has accountability under a number of different acts, including in relation to its reporting requirements ultimately, through the minister, to the Assembly.

MS LEE: Minister, who has the authority to make appointments to the CIT board?

MR BARR: The act outlines the skills requirements for the board, and the executive would make appointments.

MR MILLIGAN: Chief Minister, if the board is accountable to you, aren't you ultimately responsible for this concerning use of funds?

MR BARR: I thank Mr Milligan for the question. Clearly, the Government Procurement Act also applies in this regard. Whilst there is ministerial responsibility and accountability, there is also accountability for the board, chief executive and anyone who is delegated authority under the Financial Management Act to make procurement decisions.

Canberra Institute of Technology—procurement

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Skills. Minister, I have received

countless phone calls, messages and emails from CIT staff and students over the past 24 hours, relieved that these issues in relation to the CIT contracts are coming to light. What message do you have for the hardworking employees of CIT about these contracts?

MR BARR: I am sure the countless requests and contacts can be forwarded to the government to ensure that we can respond directly to those individuals, if they wish to receive a response directly from the government. The government's commitment is to resource the CIT to provide high quality vocational education and training. CIT is, of course, one of the major providers in the ACT vocational education and training market and, as the sole public provider in the ACT, has a very important role to play.

MS LEE: Minister, what message do you have for the CIT employees who have been too scared to speak up publicly about these contracts for fear of losing their jobs?

MR BARR: I am not sure that I accept the imputation within the question. Clearly, people who had concerns have raised them. I do not think it was the detailed investigative work of the Leader of the Opposition that brought these issues into the public realm.

MR MILLIGAN: Chief Minister, what message do you have for CIT employees who have raised these contracts time and again internally in CIT and have been told to keep quiet?

MR BARR: Again I have no evidence with which to verify the veracity of the claim from the member. I have noted some of his earlier statements that have been factually incorrect, so I am not going to accept the premise of the question. Nevertheless, under the ACT's various acts of this place, there are a number of different ways that individuals who are in the employ of the ACT public sector can raise issues of concern. That can be with their direct senior management, but there are also avenues outside of raising matters with their direct senior management.

Tuggeranong—recreational facilities

MR DAVIS: My question is to the Chief Minister standing in for the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, it has been exactly one month today since the YourSay community survey on the Lake Tuggeranong revitalisation project closed. I understand that there will be a *What we heard* report due later this month, but I am too excited, and I just cannot wait until then. I was hoping you could speak to some of the key trends in the community feedback so far.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Barr, without announcing any policy.

MR BARR: I thank Mr Davis for the question. Regrettably, I am not in a position to advise him of the key trends. I have been advised that, as he has identified, the report will be available at the end of this month, that the detailed design is expected to be complete in the second half of 2022, and that construction is anticipated to commence in 2023. But I will have to take this on notice, and provide some of that information for Mr Davis, as, regrettably, I do not have it all in front of me, now.

MR DAVIS: Chief Minister, will the government consider upgrades specifically for the skate park behind Lakeside Leisure Centre as part of those revitalisation works?

MR BARR: I am always partial to a good skate park upgrade, but I will not make an announcement of policy in question time. I will raise the matter with Minister Steele when I next get the opportunity to discuss this project with him.

MR BRADDOCK: Chief Minister, whilst you are at it, can you ask Minister Steele if he is considering installing any public art installations on the Lake Tuggeranong foreshore.

MR BARR: Yes, I can. Thank you.

Canberra Institute of Technology—procurement

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Skills, the Chief Minister taking the question. Chief Minister, this morning in the chamber Minister Steel mentioned discussions between his office and CIT in December 2021 regarding the \$8.87 million of questionable contracts. On 23 December 2021, CIT received two invoices from the consultant—that is, two invoices on the same day—to discharge in full the entire sum of a contract valued at half a million dollars. That was four months before that contract was due to end. Minister, are you aware that had happened?

MR BARR: No, I think, for obvious reasons, I was not, but I will check with Minister Steel's office. I will take the detail of the question on notice.

MS LEE: Does it seem to you like the discussions had by Minister Steel's office might have triggered these unusual advance payments four months before the contracted end date with the consultant?

MR BARR: That is asking for an expression of opinion. I will ascertain the time lines in relation to this. Obviously, we have discussed at some length both in question time yesterday and in the debate on the motion afterwards the process for investigation from this point. Minister Steel has asked for further information within five days. That would be the next point at which it would be reasonable to look at the time line of these questions. As we have discussed at length yesterday and again this morning, the forensic detail of this is clearly a matter that the Auditor-General is likely to take up.

MR MILLIGAN: Chief Minister, are you confident that CIT was provided with strong enough advice from Mr Steel's office to make it clear that these contracts did not pass the pub test?

MR BARR: I note the use of the term “the pub test”. It has become one of our favourite cliches. I am not sure that there is sort of a pub test metric in which you can do an assessment. Even if there were, I am not sure that everyone would agree on the scale of whether it gets you through the front bar or the back bar or whether you can get a top shelf drink or just something on tap on the pub test. Thank you for the colloquial question, Mr Milligan. We have all seen, because Minister Steel has tabled both his correspondence and replies in the further level of detail that the CIT provided, that he has clearly raised a number of questions and received answers in

relation to those questions.

Canberra Institute of Technology—board

MS LEE: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Chief Minister, in place of the Minister for Skills. Minister, in the letter to the CIT board that Minister Steel tabled yesterday, there is a reference to a letter of March 2021 and the subsequent discussions between Minister Steel and the CIT board chair. What was said in those discussions and what action items arose from those discussions?

MR BARR: Obviously, I was not privy to those discussions, so I will need to take that question on notice.

MS LEE: Minister, in reference to that letter of March 2021, Minister Steel mentioned discussions between his office and the CIT CEO. What was said in those discussions and what action items arose from those discussions?

MR BARR: Again, I will need to take that on notice. I appreciate that the Leader of the Opposition advised me in advance that the questions were pre-prepared and that she did not expect me to be able to answer questions on meetings I was not in, so I will take that on notice and will get the information.

MR MILLIGAN: Chief Minister, what further actions did you or Minister Steel take over the course of 2021 to satisfy yourselves that the funds were being spent appropriately?

MR BARR: Some of the detail Minister Steel has tabled. If there is anything further, I will get Minister Steel to provide that information.

Federal government—industrial relations

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety. Minister, what does the federal election result mean for Canberrans and their workplace safety and rights?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank the member for his question. It does bring about an opportunity, I think, for better conditions around work safety in the ACT. We will see, I think nationally, much better processes regarding workplace safety. I know that the previous federal minister was stymieing the conversations between states and the commonwealth on workplace safety. We have already seen some media regarding where this government wants to go; indeed looking after workers is a key priority for this government.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what other federal Labor government commitments will support Canberra workers and assist ACT government endeavours?

MR GENTLEMAN: We will see amendments to the workplace safety act. Of course, we see that the federal government are willing to treat Canberrans with respect. They are willing to support workers in the ACT and across Australia by backing minimum wage increases. Another commitment from the government that

will benefit all workers, including Canberrans, is childcare policy. This will make it easier for families to be present in the workforce and deal with the structural inequalities that still exist within our workplaces. The former government wanted to put kids on forklifts! This new government would rather see these kids in good child care so that their parents can choose to contribute to the economy and the workforce.

Our workplace safety laws in the ACT are based on model laws at the federal level. An agreement exists between the government about negotiation and policymaking around these laws. I look forward to the return of genuine consultation and cooperation with the new government on our workplace safety laws. The stronger and more relevant laws and regulations that will come from this process will benefit employers and workers in the ACT.

MR HANSON: Minister, in what way will the new government help teachers across the ACT who have been threatened and have faced assaults on a regular basis in our schools?

MR GENTLEMAN: I refer to what I have just said about better work health and safety laws across the nation—not just here in the ACT, and not simply in regard to teachers. All of the workforce should be able to come home safely at the end of the day, and that is what I think the federal government will lean to, and we will be supporting them during that process.

ACT Ambulance Services—staffing

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, recently we heard that firefighters, instead of an ambulance crew, were sent out to respond to a priority 1 call, due to shortages. The firefighters' union called it unprecedented, while the ambulance union states that the service is on a knife's edge. Minister, two years ago you promised additional staff so that minimum staffing levels as determined by the ACT Emergency Services Agency could be met. Minister, why weren't there enough ambulance staff available?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Milligan for the question; it is important. Of course, each year we have invested more in our emergency services in each of the first responder portfolios. I refer the member to the excellent interview of the commissioner just the other day on the radio. She said that the ACT Ambulance Service has an established reputation as a high-performing community-based service but, like many industries, is currently suffering from ongoing impacts associated with COVID-19. The ACT Emergency Services Agency recognises that there has been pressure on ambulance services nationally. The ACT is not exempt from this, and ACTAS is facing ongoing pressures and strain from the service.

With respect to this particular incident that occurred on Saturday 4 June there were some crewing issues, and, as a result of staff shortages, increasing workforce demands, fatigue and illness, it was decided to support our ambulance paramedics. The support provided by ACT Fire and Rescue was not an alternative to an ambulance; it was in conjunction, to ensure that care arrived as quickly as possible and to assist with frontline prioritising.

But in regard to supporting them in the funding sense, every single year we have added more funds and more resources for our frontline services, and every single year the Canberra Liberals have voted against it.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, when will you employ the new staff that you promised two years ago?

MR GENTLEMAN: We have been employing the staff. Of course, there have been recruit colleges through that period of time, particularly for Fire and Rescue and the ACT Ambulance Service. That continues to be ongoing. We have 53 additional paramedics, seven additional ambulances and powered stretchers in all emergency ambulance vehicles, which will reduce physical demands on paramedics and improve patient safety. That has occurred with the previous funding that has been delivered. In August 2020, the government announced funding of over \$45 million for the design and construction of a joint fire and ambulance station at Acton, and that is progressing as well. We have also announced \$14.1 million to continue funding the PACER operation over the next four years. That is health led, of course, but we support them with ambulance services and ACT Policing.

DR PATERSON: Today is Thank a First Responder Day. I was wondering if there were words from the ACT government to thank first responders in the ACT.

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Dr Paterson for reminding all of us that it is Thank a First Responder Day. It is very important for our Canberra community to thank their first responders. We, as a government, do. They go out of their way every day to provide safety for Canberrans. I and the chief officers today have put out some social media thanking our first responders. Can I also say that we thank not just our first responders but their families as well, because they are the ones who have to manage the shift work responsibilities that our staff have and sometimes the difficult situations that they go through. So, thank you to our first responders.

Planning—crematorium facilities

MS CLAY: My question is to the minister for planning. Minister, I have previously asked questions of you and the minister for city services about how many crematoria Canberra needs. The last response from the minister for city services said current cremation capacity was sufficient in Canberra and the proposed government facility in Southern Memorial Park will meet Canberra's future needs. Minister, can you tell me whether Canberra needs an additional privately-run crematorium near Callum Brae Nature Reserve, given that the city services minister says current and future government facilities will cover our needs?

MR GENTLEMAN: I am not sure if it is up to me to decide whether or not Canberra requires a further crematorium. With regard to planning and land management, there is an active development application for this project. In that sense, I would not be able to comment while that application is active with the independent Planning and Land Authority.

MS CLAY: Minister, what planning tools are available to government to ensure that Canberra does not get an oversupply of crematoria?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Clay for the question. I guess, as we develop the city, we look at town centres and the responsibility of government to ensure that outcomes in those town centres and geographical areas have all the community facilities that are required by that group. That is normally formed in the estate development plans for those areas, such as shopping centres and community facilities. In that regard, I guess the planning authority would have a view as to this particular facility. As I said, though, there is an active DA so I will not be commenting particularly on the details of it.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, would a planning review ensure Canberra gets the crematoria it needs where it needs them?

MR GENTLEMAN: I think we will see that as we go to the detail stage in looking at district planning. At the moment the act is in play and people are making comment on that, which has been very well received at this point; the commentary has been well received by the Planning and Land Authority. I am looking forward to that going through and the presentation of the bill again to the Assembly in the not too distant future. We will see how we go through the feedback from the Canberra community on the district planning matters.

Emergency services—staffing

MR MILLIGAN: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, in the last two years emergency services have seen a nine per cent and 15 per cent increase in administrative and executive staff respectively, yet there have been only a seven per cent and a five per cent increase in ambulance and Fire & Rescue officers. Minister, why has more attention not been paid to increasing frontline staff?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Milligan for the question. I reject the premise of the question. There has been an increased focus on frontline staff. As I mentioned earlier on, the funding that we put through in concurrent budgets has added significant resources to ESA, ACTAS, Fire & Rescue and our other emergency services, including ACT Policing, to ensure that we can recruit. There has been active recruitment going on, and not just normal recruitment either, because we are finding it difficult to get some staff for frontline services. We have been looking at lateral recruitment, too, from other jurisdictions, which has had some success.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, why are office staff being prioritised over frontline staff when there is an expected increase in demand due to winter staffing and COVID?

MR GENTLEMAN: As I said in my previous answer, it is not the case. Our priority is certainly on frontline staff. The agreement with firefighters was for 99 new firefighters over the forward years. That is an extraordinary agreement, an extraordinary EBA for Australia, I think. You can see the outcome from that, with the secretary of the Firefighters Union going nationally, telling other states and jurisdictions how good the ACT has been to them in making this arrangement and recruiting firefighters for the future.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, where else is money being spent within the services, rather than on frontline crew?

MR GENTLEMAN: It is usually capital expenditure: new stations, new fire trucks, new ambulances and, as I said, electric stretchers. We were one of the first jurisdictions to ensure that we could support the needs of ambulance officers in the workplace by using new technologies. When we look at supporting the staff on the ground, I think that new technologies are supportive of that. At the same time, we are making sure that we recruit new officers, not just to take up the positions of those people who are retiring but to increase the broader strength of our first-line responders.

Canberra Hospital—alleged bullying

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, I refer to reports from the cardiology department in the Canberra Hospital that state that “staff within Canberra Hospital’s cardiology department have reported shocking behaviours from some colleagues, including swearing, screaming, kicking doors and throwing objects”. The report also states that the behaviour included “allegedly consistent bullying of trainees, nurses, allied health and administration teams for, in some cases, more than a decade”. Minister, we are aware that some staff have been stood down recently, but why was this behaviour allowed to continue for over a decade?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Castley for the question. I do thank her for acknowledging that action is being taken in relation to these matters. Ms Castley would be aware that in 2018 there was a significant review of culture, and the need for reform in culture and to improve the culture across ACT public health services. That is a process that we have been taking very seriously. There has been a range of work underway, both across territory-wide health services to establish frameworks for action and also deep dives into those areas that have been identified as having particular culture challenges associated with them. This is detailed work that needs to be done in order to support the action that might be taken in response to these issues.

Ms Castley is right; in some circumstances these have been longstanding issues. There has been, for various reasons, historical reluctance to take action against some people, particularly where those people are senior figures. I hasten to add that I am not commenting on any individual matters in relation to this. The message that the Canberra Health Services CEO has been sending to staff, through the actions that have recently been taken, is that these actions will no longer be tolerated. Inconsistency with the values of the organisation is no longer acceptable in Canberra Health Services, and they will not just be talking the talk; they will be walking the walk. I think the CEO has been very clear about that. But the process itself needs to be fair, and it needs to be underpinned by those very detailed investigations that have occurred in a number of areas where those challenges have been identified.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, are there any reports of similar behaviour in other departments and, going back to my initial question, why was it allowed to continue for a decade?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I think I answered Ms Castley’s previous question. As I

have indicated, and as the freedom of information request has responded to—and it has been reported in the media—there has also been some work in relation to the intensive care unit at Canberra Hospital. It has actually been very publicised and known through the culture review process that there were particular areas that were variously identified as hotspots or areas of concern, where there were those deep dives that were occurring. There was that very detailed work that was occurring with those teams to understand what the fundamental basis of those culture issues were. There were a range of things that have been determined through those processes, and work with those individual teams to improve that culture.

I also want to say that there are areas of Canberra Health Services and areas of Calvary, our health services generally, that have outstanding culture. One of the things that has been done through the culture review and through responding to the culture surveys that have been undertaken is to identify not only those areas that clearly have a problem, where they might be in a culture of blame, but also those areas that are in a culture of success—as well as what we can learn from those areas, and how those staff and the people and leaders in those areas can share their experiences of how they are building a strong and positive culture across our organisations.

That has been the exact work that we have been doing in response to the culture review, and in response to the surveys that have been undertaken. The survey that was undertaken in November last year had the best overall outcome for Canberra Health Services that has ever been achieved, since these surveys commenced in the mid-2000s. So we are on an upward trajectory, but we do know that we still have a long way to go.

MR CAIN: Minister, apart from the perpetrators of inappropriate behaviour, what are the consequences for the managers who allowed this behaviour to continue?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: It is very difficult to respond to a question like that, which specifically seems to be in relation to an individual area of the organisation. As I have just indicated, in each of these different areas there are different reasons that poor culture has developed and continued over time. Obviously, management has a key role to play in addressing those issues. Mr Peffer has been clear that no-one in the organisation is too senior to face the consequences if there is poor behaviour occurring in their particular area and they are in some way responsible for that.

Federal government—child care

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Early Childhood Development. Minister, how will the federal Labor government's plan for cheaper early learning positively impact Canberra families?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Orr for the question. It has been a particularly challenging couple of years for Canberra families, and one of the major cost-of-living challenges is for families with children and their fees. For many families this cost locks them out of accessing important learning at a crucial stage of a child's development. We all know that education does not kick in just at school. From the moment a child is born their learning journey begins, and early childhood plays a critical role in that. The new federal government, led by Anthony Albanese, has made a series of commitments to

reduce the cost of early learning, making it accessible for more families. The federal Labor government is committed to lifting the maximum childcare subsidy rate to 90 per cent for families for the first child in care; to increasing childcare subsidy rates for every family with one child in care earning less than \$530,000 in household income; to keeping higher childcare subsidy rates for the second and additional child in care; and to extending the increased subsidy to outside school hours care.

The federal government will also have the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission design a price regulation mechanism to drive out-of-pocket expenses down in the long term. The Productivity Commission will conduct a comprehensive review of the sector, with the aim of implementing a universal 90 per cent subsidy for all families. This will be an approximately \$5.4 billion investment, starting from July 2023. The impacts of this commitment will mean that more Canberra families will have access to early learning for their children and will support workforce participation for parents and carers. This will ensure that more children have a great beginning to their life-long education.

MS ORR: Minister, how does the Federal Labor Government's commitment to cheaper early learning complement ACT government initiatives in this area?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Orr for the supplementary question. The new federal government has committed to developing and implementing a whole range of government early-years strategies to create a new integrated approach to the early years. The strategy will develop a program of action and develop better outcomes for Australian families. This complements the approach that the ACT government has taken in setting up its own early childhood strategy, Set up for Success. Underpinning the ACT government's strategy is a commitment to give every child a fair start to life.

No child should miss out on early childhood education because it is not affordable. The ACT government has committed to work towards 15 hours per week, 600 hours per year, of free universal early childhood education for three-year-old children. This commitment is beginning with access for 500 three-year-olds, prioritising children and families most in need, as well as 15 hours per week of Koori preschool for 100 three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The strategy also importantly recognises the value of early childhood educators as professionals who play a critical role in learning and development outcomes. Actions include developing educator professional standards and providing training to educators to support children affected by trauma. Every child has their own story. Different lived experiences and circumstances shape their stories and impact on their future years. A commitment from both the federal and ACT governments to ensure equal access to education right at the start will set up children with the tools and support that they need.

DR PATERSON: Minister, how does reducing the cost of early learning contribute to gender equality?

MS BERRY: I thank Dr Paterson for the supplementary question. The commitment to reduce the cost of early learning will make it more accessible for Canberra families because it has flow-on effects, not just for the child's development but for creating a

more gender-equal community. Across the country, women continue to do the majority of unpaid domestic labour and care-related work, and the impacts of the pandemic have exacerbated this gender imbalance. Often for households where one of the parents or carers is a woman, she will forego extra paid work to stay at home with children. There are many compounding reasons for this. Firstly, it speaks to the traditional and harmful gender roles which form an expectation that women will be the primary carers. It also goes to the fact that women are more heavily concentrated in insecure, lower-paid work, preferencing the work of the male parent for the financial security of the household. This means that making early learning more affordable will not force families to make a choice about foregoing work to do the unpaid work for caring and educating children.

This supports workforce participation and allows more women to pursue their paid careers. Ensuring that women can equally participate in a workforce contributes to creating a more gender-equal community, where they are not disadvantaged by caring responsibilities. It is great to have this commitment from the federal Labor government to make early learning more affordable, which will have massive flow-on effects for Canberra families and the community more broadly.

Canberra Hospital—cardiology department staffing

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the health minister. The *Canberra Times* reported on 5 June that staff from Canberra Hospital's cardiology department have reported some doctors rostered on for duty were often not actually in the hospital and would not always answer their phones. The article said several senior staff across multiple departments have been let go over the past six months. Minister, if doctors rostered on for duty in the cardiology department are often not actually in the hospital, where are they?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I cannot possibly fathom how Ms Castley would imagine that I could answer that question. What I will do, to help her out, is to provide a little bit of background on the cardiology issue.

In relation to cardiology, a report in 2020 known as the Johns review was largely commissioned to review the services provided by the cardiology unit with a view to improving quality of service delivery to the community. Following discussion with a large number of CHS employees, the review also provided some observations regarding the culture of the unit. A project manager resource was appointed to facilitate the implementation of the report, with most recommendations having been implemented. That is really around the quality issues that were identified.

In reviewing the cultural aspects of the report, the interim unit director at the time, Dr Peter French, concluded that behaviours had not changed sufficiently, with several reports of poor behaviours. For reference, Dr French's observations are outlined on pages 173 to 205 of the freedom of information documents that have been released and uploaded on the FOI register.

Immediately following Dr French's observations, Ms Barbara Deegan was commissioned to undertake a review of the culture within cardiology. Ms Deegan delivered her report identifying a range of specific concerns pertaining to four

cardiologists—

Ms Castley: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, the question was about where are the doctors. If the minister does not know, I am happy for her to take that on notice.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think she responded to that at the very beginning of her answer.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Madam Speaker, I am absolutely not going to take that question on notice, because there is no way that I could answer a question on where those doctors were. It is ridiculous!

MADAM SPEAKER: There is no point of order. Continue. You have 10 seconds left, Minister.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Thank you. Ms Deegan delivered her report identifying a range of specific conditions pertaining to four cardiologists who have been subsequently suspended (*Time expired.*)

MS CASTLEY: How many times have doctors rostered on for duty in the cardiology department not been in the hospital, and what action has been taken?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: That is a question that possibly Canberra Health Services will be able to provide advice about, so I will take it on notice.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members! Ms Stephen-Smith, Ms Lee, enough.

MR CAIN: Minister, how many senior staff have been let go over the past six months? Surely you can get the answer to that question.

MADAM SPEAKER: Without a snide addition to your question, Mr Cain.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am very happy to take that question on notice. It is something that I will be able to get the answer to.

Mr Parton: Excellent.

MADAM SPEAKER: Members! Honestly.

Mr Parton: I am just praising the minister.

MADAM SPEAKER: Don't you start, Mr Parton, or you will be on that short-list as well.

Sport—Amaroo tennis centre

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Minister, can you please provide an update on the project to deliver a new tennis centre in the

suburb of Amaroo, in my electorate?

MS BERRY: I am very happy to talk about the Labor commitment to invest in a new tennis facility in partnership with Tennis ACT and Tennis Australia. I know it is of interest to all Yerrabi members, including Mr Braddock, Ms Orr and Mr Pettersson. And of course, the project aims to ultimately achieve 10 full-sized courts, hot shot courts, a hitting wall, LED lighting, parking and a pavilion.

This project is a commitment that I know that the Gungahlin community have been waiting for and, in fact, I know that Nick Kyrgios, who was at the announcement for this facility, he is keeping a very close eye on the announcements for this facility and he is definitely holding this government to account for when he gets the chance to take Mr Barr on again, on the tennis courts, once they are created! And as soon as I have more detail to provide to the Assembly on the development and planning of this process, I will be able to provide more information.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, are you able to provide an estimate as to when the courts might be open for public use?

MS BERRY: Well the planning work has commenced as far as the suitability of the site and the due diligence. But on when the site will open, I do not have that advice at the moment. But once it becomes available, I will definitely provide that.

MR DAVIS: Minister, into the future, how will you ensure the fair, equitable and needs based distribution of funding across all community sports clubs in the ACT?

MS BERRY: Well thank you, Mr Davis, that is a bit of a hypothetical question that I probably cannot look into my crystal ball and assess that. However, of course, announcements are made during the budget process and we will make sure that we are carefully responding to the sports needs in our community.

Knowing that the ACT continues to have the highest sports and recreation participation rates in the country, we know that there are needs across our community, as that participation grows and continues to grow, and in fact, COVID meant that even more people were getting out and participating in sports that they had not before.

And so, we know that more Canberrans than ever before have wanted to get out to a range of different sports and recreation activities across our community and we have always been able to maintain great facilities here in the ACT and will continue to make sure that we do that.

Federal government—sports infrastructure

DR PATERSON: Minister, how will the ACT government work with the new Albanese Labor government on delivering sports infrastructure in Canberra?

MS BERRY: Well this is one question that I thank Dr Paterson for and it goes to, I guess, some of the questions that—the question that Mr Davis asked about how we can continue to provide sporting facilities here in the ACT and working with a new Albanese Labor government, we will be able to see an allocation—a fairer allocation

of national infrastructure spending to co-invest in this city.

For our local sports clubs and teams, the lack of investment that we have seen in assets sitting either without the proper maintenance, making them unavailable for use by our elite teams. On the eve of the election, we finally saw a recognition of the previous coalition government's responsibilities to maintain its own asset with a commitment to fund repairs and upgrades at the AIS arena.

Federal Labor made a \$15 million commitment to repair, renovate and reopen the arena, something the ACT government has long been advocating for since its sudden closure in 2020. While it has served out community well, being utilised as a vaccine hub through the COVID-19 pandemic, I know Canberrans, including myself—and I know Ms Lawder as well as an avid basketball fan—cannot wait for the works to commence so that we can go back to cheering on teams like the Canberra Capitals at their home venue.

The new Albanese government is also looking to Canberra's sporting future with a \$750,000 commitment to the University of Canberra's long-term plan and vision to develop a sports hub. This is something the ACT government will continue to work with the University of Canberra on, and it was great to be able to be there to the launch of their strategic plan.

It is wonderful to finally have a federal government that can share this vision for Canberrans, even on the local level, federal Labor committed \$800,000 to a tennis court in Canberra upgrades with four new acrylic hard courts at the Weston Creek Tennis Club. With \$100,000 co-contribution from the ACT government—(*Time expired.*)

DR PATERSON: Minister, what do these commitments mean for local sport in the ACT?

MS BERRY: Well it means that finally, we have a government that is listening and caring about the nation's capital and its citizens. The commitments from the new Labor government will make a significant difference to our sports infrastructure in the ACT, renovating and reopening the AIS is long overdue. When the arena was closed in 2020, it left Australia's most successful sports team, the Canberra Capitals, and many other sports teams, without a large venue to play in. I have raised the future of the AIS with every single sports minister since I have been in this role, and when the decision was made to close it without notice in 2020, I had multiple meetings and correspondence with former Minister Colbeck and the Sports Commission to get a resolution for the arena. Now with the new federal government, this work can get done.

Not only will it provide a place for the Capitals and the Giants to play, but the arena is also a central part of Canberra's events and entertainment scene. These additional investments on the local level will provide a boost to participation and access to spaces in the medium to long term.

The ACT government continues to work with the University of Canberra on their vision, the University of Canberra has been an integral part of the Canberra Capitals

and boost support and investment for basketball in the ACT. Investment in Canberra's tennis infrastructure is welcomed in a sport that has seen increased growth which has, of course, been inspired by our incredible Aussie stars like Ash Barty, Dylan Alcott and Canberran Nick Kyrgios.

With more courts and better availability of courts through the very successful book-a-court system, tennis has never been more accessible. The commitments from the federal government, coupled with the ACT's commitments around expansions and improvements to tennis infrastructure in Gungahlin and Woden will see more court time for players across Canberra.

These investments will improve the provision of sports facilities for our elite team sporting teams and all players across the ACT.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how will these investments connect with the ACT government's commitments to sports infrastructure?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Pettersson for his question. The ACT government has been delivering on sporting infrastructure priorities for the community with these new investments from the Albanese Labor government, these are most welcomed and they are a number of projects completed or underway that I want to highlight that support overall sports infrastructure in the ACT.

In terms of our pools, the new \$36 million award-winning Stromlo Pool opened in 2020. I encourage anyone who has not had a chance to get up there and check it out, it is quite a remarkable building with a 50-metre pool and program pool, leisure and toddler pools, as well as a splash park. The facility also has a dedicated gym and crèche, and some of the best views in the ACT.

In addition to commitments at the Woden Creek Tennis Club, progress on the Amaroo Tennis Centre is continuing. This 10-court facility will be a welcome addition to the tennis facilities on the northside. We saw the recent funding which I have talked about earlier, with the North Woden Tennis Club, and work is continuing, of course, on the Throsby home of football. This \$33.5 million investment in a new facility in Canberra's north will support a range of community and high-performance programs for capital football.

One final project I want to mention is the new ice sport facility proposal for Tuggeranong. I know members are very interested in this development and I look forward to the delivery of this project. I can advise the Assembly that a proposal has been received and is being considered by the government and I hope to be able to share more news on this project soon. I look forward to the delivery of these important projects and a different approach when it comes to investments in Canberra from the Albanese-Labor government.

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