



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

**HANSARD**

Edited proof transcript

Tuesday, 19 March 2024

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.

**Tuesday, 19 March 2024**

Ministerial arrangements .....	1
Questions without notice:	
Light rail—economic analysis .....	1
Visitors .....	2
Questions without notice:	
Light rail—economic analysis .....	2
Light rail—economic analysis .....	4
Light rail—economic analysis .....	6
Housing—affordable housing project fund.....	8
Government—Mugga Lane and Mitchell recycling depots procurement.....	9
Transport Canberra—bus services .....	10
ACT Policing—Gungahlin.....	12
Economy—cost-of-living.....	12
Government—Mugga Lane and Mitchell recycling depots procurement.....	14
ACT Policing—Gungahlin.....	15
ACT Policing—Gungahlin.....	15
Government—Mugga Lane and Mitchell recycling depots procurement.....	16
Light rail—stage 2B .....	17

## **Ministerial arrangements**

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Tourism and Minister for Trade, Investment and Economic Development) (2.01): As I think members would be aware, both Minister Steel and Minister Gentleman will be absent from the Assembly this week for personal reasons. I will endeavour to assist members with police, crime prevention, fire and emergency service questions; Minister Berry will take questions in skills and training; Minister Stephen-Smith will take questions for the Special Minister of State and in the multicultural affairs and planning portfolios; and Minister Cheyne will take questions in industrial relations and workplace safety, business and transport.

## **Questions without notice**

### **Light rail—economic analysis**

**MS LEE:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, cabinet documents from 2012 have revealed that there was very clear advice from the Economic Development Directorate that the case for bus rapid transit between Gungahlin and Civic was much stronger than the case for light rail. Given that the return-on-investment estimates were more than twice as high for bus rapid transit than for light rail, why did the government decide to go with the latter option?

**MR BARR:** As I think the papers would demonstrate—and, indeed, my memory confirms—there was a competing range of advice from different agencies at the time that decision was taken. I think the newspaper reporting somewhat reflected that but chose to focus on the advice of one directorate over a number of others. There was extensive work done and a range of different perspectives were put forward during consideration of which particular transport methodology to proceed with. But, as history shows, we made the correct decision to invest in light rail when the project came in under budget—in reference, to those papers—and has delivered the sorts of transport outcomes expected. Indeed, the investment along the stage 1 corridor has in fact exceeded expectations at that time.

**MS LEE:** Chief Minister, why did your government ignore the advice from the Economic Development Directorate back in 2012 in favour of the other advice?

**MR BARR:** The government considered the full range of advice and the full range of benefits that came from an investment in light rail. The papers at that time demonstrate that there were a variety of different views put by different ACT government agencies, as you would anticipate on a big infrastructure investment. But the government felt that, on balance, the investment in light rail would deliver a better public transport outcome and would deliver a better aesthetic on Northbourne Avenue, rather than adding two more lanes of concrete for dedicated busways—making that an eight-lane boulevard.

**Mr Parton:** Is there concrete in the middle now? I think there is a bit of concrete.

**MR BARR:** There is certainly a concrete track. But, as you would know, Mr Parton, the width and aesthetic of a light rail track are somewhat different to that of bus lanes, and the look and feel of Northbourne Avenue would have been quite considerably

different if we had eight lanes of road carriageway in that transport corridor.

But, beyond the visual amenity and obviously the other issues and downsides associated with bus rapid transport, clearly, there were a range of other economic benefits of transport-oriented development outcomes that were far superior using the light rail transport infrastructure. Clearly, Canberrans—having voted for it at elections in 2012, 2016 and 2020, and having another chance to vote for it in 2024—prefer light rail.

**MR PARTON:** Chief Minister, did your government sell out Canberrans just to hold on to power in 2012?

**MR BARR:** No. I can't speak for Mr Rattenbury, but the thought of him forming government with Zed Seselja would indeed have been a very curious administration that I imagine, like any Liberal-Green attempt at forming a government, it would have fallen apart very quickly!

## Visitors

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I recognise members of the Kiribati Public Accounts Committee. Welcome to Canberra. I hope that you have enjoyed the last few days, and do not take back any bad behaviour that you may see today!

## Questions without notice Light rail—economic analysis

**MS LEE:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, cabinet documents from 2012 have revealed that “the community’s clear preference for LRT are of concern if they are based on inadequate or premature estimates of the impact of proposals on the territory’s budget, rates and charges”. The cabinet papers go on to say that “especially, as the study appears to suggest that what preference for LRT there may be within the broader community is malleable and likely to shift once respondents to this question are better informed of the relative costs of the two alternatives”. Chief Minister, will you now commit to releasing the full cost of stage 2B before the election to allow Canberrans to make an informed choice at the ballot box this October?

**MR BARR:** The community has debated this issue. There has been a fierce political contest over three elections. In relation to the initial quote that Ms Lee read out—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members. You have asked the question; allow the Chief Minister to answer.

**MR BARR:** In relation to the opening part of Ms Lee’s question, clearly, the community has expressed a view on this matter not once, not twice, but three times now.

**Mr Parton:** No, it wasn't—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Parton, hush.

**MR BARR:** You were opposed to it, then you weren't, then you were again. It was something like that, wasn't it?

**Mr Parton:** It wasn't an issue at the last election.

**MR BARR:** It wasn't an issue last time?

**Mr Parton:** No, it wasn't.

**MR BARR:** Right; interesting.

**Mr Hanson:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order as to relevance, the question was about the cost of stage 2B, not about what position was taken by political parties at previous elections. I would ask the Chief Minister to be relevant.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Resume your seat. On the point of order, there are also standing orders to say that there should be no interjections.

**Mr Hanson:** I do not recall that I have interjected for a couple of months, to be honest!

**MADAM SPEAKER:** This is what I mean, dear friends from Kiribati.

Mr Barr.

**MR BARR:** It is good to see that you have broken your drought and you are making it all the way back from Siberia, Mr Hanson.

The government's position in relation to light rail stage 2B is clear. We have submitted our proposal and it is now going through the first of many commonwealth approval processes.

**Ms Lee:** What's the cost?

**MR BARR:** We will be in a position to provide more detail in relation to costs when we are further advanced in the project's development.

**MS LEE:** Chief Minister, are you concerned that support for stage 2B will drop and potentially impact the chances of you and your Greens colleagues staying in power, once the full cost of stage 2B is revealed to the public?

**MR BARR:** I am confident that the government, and indeed parties within the government who have advocated for investment in high-quality public transport over multiple elections now, will receive support for a continuation of this program of investment in high-quality public transport.

The Liberal Party are free to oppose the project, as they have done at previous elections, although I do note Mr Parton is now contesting whether that opposition has

been consistent over a decade. In some elections, clearly, the main reason to vote Liberal was to vote against—

**Mr Hanson:** Hear, hear!

**MR BARR:** public transport investment. Yes; Mr Hanson confirms that, in his further interjection from Siberia. We welcome a debate on this.

**Mrs Kikkert:** It's not relevant.

**MR BARR:** The other MLA who is also in Siberia!

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Go to the question, Mr Barr.

**Ms Lee:** A point of order, Madam Speaker. He is clearly going into a debate here, and that is not allowed.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Barr, can you just stick to the question?

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MR BARR:** I am sorry; I was distracted by the interjections from those so far distant now.

**Mr Hanson:** I'm so far away now!

**MR BARR:** I am so used to you being right there; but now you are a long, long way away.

This clearly will be an election issue, and 330,000 voters will cast their verdict on the matter in October.

**MR PARTON:** Chief Minister, why are you so petrified to be up-front with Canberrans about the true cost of stage 2B?

**MR BARR:** I have run for re-election on a positive platform on investment in public transport three times now, and I look forward to this debate again in 2024, confident that the people of Canberra recognise the value of investment in high-quality public transport infrastructure.

### **Light rail—economic analysis**

**MS LEE:** Madam Speaker, my question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, I again refer to cabinet papers that have revealed your government ignored the advice from the economic development directorate, which said: "Overall, the EDD believes that the case for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) appears to be significantly stronger than that for Light Rail Transit (LRT)..."

This advice was provided to cabinet in July 2012, four months before the signing of the Parliamentary Agreement for the 8th Legislative Assembly with the Greens in

November that year, which committed the governing partners to the construction of light rail.

Chief Minister, given what has been revealed in these cabinet documents, will you finally admit to Canberrans that the decision to proceed with light rail was more about keeping you and your Labor colleagues in government, rather than delivering the best outcomes for Canberrans?

**MR BARR:** As I indicated in my answer to the first question from Ms Lee on this matter, there was a variety of advice from different agencies. The economic development directorate had formed a particular view, and they provided that advice in a frank and fearless way. But it was not the only advice provided. It wasn't the only perspective considered around the cabinet table at that time. The Labor Party, prior to the 2012 election—and, subsequently, the government—made the decision to invest in light rail, a decision that was the right decision.

The practical results of that are very clear. We have a very good public transport outcome between Gungahlin and the city—even Mr Parton has acknowledged that publicly—and we have a significant level of investment along that transport corridor, which is what was intended as an outcome. The decision that was taken and the result demonstrate that it was the right decision.

In the flip-flopping since from those opposite—at least according to Mr Parton—in 2020 you were not opposed to light rail.

**Mr Parton:** Did you not follow the election in 2020?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Parton, not again, thanks.

**MR BARR:** I think we might have won the election in 2020. I think our view prevailed over yours, Mr Parton.

**MS LEE:** Chief Minister, will you apologise and provide a clear explanation to Canberrans about why you ignored the advice that clearly showed that the case for bus rapid transit was significantly stronger than that for light rail?

**MR BARR:** Again, Ms Lee cannot change her questions, because they are predetermined, even though the answers to the previous questions have already addressed that.

**Ms Lee:** I have a point of order. There are clear rules stipulating how questions in question time should be answered. I ask that he actually follows those rules.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** To the question, Mr Barr.

**MR BARR:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As I said before in response to the first question, and now in response to the third question, which is the same question, the advice from the economic development directorate was not the only advice before cabinet. The government made a decision

based upon a range of advice and a range of outcomes that we sought to achieve. We provided a full explanation for that in 2012, 2016 and 2020, and we will undoubtedly do that again in 2024.

**MR PARTON:** Chief Minister, what is the point of a frank and fearless public service if their advice is simply ignored by MLAs who think they know better?

**MR BARR:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, Mr Parton cannot adapt his question. There was other advice. EDD's advice was not the only advice. There were other views and other perspectives, and a cabinet has to often weigh up advice that is competing. That is the basis of decision-making. You are not allowed to cherry-pick one agency's advice and say that that constituted the totality of all advice provided to the government at that time.

Again, I stand by the decision that the government made. It has now gone to three elections and soon to be a fourth. This is a debate we have had ad nauseum in this city. The Canberra Liberals position is well known: you are opposed to investment in high-quality public transport. We all know that, and Canberrans know that. May you continue to take this policy to elections; it's worked so well for you over the last 10 years!

### **Light rail—economic analysis**

**MS LEE:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, cabinet papers from July 2012 reveal that the Treasury raised concerns about some of the modelling and assumptions used in the business case for the City to Gungahlin transit corridor. The Treasury said, "Such issues could be raised by Infrastructure Australia should it undertake a detailed appraisal of the business case." The ACT Auditor-General, in his report in 2021, found:

Neither the Stage 2a Business Case or Economic Appraisal Report provides any narrative that describes, explains or supports the estimates of wider economic benefits.

Chief Minister, were there similar concerns from the Treasury that the business case for Light Rail Stage 2A may have had unreasonable assumptions in the modelling of the business case?

**MR BARR:** Well, of course, business case modelling is something that makes certain assumptions, and there are assumptions associated with all modelling and, in this instance, associated with different transport types. There were assessments undertaken about a range of costs and benefits associated, both in pure fiscal terms but also, as Ms Lee touched on, wider economic benefits—and, indeed, benefits that sit broader than just the economy. Questions of, for example, environmental sustainability, an uplift in public transport usage and investment along the transport corridor were all considerably stronger with light rail than they were with bus rapid transport. The government made the decision—

**Ms Lee:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order: the question was specifically about whether the Treasury had raised similar concerns in the modelling for Light Rail



Stage 2A—whether there were similar concerns as I outlined in the preamble.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The Chief Minister is relevant to the question. Mr Barr to continue.

**MR BARR:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, regardless of particular agency views, there were multiple agencies advising government, including transport agencies, including environment and planning—a range of different areas—and the cabinet considered all of that advice and made the correct decision.

*Ms Lee interjecting—*

**MR BARR:** I know the Liberal Party did not like that decision at the time, and it has bitterly fought against it. The infrastructure is built, people are using it, it has delivered a demonstrable increase in public transport usage along that corridor, and the investment that we have seen from the private sector along the stage 1 route has exceeded expectations. You may well want to fight 2012 and 2016 again, but we are moving on and we are looking at building a better public transport system for Canberra.

**MS LEE:** Chief Minister, have Infrastructure Australia or any federal department undertaken a detailed appraisal of the business case for 2A, following the Auditor-General's scathing report?

**MR BARR:** I do not believe Infrastructure Australia have undertaken such an assessment, but that would be a matter for them. What I do know is that the previous federal government—in one of the press conferences of my career, standing next to Zed Seselja!—endorsed the commonwealth making a financial contribution towards stage 2A! Then, subsequently, the new federal government provided a further financial contribution towards the project. So I think it is very clear that, at least at a federal level, there would be bipartisan agreement in relation to investment in light rail, but here we are, in March 2024, and the Canberra Liberals are still trying to fight battles from more than a decade ago—the same old Canberra Liberals!

**MR PARTON:** Chief Minister, do you believe that it is acceptable to only undertake the Auditor-General's recommendation for a benefits realisation plan for stage 2A after signing the main works contract with Canberra Metro for 2B?

**MR BARR:** Sorry—after signing the contract for 2B? We have not signed the contract for 2B.

**Mr Parton:** Do you believe that it is acceptable to only undertake the Auditor-General's recommendation for a benefits realisation plan for stage 2A after signing the main works contract with Canberra Metro?

**MR BARR:** In relation to the stage 2A contract, yes, we have signed that. We have received significant federal government support for that and works are underway. There is a major transformation of that part of the CBD that will provide for more housing, more commercial, more retail and more amenity for our growing population, so we stand by that decision. We note that the Canberra Liberals have at least learnt

the lesson and they are not proposing to tear up that contract. Of course, they went to a previous election proposing to tear up the light rail contract—

**Mr Hanson:** We weren't going to tear it up; we were just going to enact the termination clause.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members!

**MR BARR:** and we saw the result in that election, didn't we?

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members, can we just consider the standing orders and have some decorum in the chamber?

### **Housing—affordable housing project fund**

**MR PETTERSSON:** My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, can you tell me how many homes have been funded through the \$60 million affordable housing project fund since it launched last year?

**MS BERRY:** I am happy to report that, so far, the affordable housing project fund will deliver more than 280 affordable rental homes for low-income Canberrans and their families.

Just last week I joined with Marymeade CatholicCare to announce a 54-dwelling build-to-rent development in Curtin, and last month this government announced its support for the partnership of CHC Australia and the Canberra Southern Cross Club in delivering 70 affordable rental homes in Phillip. That is on top of the \$4.5 million contribution the government has made to the Ginninderry women's housing initiative Build-to-Rent-to-Buy pilot program.

There are more projects in the pipeline that I look forward to sharing with the Assembly as this fund continues to gather momentum. These projects are a fantastic example of how the government can work with community groups to turn under-utilised land into a real social good. I thank Mr Pettersson for the question.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Minister, what else is the government doing to help Canberrans struggling to get into affordable housing?

**MS BERRY:** Thank you for that great question, Mr Pettersson. This government continues to roll out its ambitious housing agenda. Alongside the Growing and Renewing public housing program, which currently has more than 500 homes in the construction pipeline, the government is partnering with community housing providers to get more affordable housing onto the market.

As well as the affordable housing project fund, we are incentivising private landlords with land tax exemptions if they rent their properties at 75 per cent of the market rate through a community housing provider. This scheme has more than 170 participants so far. That is 170 homes rented at affordable rates, and we are aiming for 250.

We have also been supporting local community housing providers with their applications to the commonwealth's Housing Australia Future Fund. This government's record investment in public and community housing is an important part of achieving an equitable housing system for our town.

**MS ORR:** Minister, how is the government delivering the kind of housing that people really want to live in?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Ms Orr for her interest in this important matter. The government believes that housing should be close to quality-of-life amenities like public transport, schools, shops and green spaces—close to things that make life easy and enjoyable and maintain the environment and character of our Bush Capital. Most importantly, they should be homes that meet the needs of individuals.

The RZ1 dual occupancy reform, introduced as part of the new planning system, has unlocked more than 40,000 blocks within the territory's existing urban footprint—close to amenities, just waiting for the private sector to get building. These dual occupancy blocks allow for a modest second dwelling of up to 120 square metres to be built on RZ1 blocks of over 800 square metres. These are the kinds of townhouse-type dwellings that will help deliver the “missing middle”, which has arisen as the population has increased and households have gotten smaller. The room-to-grow Compact Housing Development in north Wright will be built with rooms to extend out the back in case the kids need more room, or for elderly parents who might need to move in for care. These are examples of innovation to meet changing trends in housing typology and preferences this government is investing in.

Ensuring Canberrans have access to secure, comfortable and cost-effective homes, whether they are rented or owned, means that all Canberrans are on an equal footing to live well today and into the future.

### **Government—Mugga Lane and Mitchell recycling depots procurement**

**MS CLAY:** My question is to the Minister for City Services. Minister, The Green Shed were not successful in the recent procurement and I have heard a lot of concerns about and from the staff. Many have worked there for years. Many have disabilities or are neurodiverse and they are worried they will not find work elsewhere in Canberra. Earlier, we heard earlier media lines that Green Shed staff will be offered jobs. I have just come from a community meeting today, which was the first time The Green Shed staff had had a chance to directly speak to the new operators and find out more about that. Prior to that I believe they were sent a brochure and told they could apply for a job, which is not the same as being given a guarantee of a job. So can you tell me, Minister, as part of this arrangement with the new operator, does every single current Green Shed employee have a guaranteed job with the new operator? Has every staff member been told that?

**MS CHEYNE:** I refer Ms Clay, first of all, to my comments this morning in response to the petition. I do understand there have been approaches to meet with and get the details of the current Green Shed employees and that is taking some time, for reasons that I am not quite sure of at this stage, but that a meeting between employees and

Vinnies is likely for the end of this week.

I would note also, Madam Speaker, that I have seen some commentary from Senator Pocock that he had been trying to get in touch with me and that one of the reasons that he held the town hall today was that he could not. That has since been refuted by both his office and my office. I think it is important to clarify that.

So I can confirm, as I said this morning, that all staff, no matter the location—and I would note that what was in scope for this request for proposal were the resource management centres, and that The Green Shed, as a business, has opened further shopfronts in the meantime. Those employees who are in those shopfronts, like here in Civic and in the underground, will be offered paid employment in Vinnies retail stores, given they have a retail element to them. So all staff will be invited to apply. I am certainly not going to say that all staff are guaranteed a job because they may not want to transition. So it will be up to staff. They will have that autonomy. There will be an application process, which I think is appropriate, especially given the legislation that comes into effect in early April regarding the positive duty for reasonable adjustments and I think an application process is a great way to reveal that to Vinnies.

**MS CLAY:** For Green Shed staff hired by the new operator, are those staff guaranteed that they will be offered pay at least at the same rate and that they will be earning at least as much as they earned with the Green Shed?

**MS CHEYNE:** Staff will be transitioned onto the Vinnies agreement, which generally pays above the award rate that is attributed to this type of employment. Vinnies is still determining the specifics of the transitioning rates of pay, noting that different staff may be getting paid different rates and they are gaining access to that progressively. Vinnies have not yet been provided detailed information on all staff salaries at this stage and that is why it is difficult to provide a definitive answer. So there is still work to determine the transition of business, including leave and entitlements, but early indications are that staff employed by The Green Shed would be paid out any leave they have accrued during their time at The Green Shed and then they would begin to accrue leave again if they were to take up the offer of employment with Vinnies.

### **Transport Canberra—bus services**

**MR PARTON:** My question is to the acting Minister for Transport. Minister, the whole town is talking about the failure of your government to ensure that adequate public transport was available after Symphony in the Park. In the weeks prior to the event, and the wider Enlighten Festival, Transport Canberra encouraged people to leave their car at home and take public transport to the events. Minister, why did the government encourage people to catch public transport to Symphony in the Park when there were no buses to take them home after the event?

**MS CHEYNE:** I thank Mr Parton for the question. I am not sure if Mr Parton was actually present there, so I think it is worth highlighting some of the facts regarding exactly the number of people we are talking about here, of the record-breaking crowd, that attended the world premier of Hoodoo Gurus with the Canberra Symphony Orchestra, which, by all accounts, was incredibly well received. My understanding is

that, of the people Events ACT discovered were waiting in anticipation of a bus service—and it is not clear to me whether or not they were expecting the shuttle bus that was taking visitors to and from the Enlighten projections or whether they were looking for public transport itself—12 to 15 people were waiting to go northbound and 20 to 30 were waiting to go southbound. That was out of our record-breaking crowd of 15,000.

If people were looking to take public transport and did take public transport to Symphony in the Park, my expectation is that they most likely would have used the Journey Planner. If people were going to an event and expecting to take public transport home, I would also be expecting that they would be using the Journey Planner to see what options were available to them to go home. The Sunday bus timetable has been the way it has been for 18 months, if not two years. So that information is publicly available.

**MR PARTON:** Minister, will you apologise to Canberrans, tourists and the many people who have suggested on social media that they were left stranded for leaving them stranded after Symphony in the Park?

**MS CHEYNE:** Yes; I am sorry. I have no issue apologising. That was regrettable and I am sorry that it may have had an impact on their impression of the event overall. I do not actually believe that that is the case, given some of the widely reported comments and that there were only a few who stressed that it was a fantastic event but that, for some people, it was marred at the end with respect to getting home.

Events ACT has absolutely reflected on having an event of that calibre, with an audience of that size. It can be difficult for us to estimate when it is a free event. Symphony in the Park attendance figures have fluctuated wildly over the last three years, especially as we have been coming out of COVID. But, if we were to put on a similar event, of a similar calibre, then yes, of course, we would be looking at how we could move people in and out of the event more efficiently and to the expectation that the community would have.

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, what impact has the Symphony in the Park debacle had on public confidence in the public transport system after big events?

**MS CHEYNE:** I would not say that there has been an impact on public transport confidence regarding big events. In fact, I would acknowledge that at Skyfire this past Saturday there was free public transport and it was widely utilised. We again had a record-breaking crowd, with more than 100,000 people around the basin of Lake Burley Griffin who were supported by Transport Canberra in getting to and from that area, especially noting that, with the danger that comes with fireworks, there was limited parking available. So we did see a great uptake of public transport.

I do not think there has been an effect at all. In fact, the most regrettable thing for me is that the focus has been on a handful of people who were left stranded—and I do apologise to them—and not on the Hoodoo Gurus and what a fantastic concert it was. I want to put on the record my thanks to the Canberra Symphony Orchestra for being so innovative and open and for putting on such a fabulous with Events ACT.

## **ACT Policing—Gungahlin**

**MR MILLIGAN:** My question is to the Chief Minister, in his capacity as acting minister for police and emergency services. Minister, on 6 March this year, it was revealed that the Gungahlin staff were to be moved to the Belconnen Police Station. The *Canberra Times* in February stated that all other police stations were already at capacity, including the Belconnen Police Station. Minister, what has been the impact of this move on the Belconnen Police Station and the staffing there?

**MR BARR:** I have received no advice, as acting minister, that there is a major problem, but I will take the question on notice and seek a meeting with the new CPO later this week. I will raise it with him then.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Chief Minister, what is being done to support policing in Gungahlin, especially during peak times when it can take up to half an hour to reach areas of Gungahlin from Belconnen?

**MR BARR:** I understand ACT Policing have put in place operational arrangements to support that. I do not have the detail of that. Again, I can take that on notice for Mr Milligan.

**MR CAIN:** Chief Minister, what has been the impact on police services for Belconnen, given the extra workload they have now inherited?

**MR BARR:** I believe ACT Policing's view is that there is no impact. Again, I will discuss that with the CPO on Friday and, if there is any new information, I, or the minister for police, will provide it to the Assembly during a subsequent sitting.

## **Economy—cost-of-living**

**MS ORR:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, how will the Commonwealth's revised stage 3 tax cuts affect Canberra's economy?

**MR BARR:** I thank Ms Orr for the question. The tax cuts have now passed both houses in the federal parliament and come into effect in July. They will have a positive impact for more Canberrans than the previous tax arrangements, and that will flow directly through our local economy. The revisions to the tax cuts put more money in the pockets of lower- and middle-income earners than was the case under the previously legislated tax cuts.

This is particularly relevant in the ACT, given we have an above national average level of income earners in that particular set of tax brackets. Many low- and middle-income earners in Canberra will be over \$800 a year better off than they would have been under the previously legislated tax cuts. People in these salary brackets are in fact—

**Ms Lawder:** I have a point of order, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Ms Lawder.

**Ms Lawder:** With regard to standing order 114, questions to ministers are about the matters that they have direct control over. They refer to a “matter of administration for which that minister is responsible”. I’m not sure how federal stage 3 tax cuts—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you. I think it is in order, because part of the question was the impact on the Canberra community. So I think it is in order, from that point of view.

**MR BARR:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The opposition—vocally—may not like the tax cuts. He interjections—

**Mr Parton:** Just the standing orders, please.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Yes, Mr Parton. That would be good!

**MR BARR:** Touché, Madam Speaker!

The fact that more money will flow into Canberra’s economy is a good thing for economic activity in the ACT. It will bring real and practical benefits for our retail, hospitality and service sectors.

**MS ORR:** Chief Minister, how has the ACT government’s approach to its public service EBA negotiations complemented the commonwealth tax cuts?

**MR BARR:** Thank you. We weave into our EBA negotiations across a range of agreements a key principle to provide the biggest pay rises to our lowest paid workers—those such as our hardworking cleaners, our mowers, our teachers’ assistants and others who work hard every single day to make our city better.

The ACT government is the second-largest employer in the territory, given the state and local government responsibilities that we hold. Our employment, wage and conditions settings do have a material impact on the territory economy and, indeed, flow through into economic activity. The agreement offers combined multiple, fixed-dollar increases as well as percentage increases. This combination provides workers on lower salaries with higher increases than would be provided if a simple, single recurrent percentage were applied. Given immediate cost-of-living pressures on ACT government staff, we also paid an initial \$1,250 cost of living supplement.

This approach aligns well with the adjustments to the commonwealth tax-cut package, which provides more money for lower- and middle-income households in the territory. So it is an example of both governments working together to make a meaningful difference—to put more money into the pockets of low- and middle-income households in Canberra.

**DR PATERSON:** Minister, how will the commonwealth’s tax changes and the ACT government’s cost of living measures work to support Canberrans under financial pressure?

**MR BARR:** The revised commonwealth tax arrangements, the ACT government’s EBA negotiation outcomes and a range of important cost-of-living measures that the

ACT government has put in place—and some future ones that we look forward to partnering with the commonwealth on—will ensure that more money is going to low- and middle-income households in the ACT. This is important, and it is active decision-making from both levels of government to ensure that more of the benefits of economic growth are shared more evenly across our community.

Here in the ACT, we have a very high proportion of pay-as-you-earn taxpayers who benefit from the commonwealth's arrangements, but for those who are on statutory income support, this is an opportunity for the commonwealth and territory governments to partner in the provision of additional financial supports for those households. We have already done so in this current fiscal year, and we look forward to doing more in the coming 12 months.

### **Government—Mugga Lane and Mitchell recycling depots procurement**

**MR BRADDOCK:** My question is to Minister Stephen-Smith, who I believe is acting as the special minister of state for procurement. If I have that wrong, please forgive me. The ACT government chose to conduct a procurement process for the reusable facility as a one-stage request for proposal, not a two-stage process that would have allowed further consultation with industry following initial submissions or request for tender. Why did the government make this choice, and did the government clearly communicate it from the start?

**MS CHEYNE:** I will take that question. To answer Mr Braddock's question, last year TCCS issued a request for proposal to the market for the management and provision of the services at these facilities. It was a competitive open tender process run by TCCS with the support of Procurement ACT. A request for proposal was undertaken instead of a request for tender, as an RFT would have been too prescriptive. An RFP allows the government to seek industry's advice and ideas on possible innovations and improvements in the service offering. This is a service which has been contracted out since 2003 and, as is well-known now, the Green Shed was the successful contractor in 2010 and 2011 for the two sites respectively, and their contract for the management and provision of these services had been extended several times.

The procurement did not go to the Procurement Board as it is under the necessary threshold of \$5 million contract value. Procurement ACT's advice was sought during the procurement process, although ultimately the procurement is managed by TCCS as a goods and services procurement. Procurement ACT provided advice that a two-stage procurement was not necessary in this instance once the one-stage RFP procurement was conducted, which was communicated to industry during industry briefings.

**MR BRADDOCK:** With the decision not to refer it to the Procurement Board, was any consideration made of the value-in-kind of the salvage rights to the materials?

**MS CHEYNE:** This is a zero-sum contract. It is of zero value to the ACT government, meaning that the sheds themselves are let at a peppercorn rate and the contractor is free to then do what they will with the material that they are recovering. What the ACT government did through TCCS was assess the tenders on the services that the proposals put forward in their submissions, with a value on environmental and



social outcomes rather than purely economic outcomes. The contract has not been valuated, but the inclined valuation of the two sheds has been estimated at \$200,000 per annum.

**MS CLAY:** Minister, over the full term of the contract, what is the total in-kind value of the contract, including those salvage rights, which have been costed by this government in the past?

**MS CHEYNE:** I will take that on notice.

### **ACT Policing—Gungahlin**

**MR MILLIGAN:** My question is to the Chief Minister as acting minister for police and emergency services. In February this year, the minister for police and emergency services announced infrastructure updates including the Joint Emergency Services Centre in Gungahlin, but there is nothing on the subsequent linked website to provide any details of these updates. The Gungahlin Joint Emergency Services Centre has been shut down due to environmental concerns, and the temporary building was also shut down last week due to safety concerns.

Chief Minister, can you provide the people of Gungahlin with details of what the infrastructure updates are?

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

**MR MILLIGAN:** Chief Minister, when will the updates be completed and the Joint Emergency Services Centre reopened?

**MR BARR:** I understand the government is awaiting advice on that completion date. Once we have that, we will make that public.

**MS CASTLEY:** Chief Minister, what is being done in the meantime to ensure that the people of Gungahlin are kept safe, especially during busy times at the Belconnen station?

**MR BARR:** ACT Policing are aware of those issues and have structured arrangements accordingly.

### **ACT Policing—Gungahlin**

**MR MILLIGAN:** My question is to the Chief Minister as acting minister for police and emergency services. Minister, in the last few weeks we have seen the reduction of operational staff at the Civic Police Station as well as the closure of the Gungahlin JESC. Now it also transpires that the Woden Police Station is not fit for purpose due to air conditioning issues. Minister, how long have these issues with the air conditioning at Woden Police Station been known for?

**MR BARR:** I have not been briefed on that matter but I will take it as a question on notice and I will provide that information in due course.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Chief Minister, why has nothing been done to fix the concerns raised by staff and an effort made to replace the air conditioning at the Woden Police Station?

**MR BARR:** I am not sure it would be fair to characterise the matter in that way, but I will seek some advice on the progress of rectification works and that will be available for the Assembly in due course.

**MR HANSON:** Minister, how long will it be before the air conditioning is replaced and the property made fit for purpose?

**MR BARR:** Welcome back Mr Hanson. Thank you for the question. As soon as possible and as soon as I have information on what that timeframe is—as soon as the government does—we will make that available.

### **Government—Mugga Lane and Mitchell recycling depots procurement**

**MISS NUTTALL:** My question is to the Minister for City Services. Each year, the government reports on the ACT's total recycling rates in annual reports. This information is based on surveys and audits of material recovered. The government has been reporting Green Shed recycling rates for over a decade, and I understand they recover around 7,000 to 8,000 tonnes of material each year. What contract provisions are included in the new contract to ensure that the new operator recycles at least as much material as the Green Shed did?

**MS CHEYNE:** I think it is important to note that it has been well understood by the government, the community, industry and indeed the media that the calculation of the recovered material at the Green Shed has been an estimation. It has been inexact. It has been based on goods coming through and sight of what those goods are and how that translates to what CO2 emissions have been diverted as a result. I would note that the figure of between 7,000 and 8,000 tonnes is in fact from Ms Clay's carbon audit of the Green Shed back in 2019. I believe that is where that figure may be drawn from. I would note that, in that carbon audit, it did say that the dataset is an estimate only and that the Green Shed provided this after discussion of operations and percentage breakdown with the site managers and the owners. So I think that confirms that. So it is no secret that it has been inexact.

In the absence of further data—and noting the contract provisions as they stood—TCCS has been relying on the monthly figures that the Green Shed has provided to determine the percentage that is being diverted from landfill and reporting that in its annual reports. The figures that have been provided have been round numbers, because they are estimations, and they have been taken and accepted on face value, while also being realistic that the data has been inexact. Vinnies is proposing to weigh the material and, naturally, that will provide us with better data.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Will the government include contract provisions to require the new operator to arrange repairs for broken items and upcycling, so that less material is sent to landfill?

**MS CHEYNE:** That is my understanding. The advice I have is that Vinnies will

continue many of the environmental programs that the Green Shed currently runs, including tag and test, repairs, upcycling, and giving materials away to artists, schools, refugees and other individuals and groups in need.

**MS CLAY:** Minister, how much of the data reported by the ACT government over the last 15 years, based on the industry surveys with these estimates in them from the Green Shed and other operators, now needs to be corrected if this data is not accurate?

**MS CHEYNE:** We are not going to know until the contract begins and then we will have a much better understanding of what the data is. But I would note that Ms Clay, with her carbon accounting qualifications, did conduct that audit for the Green Shed back in 2019, and that is publicly available. I believe that is where some information has been drawn from over the last few years. We will have a look at what data we get from Vinnies weighing the material that comes through and what the actual landfill diversion is, and we will certainly be transparent about that.

### **Light rail—stage 2B**

**DR PATERSON:** My question is to the Acting Minister for Transport. Minister, unlike the Canberra Liberals, I am very passionate about light rail stage 2B to Woden.

Minister, how is the ACT government progressing with light rail stage 2B?

**MS CHEYNE:** I thank Dr Paterson for the question. The ACT government has continued to progress with the complex design, planning and approval stages for light rail stage 2B. I am pleased to advise the Assembly that the project time line for light rail to Woden is now available on the Built for CBR website, and construction of stage 2B is set to occur in 2028.

The new referral to the Australian government under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act was published earlier this month for public comment. Alongside this, early designs of some of the proposed stops were published, so that members of the community could see how the project will contribute to the broader integrated transport network and feel of their local area.

We have also proactively begun work to develop the detailed environmental impact statement, with the expected outcome of the referral, including the supporting of detailed investigations and studies. We are engaging Canberrans early through these processes, so that they can help to shape how the project is designed, to ensure that we maximise the benefits for communities along the line.

With the ACT growing faster than any other jurisdiction in the country, it is critical that we build the infrastructure now to meet the needs of our city in the decades ahead.

**DR PATERSON:** Minister, how will light rail to Woden address the future transport needs and challenges for Canberra?

**MS CHEYNE:** I thank Dr Paterson for her supplementary and her passion for stage 2B. Canberra's population will nearly double by 2060. We need to progressively build

a transport network that a bigger city needs, to avoid the congestion and vehicle emissions problems faced by others. We know this is done by delivering an integrated public transport network which takes into consideration all transport modes, including light rail, buses, active travel, rideshare and private vehicles. Light rail to Woden is central to this, by providing that mass transit spine between the north and the south of Canberra.

Through stage 1, we have seen that light rail has resulted in a significant reduction in motor vehicles along the Northbourne Avenue corridor, and has been a major catalyst for choosing public transport over private motor vehicles. Every car off the road reduces congestion and emissions, frees up parking, and benefits everyone that uses the transport network.

Light rail to Woden will extend these broader transport benefits to the nearly 20,000 adjacent residents and provide them with access to a zero emissions and high frequency transport service into the city, and then further, into Dickson and Gungahlin. It provides new opportunities for integration with rapid and route bus services, as well as active travel infrastructure along the future corridor.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Minister, how can members of the community have their say on the location and design of light rail stops in their local area?

**MS CHEYNE:** Thank you, Mr Pettersson. The EPBC referral documents have been published on the website of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water for the public to access. Canberrans, including people living and working along the alignment, will also be encouraged to have their say on the design of the project as the EIS is developed.

*Mr Parton interjecting—*

**MS CHEYNE:** We encourage all Canberrans, including Mr Parton, to get involved in shaping this long-term asset for Canberra by visiting the Built for CBR website for information on how they can have their say, subscribing to light rail stage 2B project updates to find out more about upcoming community consultation, and commenting on the interactive map, where they can provide feedback on the preferred route and highlighted points of interest, such as stops.

I would like to thank the team in Major Projects Canberra for the diligent work they have put in, in ensuring that public information on the project is up to date and accessible for the community.

On that, I would note that there will be a road closure where Parkes Way intersects with Vernon Circle, with that cloverleaf there that is still in existence, starting from this Thursday. I would encourage people to check the website. Even if they are not that keen on stage 2B, as those opposite might not be, it is still worth being signed up to those newsletters because they do provide some great comms for the community, so that they can be prepared for any impacts to traffic resulting from works in stage 2A.

**Mr Barr:** Mercifully for our guests in the public gallery, that is the conclusion of

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