



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

**HANSARD**

Edited proof transcript

Thursday, 8 February 2024

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**Questions without notice**  
**ACT Policing—City Police Station**

**MS LEE:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, reports yesterday were that police officers were being pulled out of the City Police Station as the building is no longer a safe workplace. Last year during discussions with the Chief Police Officer you said, “It is important to note that the government does not have to build or own the buildings that stations are located in” and that a potential outcome is, and I quote, “an approach to market.” Did the Chief Police Officer, or any other official, previously raise concerns with you about the need for urgent repairs to this building?

**MR BARR:** That conversation was in the context of new police facilities, particularly as it related to the possibility of a co-location of the Winchester Police Centre, the headquarters, which is in an old TAFE campus building in Belconnen, and the possibility of co-locating a new city station. The model they were referring to—this is both the ACT Chief Police Officer and indeed, Commissioner Kershaw, the head of the AFP—was that they were wanting to investigate a model similar to Victoria. We had a very productive discussion and we have indeed funded that work. I understand that the team within ACT Policing have been progressing that previously funded work with a view to bringing back some specifications for what would be needed for both a headquarters and a city police station, and the government will consider those. As I said, in those comments, we would not necessarily need to own the building. We could simply lease space in a building. I inquired of Commissioner Kershaw and CPO Gaughan whether that was a model that could work, and whether there was precedent in other police services. The answers were “Yes, it could work” and “Yes, there was precedent” and that is what they are exploring.

**MS LEE:** Chief Minister, what action have you taken on approaching the market to find a new building for the City Police Station, if any?

**MR BARR:** We are certainly looking at possible sites within the City Renewal Precinct, but we need the scope of what would be required. So we cannot approach the market until we know exactly the GFA and other specific security and other requirements that ACT Policing would have. That is the work that we have funded. It is underway. Once that is completed we will be in a position to make an investment decision. Obviously Treasury will need to conduct a net present value assessment of whether we are better to seek to lease a facility, so effectively go to market with a pre-commitment to lease a certain amount of space within a building. I did also inquire as to whether there could be other tenants within the building. There are examples in other Australian cities where there are other commercial tenants within a building that is either a police headquarters or a police station. Once we have that information we can go to market, but we are certainly looking at possible sites.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Chief Minister, will you take immediate action to restore the City Police Station so that officers can return to the building as soon as possible?

**MR BARR:** Minister Gentleman has already addressed that in the media, and so I would refer you to his comments, Mr Milligan.

**ACT Policing—City Police Station**

**MR MILLIGAN:** My question is to the Minister for Police. I refer to reports in the *Canberra Times* yesterday of police officers being pulled out of the City Police Station because the building is not fit for purpose. The Deputy Commissioner has previously raised the issue of the station, saying “We need a new city station; I’ve been banging on about this for three years.” When were you first made aware that the City Police Station was not fit for purpose and why have you not prioritised getting the matter resolved before now?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Mr Milligan for the question. I acknowledge his comments in the media this morning but also correct those comments in that the City Police Station is not closed. There certainly has been over recent rain events water damage on the ground floor of the City Police Station that may pose a health and environmental risk without proper remediation.

Work has already started on the water egress in the City Police Station. I had a look at it about four months ago. I was shown where the water was coming in through the ground floor of the station. Work began on the planning for repairs almost straightaway and we have had engineers in there looking at the water egress. But to ensure the safety of our officers, the Chief Police Officer has indicated that they will move some of the staff to the Barton offices as of next week. This will ensure that they are not at risk of any contamination from—

**Ms Lee:** I raise a point of order, Madam Speaker. The minister is more than halfway through his answer, and the question that Mr Milligan asked was very clearly: when was the minister first made aware that the City Police Station was not fit for purpose? I ask that he be directly relevant to the question.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I think he still has time. He has spoken about a visit and being aware of it.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** That is right, Madam Speaker. About four months ago, when we had severe rains in the ACT, I visited the City Police Station after being advised of the water egress. But it has happened over years. It has happened prior to this event as well. But we are at the point now where the CPO has indicated that he feels that the safety of our officers needs to be paramount, and therefore he is moving them out whilst we do some of those repairs. It is of course a temporary move, and they will come back to the City Police Station. Of course, it is up to the CPO and the team at ACT Policing to understand—*(Time expired.)*

**MR MILLIGAN:** Minister, when did you first raise this issue with cabinet? Did you request funding to address ACT Policing’s concern about the City Police Station?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** No; this is being funded through the director-general’s contingency fund.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, can you guarantee that the City Police Station will be fixed before the end of 2024?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** The City Police Station is 66 years old. When we talk about

“fixing it”, we can certainly rectify the water leaks. That is an engineering solution. There have been some challenges as we have had the engineers in there doing some of the work on the water leaks. In fact, we found that some of the COLORBOND material they have used to do some of the repairs has actually caused more water egress into the ground floor. We are having Monarch Building Solutions coming in straightaway to start that work to retrofit some of the piping. It is quite an intricate engineering situation, where the stormwater drain actually comes down inside the outer columns of the building. So they need to be re-sleeved and it needs to be ensured that the traps underneath that contain the water from the downpipe drains are larger—

**Mr Cain:** A point of order, Madam Speaker: it is interesting to hear about the minister’s understanding of the work, but can he guarantee that this will be fixed by the end of 2024?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** He has actually responded to your language, Mr Cain. There is no point of order. Have you concluded, Mr Gentleman?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Yes.

### **Canberra Institute of Technology—funding**

**MS ORR:** My question is to the Minister for Skills and Training. Minister, how is the ACT government investing in public TAFE through the CIT?

**MR STEEL:** I thank Ms Orr for her question. Our government is investing in TAFE through the Canberra Institute of Technology, as the centre of our vocational education and training system. We do that because it delivers high-quality vocational education and training that addresses the needs of students, industries and communities.

That is why we have made it part of our VET sector, as we invest more than 70 per cent of all public funding in VET, towards public TAFE in the ACT. It includes investments in TAFE infrastructure, including through the CIT Woden campus project, which is making excellent progress. It will deliver a new, state-of-the-art facility in the Woden town centre and deliver training to around 6,500 students each year.

Our investment also includes working with the federal government, through the new National Skills Agreement, to deliver matched funding to develop nationally networked TAFE centres of excellence, funding to support improved course completions and funding to support initiatives in critical or emerging industries, particularly in the new economy. It also includes investments and partnering with the federal government in delivering fee-free TAFE places—3,600 over the next three years—to address skills shortages and open the doors of education to more Canberrans who might otherwise be unable to afford it.

**MS ORR:** Minister, what steps is the government making to support world-class training at CIT?

**MR STEEL:** We know that in order to have world-class training we must have the best technology, particularly as we invest in new TAFE infrastructure and new TAFE campuses. That is why it was great to announce, with the Chief Minister, that the ACT

government will invest an additional \$8 million in the latest smart technology at CIT Woden, through the budget review, and provide students with the simulated learning environments and hands-on training spaces that are needed to deliver that high-quality training.

The CIT Woden project will see the main building top out later this year. It will be equipped with new audiovisual technology, augmented hearing systems, camera tracking capability, videoconferencing equipment, LED wall displays, smart screens, microphones, amplifiers and speakers. This will create a better experience for students, particularly as they learn online, and it will create a better experience for teachers as well. We will also deliver modern commercial workstations and appliances, a demountable stage and creative art equipment through our investment. The state-of-the-art facility at CIT Woden is an important commitment to TAFE in the territory. It is part of our commitment to make sure that TAFE is at the centre of what we do in vocational education and training.

**DR PATERSON:** Minister, how will these investments ensure that Canberrans are skilled for the future?

**MR STEEL:** I thank Dr Paterson for her question. Our investments are all about creating the skills of the future, through major investments in public TAFE. Last week I joined the Chief Minister at CIT Fyshwick, another TAFE campus, to announce that we will be submitting a proposal to the commonwealth that we establish a new centre of excellence, as part of the National Skills Agreement. Our proposal will include the expansion of CIT's nation-leading electric vehicle training centre to support more training places for the emerging electric vehicle automotive industry and to support the electrification of our economy, particularly an expansion that will include heavy electric and fuel-cell vehicles.

We know that we need at least 1,280 additional electricians and 270 more electrical engineers for our local economy as we embark on the transition to net zero by 2045. That is why we have also announced funding to support the feasibility and scoping of a broader future energy skills hub at CIT to incorporate our proposed centre of excellence and expand training in electrotechnologies.

Sparkies are going to be at the centre of this transition, and we need more of them trained, through our TAFEs and other RTOs, to meet the needs of our economy. This transition is going to create a lot of jobs. It is going to require a lot of new skills. It needs to be supported, as well, through the reskilling and upskilling of existing workers in other trades. Through our investment in CIT we are supporting both our commitment to electrification and the creation of local jobs, skilled jobs that will power the Canberra economy.

### **ACT Policing—resourcing**

**MR MILLIGAN:** My question is to the Minister for Police. Yesterday during question time, you were boasting:

This government has, of course, made record investments in policing in the most recent budget and investments in each budget prior to that while I have been the police

minister.

The Deputy Commissioner told the *Canberra Times*:

We need a new [City] station; I've been banging on about this for three years.

While the AFP Association President told the *Canberra Times*:

We have been informing the ACT government for some time that the condition of ACT Policing accommodation needs to be addressed.

How can you maintain that ACT Policing has received record investments when the ACT has the lowest police per capita in the country and workplaces are no longer safe for use?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Mr Milligan for the question, and I will reiterate: we have made record investments into ACT Policing through our budget—a budget that Mr Milligan has voted against every single year! Of course, these investments are not just staff on the ground; they are also in accommodation. For City Police Station, for example, in the last budget there was \$2.7 million for work there on the watchhouse, bringing it to a modern environment, a safe environment for people to work with; and of course we have a contingency of some \$300,000 for the work that is happening at the moment for the repairs to the water damage at city station as well.

But Mr Milligan goes to the overall question about a new city station for the ACT. The Chief Minister has touched on it earlier on and we have agreed with ACT Police and of course the federal commissioner on a new station for the ACT. We have a panel that is working through that at the moment. I have visited the VicPol new station in Melbourne, with the Chief Police Officer, looking at the opportunities that we could deliver here in the ACT. These learnings are quite important as we go forward, and we have some very passionate people in JACS and in ACT Policing that are keen to have input into the design of a new city station.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Why have you only announced \$2 million in funding today, when the issue has been known since 2017? How did you come to that figure?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Madam Speaker, it was a budget figure in the last budget—\$2.7 for repairs to the watchhouse. It was well discussed through budget estimates, so it is not news. It was in the last budget. The figure that I have just announced is for the repairs for the water egress at city station that has occurred recently.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, why have you failed to make any significant investments towards providing adequate accommodation for police officers, especially given they have now had to leave the building because it is not safe?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I will reiterate the work that we are doing on the Master Accommodation Plan, particularly for Gungahlin, where at the end, police will have control of the whole building. We have worked with RFS, with SES and the volunteers to design a new opportunity at Mitchell for them to operate in, and then of course a new station for Fire and Rescue and our paramedics at Casey will allow police to fulfil the whole accommodation opportunity at Gungahlin. This is a commitment we have made,

and it is being funded.

**Canberra Institute of Technology—chief executive officer**

**MS LEE:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, recently the Remuneration Tribunal called for submissions for their Autumn review, which includes looking at the remuneration of the stood-down CIT CEO. ACT taxpayers are currently paying for an acting CEO and the stood-down CEO whilst the Integrity Commission is investigating a possible case of corruption. Chief Minister, have you made a submission to the Remuneration Tribunal arguing that the stood-down CEO of the CIT should not receive another pay rise while she is being investigated by the Integrity Commission, and, if not, why not?

**MR BARR:** The Leader of the Opposition may have missed a disallowable instrument that I have introduced: the Public Sector Management Amendment Standards 2024 (No 1). I signed that off on advice to address some of the issues that are pertinent to questions around what happens in relation to executives and statutory officeholders in a situation where contract termination may or may not occur. Public sector management standards have been in place. There is a publicly available amendment that I have signed. In relation to the Remuneration Tribunal, it would not be within their remit to make a decision to single out an individual. I think the line of questioning from Ms Lee heads down the path of a denial of natural justice.

**MS LEE:** Chief Minister, have you made any previous contact or inquiries to the Remuneration Tribunal regarding this matter so that ACT taxpayers are not paying two full-time salaries for CEOs, such as over the last two years?

**MR BARR:** It would not be a matter for the Remuneration Tribunal. Ms Lee should understand that. Obviously, there are a number of legal requirements and, indeed, the presumption of innocence that does need to apply here. As Ms Lee has indicated, there is a process underway that is public, and we will await findings from the Integrity Commission.

**MR CAIN:** Chief Minister, what action will your government take, including submissions to the tribunal, to ensure that the CIT's CEO does not get another significant pay rise, given she has been on paid leave for nearly two years?

**MR BARR:** That is another example of where the supplementary question cannot be adjusted to reflect previous answers. If you had been listening—

**Mr Cain:** Are you making a submission to the tribunal—

**Ms Lee:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order: standing order 117 is very clear about what the answer should be, and I ask the Chief Minister to just answer the question.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The standing orders also say interjections should not be allowed. Mr Barr.

**MR BARR:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. To be clear, this is not a matter that the Remuneration Tribunal would make an individual determination on, in relation to a



person who holds a position. That is an unreasonable proposition for the Canberra Liberals to put forward. I do point out the Public Sector Management Amendment Standards 2024 (No 1) disallowable instrument.

### **ACT Public Service—Public Sector Management Standards**

**MR BRADDOCK:** With respect to that instrument—and I promise you there was no collusion between myself and the Liberal Party on this question! That instrument amends the circumstances in which, at the end of an SES member’s engagement, they will be eligible for a payout, and it will now also include circumstances where the engager loses confidence in the SES member’s ability to exercise the functions which the SES member has been engaged to exercise.

The explanatory statement states what the change is but has not provided the reasons as to why that change is being incorporated into the instrument.

**MR BARR:** I presume the question is, “Why the instrument?” It is a simple amendment that has been made to reflect contemporary approaches that make it clear that senior executives and statutory office holders who are the subject of findings of serious misconduct, serious corrupt conduct or systemic corrupt conduct do not receive this payment.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Chief Minister, what would you say to the suggestion that a so-called “loss of confidence” in a senior executive has the same effective meaning as having concerns of underperformance?

**MR BARR:** I think they are legally different.

### **Light rail—stage 2B**

**MR PARTON:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, five years ago you were lamenting the coalition’s victory at the 2009 federal election in Canberra, and I was celebrating your lamenting—

**Mr Barr:** 2019.

**MR PARTON:** 2019—by saying that Canberrans probably will not ride light rail to Woden until 2025. It is what you said. Chief Minister, it is now early 2024. The Coalition, of course, is no longer in government. It seems though that the tram will probably will not arrive at Woden until sometime after 2030. Why does your government never meet any of its own delivery targets when it comes to stage 2 of the tram?

**MR BARR:** I do, of course, note that the change of federal government has indeed brought a partner to the table in the delivery of light rail infrastructure. I do always find it ironic that the party that does not want any progress—you do not want this built at all—and yet you spend an extraordinary amount of time, you spend an extraordinary amount of time throwing obstacles up, attempting to block progress—

**Mr Cain:** Cheaper and better outcomes!

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Barr—just, just—put it to the side Mr Barr.

**MR BARR:** You spend a lot of time, Mr Parton, seeking to stop progress on this project, and then come into this place and complain that things are not happening first enough for you. You do not support the project. What is clear, is that we do have a delivery partner and a financing partner in the commonwealth, but it is very clear, as has been expressed multiple times, that the next stage through the national triangle does indeed involve the federal parliament, the National Capital Authority and a range of environmental and heritage issues.

**Mr Hanson:** That is not new! That was not new, when you have said it would be delivered by 2025. There is nothing new there.

**MR BARR:** Welcome back Mr Hanson.

**Mr Hanson:** Thanks.

**MR BARR:** It is always good that you interject from the back bench! I have missed you terribly. I have missed you terribly.

*Members interjecting—*

**Mr Hanson:** You interrupted my nap time!

*Members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members, members!

**Mr Hanson:** Do not respond, Mr Barr. Do not respond.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** You have 16 seconds left Mr Barr.

**MR BARR:** Madam Speaker, with friends like these Ms Lee is well served, is she not?

**MR PARTON:** Chief Minister, do you have any confidence in the tram arriving in Woden before 2034, given the deadline blow-outs that stage 2 has experienced to date?

**MR BARR:** Yes.

**DR PATERSON:** Why, Chief Minister, is it so important that we do get light rail to Woden?

**MR BARR:** Our city is the fastest growing in Australia. We need to provide more public transport infrastructure. We also need to provide more infrastructure in health, education and in a number of areas. However, in order to ensure that we remain Australia's most liveable city, and one of the most liveable cities in the world, it is important to invest in transport infrastructure: active transport infrastructure; public transport infrastructure; and indeed, certain targeted upgrades to our road network. It would appear there is only one party in this place committed to doing all three. You

lot—the Canberra Liberals—are not interested in public transport and the Greens political party find it very difficult to invest in road infrastructure.

**Ms Lee:** Madam Speaker, another point of order. Again, I draw your attention to standing order 117, about answers.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I have gone back and considered, and I think my ruling, that there is no breach of standing orders, is in place. Mr Barr.

**MR BARR:** So we will continue our focus on investing in all forms of transport infrastructure right across the city.

**Mr Parton:** Hovercrafts?

*Members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Barr. Members—interjections—hang on!

**MR BARR:** I suspect Mr Parton might have let his brand new policy out of the bag there! Hovercrafts for all, is it? They would have to be BMW, of course, would they not!

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members! We have question time and I am calling questions without notice.

### **ACT Health—Digital Health Record system**

**MS CASTLEY:** My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, I refer to your answer during question time on Tuesday where you said, “I have no information that the outcomes for individuals who have passed away or were in palliative care were related to the referrals that were not received.” Minister, will you tell the Assembly how many patients had to wait longer than clinically recommended because of your disastrous DHR system losing over 200 referrals?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** Again, I completely reject Ms Castley’s representation of the Digital Health Record. In fact, as she well knows, the issue occurred in relation to the integration system, which has since been replaced.

In question time the other day an issue was raised regarding the patient who passed away during the period between the original issue and the issue being identified. I can advise Ms Castley that two of the referrals were for that patient rather than being for two separate patients and that the patient was receiving treatment from CHS during this period and that their death was not related to this issue. So, to put to bed one of the potential scare campaigns from those opposite, CHS has provided definitive advice on that matter. CHS instituted its clinical procedures, as was advised at the time, and we are seeking some further advice in relation to whether any immediate harm—

**Ms Castley:** Madam Speaker, I raise a point of order on relevance. I asked how many

patients had to wait longer than clinically recommended. I do not believe she has answered that question.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** She has gone to the substance of the question, as I understand it.

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I am happy to take that question on notice. I do not have that information here with me. I am not entirely sure that we will be able to answer in detail. As Ms Castley is aware, a number of those referrals had already come through different channels. It may be an unreasonable diversion of resources to go back through those 231 referrals. *(Time expired.)*

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, have any patients that were unfortunately affected by this latest DHR stuff-up taken legal action?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** Not to my knowledge, but I will take the question on notice and double check.

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, will you apologise to any patients impacted by this serious failure of the DHR system?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** Again, I would emphasise that this was not a failure of the DHR system; this was an issue with the integration engine, which has since been replaced. It was an issue of the integration process. And, again, I would emphasise that—as is clear in the information that is available to Ms Castley through questions on notice and through the caveat brief that she has access to—this system processed thousands and thousands of referrals and this was a small number. If any individual has been adversely affected by an issue in our system, of course, I am sorry about that and, of course, I apologise to them for that.

But I would re-emphasise something I said the other day: the systems that were in place before this were far from perfect. You have been a nurse, Madam Speaker, and you have worked in the health system. Anybody who has worked in the health system understands that the 40 systems that were in place prior to the Digital Health Record being implemented were far from perfect and were not always well integrated. This issue was picked up and addressed. The scaremongering that is going on from those opposite, with the conflation of issues, to suggest that this is about Epic, is absolutely incorrect.

### **Period Products and Facilities (Access) Act—implementation**

**DR PATERSON:** My question is to the Minister for Women. Minister, last year the Assembly passed the Period Products and Facilities (Access) Bill. Can you please update the Assembly on what progress has been made to implement this bill?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Dr Paterson for her question, but I particularly want to acknowledge Ms Orr for her advocacy on ending period poverty in the ACT. The ACT is only the second jurisdiction in the world, after Scotland, to enshrine free period products in law as we aim to eliminate period poverty.

As I announced at the end of last year, through the 2023-24 midyear budget, the government has committed \$2.8 million to support the rollout of free period products across our city. This funding will provide for the installation of period product dispensers in a number of public locations, such as ACT public schools, child and family centres, and public health facilities. This commitment shows that Labor takes seriously the issue of period poverty and addressing inequity more broadly across our city. No-one in our community should have to struggle to afford pads and tampons.

As an update to the Assembly: free period products have been available since the end of last year in our child and family centres in Gungahlin, west Belconnen and Tuggeranong, and at the Child Development Service in Holt.

**DR PATERSON:** Minister, what does the rollout look like in our ACT public schools?

**MS BERRY:** We know that school students are some of the most significantly impacted by period poverty. Forty-eight per cent of the people who menstruate have recorded missing education as a result of having to manage their period. The impact that period poverty has on education and work, for those who experience, it is significant. We do not want any student to feel as though they have to use unsuitable products to manage their periods if they run out of tampons at school or cannot afford to buy them.

Whilst providing period products is ongoing policy within our schools, along with other hygiene products, this commitment sends a very clear message. Providing access to period products at every ACT public school will reduce the burden of managing periods, especially for young people.

Part of Ms Orr's bill called on the ACT government to develop information about menstrual health and hygiene. This is an important step to reduce the stigma and shame that people who menstruate might experience. This is why we have provided funding, through the 2023-24 midyear budget, to develop educational resources on menstrual health, to help reduce the stigma associated with menstruation.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Minister, what is the next stage of implementation?

**MS BERRY:** It is important to note that free period products are already available in public schools, as I have noted. However, over the course of this year the ACT government will be conducting a procurement process to find a provider for period product dispensers to be rolled out across our ACT public schools. Maintaining people's privacy when accessing period products is a key part of the principle of dignity. This is why the government has seen fit to invest in the provision of dispensers. Having period products available via dispensers is a key part of the principle of dignity that my colleague Ms Orr highlighted in her bill. In addition, the rollout of period products in other public places, such as public health facilities, will continue throughout the year.

If there are any members who would like more information on this, I encourage them to look at the CSD website. This is another example of how ACT Labor is committed to addressing inequality across our community.

## **Government—human resources and information management system**

**MR CAIN:** My question is to the Special Minister of State. Minister, in question time on 29 June last year, you said that you were briefed on the HRIMS project in November 2020 and were made aware then that the project was not going to meet its deliverables timeframe of December 2020. You also said at that time:

... we then paused the program and undertook multiple technical and non-technical reviews into the program.

Minister, why did you not cancel the program then?

**MR STEEL:** Because we did not know what the issues were. We undertook those reviews and inquiries to understand the issues with the program, initially with a view that we wanted to set the program back on track to deliver its intended outcome. But through that process, as a result of all the reviews that were commissioned, we then found that there was an option that had not been fully considered, which was to upgrade the existing CHRIS21 HR21 systems at a lower cost and lower risk for the territory.

As a result of finding that option, we are now pursuing that, and we made that announcement through the budget around eight months ago, as well as making the decision to close the HRIMS program so that we could then focus on this new PCHRM program.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, when did you first brief cabinet on the issues facing the HRIMS project?

**MR STEEL:** Madam Speaker, I am not going to comment on confidential cabinet process, but the answer broadly is we discovered the option around the time that the Leeper review was also being conducted, and that informed the decision in the budget in June.

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, did you brief the Chief Minister on these issues, and if so, when did you first bring it to his attention?

**MR STEEL:** I believe this was brought to his attention through the budget process, Madam Speaker.

*Ms Lawder interjecting—*

## **Municipal services—Evatt shops**

**MS CLAY:** My question is to the Minister for City Services. Minister, can you provide an update on the Evatt shops upgrade?

**MS CHEYNE:** I thank Ms Clay for the question. Work is continuing on the Evatt shops upgrade. Ms Clay would be aware that there was a community consultation period that ran from 28 June to 21 August last year, and that the *What We Heard* report was released on 5 October. Following that consultation, final sketch plans are in progress as we speak. They will inform the detailed design, with an expectation that the detailed design

will be completed in April and shared with the community. From this, a construction tender will be released and, once the contract has been awarded, construction will commence. Works are expected to take approximately six to nine months, dependent on weather.

**MS CLAY:** Minister, when will the final upgrades be completed?

**MS CHEYNE:** I refer Ms Clay to my previous answer.

**MISS NUTTALL:** What upgrades did people ask for during the consultation?

**MS CHEYNE:** There were 230 surveys received during the consultation period. Some of the most popular elements that were voted as being sought after at these shops were: safety improvements, including lighting, path and pavement improvements; places to sit and to gather; and play elements. Then, against the preliminary design that was released, people commented on the proposed nature play and accessible play elements, on new seating and tables providing spaces to sit and gather, as well as on improved access for pedestrians including paths, safe crossings and stairways. And this is all available online on the YourSay website.

### **Minister for Sport and Recreation—correspondence**

**MR MILLIGAN:** My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Minister, on 20 November last year, more than two months ago, you received an email into which I was cc'd asking questions about the change of operations management of the Gungahlin Leisure Centre. The email raised significant concerns regarding the operation and access to the centre, including the handover of private bank details from one provider to the next. However, as of 22 January, according to the concerned person, you have not yet replied to that email.

Minister, how long does it take your office to respond to letters of concern, particularly where the matter is of some urgency, as was the case here? When will you reply to the concerned constituent?

**MS BERRY:** I think I recall that email, or an email similar to that, and I will have to take it on notice and see where the response is up to.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Minister, were you aware that private banking details were to be passed over to the new operators?

**MS BERRY:** There were a number of arrangements in place as part of the transfer to the new operators of our leisure centres and swimming pools across the ACT. With regard to bank details and other information that was provided, I will take that on notice.

### **Kambah—50th anniversary**

**MISS NUTTALL:** My question is to the Minister for the Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy. Minister, it was raised to me by a constituent that Kambah is about to celebrate 50 years since its establishment. They expressed that it is vital to celebrate milestones like this, as a way to embrace the sense of community among Canberra's

outer suburbs. The 2023 recipients of the ACT Event Fund were granted amounts ranging from \$10,000 up to \$30,000. With this in mind, how does the ACT government plan to support smaller scale community led events in 2024 such as the 50th anniversary celebration for Kambah?

**MS CHEYNE:** I thank Ms Nuttall for the question. The ACT Event Fund is our primary avenue for event and festival funding assistance via the ACT government and it does support a range of economic and community outcomes across artistic, cultural, sporting, community and special interest events. It supports both larger events that attract tourism and increase economic activity in the region, as well as community events within Canberra's town centres and suburbs, encouraging the involvement of local community and the utilisation of community assets, precincts and spaces.

My understanding is that I have signed off on the 2024 event fund and the successful recipients at the end of last year, and I believe that is in the final stages of deeds being issued and accepted. There are a range of organisations that have been supported, whether for a smaller-scale community event, or for a larger one that is going to create some economic activity, including one this weekend, which is of course the Belco Bowl Jam.

In terms of other areas of funding that Ms Nuttall might be interested in, there are arts activities grants which are available all year round for applications of up to \$5,000. Outside my portfolio responsibilities, there are several programs that support community led events, including multicultural participation grants, youth week grants and more.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Minister, given the eligibility criteria for the ACT Event Fund states that applicants must provide supporting documentation that demonstrates their experience delivering similar services, are any considerations made for first time event organisers in light of the potential community benefits?

**MS CHEYNE:** Certainly with this fund, we do have two separate streams of funding, as I mentioned, so both community event funding and the event development funding. For community event funding, up to \$10,000 is available to support the delivery and enhancement of events that can encourage local engagement and participation. Applicants seeking \$5,000 or less will have no requirements for providing own source budget revenue but those seeking more than \$5,000 will not be able to apply for more than 50 per cent of the event's total cash expense budget. I would note, that within the ACT Event Fund there is a small amount of funding that goes towards sector development. There was a two day session, I believe held last year, which had a very high attendance rate of people from right across the community with varying levels of experience, about how to host a successful event. As a result of that, there are now a range of resources that are available at events-dot-canberra-dot-com and I believe that Events ACT will be holding a similar session for the sector again this year.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Minister, what measures are taken to promote equity for other milestone events in the ACT?

**MS CHEYNE:** I would note with regard to the ACT Event Fund is that it is a very rigorous process in terms of making sure the recipients are both able to hold the event



they are successful for and also that there is a balance right across the community. I would note in particular, and going to perhaps some of Ms Nutall's questioning, that again there is the Belco Bowl Jam this weekend, but year after year, SouthFest, including SouthFest in the Suburbs, has been supported by the ACT Event Fund.

This year, I would note that there are 19 event development funding successful applicants and 11 community event funding applicants. They are spread across arts, sport and recreation, community gatherings and festivals, and food and beverage. I believe through this rigorous application process that we have, while we do have different standards for the levels of funding that people are applying for, and different requirements of course as that scales up, I do think we have a very wide range of events, both geographically, and also in event type.

### **Arts—Susan Ryan AO memorial**

**MR PETTERSSON:** My question is to the Minister for Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy. Minister, could you please provide an update on the government's public art commission to honour the late Senator Susan Ryan AO?

**MS CHEYNE:** I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. At the end of January, I joined Minister Kristy McBain and Justine Butler, who is the daughter of the late Senator Susan Ryan, to jointly announce the location of this special ACT government public art commission. Susan Ryan was a formidable trailblazer who continues to inspire Australian women, the public service and wider community through her significant contributions as a senator in the ACT and minister in the Hawke government, as well as in senior roles across the private and public sectors.

The commission honouring Susan Ryan not only enhances the representation of women in the territory's public art collection but also pays tribute to Susan as a champion for the rights of women and the pivotal role she played in the creation of the Sex Discrimination Act, which has its 40th anniversary this year. As we know, this act literally revolutionised rights for women in Australia. Many women would not be in the roles and positions they are now if it were not for this act, which prevents discrimination on the basis of sex, marital status, or pregnancy. As education minister, Susan Ryan also increased participation and finishing rates of schoolchildren and tertiary enrolments, in particular, increased dramatically. While there are some who associate her with the introduction of HECS fees, they do not realise that, behind closed doors, she in fact vociferously opposed this but she was overruled.

Following a two-stage open public tender process, acclaimed Australian artist Lis Johnson has been selected to memorialise the late senator through a life-sized bronze statue, which will be installed and unveiled in the Senate Rose Gardens later this year.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Minister, how has the family of the late Senator Susan Ryan AO been involved during this process?

**MS CHEYNE:** I thank Mr Pettersson for the supplementary. The artist, Lis Johnson, was also responsible for the recently launched bronze sculptures of Dame Enid Lyons and Dame Dorothy Tangney outside Old Parliament House, which have become exceptionally popular, I would say. Liz has been collaborating closely with Susan

Ryan’s family, including Justine Butler, and she was present at the announcement of the location.

It has of course been crucial to engage and consult with the family at every stage of the process right from the initial conversations—I called Justine to seek her family’s permission very soon after the 2022 election result, actually—and throughout the commissioning process and in consulting with the family about the artist, the depiction and the location of the artwork. When I spoke with Justine at the recent event, I learnt that she had just visited the artist’s studio in Victoria, where she was able to connect with Lis, sharing stories about her mum and her mannerisms, and to ultimately ensure that the final work captures the essence and presence of Susan Ryan for generations to come.

**MS ORR:** Minister, what is the significance of the location that has been announced?

**MS CHEYNE:** I thank Ms Orr for the supplementary and I would like to acknowledge her efforts in ensuring that our public art collection better represents women. The life-size bronze sculpture of Susan Ryan will be located adjacent to the Senate Rose Gardens eastern central entry, in very close proximity to where Susan once had an office in Old Parliament House. The work will be in a purpose-designed setting featuring a curved bench seat, new paving and interpretive signage.

During the location announcement, Justine recalled the many happy memories that she and her brother Ben had spending time with their mum at what was then Parliament House and in the gardens and surrounds. I learnt that during the summer Susan and her parliamentary colleagues played social tennis games in the gardens, which also provided an important place to think and work during sitting weeks. It is also an area that today plenty of school students from across the country gather in when they are visiting Canberra, and I love that they will get to know this former education minister and minister for women.

Moreover, I hope that, for generations to come, people—and especially young women—will gain the same strong appreciation for and inspiration from Susan Ryan that I and many of my generation, and generations before me, have gained. She was unwavering in her beliefs and in advancing women’s rights, and something having not been done before was never a deterrent. Instead, her unrelenting determination for change improved education, the economy and equality. Australia changed for the better because of her.

I want to thank both houses of federal parliament for their approval to locate the sculpture of Susan Ryan within the Parliamentary Zone given that this location was so important to the family. Indeed, Susan was elected as the ACT’s first Labor senator in December 1975, having campaigned with the slogan “a woman’s place is in the Senate”. I look forward to unveiling later this year.

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