



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

**HANSARD**

Edited proof transcript

Wednesday, 10 April 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.

## Wednesday, 10 April 2024

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## **Ministerial arrangements**

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Early Childhood Development, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (2.01): Minister Steel is away for personal reasons this week, as explained yesterday by the Chief Minister, so there are ministers here who will take questions on his portfolios. The Chief Minister is also absent from the Assembly today and tomorrow for ministerial council responsibilities. I will endeavour to respond to questions in the Chief Minister and Treasury portfolios, noting that that might make this a very quick question time! Minister Cheyne will take questions in the tourism, trade, investment and economic development portfolios, and Minister Rattenbury will take climate action questions.

## **Questions without notice**

### **Schools—safety**

**MS LEE:** My question is to the minister for education; she will be dismayed that it is not about the UPF! Minister, the latest results from the Australian Principals Occupational Health and Wellbeing Survey show that, yet again, the ACT has the highest rates of violence and threats of violence against school leaders in Australia, with 72.1 per cent of ACT principals reporting threats of violence. Worryingly, over 65 per cent of ACT principals were involved in actual violence. During a debate on this very issue in the Assembly last year, you said: “We all need to take continued action and not do another inquiry into this issue.” Minister, the government contracts register shows that your directorate did in fact commission yet another review earlier this year titled Prevention and Management of Occupational Violence in ACT Public Schools. Minister, why is the ACT continually experiencing the highest rates in Australia of violence and threats against school leaders?

**MS BERRY:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question. This is a very serious issue, and I am concerned to hear about the reports of violence in ACT public schools. ACT school principals have reported significantly more rates of violence than any other school principals across the country, which is why we have set up the Safe at School Task Force. We have a whole-of-government approach to addressing occupational violence through the occupational violence campaign with specific school materials. We are also implementing positive behaviours for learning across all of our schools, which is a culture change initiative that has shown real changes in behaviour across schools, not just here in the ACT but nationally and internationally.

We have been meeting with the Principals Association here in the ACT to understand where the concerns are coming from. School principals in the ACT have been concerned about the rates of violence against them, sometimes from people in the community. They understand that sometimes people who come to their schools have complex lives. Because they are leaders in their schools, they do want to support people in the community. However, they have a right, like everybody else, to go to school and have a safe work environment.

Working through these issues is a priority for the ACT government through our task force work with the Education Union. But it is not always something that is solved

quickly, and it requires some significant culture change work within our schools and within our community.

**MS LEE:** Minister, will you now finally admit that you have failed to protect our hardworking principals in ACT government schools?

**MS BERRY:** What I will admit to is working closely with school principals to understand the concerns and to ensure we have continued high reporting rates in the ACT, so that strategies can be set, and to work within our schools and support principals to ensure that they can go to school and have a safe and healthy work environment.

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, will you confirm that the Prevention and Management of Occupational Violence in ACT Public Schools review, as listed on the contracts register, has been completed, and commit to releasing it publicly?

**MS BERRY:** That review work is ongoing, so I probably could not release it publicly at the moment. However, as I said, I am continuing to work with the Principals Association to understand the reasons for increased violence in our schools and to ensure that the wellbeing of our school principals is a priority. In fact, over the last couple of years, our Principals Association have asked me to take the wellbeing of school leaders as a particular issue to the federal education ministers meetings. I am pleased to say that that has now been taken up as a priority by education ministers, and particularly the federal education minister. In an article in *The Educator* this week, the Australian school principals association chair talked about how the federal government should work with state and territory governments and school principals to address this issue.

### **Schools—safety**

**MS LEE:** Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Minister, your own directorate's annual report states that, based on reported incidents, the most significant risk to the health and safety of workers in ACT public schools continues to be occupational violence in the form of verbal or physical aggression by students or parents and that in the 2022-23 reporting period there were a whopping 7,448 work incident reports submitted in relation to occupational violence, an increase of nearly 2,000 from the previous reporting period.

I again refer to the debate in the Assembly last year on this very issue, when you said:

... the ACT government has been working on these issues for some time and will continue to meet the needs of our school principals and school staff.

You also welcomed the 10-point action plan by the Australian Education Union. Minister, isn't it obvious from the increase in reported incidents, by 2,000, that you have failed to meet the needs of school principals and school staff?

**MS BERRY:** No. It means that I have recognised that the issue is complex and not something that can be resolved overnight. That is why I am working with the Australian Education Union to ensure that there are processes in place, particularly with the Safe@School Taskforce, to identify what the issues are and how the ACT government

and I, and the Education Directorate, can work with the Education Union and their members and school principals to ensure that our schools are safe workplaces for everybody.

Everybody recognises that this can be a really complex issue. It is not something that can be resolved quickly or easily. What I have been appreciative of is that our ACT public schools have high rates of reporting, which I encourage. I reinforce at every opportunity that reporting the issues is the important part so that the ACT government and the Education Union and all our stakeholders can work together to resolve what are sometimes really complex issues.

**MS LEE:** Minister, what is the status of the government's response to the AEU's 10-point action plan, and will you release your response to their plan publicly?

**MS BERRY:** The ACT government is working through that plan, so releasing it now would not be appropriate.

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, will you apologise to our hardworking teachers, principals and staff for not addressing the issue of school violence?

**MS BERRY:** What I will do is reassure public school teachers, principals and others that I will back them every day, in every way. When it comes to being safe at school, it will be the ACT government that will back them.

### **Schools—parent portal**

**MS LEE:** My question is to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Minister, in 2016 the former education minister Mr Rattenbury announced \$10 million for a new digital system which would have the capacity for parents to digitally complete consent forms, make payments and update student details. The former minister said work on this system would commence in 2017 and that it would be implemented across three years. On 28 February this year, 2024, you announced that the government will be rolling out a new parent portal across all ACT government schools this year. Your media release stated that the new system will make it safer and easier for families to engage with their school and will have the capacity to update details, make payments, receive messages and complete consent forms. Minister, is this the same parent portal that was announced by your predecessor, Mr Rattenbury, when he was education minister back in 2016?

**MS BERRY:** I do not believe it is, because a lot has changed since 2016 and technology has evolved. The system that is in place now, which I have had the chance to join myself as a parent of a student in a public school, does work really well and is a seamless way for parents and teachers to be able to engage through the parent portal. The feedback that I have had so far from parents and the parents and citizens council is very positive, that the portal has been welcomed. It is still being rolled out and we want to make sure that the rollout is as smooth as possible. But, to ensure that my answer is as fulsome as possible, I will take on notice and double-check what the system was that was being developed in 2016 to see if this is an evolution of that or a completely different system.

**MS LEE:** Minister, what is the total cost of this new parent portal, and is that in addition

to the \$10 million that was announced by Mr Rattenbury back in 2016 for that system?

**MS BERRY:** I will take that question on notice.

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, are you able to give a personal assurance to parents that their child's personal information will not be at risk due to a data breach?

**MS BERRY:** Yes.

### **Education—early childhood**

**MR PETTERSSON:** My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. Minister, can you update the Assembly on the delivery of free three-year-old preschool?

**MS BERRY:** I am pleased to provide an update to the ACT Assembly on the delivery of free three-year-old preschool. On 1 January 2024, the ACT government commenced delivery of free three-year-old preschool. Eighty-two providers representing 143 services across Canberra have signed on for the rollout of free three-year-old preschool. In the first quarter of 2024, over 2,700 children have enrolled in the program.

This is the ACT government's biggest ever investment in the early childhood sector, something I am immensely proud of, because we know that children who participate in early learning programs are more likely to stay longer in school and continue into further education. Preschool sets up children well for success at school and into the future. This investment will increase preschool programs across the ACT delivered by degree-qualified early childhood teachers, and it will generate an average saving of \$1,329 for eligible families, something I know is making a difference to the cost-of-living impacts for Canberra families.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Minister, what is the ACT government doing to increase the number of early childhood teachers and educators in the ACT?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Mr Pettersson for his supplementary question. Last year I released the ACT government's first ever workforce strategy for the early childhood education and care profession. Early childhood educators are at the heart of what makes early learning great. We know that to deliver free three-year-old preschool we need to support educators to do what they do best: build brains.

The ACT government has hit the ground running in delivering some key actions in the strategy. Starting on 1 April this year, early childhood teachers can now be professionally registered with the Teacher Quality Institute, opening up doors to new professional networks, communities of practice and professional learning opportunities.

Earlier this year, I also launched the Early Learning Connection program, which will support up to 260 women to study early childhood qualifications. Participants will receive study financial assistance, help with facilitating employment opportunities in early childhood centres while studying and their own educator-coach to help them balance work, study and life commitments as well as their own wellbeing.

The ACT government is also working on scholarships specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to ensure we can build a pipeline of educators who can create culturally safe environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

**MS ORR:** Minister, can you update the Assembly on the ACT's other publicly funded early learning programs, including the targeted three-year-old initiative and Koori preschool?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Ms Orr for her interest in this matter as well. The ACT government's targeted initiative to provide free early learning to children and young people experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability commenced in 2020. It continues alongside the universal, free three-year-old program. The targeted initiative ensures that those children who need it most can access more hours of free early learning—to ensure that no child is left behind before they leave school.

Early in 2024, this initiative reached the milestone of having supported 1,000 children and young people across the life of the program. From the start of 2024, the ACT government has also expanded the number of sessions available at three of our five Koori preschools. Koori preschools support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at any time between the ages of three and five. This expansion is part of delivering on our commitment under the Set up for Success strategy to provide up to an additional 100 places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander three-year-olds at Koori preschool.

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

**MS LEE:** My question is to the Acting Minister for Skills. Minister, I refer to recent media reporting that said the release of the ACT Integrity Commission's report into the CIT contracts issue has been delayed again until at least April 2024. I note that the CEO of CIT, who was stood down pending the outcome of this investigation, has remained on paid leave of over \$370,000 per year since June 2022—close to two years. Minister, if adverse findings are made against the CEO in the Integrity Commissioner's report into the CIT matter, will you require the CEO to pay back the amount of money she has been paid since being stood down over these allegations?

**MS BERRY:** As Ms Lee has noted, the report is still being developed and handed down, so I will have to take that question on notice.

**MS LEE:** Minister, is the wastage of over \$740,000 of taxpayer's money fair to Canberrans, especially those who are doing it tough during this cost of living crisis?

**MS BERRY:** Once the report comes down, the government will respond.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Minister, why has your government allowed such a waste of taxpayer's money on the payment of two CEOs for the CIT campus?

**MS BERRY:** As the opposition knows full well, there is a review by the Integrity Commission. It would be inappropriate to respond until the report comes down.

### **Strathnairn—schools**

**MR CAIN:** My question is to the Minister for Education. Minister, I refer to my question to you on 20 March this year about the broken promise to build a new primary school in Strathnairn. In your response you said:

I would point them specifically to the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement, which identifies all the election commitments that were made by the ACT government.

Interestingly enough, it appears that the Strathnairn school is not included in the PAGA. I also refer to an interview on ABC Radio on 5 April where you said: “We don’t make promises we can’t deliver on.” I have to say this once again: “We don’t make promises we can’t deliver on.” If that’s the case, Minister, why did you promise Ginninderry residents that Labor would build a new primary school in Strathnairn by 2022 when you could not deliver it? Minister, is this an example of, in your own words, “You don’t make promises you can’t deliver on”?

**MS BERRY:** The opposition may know that the Strathnairn school is funded and it will be delivered.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, why was the commencement of construction of the Strathnairn Primary School by the first half of this term not included in the PAGA?

**MS BERRY:** Those were negotiations that the ACT government had with the ACT Greens, our coalition partners, and there were a number of things that were not included in the PAGA. In the PAGA were things that the ACT Greens and the ACT Labor Party agreed to in delivering on our commitments.

**Mr Cain:** Why did you say that the PAGA is where you go to find the promise? You misled the community.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Cain, you get to ask the question. Just leave it at that and be very mindful of the language you use.

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, did you deliberately omit the delivery of a school in Strathnairn from the PAGA as you knew it would be a broken promise?

**MS BERRY:** No. This is business-as-usual work for a government to be building new schools. It was not required to be part of the—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members!

### **Planning—Hawker shops**

**MS CLAY:** My question is to the Minister for Planning. I understand that Woolworths have submitted a direct sale application for the car park adjacent to the Hawker Woolworths. Is the government considering a two-stage tender process to ensure the best community outcomes from the sale of this site, or is the government only considering a direct sale?



**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Ms Clay for the question. I can confirm that Woolworths Group Ltd have applied for the direct sale of block 26 section 33 Hawker, the TCCS road reserve next to block 26 Hawker Place, block 24 section 33 Hawker, and part of block 33 section 33 Hawker. The direct sale application is currently being considered by EPSDD. Woolworths has proposed two storeys with basement car parking, which is allowed under the current zoning under the Territory Plan.

I understand that Woolworths has been undertaking its own consultation with the community prior to submitting its application. Woolworths' request will be assessed in accordance with section 266(2) of the Planning Act 2023. The government will also need to consider if it is open to the sale of the land as part of this process. As part of the initial phase of the direct sales process, a development application will be required, and the development application process, as Ms Clay would be very well aware, involves public notification and consultation, as well as referral to relevant agencies for technical advice.

If the proposal progresses to the development application stage, I encourage any interested members of the community to have their say on the proposal. This direct sale process is a pretty standard process which Ms Clay should be aware of, given that it is outlined in section 266(2) of the Planning Act 2023, and she was a member of the committee that has considered this act.

**MS CLAY:** As part of any land sale, is the government considering including requirements for housing, a playground, good footpaths, a post office or subsidised community facilities for Hawker?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** Given my answer to the first question, I think it is far too early to make any comment in relation to any of those matters.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Minister, why would the government consider a direct sale over other options?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** The direct sale process is part of the broader planning system. I have outlined in my response to the first question how that process commences. There are a number of stages in that process. As I said in response to the first question, the very first stage of that would require Woolworths to submit a development application, which would require public notification and consultation. Woolworths is already undertaking its own prior consultation, and I would encourage anyone who is interested in the matter to engage in that process as part of the broader, well-understood planning processes.

### **Minister for Business—consultation**

**MS CASTLEY:** Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Business. Minister, I note that priority number one in your ACT Small Business Strategy is to improve the experience of business when dealing with government. Minister, in a radio interview on 29 March the CEO of the Canberra Business Chamber said in response to a question about access at a ministerial level:

Minister Gentleman is settling into his role, I think, as Minister for Business. I'm yet to sit down with him.

Minister, given that you have been the Minister for Business since December last year, why wasn't one of your first actions as minister to sit down with the peak body for ACT businesses, the Canberra Business Chamber?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Ms Castley for the question. With this portfolio I have sat down with a number of entrepreneurs from across the ACT, and I look forward to meeting with the Business Chamber. It is a matter of process. I have recently had time off and we have had to move some of those appointments, but I look forward to catching up with them.

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, how can you meet priority number one in your Small Business Strategy when you will not make meeting with their peak representative body a priority?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I will be meeting with them.

**MR COCKS:** Minister, is this poor level of engagement all that Canberra businesses can expect from you, as business minister?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I reject the premise of the question. We continue to meet with business owners across the ACT and representatives of those businesses as well, including Canberra Women in Business.

### **Transport Canberra—bus fleet**

**MR PARTON:** My question is to the Acting Minister for Transport. Minister, how many buses are driving the streets of our city stating: "This bus is one of 106 zero-emissions electric buses"?

**MS CHEYNE:** I believe that we have 12 buses that are driving and another four on the way. I would have to take on notice whether they are wrapped in that or not. If I have those figures wrong, I will correct them.

**MR PARTON:** Minister, why are you misleading the Canberra public by falsely claiming that you have 106 electric buses on the road when, in fact, you only have 12?

**MS CHEYNE:** As someone who actually takes buses, I would note that it does not say they are one the road; it says, "I am one of 106 electric buses." We are committed to 106 electric buses, and I would—

**Ms Lee:** Where are they?

**MS CHEYNE:** Ms Lee, perhaps you could read or listen. Back on the very first sitting day—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members! Just ignore the interjections and continue the answer.

**MS CHEYNE:** On 6 February, Minister Steel, as I alluded to yesterday, gave a very detailed statement to the Assembly on the status of this. He expressed his frustration with the contract and the delivery time frames and how those time frames have continued to move. That is why. Why the Liberals are pleading ignorance to this continues to baffle the community.

**MR COCKS:** Minister, how can anyone in this city believe anything that this government says about transport when you continue to be so creative with the facts and use semantics to pretend away your failures?

**MS CHEYNE:** We are a government of delivery. Everyone knows that there are supply chain challenges. This was literally part of the—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members! The question has been asked. Allow the answer.

**MS CHEYNE:** This was literally part of the motion that Ms Lee brought forward yesterday, that businesses everywhere have been affected by supply chain challenges. Minister Steel has been constantly up-front with the community and with this chamber in detailing where things are up to. The 106 buses are still a commitment. That has not changed. Yes, the delivery was changed. That is frustrating. We are all frustrated, but it does not mean that we are not going to do it, because we do what we say we will do and we certainly do not come up with a whole lot of creative ideas, like double-decker buses, that will not even be able to—

**Ms Orr:** Built in Canberra.

**MS CHEYNE:** Built in Canberra, I might add—that will not even be able to get across a bridge.

### **Planning—urban boundary**

**MS ORR:** My question is for the Minister for the Environment, Parks and Land Management. Minister, it has recently been suggested that Canberra should implement a strict urban growth boundary based on the current residential footprint. Evidence suggests, however, that an artificially restrictive urban growth boundary, requiring all new housing to come from infill and densification, will drive up housing prices. Given you have stated that we are in a housing crisis, what will you do to ensure we protect our environment and improve housing affordability?

**MS VASSAROTTI:** I thank Ms Orr for the question. I think the suggestion that you refer to is taken from the state of the environment report from the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment that was tabled in this chamber a little while ago. Government is having a look at that report and carefully considering its recommendations. One of the recommendations in that report is that we consider an urban boundary. I think it is really important that we do really look at the key issues, particularly around the impact on the environment as well as affordable housing. I have

said many times in this chamber that we need to be really careful in ensuring that we do not trade-off one crisis to deal with another one. We know that we are facing a series of crises: the climate crisis and the biodiversity crisis, but also the inequality crisis and the housing crisis.

I will reflect that developing housing on the outer perimeter of our city, particularly in greenfield areas, is not a quick fix to this housing crisis. I will reflect on previous comments made by the previous planning minister, Minister Gentleman, that recognise that it usually take between seven and 10 years from identifying land potentially suitable for development to homes being built, and that we really need to look at things, including the environmental studies.

I also reflect on the 2022 Productivity Commission report into the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement that did note that to support meeting housing targets, state and territory governments should really look at zoning regulations that restrict greater density, especially in established suburbs and locations.

**MS ORR:** Given the ACT has already made significant commitments to environmental preservation and conservation, with 46 per cent of the ACT's land mass in Namadgi National Park and an additional 11,000 hectares in the Canberra Nature Park, can you advise whether the proposed urban growth boundary is a strict boundary based entirely within the existing residential footprint, or does it include identified but not as yet confirmed development areas such as CSIRO Ginninderra and the western edge?

**Mr Braddock:** Is this a preamble to a supplementary?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Can you go to the first part of your question?

**MS ORR:** Would you like me just to rephrase the question?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** No, we will go to the first part.

**MS ORR:** Given we have already made significant commitments to the environment—

*Members interjecting—*

**MS VASSAROTTI:** I am happy to answer—

**Mr Rattenbury:** Madam Speaker, I seek your clarification as well. Minister Vassarotti has indicated in her first answer that the commissioner's report is subject to cabinet considerations. I wonder whether the question now seeking an announcement of government policy.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I do not believe it is.

**MS ORR:** I am happy to rephrase the question if that suits the chamber.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** No, it is out of order. A supplementary question, Dr Paterson?

*Ms Lee interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members!

**DR PATERSON:** Minister, the community would appreciate a clear explanation on why an urban growth boundary based on the exact current residential boundary is—

*Members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members!

**DR PATERSON:** Minister, how are you going to protect our environment, and will it be not at the expense of housing supply, choice and affordability?

**MS VASSAROTTI:** As I have said before, we have got our recommendation from the commissioner. Government is considering that. There is a range of issues that we will take into account. The issues that are in my purview, in terms of the environment will be absolutely considered in that. I will be certainly drawing on the advice from places like the Productivity Commission and also the international panel on climate change, which has really looked at what we need to do around looking at work within our urban boundary.

I would also note, in terms of our current plans, we are still looking at doing development in greenfields areas for decades to come, up to the 2050s, but it is a consideration for government as a whole to think about.

### **Attorney-General—conduct**

**MR CAIN:** My question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney, it has been reported that you exerted political pressure on the acting Director of Public Prosecutions on 30 January 2024 regarding the termination of several sexual assault prosecutions in the ACT. The Director of Public Prosecutions Act requires you to present a notifiable instrument to the Assembly if you are to give the DPP a direction or guideline in relation to particular offences. Attorney, did you direct the acting director to stop discontinuing sexual assault prosecutions?

**MR RATTENBURY:** Madam Speaker, I am happy to assure the chamber I absolutely did not. I found that report in the article in *Australian* newspaper a surprising account of that meeting. I have been very open about the fact that I did seek to meet with the Director of Public Prosecutions. I meet with the director on a range of matters at a range of times. I sought the meeting with the director because I had concerns raised with me, and as the responsible minister, it is my job, when questions come to me, to inquire into those matters and to seek a suitable answer. I asked the director about the concerns that had been raised with me. I was open to a full spectrum of answers. The director may have said to me, “Actually, Attorney there is a problem and we need to consider a law reform,” through to the acting director providing me with a series of background information that details how a discontinuance is arrived at. I found that to be very useful information. I did not direct the acting director to take any particular steps and I certainly did not comment on any individual cases.

**MR CAIN:** Attorney, will you present a notifiable instrument to the Assembly to give

a formal direction to the acting director to stop discontinuing sexual assault prosecutions?

**MR RATTENBURY:** That is a preposterous suggestion! To take from the Director of Public Prosecutions the ability to discontinue a matter in an extraordinary suggestion from Mr Cain.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members, members! The question has been asked, allow the Attorney to answer.

**MR RATTENBURY:** I am not proposing to make such a direction, so therefore, I am not proposing to present such an instrument. I have not given a direction, nor a guideline to the director. Mr Cain is correct, that is, the legislation requires if I were to do so, I am required to then present it as a notifiable instrument and table it at the Assembly, but I have not done and do not plan to do that.

**MS CASTLEY:** Attorney, will you table the notes from the meeting you mentioned in your first answer to the Assembly by the close of the day?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I have to check what is available on those matters, whether I have any notes that I took in that meeting or not—

**Mr Cain:** Or that the acting DPP took!

**MR RATTENBURY:** If Mr Cain—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Cain! Sit down! You are becoming persistent and irritating!

### **Attorney-General—conduct**

**MR CAIN:** My question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney, in your explanation to the *Canberra Times* regarding why you held this extraordinary meeting with the acting director, you said, “It was to understand the circumstances around the concerns that have been raised with me.” Attorney, who raised these concerns?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I had questions identified to me about a number of matters and I think it is reasonable that these are debated points, and it is reasonable for me to speak directly with the acting director about that to say, “These are the issues. What is your take on it? What is your view on the matter?”

**Mr Parton:** Point of order, Madam Speaker, on relevance. The question was very, very specific: who raised these concerns.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Yes, and the minister has two minutes in which to answer and you stood within the first 30 seconds.

**MR RATTENBURY:** I have nothing further, Madam Speaker.

**MR CAIN:** Attorney, why did you think that these concerns—from whomever—were significant enough to warrant an extraordinary meeting with the acting director?

**MR RATTENBURY:** The corollary of Mr Cain's question is that, as a minister with responsibility for these matters, when question are raised with me I should just ignore them, that I should do nothing! That is the corollary of the line of questioning that is being put to me.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**Ms Berry:** Point of order, Madam Speaker. Seriously, the interruptions by Ms Lee following Mr Cain are continuous and persistent. This is a serious matter and the Attorney-General deserves to have the chance to answer that question in silence.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members, I have asked for quiet. Mr Cain, one more peep out of you and you will be warned. Mr Rattenbury, do you want to continue?

**MR RATTENBURY:** No.

**MS CASTLEY:** Attorney, did the Chief Minister raise any concerns with you regarding the number of terminations of sexual assault prosecutions?

**MR RATTENBURY:** No, I have not discussed that very specific matter with the Chief Minister.

### **Tuggeranong—Canberra Arena development**

**MISS NUTTALL:** My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Minister, I have had quite a few constituents reach out, eager to hear about any updates on the Canberra arena, the ACT government's new ice sports facility in Tuggeranong. I note that, as of January last year, the arena was due to open in 2025. Would the minister be able to provide an indicative time line on the arena?

**MS BERRY:** Not at this stage. However, I can confirm and report to the Assembly that I did, along with the sport and recreation directorate, have a meeting with Pelligra and Cruachan, the investment partners who put in the expression of interest to build the ice sports facility and gym in Tuggeranong. That meeting was on 13 March. It was a productive conversation about how they were moving the project along. Part of the work that they are doing right now is going through the legal processes of ensuring that their joint venture agreement is appropriate. I am hopeful that there will be some more news soon.

I share the frustrations of the community regarding the length of time. I know you do, too, Madam Speaker. I am doing my best to keep the community up to date, even though the information is not very exciting at the moment. I am sure it will be, as soon as the joint venture partners get their agreement working; then we can start work on the facility.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Minister, will both the ice sports and climbing facilities be accessible to the general public on a regular basis, as the Phillip ice rink currently is?

**MS BERRY:** It is probably a little bit early to talk about how the management of the facility will work. However, the intention that has been expressed to the private partner owners of the facility is that it will be available to the general public outside those training hours.

**MR COCKS:** Minister, why is it that a promise for a new ice sports facility which was made in 2016 remains undelivered, considering that, from your perspective, you do not make promises that you do not keep?

**MS BERRY:** The promise is being kept. The ice sports facility is being delivered. We are working with the joint venture partners who will be funding this facility to ensure that the due diligence occurs and the facility is built.

*Mr Cocks interjecting—*

*Mr Parton interjecting—*

**MS BERRY:** I know that the community is excited about this facility. I was really pleased to be part of that announcement in 2016. It is a unique facility. It does require specialist development. With respect to finding joint venture partners that would be part of this very special project, a very unique project for Australia, it is exciting that we were able to find two joint venture partners, Pelligra and Cruachan, who are really keen to be part of the ACT community and build a facility that meets the needs of Canberrans.

We know that Canberrans have enjoyed the use of the Phillip ice facility for a number of years. There are probably a number of people in this place who have gone and watched ice-skating events, or indeed the CBR Brave, at the ice rink, the Brave Cave, at Phillip. I know everybody within the ice sports and ice-skating facility is keen to see a new, twin-sheet Olympic facility in Tuggeranong. It is appropriate, as I am sure the Canberra Liberals would agree, that all of the appropriate legal processes and due diligence should occur before a joint venture partnership in this facility continues and starts.

### **Gungahlin—emergency services**

**MR BRADDOCK:** My question is to the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services. Minister, with the temporary closure of the Gungahlin Joint Emergency Services Centre and the use of interim arrangements to provide emergency services to the Gungahlin district, can you please provide an update to the community on the situation?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Mr Braddock for his question and his interest in the safety of our first responders at the JESC at Gungahlin. I also congratulate JACS personnel, ACT police and our ESA on their quick response in ensuring safety for those first responders. As you would be aware, Madam Speaker, we have released a report showing the interim results of an inspection at the JESC, which found some diesel particulates and some lead particulates there.

As soon as they were found, we deployed staff from that location to other locations that were as close as possible. ACT Fire & Rescue activated business continuity plans, and



staff and operations were moved to the west Belconnen facility. The ACT Ambulance Service activated their continuity plans and their staff were moved to west Belconnen and Dickson facilities. ACT RFS is scheduled to move to the demountable site at the JESC. Access to the main building has ceased. Emergency services have been relocated to other areas. The Gungahlin police station officers have relocated to the former traffic operations centre at Belconnen.

That does not mean to say that operations do not occur within Gungahlin. Patrols still do occur and we still have the fastest response times. My understanding is that the work and program of remediation for fit-outs will be completed at the end of May and staff will be able to move back into the location at that time.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Minister, have emergency services response times been impacted by these temporary arrangements?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** My understanding is that those response times are as they were before. I should point out that ACTAS, police or other first responders are not necessarily despatched from their accommodation; they are despatched from their last job. A good example is our Ambulance Service. Most of their jobs will be complete when they finish their appointments at the emergency services location at the Canberra Hospital. They would be despatched from there to their next job, or they would be despatched from the closest location. Wherever they are, closest to the call, is where the despatch would occur from.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Has the ACT government considered the service risk of co-locating emergency services in one facility?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Yes, certainly. That is part of the work that we have been doing in the master accommodation plan for ESA, Policing and our other first responders. It is appropriate that some are co-housed. For example, the new station at Acton, which is underway at the moment, will co-locate an ACTAS paramedic service and our Fire & Rescue service. They can be despatched from that particular location after servicing crews and vehicles. We need to make sure that these accommodation facilities are as safe as possible for our first responders.

### **Molonglo Valley—library**

**DR PATERSON:** My question is to the Minister for City Services. Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the work being done to design the new Molonglo Valley library?

**MS CHEYNE:** I thank Dr Paterson for the question and for her advocacy for Molonglo Valley residents. This new library and community hub will be located in the heart of the future Molonglo Valley group centre. It will be an important resource not only for the projected 87,000 residents of the Molonglo Valley but also for the wider Canberra community. The future facility will offer access to a wealth of library resources and will be a welcoming, safe and inclusive space for the community. The community has already identified accessibility, collaboration, lifelong learning and integrated services as key priorities for the new library, as well as ongoing engagement opportunities to co-design future services.

The community co-design process has now begun. Involving the Canberra community from the very beginning of the design process will ensure the future Molonglo Valley library and community hub best meet the diverse needs of our growing community. The community can provide feedback in a variety of ways, but primary school children in particular are able to participate in the engagement by submitting their creative ideas for the future Molonglo Valley library via the online Kids' Corner.

**DR PATERSON:** Minister, how can residents of the Molonglo Valley already utilise the great services that Libraries ACT have to offer?

**MS CHEYNE:** Feedback from the community through the co-design process is going to be informing the design brief for the future Molonglo Valley library. This will be used to develop three concept designs, and the preferred of these will be decided by the community and will inform the construction of the future library and hub. In the meantime, residents in the Molonglo Valley can already take advantage of the terrific services that Libraries Act have to offer in person at Woden, Belconnen or one of the other existing branches or by accessing the wealth of resources available online. All Libraries ACT members have free access to e-books, audiobooks, magazines, movies and a range of other terrific collections online. Membership also includes access to ancestry.com's family history research functionality.

In addition to the range of regular programming in branches for the school holidays coming up, there is so much increased programming right across our libraries. There was a post about this on late Sunday night. The dedication and commitment of Libraries ACT staff to support the community is first rate, I have to say: the free events, the movie nights, and the activities where people are able to create some elements and link them to what they are reading. What we are able to do with our Libraries ACT staff in branches already, as well as everything that is offered online, is really quite special. I encourage everyone in Canberra to make use of them.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Minister, what service improvements are being made across the Libraries ACT network of branches?

**MS CHEYNE:** Our library branches are constantly innovating. They are always open to community suggestions for improved or extended service offerings. One recent change is to better support our diverse multicultural community by identifying to customers, via staff name badges, which languages our library staff speak. Libraries ACT is also currently drafting its Imagine 2030 strategy which will set a course for the future of public libraries in Canberra, with a focus on inclusivity, innovation and meeting community needs. The strategy aims to adapt library services to fit evolving 21st century needs, emphasised by shared community values like equity, inclusion, sustainability and affordability.

Underpinning the strategy is the Imagining 2030 community priorities project which was developed through a co-design approach with the community. That identified six key priorities that go to: unlocking access; increasing access for all; better together; collaboration shaping our greater community impact; anywhere anytime; integrating online, onsite and outreach services and experiences; lifelong learning and empowering learning at all life stages; increasing awareness of the library's value; ways of working;

being people-centred; and transforming from the inside out.

Speaking of the school holidays, another innovation that has come through Libraries ACT is their collection specifically for people who may have dyslexia. That is being rolled out right across our Libraries ACT branches over the school holidays. You can book into a very small group to understand the collection over a 45-minute period. It is free and it is going to be available at all our library branches. And they have expanded their comic book selection. I think that is a terrific opportunity for kids to understand the values of their libraries during these school holidays.

**Ms Berry:** Madam Speaker, I ask that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.