



QUESTION TIME
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

Wednesday, 14 May 2025

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Questions without notice

Canberra Health Services—Canberra Hospital operations centre

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Health. Are specialist surgeons being asked or expected to operate on elective surgery patients whom they have not had the opportunity to meet, let alone assess clinically?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I will take that question on notice. But it is standard practice across other jurisdictions that patients who are on the public elective surgery waiting list might be assessed by one specialist and might have their surgery with another specialist. It is very clear on other jurisdictions' websites that, if you are a public patient in the public hospital system, you do not have a choice of specialist. I recognise that moving in this direction in the ACT, towards a pooled waiting list, is a change for the ACT, but it is a change that will improve the timeliness of care for many patients and will certainly improve the efficiency of our system. I will take on notice the specifics of Ms Castley's question about whether surgeons have no opportunity to review.

MS CASTLEY: This question will possibly be taken on notice as well. Minister, why have specialist surgeons been prevented from clinically assessing patients? Is it by the Operations Centre?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I do not think it is a question of surgeons being prevented from assessing patients. I think it is in relation to the process of not having a choice of surgeon and potentially having one person doing the assessment and another person undertaking the surgery. What we are attempting to do is align with the practice of other jurisdictions—the way that the public health system works across the country.

MS BARRY: Minister, if specialist surgeons have been prevented from clinically assessing patients, how is this the best in-patient care?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I refer Ms Barry to my previous answers.

Canberra Health Services—surgeons

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, should patients in the public health system have the right to know the identity and clinical experience of the surgeon that will be undertaking an operation on them, as is in the case in the private system?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: The public system is different to the private system. In the private system, clearly people do identify, choose and consult a specific surgeon and then have surgery with a specific surgeon. The way the public system works in other jurisdictions, and it is very, very clear on their websites—I would refer Ms Castley in particular to the Queensland Health website, which is very clear that if you are a public patient getting planned care in the public hospital system, you do not have the opportunity to choose your surgeon.

Ms Castley: Point of order on relevance. I asked if—

MR SPEAKER: I have it! I think the point of order is valid in terms of, I think Ms Castley is aware of the differences between private and public—

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: It did not sound like it from the question.

Ms Castley: I can repeat the question.

MR SPEAKER: No, no. The question was: do patients have the right to know as is the case in the private system. That was the question. Do patients have the right to know the surgeon and the experience of the person?

Mr Hanson: Can we stop the clock while this is going on?

MR SPEAKER: It might be handy to stop the clock.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Mr Speaker, it is not a useful comparator. I would certainly expect for anyone who is receiving surgery, that at the point they are going in to receive their surgery, their surgeon will have a conversation with them. Their surgeon will be part of the consenting process, and they will know who their surgeon is at the time they go to receive their surgery. But it is a completely different system to the private system and so the distinction you are making in responding to this point of order is not a valid distinction, with all due respect, Mr Speaker.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Let us move on to the supplementary Ms Castley.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, do public hospital patients not deserve the same rights and quality of care as patients in the private sector by knowing the identity and clinical experience of the surgeon performing the surgery?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Certainly all patients in the public system deserve to receive exceptional care and that is what Canberra Health Services aims every day to deliver. Again, Ms Castley's casting of wide aspersions about the quality of the surgeons in our public system is pretty unacceptable. What she is really saying is that people who have their surgery—

MR SPEAKER: On a point of order; if we can just stop the clock.

Ms Castley: I believe she is debating the question, Mr Speaker. I am asking if the patients should be allowed to know the identity and clinical experience of the surgeon, not disparaging the surgeons in any way.

Mr Pettersson: Point of order. Mr Speaker, the question is asking for an expression of opinion.

MR SPEAKER: No, Mr Pettersson, I am not sure that it is asking for an opinion. I do not know that it is. Mr Cocks, what do you have for us?

Mr Cocks: On that point of order, I would take the same position as you, that the right

of someone to know, and what they deserve, is not the same as an opinion.

Mr Pettersson: Asking should they have it though?

MR SPEAKER: I think we are playing with the pedantries of language. We have a minute 30 on the clock. Because we have been chatting for a while on other things, do you want the question re-stated or are you fully across it?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I think I have answered the question as well as I can with reference to previous answers as well, so I will refer Ms Castley to my statements in response to that question and previous ones.

MS BARRY: Minister, why are your decisions about ACT health and hospitals leading to an ideological model of patient treatment?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: No they are not.

Canberra Health Services—visiting medical officers

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, noting the number of resignations of orthopaedic surgeons—some later rescinded—there are still fewer orthopaedic surgeons working in Canberra since October. Meanwhile, the number of elective surgery patients waiting over 30 days has more than doubled, from 10 in October 2024 to 26 in May 2025. Is this blowout because of resignations and other staffing issues resulting from your mismanagement?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: No. In fact, as of May, those surgeons who had tendered their resignations were all still working anyway. I have been really clear in this place multiple times with Ms Castley: each of those surgeons who had tendered their resignations were working through their period of resignation. One of those surgeons pretty much did no elective surgery in the public system anyway. Ms Castley should be aware of that, given the multiple conversations she has clearly had with these particular individuals.

Ms Castley has referred to a point in time that includes the summer period. As I have pointed out to her before, over that summer period of Christmas and New Year there is sometimes a reduction in surgery because surgeons take leave. Sometimes there is a reduction in elective surgery throughput because particular surgeons are away at conferences. There are a whole range of different reasons for this occurring.

What I can assure the Assembly is that the orthopaedic team has been collaborating with Canberra Health Services to ensure that some of the longest wait patients—including patients who were waiting for very long periods on the waiting list of one of those surgeons who has resigned—are, in fact, getting their surgery in a timely way, now that these issues have been resolved. Actually, the orthopaedic team is pulling together to ensure that they are getting through those surgeries.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, what effect is your decision to phase out the VMO contracts for medical specialists and surgeons having on your ability to attract orthopaedic surgeons to replace the experienced ones who have resigned?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: None, I believe. Again, I will correct Ms Castley. What we have been saying to the orthopaedic surgeons was that we want to phase out fee-for-service visiting medical officer contracts. We do want to recruit more staff specialists, and it is my understanding that the orthopaedic team has now had productive conversations with Canberra Health Services about actually recruiting staff specialist orthopaedic surgeons. This would be fantastic, because this service has been a 100 per cent visiting medical officer consultant service, in my understanding. This is a service whose accreditation for supporting the most junior medical officers—those interns and residents, who were in their first two years out of university—was withdrawn last year because of a lack of supervision capacity within that orthopaedic team. And that was because of the model that it adopted: a fully visiting medical officer model.

The productive conversations that Canberra Health Services have had with the orthopaedic team are also resolving those issues and the concerns that have been raised repeatedly over a number of years by the Canberra Region Medical Education Council. We are seeing a commitment to junior doctor training in this team and this group—as we are in our other surgical groups—that was hard to achieve with an entirely visiting medical officer model. But our current visiting medical officers are leaning in. They are recognising the challenges, and they are doing this work.

MR HANSON: Minister, do you actually care about the clinicians who are so affected by your decisions that have caused so much concern and distress to them?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I absolutely care about the clinicians. I care about all of our clinicians across the public health system. That is why it is always so distressing when Ms Castley gets in here and denigrates a range of surgeons who are not the ones that she is particularly talking to.

Mr Hanson: Mr Speaker, on a point of order, the question was about the minister's actions and the concern and distress caused as a result. She is creating imputations. If you look at standing order 118 (d)—

MR SPEAKER: Stop the clock.

Mr Hanson: She is trying to impugn that the question that I am asking—or Ms Castley is asking—is somehow to denigrate the surgeons. It clearly is not.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I have a point of order, Mr Speaker. If my comments were impugning, so was the question, and it would also be out of order.

MR SPEAKER: Minister for Health, I am not sure that your point of order applies. I can understand why you have gone to that example, but can we just get back to the question and could we just try to be nice. Can we address the actual question, please. Minister.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I think I have addressed the question, Mr Speaker. I do care about our clinicians. What I want to do is ensure that Canberra Health Services provides a supportive work environment for all of our clinicians, our nurses and our junior doctors as well as for our consultants.

Roads—pedestrians—Belconnen markets

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for City Services. Minister, in February, I asked you a question on notice about the poorly designed crossing at the Belconnen markets. In your answer, dated 24 February, you said:

TCCS has recently completed a design for a new raised pedestrian crossing in that location, which includes relocation of the ramps. Construction of the crossing is to be completed within the next three months.

This crossing is particularly difficult for people in wheelchairs, pushing prams or using mobility aids, because you have to leave the crossing and walk on the road to use the ramp. If you follow the crossing, it goes to tarmac. The date of 24 May is fast approaching. Will you meet this three-month deadline?

MS CHEYNE: For construction to begin, yes. In fact, on the City Services website news page, there was an article released in April, headed: “New raised pedestrian crossing on Ibbott Lane, Belconnen”. At the same time, we contacted the businesses in the area. The design has been finalised, the construction procurement is underway and it is expected that the contractor will be on board to deliver the upgrade very soon. Works are still expected to commence in May.

MS CLAY: Given the commitment was that construction of the crossing is to be completed within the next three months, when will construction be completed?

MS CHEYNE: Works will take around eight weeks to complete.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, when you build crossings and consider roads, how are you making sure to include the needs of all Canberrans, including those who use wheelchairs or mobility aids or are pushing prams?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Braddock for the question. Again, I would probably point to this crossing as being a great example of what is being taken into account. Obviously, the crossing that has existed there was in place for how the markets were constructed at the time, and that has changed since Capital Food Market has opened. For this new raised pedestrian crossing, the works will include the removal of existing speedhumps, extending some of the kerbing, new kerb ramps, removal of existing bike racks and installation of bike racks closer to the new crossing—which is also expected to help deter vehicles from parking on the verge—shifting the location of the accessible car park by one space to accommodate the new crossing and some new lighting. I trust that answers Mr Braddock’s question.

Bimberi Youth Justice Centre

MR EMERSON: My question is to the Minister for Children, Youth and Families. The Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People has expressed deep concerns about the treatment of Aboriginal children in the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre. The Children and Young People Act prescribes that the commissioner may at any reasonable time enter a detention place for the purpose of exercising her function. The act says that an example of a time that would not be

reasonable would be when an emergency declaration is in force; however, the commissioner has been told she may only attend Bimberi during certain pre-approved times.

Minister, why is the commissioner's legislative power to attend at any reasonable time being denied?

MR PETTERSSON: I thank Mr Emerson for the question. As Mr Emerson has made members of the chamber aware through his question—as well as media reporting—there have been challenges recently for certain oversights to maintain the access that they believe is reasonable in providing oversight to Bimberi.

I am aware of ongoing conversations that have taken place, since some of this earlier media reporting, to ensure that oversights are able to maintain what they believe is an appropriate level of oversight in line with what is legislated.

I understand that the legal question has been pursued by interested parties in this matter. I am also aware there are current arrangements in place that I believe are satisfactory to meet the requirements of oversight bodies in line with their legal responsibilities.

MR EMERSON: Minister, will the government increase resourcing so that Bimberi has sufficient staffing to facilitate ad hoc visits, or otherwise commit to training these oversight entities so that they can visit the centre unescorted, given I heard this morning from the commissioner that she is not satisfied with the resolution that has been reached?

MR PETTERSSON: I would like to thank the member for the question. Yes, the ACT government is committed to improving and increasing staffing at Bimberi. The question of staffing is one of available human resources, not of government intent to staff the facility. The government is currently undertaking a recruitment college and providing appropriate training to staff a new cohort of workers for the centre. At the moment, Bimberi is experiencing an unusually high number of young people within the centre. This is presenting staffing challenges which have led to some of these conversations about appropriate access and timing of access.

I appreciate the frustration that is experienced on every side of this situation. I do, however, acknowledge that all sides are committed to working together to reach a good outcome, not just for the relevant parties but for the young people involved.

MS BARRY: Minister, what have you practically done to ensure that the commissioner's ability to effectively carry out their functions is not being limited?

MR PETTERSSON: I would like to thank the member for the question. I have sought proactively to meet with relevant parties in this matter to discuss and understand their issues and what they hope to achieve at the end of this discussion. I am confident that we will be able to reach a sustainable place, where all relevant parties are comfortable and happy with the outcome.

I will re-emphasise that this is in response to an unexpected number of young people within Bimberi while it is simultaneously experiencing a shortage of available

workforce. That being said, I understand that arrangements are in place that have been facilitating appropriate and relevant access, regardless of an individual's claimed legal rights.

Canberra Health Services—visiting medical officers

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, are you aware that, due to your decision to phase out VMO contracts, the pay and conditions of senior specialists at Canberra Hospital are such that no appropriately qualified Australian specialist applies for these posts and that these posts are now being filled by overseas specialists?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I cannot possibly answer that question without Ms Castley providing a bit more detail about what type of posts she is talking about. Canberra Health Services advertises for both visiting medical officers and staff specialists. My understanding is that a number of staff specialists have been appointed over the last few months. In fact, Canberra Health Services, as I have previously provided information on in this place, has been very successful in recruitment. That includes recruiting some highly qualified clinicians from overseas. Again, Ms Castley's suggestion that because a doctor comes from overseas they will not be as qualified as someone who is moving from a different jurisdiction in Australia, and who may have previously come from overseas, is not an accurate reflection of the make-up of our health workforce.

MS CASTLEY: Can the minister confirm that this is the case for important senior roles, such as the Director of Cardiology at Canberra Hospital?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I will take that question on notice.

MR HANSON: Minister, what other “craft groups”—that is, surgeons and medical professionals—have been affected by your decisions that are deterring Australian specialists from applying for roles such as directors of cardiology?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I absolutely reject the premise of the opposition's question. If Ms Castley has specific questions that she would like to put on notice or send to me, we are happy to look into it. But the vagueness of these questions makes it impossible for me to answer in question time.

Waste—syringes

MS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for Health. Local businesses and constituents have expressed concerns about used syringes being dumped in public areas, including parks and playgrounds. Minister, what are some of the health risks associated with being accidentally jabbed by a used syringe?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I am the Minister for Health; I am not a clinician or a qualified specialist. My response to Ms Morris would probably be by saying, “Google it.” You will get as good an answer from that, in terms of the health risks, as you would from me googling it and answering your question in relation to the health risks. If what Ms Morris is concerned about is, in fact, a matter of littering and syringes being in public places, the responsibility for that does not sit with the health minister.

MS MORRIS: I take it from the answer you just gave that the answer would be no, but, Minister, are you concerned at the health risk discarded syringes present to young children and families playing in public areas where there are discarded syringes?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I feel that this is very much asking for an expression of opinion, but, of course, like any member of the community, I am concerned when I hear about syringes being discarded in public places. As a local member, I have had those conversations with people in my community as well.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, has the number of syringes dumped in public places increased since your government decriminalised hard drugs like heroin, ice and cocaine?

MS CHEYNE: That definitely is a question for me. No; I do not believe so. I am happy to take that on notice. What I would say is that needles and sharps of any kind should be reported to Access Canberra on 132281 or via the website. There are response times for picking those up. I think it is two hours, or something like that—it is very short—so that any harm that is possible to the community is rectified. There are also numerous syringe disposal bins around the city, including within our public health facilities.

I would note that there are many reasons someone might be using a syringe. It could be Ozempic or Wegovy—that is me. It could be diabetes; it could be anything.

Mr Hanson: So you can give medical advice?

MS CHEYNE: Suggesting that there is an immediate risk relating to drug use—

Ms Stephen-Smith: It's not medical advice; it's just—

Mr Hanson: She's giving a list of conditions. You said that was not appropriate.

MS CHEYNE: It is not appropriate. I do not believe it is appropriate. I would say that stirring up sentiment that there is a risk when there is a very clear way of reporting this and getting City Services to attend to any issue that someone sees, whether it is in a playground or whatever it may be—that is where I would focus Ms Morris's and Ms Castley's efforts.

South Tuggeranong health centre

MS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for Health. In May last year, your government announced a timeline for a South Tuggeranong health centre and you promised construction would be completed by the end of this year. This has since been pushed back to August next year. Minister, what are the reasons for these delays?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Morris for the question. The main reason for the delay was working through the detailed design and development application process is my understanding. If that is not correct, I will come back and correct the record with the Assembly.

MS MORRIS: Minister, what impact has the delays had on the health centre's estimated cost to taxpayers?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: None as far as I am aware.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, given the delays, what is the plan to ensure access to quality health care for Tuggeranong residents?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Well our plan continues to be to build a new health centre in South Tuggeranong, something that those opposite never committed to do.

Planning and development—Manuka Oval

MR RATTENBURY: My question is for the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, last week I asked you about the planning proposal by the Canberra Services Club for a site at Manuka Oval. You answered that Minister Steel has recused himself due a possible perception of conflict of interest, and that you had decided it was in the public interest for this proposal to proceed. What was the potential conflict of interest for Minister Steel that was the basis for him recusing himself?

MR BARR: I thank Mr Rattenbury for the question. The minister had previously worked at the Australian Federal Police Association. I understand that his boss at that time now has a role with the impacted club.

MR RATTENBURY: What were the factors that you took into account in deciding it was in the public interest for a development application to be considered?

MR BARR: The briefing material provided to me as the decision-maker.

MISS NUTTALL: Chief Minister, what is the status of the Manuka Oval precinct plan that in 2016 you undertook to develop?

MR BARR: That project was abandoned as a result of the COVID period. There was no funding source for it.

City and government services—mowing

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: My question is to the Minister for City Services. Minister, can you update the Assembly on the ACT's annual mowing program for 2025?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for the question. This year we finally had a relatively normal year when it came to the mowing program. It ran from 2 September until 4 April, with much more favourable conditions compared to last year or many years previously. It was much more like a usual summer for us. Crews were able to carry out 124 service days with only 26 days impacted by rain or unserviceable weather conditions—such as, it might be a sunny day after a rain period but the ground is exceptionally damp.

Resources available for the delivery of this year's program included our hardworking in-house crews supported by procured mowing contractor services, which are annually

adjusted to meet seasonal demand. It is fantastic to report that around 90 per cent of mowing activity continues to be delivered in-house, which is an ongoing commitment. That is even with the growth in responsibilities that our crews face season after season. Those 124 available servicing days correlated to the completion of seven passes of suburban mowing and five passes of arterial road mowing.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, how does the mowing program support broader government objectives?

MS CHEYNE: The mowing program is about much more than simply keeping the grass down in our parks and along our roadsides; it is central to how we maintain a safe, accessible and sustainable city. Regular mowing supports road safety by maintaining clear sight lines for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. It supports bushfire preparedness, helping reduce fuel loads and creating defensible space near homes, nature reserves and key public infrastructure. It is why TCCS is such an important stakeholder in the Bushfire Operations Plan, and I note that that plan is out for consultation at this moment. Our mowing schedule complements the government's investment in active travel by ensuring parts remain usable and safe throughout the year. The program is also designed to enhance the amenity of our urban spaces, making them more attractive and usable for recreation, sport and simply social connection.

Importantly, our mowing efforts are aligned with the government's ecological and environmental objectives. Special mowing guidelines apply to areas of high conservation value, such as grasslands and nature reserves, to protect native species and ecological processes. This includes managing weeds, encouraging the growth of native grasses and maintaining habitat for endangered species like the golden sun moth and the striped legless lizard.

MS TOUGH: Minister, what is the ACT government doing to support our city presentation crews in preparation for the next mowing season?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Ms Tough for the supplementary. The ACT government supports our city presentation crews year after year through a strategically planned and reviewed program, the ongoing maintenance and expansion of our fleet as well as staff upskilling and training. We have a mowing program coordinator, Miss Jody Friend, who does an exceptional job in programming the year but also, in this off-season, reviewing all of the maintenance, the standard operating procedures and the training. With this year's program, additional weeks are now being spent conducting mechanical inspections, maintenance and repairs of machines and equipment. That will ensure that our fleet is primed, ready and fit for the next season, which will start in September 2025.

Our City Services staff undergo training this month and in August and go through a debriefing process as well. That supports staff in becoming more comfortable in carrying out daily tasks using a range of different machinery and equipment. That all increases efficiency. On top of that, there is an enhanced ecological map that has been developed in partnership with EPSDD, and that assists our mowing crews as well as our tree planting teams. I look forward, especially with the machinery of government changes, to seeing even greater alignment between our ecological objectives and our objectives regarding amenity and safety.

City and government services—cycleways

MS CARRICK: My question for the Minister for City Services is about the cycle paths in Coombs Peninsula. ACT Labor made a commitment before the last election to complete the missing link in the path network, making it easier for locals and visitors to explore and enjoy the area. When will this missing link/path be completed?

MS CHEYNE: I believe it will be subject to budget funding. We are going through a budget process right now. It is an election commitment, and we will deliver it this term.

MS CARRICK: When will work be completed on the seven-kilometre off-road shared path for walking and cycling along John Gorton Drive, including an underpass connecting the future town centre to Denman Prospect that ACT Labor said work was already underway on before the last election?

MS CHEYNE: I will take it on notice, Mr Speaker.

MR COCKS: Minister, when will construction commence on the new pedestrian and cyclist bridge near the RSPCA in Coombs, which ACT Labor also committed to before the last election?

MS CHEYNE: There are two different roads or cycle pathways there, so I am going to take that on notice. One is being delivered by the SLA and one by TCCS. So that I do not mix it up, let me take it on notice, and I will come back.

City and government services—Access Canberra

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for City and Government Services. Businesses that operate both in Canberra and in other jurisdictions often say that working with the ACT government is harder and more expensive than in other states. Minister, why does it take five days to process used car registrations lodged by car dealers online?

MS CHEYNE: I will double-check, but I am pretty sure that this is an issue that has been resolved. It is something, if I am exactly recalling this issue, that has been raised with us, and Access Canberra did implement a solution some months ago. I do not believe that it is still a problem, but if I am conflating something else, I will come back and correct the record.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, why are Canberra businesses paying more than twice as much in commercial rates compared to other businesses just over the border?

MS CHEYNE: Commercial rates are not a decision for me. In fact, it is the Revenue Office that assesses the value of the land. I would note that all of that information is publicly available, and Mr Milligan may wish to read more about it.

MR COCKS: Minister, why does the ACT government make it so hard and so expensive to do business in Canberra?

MS CHEYNE: We do not.

Light rail—construction impacts

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, you have previously stated in this chamber, very clearly, that any support for businesses on London Circuit would not be financial. This week, the government backflipped and finally acknowledged the impact of light rail construction and announced business support measures, months after construction had already had a devastating effect on businesses. Minister, why is free parking limited to after 5.30 pm and only on selected days of the week?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. This corresponds with the activity of hospitality businesses. We were very pleased to put that in place from this week to make sure that there is an incentive for Canberrans to support businesses during that time. That is the focus of the package that we have announced this week, to encourage Canberrans to get out and support businesses during the construction period where it is affecting them. Of course, the other measures that we have announced will do the same thing, like an advertising campaign, for example. The period Wednesday through to Sunday corresponds with a higher level of activity for hospitality businesses, which we know will be the businesses that are most affected in the area around London Circuit. There is a mix of businesses around the area, but some of them will be more affected than others. We certainly note that hospitality was affected. When we consulted with them through the City Construction Information Group, the discussion that they had with Infrastructure Canberra focused primarily on parking. It was something that the businesses themselves raised with the government, and we were pleased to be able to support that measure. It is practical and agreed to by the government.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, given that the impact of construction has been affecting businesses since February this year, why is the outdoor permit waiver not implemented immediately or even backdated to the start of construction?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. Of course, we have budget processes in government that we need to go through when considering these matters. We set out a range of supports that we would provide to the businesses affected in this area through the Business Partnership Plan before the project really ramped up, in terms of construction of the light rail stage 2A line. Of course, as construction has been occurring, businesses have raised other matters that they would like to see addressed, and we have been able to address some of those through the package that we announced this week. We will continue listening to the businesses about other supports and practical measures that can be taken that the government can agree to as the construction program continues.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, why are you not doing more to account for the devastating impact your construction is having on local businesses, noting they are not all hospitality businesses?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. I think the package this week shows that we are.

Schools—corporate sponsorships

MISS NUTTALL: My question is to the Minister for Education. Minister, in question time yesterday, as well as in some other communication, you have indicated that you are undertaking a consultation process about fossil fuel sponsorships in schools. Can I confirm that this is the same process that was undertaken for the other industries that are not permitted to be involved in school sponsorships under the Education Directorate's corporate sponsorship policy?

MS BERRY: Thank you for the question Miss Nuttall. Yes, I indicated in my response to a motion brought to the Assembly with regards to corporate sponsorship of schools, including gas, fuel and gaming, that the ACT government's Education Directorate was already conducting a review into that corporate sponsorship. This is that.

Miss Nuttall: Point of order on relevance, Mr Speaker. The question was about whether the process that was undertaken right now for fossil fuel sponsorships is the same process that was undertaken for other things that are currently banned, like armaments and pornography.

MR SPEAKER: Ms Berry?

MS BERRY: This is a review of the corporate sponsorship policy, which includes the fuel and gambling corporate sponsorship that your motion in a previous sitting called for and I confirmed that we were conducting a review of that policy. That is what this is. That is what I answered when you asked the question this week.

MISS NUTTALL: Have you opted to undertake a different process for fossil fuels compared to something like tobacco or armaments?

MS BERRY: No. The review is occurring because it needs to occur. It has been some time since the policy was looked at. There are a number of policies that are reviewed as a regular business as usual process. So this review was already happening and it was timely that it happened at the same time as your motion.

MS CLAY: Minister, will the review include a review of curriculum materials sponsored by fossil fuel companies?

MS BERRY: No, it is a review of corporate sponsorship.

Reconciliation Day—grants

MS TOUGH: My question is to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. Minister, what grant programs are available to support Reconciliation Day and the local community?

MS ORR: I thank the member for their question. I am pleased to say that the ACT government has a range of grant programs that support reconciliation and the community. The ACT Reconciliation Day Grants and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural, Leadership and Scholarship Grants are two examples of these, and both have recently concluded grant rounds.

The ACT Reconciliation Day Grants program funds meaningful initiatives in the lead-up to Reconciliation Week, with events that support Reconciliation Day. These grants give priority to projects that demonstrate that: they integrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities into their organisation's structures; they work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a culturally appropriate way; and that they recognise the need to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities in service design and delivery. This year there were seven applicants who were offered a Reconciliation Day Grant to support work relevant to community-organised events during Reconciliation Week.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural, Leadership and Scholarship Grants, as the name suggests, have three components: culture, leadership and scholarships. All of these are focused in their own way on supporting initiatives to increase cultural integrity and excellence within the community. This year, 31 applicants across the three streams were offered a grant.

The ACT government also offers relevant grant programs throughout the year, for instance the Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation Establishment and Expansion Fund is there to support new and existing ACT ACCOs build organisational capacity and capability through the provision of culturally appropriate human services to the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island community. Applications for that particular program are open and ongoing. However, we do encourage people to get in before 30 June.

All these programs improve outcomes across the territory, and I would like to thank everyone for their participation. I look forward to seeing a lot of these projects as they get implemented.

MS TOUGH: Minister, what kind of community-driven activities will we see this year through the 2025 ACT Reconciliation Day Grants?

MS ORR: Again, I thank the member for her question. This year's successful applicants reflect a wide diversity within the Canberra community, with six applicants receiving grants. The YWCA of Canberra's Curious Kids reconciliation program is one of those. They will share stories and acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practices with children through fun activities. The ACT Council of Social Services is convening a panel session on how cultural safety and reconciliation practices today lay the groundwork for inclusive and equitable workplaces in the future. Beseda, the Czechoslovak Australian Association of Canberra, is running an art workshop and a group discussion on relationships, respect and trust. Gilmore Church will host a holistic Reconciliation Day event. The Celebration of African Australians will host an African drumming workshop to promote Reconciliation Day, and Corroboree Empire is holding a week of activities for local Aboriginal groups and children to celebrate Reconciliation Week.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, how does the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural, Leadership and Scholarship Grant program build cultural integrity and community leadership?

MS ORR: I thank the member for his question. The grants, as I mentioned, have three

streams, all focused on building a range of capabilities. The cultural grants support cultural integrity and the aspirations of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and contribute to the building of respectful, fair and sustainable communities. This year's successful grant recipients and activities included the ACT Torres Strait Islanders Corporation bringing the Torres Strait Islander dance group Gerib Sik to Canberra for cultural performances and workshops.

Our Canberra Writers Festival's First Nations Stories and Strengths program highlights First Nations authors and strengthens storytelling traditions that keep culture alive within the community. The Canberra High School P&C got a grant to support the Community Indigenous Garden project, an outdoor classroom and learning space that honours Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and knowledge. Basketball ACT received a grant for their Indigenous Game Development Program.

The leadership grants are there to support community leadership, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a strong voice and are decision-makers on issues that impact them and lead through the achievement of positive life outcomes. There were a range of successful grant recipients and activities, which included leadership and development activities. Some of the groups include the Canberra and District NAIDOC Aboriginal Corporation; the Yeddung Mura, or 'good pathways', Aboriginal Corporation; and the Australian Outward Bound Development Fund. There were also five individuals who received leadership development grants to support participation in training and professional development programs.

The scholarship grants support lifelong learning, empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to engage in that lifelong learning journey. Scholarship grants are open to individuals only. This year, 10 successful grant recipients were provided with scholarship grants to provide career opportunities within midwifery, medical radiation science, mental health, alcohol and other drugs, and psychology. It is certainly quite a diverse and very broad range of recipients and projects, and I commend all successful applicants.

City and government services—cycleways

MR BRADDOCK: My question is for the Minister for City Services. Minister, on the TCCS page on the Sherbrooke Street active travel street trial in Ainslie, it says:

At this stage, funding has been allocated for the design phase only. Construction of the Active Travel Street is subject to future funding.

Minister, is there a possibility that the residents of Ainslie and the students of Ainslie primary school may not, after all, get an active travel street/bicycle boulevard along Sherbrooke Street?

MS CHEYNE: The answer is exactly as Mr Braddock read out: it is subject to future funding.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, can you reassure the community that segments 5 to 7 of the garden city cycle route will be constructed now that the 2023-24 budget funding for segments 1 to 4 is complete?

MS CHEYNE: I will have to take that on notice. Asking about specific sections of roads is really not a good use of time, but I am happy to take it on notice.

MS CLAY: Minister, if funding is only allocated in a piecemeal way for active travel network infrastructure instead of being forecast, how can we know how long it will take for there to be a dedicated safe cycling network all around Canberra?

MS CHEYNE: I would point Ms Clay to our election commitments, which are comprehensive and do point to a four-year program of uplift to the existing path network as well as the construction of new paths and, in particular, the expansion around Lake Ginninderra and the widening of the path there.

I would also note that the Labor federal government greatly value active travel and they do seek to partner with the ACT government. So, in some instances, it may be best for us, whether it is due to that funding or due to market conditions or whatever it may be, that we stage things and go to market in that way. In others, we can make a clear investment with a contract for multiple areas. So I think the community can have confidence. We have detailed design work underway right across the city, in addition to construction in what feels like everywhere. So I reject any sense that we are not investing in this crucial infrastructure.

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