



**QUESTION TIME**  
OF THE  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
FOR THE  
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**HANSARD**

Edited proof transcript

Thursday, 9 June 2022

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*.

**Thursday, 9 June 2022**

Ministerial arrangements .....	1
Questions without notice:	
Canberra Institute of Technology—procurement.....	1
Canberra Institute of Technology—procurement.....	1
Canberra Institute of Technology—procurement.....	2
Canberra Institute of Technology—procurement.....	2
Health—investment .....	3
Energy—cost .....	6
Canberra Institute of Technology—procurement.....	7
Federal election—impact on the ACT.....	8
Youth justice—Functional Family Therapy program .....	10
Planning—gas-free suburbs.....	12
Waste—Mugga Lane Resource Management Centre .....	12
Government—business support grants .....	13
Mulligans flat—Wildbark Learning Centre .....	15
Carers—Carers Recognition Act implementation.....	16

## **Ministerial arrangements**

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (2.00): Minister Steel is absent, for the reasons I outlined yesterday, so I will assist members with questions in his portfolios.

## **Questions without notice**

### **Canberra Institute of Technology—procurement**

**MS LEE:** My question is to the Chief Minister, standing in for Minister Steel. Yesterday the minister tabled correspondence from the CIT board chair dated 5 March 2021. When that advice was received, did Minister Steel ask why, substantially, the same services appeared to be delivered from contract to contract but the costs kept escalating?

**MR BARR:** I will raise that matter with the minister and report back to the Assembly.

**MS LEE:** Did the minister ask why key information was redacted in these contracts, knowing that it is not standard practice to do that in ACT government consultancy contracts?

**MR BARR:** I understand that redaction for FOI purposes, for commercial-in-confidence reasons, is, in fact, standard practice. I will take further advice on the specifics of the question in providing further information, as I have undertaken to do in relation to the first part of the question and, I will speculate in advance, in relation to the supplementary question that follows.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Given the unusual nature of these contracts, did Minister Steel find it odd that the consultant continued to be awarded new contracts, as though the procurement process was designed to deliver that outcome?

**MR BARR:** It is borderline asking me to express an opinion on what another minister's opinion might have been. I will take the question in the spirit in which it was brought forward and will respond in accordance with the other questions.

### **Canberra Institute of Technology—procurement**

**MS LEE:** Chief Minister, I refer to the correspondence from the CIT board chair dated 5 March 2021, tabled yesterday. The minister noted he had written to the board chair because he received a media inquiry. Other than that media inquiry, did the minister receive any representations suggesting there was questionable contracting going on at CIT? If yes, what actions were taken by the minister or his office?

**MR BARR:** Again I will need to confirm with the minister's office whether any other representations were received. Can I confirm: outside media?

**Ms Lee:** Yes.

**MR BARR:** I will take that on notice.

**MS LEE:** In line with that, were any representations received by the minister about this matter from people who worked at CIT? If so, what actions did he or his office take?

**MR BARR:** That is a secondary question. There are two categories, just to be clear—that there were other representations from people who were not the media and did not work at CIT, and the second question is about any representations from anyone who worked at CIT.

**Ms Lee:** Yes.

**MR BARR:** I will take those on notice, on behalf of the minister.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Chief Minister, has Minister Steel ever received any representations suggesting there is systemic bullying and a culture of cover-up at CIT? If yes, what actions were taken by the minister or his office?

**MR BARR:** Again, perhaps a not unfamiliar response to this supplementary, similar to the others: I will take it on notice.

### **Canberra Institute of Technology—procurement**

**MS LEE:** Yesterday, the minister tabled the correspondence from the CIT board chair, dated 5 March 2021. Page 5 of that advice refers to two off-site CEO professional development sessions. Can you confirm that they were one-on-one sessions between the CIT CEO and a consultant?

**MR BARR:** I presume the question was to me; it did not come with an introduction. I will take that on notice.

**MS LEE:** Where were these off-site CEO sessions, and what were the travel expenses, including fuel, flights, hotels and the like that were incurred?

**MR BARR:** I will take that on notice as well.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Have there been any off-site CEO sessions held that were not mentioned in this correspondence or since this advice was received?

**MR BARR:** Again, I will take that on notice.

### **Canberra Institute of Technology—procurement**

**MS LEE:** My question is to the Chief Minister, standing in for the Minister for Skills, in relation to the correspondence tabled—and it is dated 5 March—from the CIT chair. The contracts referred to in that document total \$3.27 million. The document clearly shows that most of the outputs produced by the consultant were mentoring, guidance and workshops, but large-scale organisational transformation, which is what CIT is claiming these services were for, requires a lot more than mentoring, guidance

and workshops. Did the minister ask the board chair any further questions about whether mentoring, guidance and workshops alone were sufficient to deliver large-scale organisational transformation?

**MR BARR:** That seems to be a very specific question around what the minister may or may not have asked that I am not privy to so, again, I will need to seek that information from the minister.

**MS LEE:** Thank you. Did the minister ask any questions about the qualifications and experience of the consultant and their demonstrated ability to provide large-scale organisational transformation services?

**MR BARR:** Again, I will need to seek some information from the minister in relation to the question. I would note, though, that the line of questioning here suggests that the minister would be almost, in effect, making a procurement decision. I am not sure that it would be standard practice for a minister to be interrogating that level of detail in relation to any procurement.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MR BARR:** The line of questioning is veering into a space that I think is inviting the suggestion that ministers that are involved in assessing tenders and assessing the qualifications of people.

**Ms Lee:** There's a reason why he asked for information.

**MR BARR:** I have listened to the questions in silence and endeavoured to answer them. If you would let me make a response—we are only 50 seconds in—we would be courteous; it is not too much to ask, I would hope.

I understand the questions. I understand the line of questioning. I will get the information for the members, but I just make the observation that, as each question has gone by, it is veering more and more into a question of the minister making procurement decisions. That is not what happens, and you know that.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Did Minister Steel ask questions about whether mentoring, guidance and running workshops was value for money and worth the expenditure of \$3.27 million?

**MR BARR:** I think from what the minister has already outlined and the correspondence that is publicly available, questions were asked—that is clear—and they have been outlined and tabled in this place.

### **Health—investment**

**DR PATERSON:** My question is to the Minister for Health. What steps has the ACT government taken to plug the gap made by the former Liberal-Nationals government's years of underinvestment in Medicare, making it harder and harder to see a GP?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Dr Paterson for her question. As members here

know, the former federal Liberal government did spend a decade neglecting primary health care here in the ACT and around the country. Primary care is a key responsibility of the commonwealth government. They have policy and funding responsibility for primary care, including setting the rebate amount offered to patients for seeing a GP.

We know that the ACT has the lowest overall rates of bulk-billing GP services in Australia. These matters were made worse and harder for Canberrans by the former federal Liberal government freezing the indexation rate of Medicare items and making it harder for primary care to operate here in the ACT, particularly for bulk-billing practices, and then specifically targeting the ACT, cutting the bulk-billing incentive for those who need bulk-billing most, from 1 January 2020. Despite repeated representations, that was never reinstated.

As the federal Liberals continued to undermine primary health care, the ACT government stepped in to fill some of these gaps. Over the past decade the ACT government has provided \$12 million in incentives to support the GP workforce; infrastructure funding through a competitive grants process; an intern placement program; scholarships; and services to assist GPs to attend housebound and aged-care patients. We have run a GP bulk-billing round, supporting capital works for primary care services here in the ACT, and we have delivered targeted, vital support for those who need it most, through specialised primary care services delivered by Directions, Companion House and Junction Youth Health Service.

The ACT government has not only stepped up and filled this gap left by a decade of neglect and cuts to Medicare from the federal Liberal government; we have built a network of five walk-in centres, providing free nurse-led health care as an alternative, for non-urgent injury and illness.

**DR PATERSON:** Minister, how will the Albanese Labor government's commitments to deliver better access to general practice and primary care support the ACT health system?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Dr Paterson for the supplementary. As I outlined in my previous answer, the ACT and, indeed, Australians have weathered a decade of cuts and neglect by the former Liberal government, severely impacting Canberrans' ability to see a GP when they need to.

These cuts have led to people delaying seeing a doctor. We know that from Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data. This impacts people's health. They delayed purchasing medicines because PBS prices were too high, leaving illness and chronic disease until their only option was the public hospital system. I do not for one second want to ignore the unbelievable dedication and skill that our GPs across the ACT deliver. They know that there are better times ahead for them, with the Albanese Labor government's commitment to invest \$750 million to deliver the outcomes of the Strengthening Medicare Taskforce.

That is \$750 million from the Albanese Labor government to deliver a strategy that the former minister, Minister Hunt, delivered but never put any funding behind. One of Minister Hunt's favourite approaches was to make a big bang announcement about

a strategy and then move on to the next thing. Sounds familiar. Former Prime Minister Morrison also had that approach to things.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members!

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** The focus on better management of chronic disease, improved access to GP-led multidisciplinary teams and greater affordability will integrate well with the work the ACT government is doing. This work will shift the management of complex care into the community, where our health system can support and work with people with individual GP teams to deliver better outcomes, better care, closer to home. The reduction in the cost per pharmacy script by \$12.50, from \$42.50 to \$30, will also go a long way in helping people with the cost of living and reduce the number of people delaying purchasing medicines.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Minister, given the federal Labor government's commitment to strengthening Medicare and improving healthcare delivery across Australia, how else will the ACT benefit from this new focus and prioritisation?

**Mr Parton:** Great question, Michael. Great question! Well done!

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I agree. Great question, Mr Pettersson. Thank you very much. We also welcome the commitment to deliver a Medicare urgent care clinic to Canberra's south side. This clinic will relieve pressure on our emergency departments and deliver bulk-billed care to those needing urgent care and after hours care, complementing our network of walk-in centres.

I suspect that members would be aware of a very big issue: the mess that the previous Liberal government has left in aged care and the National Disability Insurance Scheme, and the impacts that that has had on public hospitals across Australia. These impacts were so significant that all state and territory health ministers, Liberal and Labor, wrote to the then federal Liberal government with sensible solutions to address the bed block caused by their mismanagement of aged care and the NDIS.

I was very heartened, throughout the last year and through the election campaign, to see the Albanese Labor government's suite of commitments to properly responding to the aged-care royal commission's recommendations and to go about fixing the NDIS. These are landmark Labor reforms. The Albanese Labor government has committed \$2½ billion in aged-care funding across the forward estimates to lift care equality standards and improve health outcomes, including making it mandatory to have a registered nurse on site 24 hours a day in residential aged-care facilities.

To ensure that the ACT has the workforce in the future to meet this commitment to aged care, the new government has committed up to \$23 million to the national nurse and midwife health service. This service will provide current ACT nurses with personalised and professional support services, enabling our nursing workforce to continue caring for Canberrans. This will be a critical contribution to improving aged care and relieving the pressure on the ACT hospital system.

I look forward to discussing public hospital funding reform as well with the new health minister, as, I know, do all of my state and territory health minister colleagues after the former government refused to engage on this important topic.

### **Energy—cost**

**MR DAVIS:** My question is to the Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction. Minister, I understand that yesterday you went to the national energy ministers meeting and discussed the nation's energy crisis. What has caused surging prices in energy across the country and how is the ACT different?

**MR RATTENBURY:** Yes, the energy ministers did meet virtually yesterday afternoon, in an online meeting. It was good to see a direction from the new federal minister indicating his desire to work in a collaborative manner with the states and territories, and his desire to share information and have more frequent meetings. It has been a long time since there has been an energy ministers meeting, as the commonwealth had not convened one for some period of time. I am encouraged by the direction shown by the new federal energy minister and the response from all states and territories, who indicated a desire to work in that spirit and to address the serious issues facing Australia's energy sector.

In terms of why we are seeing price rises, this was obviously a key issue for energy ministers yesterday, to look at what measures could be taken in the short term, and to understand the state of the market. We were briefed extensively by the energy regulators. Some of the factors that have helped to create this situation in Australia are that Australia's coal-fired power generators have been failing more frequently. This has meant that they are not available and it has drawn more demand for gas generators. Australia's gas supply has been running low, and there has been no domestic gas reserve.

Of course, the global geopolitics of the war in the Ukraine has meant we have seen a significant increase in the price of fossil fuels around the world, where Australia continues to export. Because the European countries are seeking to extricate themselves from Russian gas contracts, we are seeing upward pressure on gas prices, and Australia's gas producers are exporting it rather than using it for domestic reasons. Similarly, there is the cold weather. All of these factors together have seen a significant price increase in Australia's wholesale power prices, which are now more than five times last year's average price. The ACT has been insulated from that, and I think many members know why.

**MR DAVIS:** Minister, can you explain how the ACT's nation-leading renewable energy policies came to be?

**MR RATTENBURY:** This stems back to the decision by the ACT in 2010 to legislate a greenhouse gas reduction target. This was a matter in the parliamentary agreement from 2008. The Assembly conducted an inquiry, and we agreed to adopt a 40 per cent emissions reduction target. That necessitated finding the policies that would deliver an outcome which saw us move to take a series of large-scale reverse auction contracts, which not only delivered 100 per cent renewable electricity for the ACT but—at a time when the federal government, under Prime Minister Abbott, was

actively undermining the renewables sector—it actually propped up the renewables sector in this country. It maintained jobs, it created an investment path and it meant that the industry was able to keep developing in Australia so that they could accelerate in the ways that they have, where wind and solar are the cheapest new forms of electricity development in this country.

Those contracts have stood the ACT in very good stead. Members will recall that back then, way back in 2012-13, the government estimated the price impact that this would have for the ACT. That has proved to be the case. The modelling has stood up very well against time. Of course, this week we have seen that those contracts were the difference. They are doing a very effective job, in this context of extremely high wholesale prices, of insulating ACT consumers and ensuring that this year electricity prices will not be a cost pressure for people living in the ACT. Our bills, on average, will be at least \$800 cheaper than for people living in New South Wales.

**MS CLAY:** Minister, how is the ACT government helping Canberra households and businesses to reduce their costs from fossil fuel and electricity?

**MR RATTENBURY:** This is certainly something that people have had in mind, because electricity is a really important cost component of people's budgets, be it a household or a small business. Aside from the insulation that our contracts are providing this year, the ACT government has a range of programs to help both households and businesses to invest in energy efficiency. That can be through upgrading to more modern energy-efficient electric devices or transitioning from gas to electricity.

Programs such as the Energy Efficiency Improvement Scheme enable people to get free upgrades of their premises. There is the Sustainable Home Advice Program. The new Sustainable Household Scheme provides interest-free loans. The Business Energy and Water Program offers up to a \$5,000 rebate. We have seen literally thousands and thousands of Canberra households and businesses take advantage of these programs, which help to reduce their energy costs.

One of my favourites is the solar for low income program. Low income households who hold a government concession card can get both a rebate and an interest-free loan that enables them to put solar on their property for a zero up-front cost, and they are saving around \$1,000 a year, on average, on their electricity bills. This has an extraordinarily significant impact on low income households, and it has an ongoing impact. For the first couple of years they will pay back their loan; after that, they are simply getting significant electricity savings. We also have the \$50 million program for public housing and low income households, which will also reduce energy bills.

Whilst the energy story is reasonable good in the ACT this year, we also have in place programs that will help people to keep their energy bills down in the long term.

### **Canberra Institute of Technology—procurement**

**MS LEE:** My question is to the Chief Minister standing in for the Minister for Skills, in reference to the correspondence from the CIT board chair of 5 March 2021, which was tabled yesterday. Having received the advice from the board chair that he

requested, was the minister satisfied that these procurements represented value for money?

**MR BARR:** That would be seeking an expression of opinion from the minister. I will take the question on notice, but it may well be that the line of questioning is seeking opinion.

**MS LEE:** Did the minister discuss any of the Government Procurement Board advice regarding these contracts with the CIT board chair or, indeed, any other government official?

**MR BARR:** I will need to take that on notice.

**DR PATERSON:** A supplementary. My question is for the Chief Minister. How many members are there on the CIT board?

**MR BARR:** From recollection, the act requires between seven and 11 or 12, and I think there might be about nine, but let me double-check that and I can confirm that for the member.

### **Federal election—impact on the ACT**

**MR PETTERSSON:** My question is to the Minister for the Arts. Minister, how will the ACT arts sector benefit from the election of the new federal Labor government?

**MS CHEYNE:** I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. The ACT has always been a place for people who embrace arts, culture and creativity. Canberrans fundamentally understand the importance of arts and culture for individual and collective wellbeing, as well as the enormous economic impacts of these sectors. We know this because the statistics speak for themselves. Prior to the pandemic, the ACT had the highest attendance rate at cultural venues and events and the highest cultural participation rates ahead of all other states and territories.

The new federal government also fundamentally understands the importance of arts and culture to our wellbeing and economy. In addition to several funding announcements, the federal Labor government has committed to the development and delivery of a national cultural policy that provides a broad but comprehensive roadmap for Australia's arts and culture that touches all areas of government. It was fantastic to see the new Minister for the Arts, Minister Burke, underline that in a statement he released last week, on his appointment.

Since the Abbott government abolished Australia's last cultural policy in 2013, which had also been established by Labor, the Australian arts sector has languished through almost a decade of inaction and neglect. Finally, arts and culture are back on the national agenda. These sectors, including in the ACT, will benefit from a national cultural policy that guides and coordinates action, from a government that understands the vital role of arts and culture for our wellbeing and the economy. I look forward to working with the federal government and will continue to advocate for ACT artists and organisations.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Minister, will your statement of ambition for the arts be affected by this change of government?

**MS CHEYNE:** I thank Mr Pettersson for the supplementary. The ACT government's statement of ambition for the arts and its three strategies to create, develop and promote provides a lens through which our short and medium-term decisions are made, such as acting as a framework for our new ACT arts policy and arts organisation funding model.

Now, more than ever, we have a federal government that shares the same values that underpin our ambition. Those values include understanding that the arts and culture sectors are much more than simply entertainment activities and hobby interests. There are intersectional impacts for health, wellbeing, education, trade and industrial relations, tourism and democracy. They are significant drivers of economic growth.

I am encouraged that the value our government places on artists as being part of our economy, driving economic development and growth in their own right, is shared by the new federal government. It became apparent how short-sighted the previous federal government was when it excluded Australian artists and creatives from income support schemes such as JobKeeper, despite relentless advocacy from the then opposition and industry bodies.

Our statement of ambition for the arts will be supported by the values we share with the federal government about the critical importance of cooperation, collaboration and dialogue between federal, state and territory counterparts. Most immediately, the federal government's commitment to a new cultural policy provides a long-awaited foundation for a better future for Australian artists and the sector at large. It will also provide a strong context for our ambition for the arts to position Canberra as Australia's arts capital.

**MS ORR:** Minister, what is an example of the new federal Labor government's commitment to our growing arts sector here in the ACT?

**MS CHEYNE:** I thank Ms Orr for the supplementary. As I mentioned earlier, the new federal government has made a commitment—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members!

**MS CHEYNE:** Thank you, Madam Speaker; this is important. The new federal government has made a commitment to embark on a thorough, nationwide consultation in each—

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Not again, Mr Hanson.

**MS CHEYNE:** state and territory to inform the national cultural policy. The ACT government, Mr Hanson, looks forward to contributing to the policy and

welcomes this direct engagement. I am also delighted to share that federal Labor—

**Mr Hanson:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order under standing order 42.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** That comments are to be addressed through the chair.

**Mr Hanson:** As the minister directly addressed me, I think she is breach of the standing orders.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson, sit down. The standing orders also say that there are to be no interjections, so next time you do, you will be warned. Ms Cheyne.

**MS CHEYNE:** Federal Labor has committed \$5 million to upgrade Gorman House Arts Centre ahead of its upcoming centenary in 2024. The heritage-listed Gorman House is a much-loved arts hub located on Ainslie Avenue in Braddon. ACT Labor committed \$8 million in the 2020 election for upgrades to Gorman House. This investment will enhance accessibility, safety and energy efficiency and deliver major heritage restorations.

An additional \$5 million from federal Labor will enable further upgrades to conserve heritage values and improve functionality at the complex, including fit-for-purpose, safe and inclusive workspaces for artists, as well as spaces for the community to experience arts activities.

### **Youth justice—Functional Family Therapy program**

**MRS KIKKERT:** Madam Speaker, my question is to the Assistant Minister for Families and Community Services. Minister, in annual reports hearings last year, you told me, “We needed to have programs like the Functional Family Therapy—Youth Justice pilot up and running.” Three months later you told this Assembly that this program was “a great example of investment in whole-of-family support for children and young people” and said, “I commit to working on diversion initiatives such as functional family therapy.” Then in estimates hearings, an official said, “It is an incredibly successful program.”

Minister, we have been told that you have decided to provide no further funding for this program after August. Is this true, and, if not, what exactly is happening with the program, going forward?

**MS DAVIDSON:** I thank Mrs Kikkert for the question. The program that she is talking about, the Functional Family Therapy—Youth Justice program, was a pilot program. No such decision about ongoing funding, or not, for the program has been made as yet. As with all pilot programs, the pilot runs for a period of time and then there is an evaluation of the program. The Functional Family Therapy—Youth Justice program is an evidenced-based program that achieves high program completion rates, with children and young people remaining at home, rather than entering the statutory care system, and staying engaged with their schooling, wherever possible. It engages with a quite diverse group of clients.

In early 2021 the pilot program was established through an initial allocation of \$380,000 for a six-month period from the confiscated assets trust. A further six-month funding of \$380,000 was also obtained through the confiscated assets trust program to support a continuation of the pilot. In order for a pilot to become an ongoing funded program, it would need to go through a business case process and a budget process.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Minister, what will happen to the at-risk young people in the Functional Family Therapy—Youth Justice program who will not be able to finish before funding runs out, and what will happen to the at-risk young people who are currently awaiting intake?

**MS DAVIDSON:** Thank you for the supplementary question. The Functional Family Therapy program is, as I was saying earlier, a pilot program. When a pilot program is established it has a known end date, and that impacts on the intake of new referrals into the program as the pilot program nears its end date. There are a number of other programs that are running through our youth justice services that will be able to support people, should they need ongoing support, after the pilot program has ended. I can provide some further details, if there are particular people that you are concerned about.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, when will you know whether this program is going to be continued or not and, if not, what program are you going to provide for at-risk young people?

**MS DAVIDSON:** Thank you for the question. Given that we are currently considering the service response to raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility, as well as a number of service initiatives that are ongoing through the Next Steps for Our Kids program, which Minister Stephen-Smith was talking about, both last week and in the papers that she tabled yesterday, there is quite a lot of work going on across a number of different programs to look at how we can better support young people and their families to have good outcomes, to be healthy and to engage in healthy behaviours. The Functional Family Therapy program is just one of a number of different programs that are being considered. Decisions will be made based on the evidence that will be part of the evaluation of that program.

**Mrs Kikkert:** A point of order, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mrs Kikkert.

**Mrs Kikkert:** The question was in regard to what are the other successful programs that are available instead of Functional Family Therapy. She just mentioned the program, but she did not say what they are.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** She made reference to a number of other programs.

**Mrs Kikkert:** She didn't say what they are.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mrs Kikkert, there is no point of order.

**Planning—gas-free suburbs**

**MS CLAY:** My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister, the SLA has three land releases at Turner, Holt central and Lawson. There are different words used in different websites and sales documents, but they all make reference to all-electric connections, with no gas, and EV charging units. Can you confirm that no fossil fuel gas will be connected at the SLA's releases at Turner Place, Holt central and the two blocks currently for sale in Lawson stage 2?

**MS BERRY:** Yes, I can.

**MS CLAY:** Can you confirm that electric vehicle charging facilities will be provided in all of these developments?

**MS BERRY:** I understand that that is the case, yes.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Minister, will all future SLA land releases require EV charging where parking is mandated, and require no new fossil fuel gas connections?

**MS BERRY:** That is a future consideration for the Suburban Land Agency. Of course, as the minister for suburban land development, ensuring that our future suburbs are sustainable, environmentally friendly and meet the government's purpose of moving towards zero emissions by 2045 is front of mind. However, those considerations will be made as land is released, particularly with regard to electric vehicle charging stations.

**Waste—Mugga Lane Resource Management Centre**

**MS LAWDER:** My question is for the Minister for Transport and City Services. Over the past few weeks my office has received a number of reports of an unpleasant odour emanating from the Mugga Lane Resource Management Centre area. One resident was told by Access Canberra on 23 March that there were works underway and that they were expected to be completed by 23 April. Another person, who complained last Friday, was told that there were works underway expected to be completed in early June. Minister, how many times do we have to go through this process of residents complaining, feeling fobbed off, and then finding out that there are works underway with flexible end dates?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Ms Cheyne.

**MS CHEYNE:** I think I can speak to the substance of this, if that is all right with members! What is currently occurring at the Mugga Lane tip is different to the previous issues that we have encountered in that there are essential land-fill gas works currently being undertaken which have the potential to generate odour. The EPA, as Ms Lawder flagged, is aware of the activity underway and the strategies that are being used by the contractors to reduce odour where possible. Works were to be completed by the end of April; however, due to the wet weather and then a change in construction methodology, works were delayed. The current round of trenching work commenced on 26 April and works, at the time that I got advice, were on track to be completed by the target completion date of 3 June, and all reasonable steps have been

undertaken to minimise the risk of odour transmission, including consideration of meteorological conditions.

The next round of works, which is a lateral well installation, are scheduled to commence on 27 June for completion in the first week of July. But this work is subject to EPA's approval. I understand that Access Canberra is continuing to engage with community members about this, but if community members are concerned about odour, they need to make that report as soon as possible so that the EPA can investigate the matter while the alleged odour is still present.

**MS LAWDER:** I have a supplementary question. Minister, how many complaints has Access Canberra received about the odour in the past few weeks?

**MS CHEYNE:** There have been 40 complaints received in 2022 to date, and 35 complaints have been received on or up to 22 March 2022, meaning that those 35 relate to the essential landfill works that must be undertaken.

**MR PARTON:** I have a supplementary question. Minister, why can't residents be given more proactive information about works like these?

**MS CHEYNE:** I probably need to take that question on notice to check on the contract work that is being undertaken. I think it does fall within the city services element of the portfolio, but I will check what proactive communications were made. It may also have been that we just did not expect there to be the odour that has occurred out of this. I would remind members that this work is essential; it needs to be carried out for the safety of all.

### **Government—business support grants**

**MS CASTLEY:** My question is to the business minister. Late last year some businesses in the tourism, accommodation, arts, events, hospitality and fitness sectors missed out on business support grants because they did not fit neatly into certain provider categories and businesses were told that the government would review their eligibility. After this review, on 21 February businesses were informed that they could reapply for these grants, but FOI documents reveal they had to apply by 7 March, giving them only 14 days. Minister, how many of these businesses did this review affect and were they all contacted by your government to reapply?

**MR BARR:** In the accommodation and tourism venue operator support program there were 51 applications received and 47 were approved, worth 1.46 million. As I understand it, at the time this briefing was provided one was still under assessment awaiting further information from the applicant and three were assessed as ineligible. But that may include applications that were received under the totality of the program. I will take on notice the number who applied in the 14-day period which I think you are referring to.

**Ms Castley:** I could not hear the Chief Minister. Did he say 51? I need some clarification. Can he explain those numbers again?

**MR BARR:** There were 51 that applied for the totality of the program, I am advised.

In the accommodation and tourism venue operator support program there were 51 applications received there. Forty-seven of them were approved. There is one under assessment awaiting further information from the applicant and three were assessed as ineligible.

That was a program where applications closed on 17 September last year. Your question referred to a further assessment and an opportunity for people to submit a late application in the two-week period. I will take on notice the number. There were 51 in the previous program, so I am suggesting to you that it is not going to be a big number.

**MS CASTLEY:** My supplementary then is: of the ones that were deemed eligible that were not previously, how many of those were there and were they all contacted, or was there just a media release?

**MR BARR:** My understanding is that it was more than just a media release. For those that would have applied but been told they were ineligible and then there was a subsequent reconsideration to invite them to apply, they would have been advised directly. The numbers are very small. I need to put this in context. Over all of the business support programs that assisted upwards of 12,000 businesses, the numbers we are talking about here will be a handful. I will take on notice the exact number in the time period that the question required.

**MS LAWDER:** Chief Minister, why did businesses have to reapply when the directorate already had all of their application details?

**MR BARR:** I will not take it on face value that the directorate did have all their application details, because there are still examples—and I am aware of them—of the directorate having to go to great lengths, on dozens of occasions, to contact certain businesses multiple times in order to get the information that was necessary. I have been dealing with the odd outstanding case months later because finally information came in that allowed us to make a payment.

It needs to be clear that more than 12,000 businesses received nearly half a billion dollars of assistance here.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MR BARR:** Of course you are not interested in talking about those ones.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members!

**MR BARR:** These specific cases have been dealt with on a case-by-case basis on the basis of providing information, because there have been many cases—too many cases—of fraud in this program, where we have had to say no to people who have tried to scam the system. You lot have been all about integrity this week, so do not be carrying on here about the government applying integrity to a grant assessment process.

**Ms Lee:** How many were fraud? It was the majority, was it?

**MR BARR:** No, but it was enough to be serious, Elizabeth.

### **Mulligans flat—Wildbark Learning Centre**

**MR BRADDOCK:** Minister, can you please provide an update on Mulligans Flat, and, in particular, the woodland learning centre that will be located in the suburb of Throsby?

**MS VASSAROTTI:** I thank the member for the question. We are very excited about the impending opening of Wildbark, which is the woodland learning centre. I think it was a little over 12 months ago that Minister Gentleman and I went to see early works at the centre and—while we have been dealing with the issues of COVID, COVID restrictions, construction shutdown and inclement weather—we are in the final stages of construction of the learning centre.

We are working on the final details of the opening, but it is due to be opened in July 2022. This is a really exciting project. The construction of Wildbark is a joint partnership between the ACT government, the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust and the ANU. We are really pleased that the ACT government has been able to contribute \$1.6 million in funding towards the learning centre, and that has been matched by funding by the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust. This is going to be a great resource and a hub for environmental and cultural education, research, innovation and community wellbeing. We really encourage all Canberrans to plan a trip out to Mulligan's Flat and out to Wildbark when it is opened. I am really looking forward to joining with ministerial colleagues when we do finalise the opening date and celebrate this really fantastic new facility for the community.

**MR BRADDOCK:** I am also interested in how the trial of the release of spotted-tailed quolls is going?

**MS VASSAROTTI:** I was really delighted to go out and meet two of the spotted-tailed quolls just before they were released into the sanctuary at the beginning of summer 2021. I was out there on 1 December 2021 and met, I think it was, Boof, and I cannot remember the name of the other spotted quoll. This is an exciting thing in the sanctuary because this is the introduction of an apex predator, which is a really important contribution to the sanctuary. This is a sanctuary and we have removed predators from the sanctuary, and we have seen the fantastic introduction of species that used to be endemic in the region but are no longer, particularly species such as the bettong. What we have seen is the need to get the ecological system working well, so we have introduced those spotted-tailed quolls into the sanctuary. We are really looking to see how this apex predator does recreate the food web and to test how these predators behave. That research is ongoing, and as soon as we have data to be provided, we will provide it to the community.

**MR DAVIS:** Minister, what other species may be reintroduced in the future?

**MS VASSAROTTI:** This experiment has really been looking at how we get new, endemic species back into the community. We have seen the introduction of eastern bettongs, eastern quolls, spotted-tail quolls, bush stone-curlews and New Holland

mice. They have all been reintroduced into the sanctuary. The research team are looking at a number of other species that may be appropriate for reintroduction, but we have not yet got any time frames on new and future releases. We will be working with scientists and letting the community know when we have releases to happen. This is one of the really exciting things about the new education centre—that we will be able to provide more information and more opportunities for the community to engage and interact with these species that used to be very common within our local region but, unfortunately, since colonisation are no longer in the environment.

### **Carers—Carers Recognition Act implementation**

**MS ORR:** My question is to Assistant Minister for Families and Community Services. Minister, given the Carers Recognition Act passed the Assembly in December 2021 and has since commenced, can you please provide an update on the implementation of the act?

**MS DAVIDSON:** I thank Ms Orr for the question and for the work that she did last year on the Carers Recognition Act. I note that the act passed unanimously last year, which I think is a really good recognition of the importance of carers in our community.

This act requires carer support agencies, both government and non-government, to consider care relationship principles and consult with carers on their needs in all aspects of the organisation's work. That might include services, programs, policies through to delivery and review. We are now putting the act into action. That means that ongoing commitment to ensuring that the policy intent and the principles of the act are translated into something meaningful for the 50,000 carers in our community to be recognised and supported in what they do by a wide range of organisations.

This is a whole-of-government and a whole-of-community responsibility. That is why the ACT government has been working closely with Carers ACT to develop and communicate support materials, like information sheets and reporting templates and frameworks, to help support carer support agencies, whether they are in the government or the non-government sector, to assist them with compliance and reporting against the act. That will also assist with any future reviews of the ACT.

I have written to carer support agencies to inform them that the Carers Recognition Act has commenced, to remind them of their obligations to carers under the act and also to encourage them to see the act as an opportunity to be more inclusive of carers. I am hoping that that provides some useful information on where we are at.

**MS ORR:** Can you give us an example of some of the carer support agencies that you have written to, so that we get an idea of the breadth of these groups across our community, as well as the sorts of guidelines and information they have been provided with.

**MS DAVIDSON:** I would be happy to take on notice and provide a full list of the agencies that we have written to and also a copy of some of the material that we have provided them with to assist them in their work.

I would note as well that there is a really diverse range of people in our community who are carers. That means that there will be a diverse range of organisations providing services that fall within this Carers Recognition Act. There are some carers who are quite young people, we have older people, we have people who have health conditions of their own to manage, as well as people who are managing caring responsibilities for multiple family members at the same time. With the nature of the pandemic that we have been through and the workforce impacts that has had on many of the support services in our city, our unpaid carers have had a lot of unpredictability in what they have needed. So it is more important than ever that we recognise what they are going through and provide the agencies that are supporting them with as much as help as possible to be able to do that work.

**DR PATERSON:** Minister, can you please update the Assembly on how the ACT government and directorates are working to meet the reporting obligations under the act?

**MS DAVIDSON:** Providing those organisations with support to be able to comply with their obligations under the act is something that our Community Services Directorate has been doing. That has involved producing some of those support materials and communicating that to those organisations and having reporting templates and frameworks to help them to understand how they can meet their compliance obligations.

**Ms Orr:** Point of order, Madam Speaker. The question was how the ACT government and directorates are working to meet the reporting obligations. The answer focused on the agencies, but I think the question also goes to how government directorates will be dealing with it.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** In the time you have left, Ms Davidson.

**MS DAVIDSON:** I can take on notice to provide some information about what government agencies have been doing specifically.

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