



QUESTION TIME
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

Thursday, 28 May 2026

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Ministerial arrangements

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Trade) (2.00): As members may be aware, Minister Cheyne is away from question time today, so Minister Steel will take questions in the city and government services portfolios; Minister Paterson will take questions in the Attorney-General and human rights portfolios; and Minister Pettersson will take questions in the night-time economy portfolio.

Questions without notice

Procurement—Secure Local Jobs Code—Future Form

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations. Minister, the Secure Local Jobs Code is supposed to ensure that ACT government contracts only go to businesses meeting the highest ethical and labour standards. Yet reports today say Future Form's ACT entity has picked up work on the ACT government's lyric theatre project despite the New South Wales Labor government recently banning the company over suspected underpayments; tax fraud; workers compensation, safety and subcontracting transparency breaches; and the alleged involvement in the firebombing of a union official's car. Minister, why has Future Form, or at least their ACT entity, been certified for taxpayer funded contracts under the Secure Local Jobs Code?

MR PETTERSSON: I thank Mr Parton for the question and his interest in the ethical treatment of workers. As the member would be aware, these are matters for the registrar. I am happy to take it on notice and see if any information can be provided.

MR PARTON: Minister, what is the point of the Secure Local Jobs Code if it enables a subcontractor subject to multiple investigations in New South Wales relating to underpayments, tax fraud, workers compensation failures and safety breaches to end up on an ACT government work site?

MR PETTERSSON: I thank Mr Parton for the supplementary question. The Secure Local Jobs Code plays an important role in uplifting standards in industry. It is a strong initiative, which has not been supported by those opposite. So, I am heartened to see any interest from the Canberra Liberals to make sure that these high ethical standards are met here in the ACT. The appropriate course of action when matters arise in this space is for that information to be provided to the registrar for them to assess compliance. This is a question for them. As such, I thank Mr Parton for the question but I am not in a position to speak to the specifics of it.

MRS MORRIS: Minister, why are ACT taxpayers lining the pockets of a company being investigated for firebombing, threats and intimidation, underpayments, tax fraud and safety breaches?

MR PETTERSSON: I thank Mrs Morris for the question. The Secure Local Jobs Code is an important tool that the ACT government has to uplift standards in the ACT, to ensure those who work on ACT government projects do meet those high ethical standards—which are also inclusive of the lowest of standards; simply obeying the law. It is important that all work undertaken in the ACT is done so by those that are

compliant. These are questions for the registrar, and I understand that they are aware of these matters.

Procurement—Secure Local Jobs Code—Future Form

MRS MORRIS: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, the New South Wales Labor government reportedly acted to ban Future Form from a major taxpayer funded project after serious allegations about underpayments, tax fraud, workers compensation failures, safety breaches and the alleged involvement in the firebombing of a union official's car. Three weeks later, Future Form's ACT entity was engaged on the ACT government's \$317 million lyric theatre build.

Chief Minister, how much are Canberra families paying to engage to work on the lyric theatre a company suspected of firebombing, underpayments and tax fraud?

MR BARR: I will need to take the detail of that question on notice in relation to the subcontracting arrangements. But to be clear, we expect all contractors and subcontractors engaged in ACT government projects to meet strict standards, including the full disclosure of subcontracting arrangements and compliance with workplace, taxation and insurance obligations.

The Canberra lyric theatre project is being delivered by Multiplex under a robust contractual and probity framework. Of course we will continue to monitor closely all aspects of delivery. If any issues are identified, they would be addressed swiftly, including referral to appropriate agencies and authorities where required. I would refer Mrs Morris to the minister's answer in terms of that process, and that is of course a matter that is handled at arms-length from ministers.

MRS MORRIS: Chief Minister, will you allow Future Form to continue working on the lyric theatre or will you protect the integrity of government infrastructure projects and terminate their contract as the New South Wales Labor government has done?

MR BARR: We acknowledge the findings and the public statements out of New South Wales are serious and concerning, particularly around worker exploitation and subcontracting practices. Further information is being sought from New South Wales, and ACT regulators are of course aware of the situation and are in a position to take any action they consider necessary.

We have zero tolerance for this kind of behaviour, and if any contractor or subcontractor on ACT projects is found to be in breach of their obligations under the law, then of course there will be consequences.

MR COCKS: Chief Minister, is the ACT government seriously saying that it is acceptable for a company banned by the New South Wales Labor government from New South Wales work sites to be engaged on an ACT government project?

MR BARR: We are saying that there is an appropriate legal framework and protection in place in the ACT through the Secure Local Jobs Code. If any issues in relation to a breach of any of the requirements of that code are identified, then that would trigger action against a subcontractor in this regard.

Procurement—Secure Local Jobs Code

MRS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations. The government says that the Secure Local Jobs Code and local industry participation policy settings support local workers and local businesses. Industry professionals are warning that the existing framework drives up the cost of government projects and fails to deliver outcomes for local businesses and workers. Minister, what evidence does the government have that these rules have actually improved employment outcomes for ACT workers or increased participation by ACT-based construction businesses?

MR PETTERSSON: I thank Mrs Morris for the question.

A bit tongue-in-cheek, but my first response would be that the strong opposition to its existence from the Canberra Liberals throughout its history indicates that it has been very effective in driving up standards here in the ACT, because the Canberra Liberals, throughout my time in this place, have always sought to undermine the working conditions of—

Mr Cocks: A point of order, Mr Speaker. I think the minister may have been pushing things a bit close to the line of acceptability. He really is, at this point, debating another party's policy position.

MR SPEAKER: I agree. Minister, I would ask you to be relevant and not debate the matter. The Liberals' position is not relevant to your administrative arrangements. I would ask you to be directly relevant.

MR PETTERSSON: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I was seeking to highlight the views of those that were opposed to the policy as evidence as to why they would be opposed to it, and their strong opposition to it. It is very clear to me—

Mr Cocks: A point of order, Mr Speaker. On debating the question, essentially, what the minister has just stood and said is that in responding to the question he is seeking to build a straw man. That would be a debating technique.

MR SPEAKER: What he is saying is that his evidence is the strong opposition to it. You may or may not agree with that, but he is citing what his evidence is. So he is being relevant, and he is being responsive. You may not agree with his position, but he is saying that is the evidence that he has. Minister, do you have anything further to add?

MR PETTERSSON: Yes, Mr Speaker. This is a strange question, to me. In the first question that I received today, I was asked about applying the Secure Local Jobs Code to ensure that companies that meet high ethical standards abide—*(Time expired.)*

MRS MORRIS: Minister, how many additional ACT residents, apprentices or local subcontractors can you point to who got work because of these rules?

MR PETTERSSON: I cannot accept the premise and the framing of the question. The Secure Local Jobs Code plays an important role in ensuring that the highest standards

are met in industry to ensure that companies that get government work here in the ACT meet incredibly low bars, like not breaking the law. There are a range of policies in place at Procurement ACT that speak to supporting and generating local employment.

Mr Parton: A point of order, Mr Speaker. The minister was asked very specifically: how many additional local jobs are there because of the Local Jobs Code? He is not going anywhere near answering it.

MR SPEAKER: I think what he is saying is that that is not the purpose of the code. He is outlining what the purpose of the code is.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Members! He is providing a response. He is being relevant. He might not be giving an empirical number, but he is giving you an explanation that is both relevant and responsive, so there is no point of order.

MR PETTERSSON: There are a range of policies in place across Procurement to try and support investment and support local jobs. The Secure Local Jobs Code plays one part in that suite of policies. I do not have a particular number that I can attribute to that one particular policy, but this government is proud to support local jobs. We are proud to use our procurement powers to make sure that we support local industry, and it is something we will continue to do.

MR COCKS: Minister, has the government ever commissioned an independent evaluation of its union-influenced procurement regime to assess whether it is delivering better outcomes for local workers and businesses?

MR PETTERSSON: I am not aware of any review of that nature. I am happy to take it on notice and check.

Planning—lease compliance and Macquarie pool

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Planning. Many Canberrans are concerned about lease squatting, and one of those sites is Big Splash. Big Splash has been part of the Belconnen way of life for nearly 60 years. It started as a public swimming pool, but it fell victim to the thinking that governments should not be involved in delivering those services. It is now privately owned, but it is clear the community still considers it is a public asset and its continued use enhances the community wealth of the people in Belconnen. Minister, we often talk about good planning outcomes, but how will the public value of Big Splash to the community be taken into account in decisions about Big Splash's future?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. Under our planning system, we have a range of ways that the community can provide input into planning decisions. The government is not proposing any changes to the zoning of Big Splash. We have been very clear about that. Any future development applications that the proponent, the lessee, puts to the government would have to go out through public notification for community consultation and input as part of the independent assessment undertaken by the Territory Planning Authority. I am not aware that there is any live development

application in relation to the site. The government has expressed its wish to see that aquatic facility open as soon as possible and certainly in line with the lessee's commitment of opening it on 1 November this year.

Obviously, we have a leasehold system here in the ACT, but, whilst we have a leasehold system, property rights are attached to those leases and we need to respect those property rights, but we also need to provide community consultation in relation to developments that lessees want to undertake, and that process is there for the community to be involved with.

MR SPEAKER: Just before we go to your supplementary, Ms Clay, it has been drawn to my attention that there is a sign on the former member Mr Rattenbury's chair. I make this point about props. The ruling that I set is that, if it is a visual aid, it is permitted but not encouraged. But if it is not a visual aid to illustrate a point, it is not. Further, if you go to *House of Representatives Practice*, page 509, the chair has more than once ruled that displaying signs is not permitted. I will not go on about the further ruling, but, if you want to go further, you can read at your leisure about why he made that ruling. The prop has been removed. Mr Braddock, do you have a point of order?

Mr Braddock: Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table this document for the information of members, in terms of Mr Rattenbury and his valuable contribution to this place.

Leave granted.

Mr Braddock: I hereby table the sign saying how much we miss Mr Rattenbury in this place.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you, members. After that little interlude, Ms Clay, you may go to your supplementary.

MS CLAY: Minister, what is the latest update on the now defunct Hawker Tennis Centre?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. This has certainly been a site that has been looked at by the independent regulator, Access Canberra. Following the work that they have been doing on the Big Splash site, they have also been looking at a range of other sites which are unused in the territory. Of course, this is consistent with the priorities that I set for the Territory Planning Authority—Access Canberra acting as their delegate—in my statement of planning priorities, where I indicated it was a priority of the government that they should enforce leases, particularly unused leases for community and recreational purposes but also shopping centres.

In relation to Hawker, there is a long history of DAs which have not been acted on at Hawker. Regulatory action and monitoring are currently underway. However, no further comment can be provided at this time from Access Canberra. When I can provide an update in relation to that matter, I will.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, what is the latest update on the long-defunct Richardson shops?

MR STEEL: As Miss Nuttall would know, the Richardson shop site is currently vacant. Whilst the Crown lease permits the use of retail and personal services, obviously activity is not occurring at the site. There are also currently no active DAs relating to the site. Access Canberra have been investigating the state of the shops since 2023 and regulatory action is currently underway.

Canberra Institute of Technology—EV Centre of Excellence

MR EMERSON: My question is to the Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations. In May 2024, the ACT and commonwealth governments jointly announced that CIT would host Australia's first centre of excellence focused on electric vehicle training. That has been supported by a total of \$27.3 million in joint funding, including \$4.8 million from the commonwealth, to turbocharge the project. Despite all this funding, I understand there have been extensive delays in procuring EVs to be used for training purposes. Minister, when did CIT receive the training vehicles it has procured to use for this program and what vehicles were used in the meantime?

MR PETTERSSON: I would like to thank Mr Emerson for the question and his continued interest in vocational education in our city. Vehicle acquisition was complete in March 2026. During this time, additional equipment, including portable simulators and EV components, were procured to support the commencement of training and the development of training toolkits. However, I appreciate the specifics of Mr Emerson's question in relation to vehicles, and so I will take that on notice.

MR EMERSON: Minister, how many practical training sessions using an EV had been run by the centre of excellence program from the time the EV program commenced up until those vehicles were procured in March 2026, and can you please provide the Assembly with a list of dates and locations for these training sessions?

MR PETTERSSON: I would like to thank Mr Emerson for the supplementary. I will of course take that question on notice. I can provide some adjacent information which might be of benefit to members. To date, there have been 309 participants who have been trained, including 245 existing industry professionals through the roadshow as well as 64 TAFE educators from across all states and territories. There have been a range of training options. For the benefit of members, those courses include: Statement of Attainment Depower and Reinitialise Battery Electric Vehicles, a one-day offering; Battery Electric Vehicle Inspection and Servicing Skill Set, a three-day offering; for TAFE educators, Battery Electric Vehicle Inspection and Servicing Skill Set, three days; and the Electric Vehicle Diagnose and Repair Skill Set, a six-day offering.

MS CARRICK: Minister, has the government or CIT leadership taken any steps to ensure photos, documents and other evidence relating to allegations involving this centre of excellence are not deleted, altered or removed from CIT databases, given the allegations that have been made?

MR PETTERSSON: I would like to thank Ms Carrick for the question. I appreciate the spirit in which it is asked. As members would appreciate, I am not intimately across day-to-day management matters at CIT. I will take the question on notice, and I thank Ms Carrick for raising those matters in this place.

Roads—Commonwealth Avenue

MS CARRICK: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development or the Minister for Transport. Same minister!

Minister, earlier today I raised concerns about delays to northbound rapid bus services on Commonwealth Avenue during peak periods, particularly outside the Hyatt Hotel, before buses reach the dedicated lane that begins at Albert Hall. I understand that Transport Canberra anticipated these delays and sought agreement from the National Capital Authority to extend the bus lanes south to the Coronation Drive intersection ahead of the Commonwealth Avenue Bridge strengthening works. However, the National Capital Authority has indicated that they are responsible for the bridge and that the public transport network is a matter for the ACT government. Minister, which agency is responsible for deciding whether or not to have a bus lane on Commonwealth Avenue?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. The reality is both are responsible. Commonwealth Avenue Bridge is a commonwealth asset and the NCA has planning responsibility within certain parts of Canberra in designated areas and national land. So they are involved and any decisions would, of course, be made not just by the ACT government but with them.

In terms of the question in relation to having an extension of the bus lane or a bus lane that is provided, I think the member is talking about the section between Coronation Drive and Commonwealth Avenue Bridge. This has formed part of an earlier discussion with the NCA, but the ACT government does not believe it is a priority. It will not provide particularly significant benefits for buses. Part of the challenge with bus lanes on Adelaide Avenue, Yarra Glen and Commonwealth Avenue, is that the bus lane is on the right-hand side of the road on Yarra Glen and Adelaide Avenue, travelling northbound, and then it transitions to the other side of the road when buses need to stop at a bus stop that is on the left hand side of the road, like the Albert Hall stop. So buses are in transition at that point. So establishing a bus lane there may not necessarily provide a significant benefit for the traffic network.

Of course, we would not rule anything out. As I mentioned in my ministerial statement this morning, as temporary traffic arrangements change with the work program of the Commonwealth Avenue Bridge renewal project, there may be a need to look at the arrangements that are in place as we see things change. We will work with the NCA closely on that.

MS CARRICK: Minister, what evidence do you have to determine that you do not support a bus lane from Coronation Drive to Albert Hall?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. I think some modelling was undertaken in relation to that, and that it was done quite early on in, in the life of the former disruption taskforce that was set up. I think there was some modelling done. I will take that on notice and see what information we can provide in relation to that. But it is not a particular priority at the moment. There are a range of other things that would impact on the utility of a bus lane in that area, including the temporary traffic arrangements the NCA has put in place with their bridge renewal project as well. We

are looking at the system holistically, not just at one particular section, to understand what the best outcome is, to prioritise public transport and to make sure we have reliability for our buses running through that area, of which there are many.

MR EMERSON: Minister, if that bus lane is not being prioritised, which dedicated bus lanes are being prioritised?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. I consider it a Dorothy Dixter! We are prioritising improvements to bus lanes on the Belconnen Transitway, Haydon Drive. Major public transport route updates are being made to feasibility to inform more detailed design to bus priority improvements in the corridor. We have had work underway on the Cotter Road looking at opportunities for improvements to the general traffic flow, but also for buses, because, of course, buses run on the road with other vehicles and do get caught up with other vehicles. There may be potential improvements that can be made there for buses as well through the Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework that we are looking forward to consulting on with the community soon. We will be considering further opportunities for enhancement and access to our bus services and integration with future light rail systems. So there are a whole range of different opportunities that are being progressed throughout the city to make sure that buses are prioritised and that we support more multimodal use of our transport network.

Workers compensation insurance

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations. In 2022, the government signed a new contract with Finity consulting to, among other things, provide a report on the ACT workers compensation scheme. Evidence was given during the inquiry into insurance costs, which speculated that the terms of reference for this report changed under the new contract. It was suggested that the changes made it more difficult to identify issues with the scheme. Minister, why did the terms of reference change for the Finity review?

MR PETTERSSON: I will take that one on notice.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, did your office or anyone in the Chief Minister's directorate consult with any union-affiliated person in drafting the new terms of reference?

MR PETTERSSON: I will take that one on notice.

MR CAIN: Minister, will you commit to tabling the terms of reference for both the 2017 and 2022 contracts, in this Assembly?

MR PETTERSSON: I do not believe there would be any problem with that. However, I will take it on notice just to check if that is not available in some other way. But I will take it on notice.

Community service organisations—funding

MISS NUTTALL: My question is to the Minister for Disability, Carers and

Community Services. Minister, after extensive advocacy by the community and the Greens for an uplift in funding for the community sector, we were really pleased to see the government commit \$23.7 million in permanent uplift to the community sector—it is much needed. I want to clarify: how much new money is the community sector getting as a permanent uplift per year, and how many organisations will share this funding?

MR STEEL: I will take the question as Treasurer. We will be outlining the full scope of the investment that the ACT government is making in our community sector in the budget, when I hand it down in June. We have heard from community sector organisations and peak bodies that there is a need to respond to increasing cost in demand that they are seeing, with more people coming to them, and to provide support. We were very pleased to announce additional funding for them, which will be reflected in the budget. I am looking forward to handing that down and providing further details both to the community sector partners and the Assembly on 10 June.

Miss Nuttall: Under 118AA, I do not believe the minister was responsive to the question of how much money is being given per year, nor how many organisations will share this funding.

MR STEEL: In the interest of not making announcements during question time, I have indicated when I will be making the announcement.

MR SPEAKER: I think he has been responsive, Miss Nuttall. He is not going to pre-empt the budget based on a standing order, as much as we might like him to. I think that even though he has not directly answered, he has indicated when he will answer, and therefore he has been consistent with the standing orders.

MISS NUTTALL: Awesome—worth a shot; thank you.

Minister, how many organisations will receive the \$894,000 in continued and expanded funding for LGBTIQ+ organisations and over how many years, and how much of that funding is for continued as opposed to expanding programs?

MR SPEAKER: Ms Orr, are you taking this one?

MS ORR: Thank you, Mr Speaker. That one sits more within my portfolio than the Treasurer's. I will take it on notice—for the same reasons that the Treasurer outlined in his response.

MR SPEAKER: Right. Noting that we will get the budget, I think, before we will get a response on notice.

MS ORR: Quite possibly, yes.

MR SPEAKER: So, there you go! Ms Clay?

MS CLAY: Can you provide the full breakdown of the \$15.4 million in funding going towards specialist homelessness services and confirm that that is new money?

MS BERRY: I will take that on notice.

Levies and taxation—gas exports

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, many Canberrans were disappointed to find out that the most recent federal budget did not include a simple, proven and popular measure—a 25 per cent tax on gas exports. In the context of generating more commonwealth revenue to fund the kind of services our territory desperately needs, the Greens have brought this idea to the Assembly time and again. Would you like to read into the *Hansard* your opposition to a fossil fuel tax, as per your amendments to the motion of 3 September 2025?

MR STEEL: Could I ask Mr Braddock to repeat the question?

MR BRADDOCK: I will repeat the final sentence: would you like to read into the *Hansard* your opposition to a fossil fuel tax, as per your amendments to the motion of 3 September 2025?

MR SPEAKER: I will seek some advice on this from the Clerk, as to whether a federal fossil fuel tax would be under the minister's administrative arrangements.

I am allowing the question. Treasurer, I will give you the call.

MR STEEL: Not in the form of words of the motion that was put to the Assembly. I think that is on the record, as well as my speech to the Assembly in relation to that matter. We have, of course, canvassed other ideas on broader revenue in relation to resources, which is available in submissions we have made to the commonwealth.

MR BRADDOCK: Treasurer, why don't you support more revenue being directed to the ACT from taxing giant gas corporations?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. Of course, it is a question for the federal government, which is the decision-maker and which has the taxation responsibilities under the Constitution for those matters. We do not have any significant mining resources that we can tax here in the territory. That is a shame, because it would be helpful to the budget. Other jurisdictions do. Of course, we are partially compensated for that through CGC arrangements and GST sharing and distribution arrangements. Ultimately, those are matters for the commonwealth. We will continue to engage with the commonwealth on vertical fiscal imbalance, where they have the ability to raise revenue, but we are ultimately the ones that deliver services. We will continue to talk to the commonwealth about how we get our fair share of funding to be able to deliver the services that our community needs.

MS CLAY: Has ACT Labor or the ACT government stated that they support taxing fossil fuels to their federal counterparts?

MR STEEL: As I mentioned in answer to the first question, we have canvassed a range of other suggestions, but not in the exact form that the previous motion had suggested. That is why we took a slightly different position on that motion.

Ms Clay: A point of order on relevance. It was a simple question about whether they have advocated for this one.

MR SPEAKER: Do you have anything further to add, Treasurer?

MR STEEL: No. I have answered the question. We have put forward a different arrangement. I am happy to take on notice and provide that submission, and table it in the Assembly.

MR SPEAKER: There is no point of order, Ms Clay.

Roads—safety

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: My question is to the Minister for City and Government Services. Minister, can you update the Assembly on new investments to improve road safety across Canberra?

MR STEEL: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for the question. I really appreciate it, and I will be taking this question on behalf of the Minister for City and Government Services, in relation to the Black Spot Program. I am very pleased that there has been an announcement by local federal representatives about almost \$7 million in funding through the 2026-27 Black Spot Program to improve safety at 17 locations across Canberra, building on the two projects which received Black Spot funding of over half a million dollars by the commonwealth in April, earlier this year. These projects target known crash risks and community concerns and deliver practical upgrades, including new traffic infrastructure, pedestrian improvements, speed management measures and safer intersections. Funded works include major upgrades at the Hindmarsh Drive and Yamba Drive intersection in Garran, safety improvements in Gungahlin, and traffic calming and active travel improvements on Cowper Street in Dickson and Ainslie.

I am also pleased to report the construction of a signalised pedestrian crossing and path improvements on Canberra Avenue are underway, with anticipated completion of the crossing in August and other elements to be completed in September, weather permitting. Every road safety improvement matters because behind every statistic is a person, a family and a community. These projects are about making everyday journeys across Canberra safer and more reliable and help to ensure everyone gets home safely.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, how were these Black Spot projects identified as priorities for funding?

MR STEEL: Thank you for the supplementary. These projects were recommended by the ACT Black Spot Consultative Panel, which brings together local stakeholders with detailed knowledge of Canberra's road network and safety concerns. The panel considers crash history, known risks and community nominations to ensure funding is directed to locations where improvements can have the greatest safety benefit. Importantly, anyone can nominate a location for consideration under the annual Black Spot Program, including residents, community groups and local councils. That local input is critical because communities often know firsthand where near misses, unsafe conditions or recurring risks exist. The funded projects reflect a range of safety priorities from reducing right-angle collisions and improving sight lines through to safer

pedestrian connections, lower vehicle speeds and better cycling conditions. The Black Spot Program demonstrates the value of governments working with communities together to deliver practical, evidence based road safety improvements.

MS TOUGH: Minister, what kinds of safety improvements will Canberrans see delivered through this Black Spot funding?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Tough for her question. Canberrans will see a wide range of targeted road safety upgrades delivered across the city through this funding round, and this includes new mast arm traffic signals, roundabouts, speed humps, pedestrian improvements, upgraded lighting, improved signage and safer line marking. For example, more than \$1 million will be invested at Hindmarsh Drive and Yamba Drive in Garran to improve signal visibility and intersection safety, while Cowper Street in Dickson and Ainslie will receive speed management and active travel improvements, including a reduction to 50 kilometres per hour. Other projects will improve safety around schools, strengthen protections for cyclists and pedestrians, and address roadside hazards and dangerous intersection layouts. These are practical, locally targeted interventions that will make everyday travel safer and more reliable for drivers, cyclists, pedestrians and public transport users alike. These investments support our Vision Zero approach—that no death or serious injury on our roads is acceptable.

Crime—Braddon and Civic

MRS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. Minister, yesterday you dismissed community safety concerns in Civic as fearmongering and you said the city is “more safe than ever”. Minister, if Civic and Braddon are safer than ever, why are businesses in Civic and Braddon reporting having to call the police more often and lock their doors in order to screen customers, and why are they saying the city is “way worse”?

DR PATERSON: I thank the member for the question. We have talked about this a lot over the past couple of weeks. What I answered yesterday was relying on the evidence of police statistics, based on reporting of incidents and apprehensions within the Civic and Braddon area. As I said yesterday, crime statistics demonstrate that Canberra is a very safe society. Perceptions of safety statistics also indicate that Canberrans do, for the most part, feel very safe both in the day and the night and that we lead the nation in terms of feeling safe.

As we have talked about multiple times, there is significant construction underway in the city centre. It is a time of flux and a time of change. We understand that businesses are facing some challenges. As we have talked about, these challenges exist outside of the city centre as well, in other shopping precincts around Canberra. We will continue to work with these shopping precincts. I really encourage any businesses that the Canberra Liberals are talking to, to contact the Business Liaison Officer at ACT Policing. He is a highly-engaged professional officer who is really keen to talk to businesses that might be struggling and to provide some suggestions on how they can harden their shopfronts and harden their security processes—and, of course, they can report any crime.

MRS MORRIS: Minister, why is it so hard for you and your government to admit that

business owners, staff and customers are struggling with danger and antisocial behaviour?

DR PATERSON: As I just said in my previous answer, we are talking with businesses with them around their struggles with antisocial behaviour and we will continue to do so.

MS LEE: Minister, will you apologise to the business owners, staff and customers whose safety concerns you have dismissed as “fearmongering”?

DR PATERSON: I reject that question. I dismissed the Canberra Liberals as fearmongering, not the businesses. I am very open to talking to the businesses. I do talk to businesses very regularly. As I said, ACT Policing’s Business Liaison Officer is there and ready to hear the concerns of businesses. If the Canberra Liberals are speaking to businesses, I suggest they refer them to my office, and we will put them onto the business liaison team.

Levies and taxation—Capital Gains Tax

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Chief Minister as the Minister for Economic Development. ABS quarterly data and the Eslake report show that private investment as a share of the ACT’s economy is well behind that of other states and is declining. I refer the Chief Minister to comments made by the Labor premiers of New South Wales and Western Australia opposing federal Labor’s change to the capital gains tax. Chief Minister, when did you or your government first become aware of the federal government’s intentions to change the capital gains tax?

MR BARR: I thank Mr Milligan for the question. Well, formally aware, on budget night. There was a lot, of course, of media speculation and interviews that various federal ministers gave in the lead up to the budget. So that occurred through, from memory, the months of March and April this year.

MR MILLIGAN: Chief Minister, has the ACT government done any modelling on how this may impact the private sector’s activity given you heard of speculation that this may occur two or three months prior to the announcement?

MR BARR: We would not routinely do modelling on speculation on commonwealth government policy, and obviously, the commonwealth, through its own agencies, is best placed to do modelling on its own policies. I understand the commonwealth Treasury has done extensive modelling in relation to the tax changes that have been proposed. Of course, they are yet to pass the parliament and we have been advised there are multiple tranches of legislation.

Some of the detail, particularly as it relates to startups, which is an area that we are certainly very interested in—the application of the commonwealth’s policy change. We will, of course, need to see the detail of that commonwealth legislation before we can form a concluded view on that matter. Obviously the commonwealth has been very public in their engagement with the tech and startup sectors. Then there are a range of other areas that are still subject to further commonwealth engagement and detailed legislation.

Another area that will be relevant is the definition of small business within these arrangements, and I do note, for example, that questions around turnover and business size in terms of the definition of small business may not have changed for some time now.

MR COCKS: Chief Minister, will you join your two Labor counterparts now and fight against federal Labor's bad budget?

MR BARR: Well, first of all I do not think the statement and the implication of the question is accurate. I do not think either Premier Cook or Premier Minns would agree with the characterisation of the shadow Treasurer. I think it is obviously open for premiers and others in the political system to make observations about policy detail and the implementation thereof.

We certainly are interested in exactly where the commonwealth will land in relation to definitions of small business and what carve-outs there will be, particularly in relation to startups that start from either a zero capital base or a very low capital base. The commonwealth has been clear that they are working through that and that there will be subsequent legislation. So I will be in a better position to comment on that once we have seen that legislation.

ACT Ambulance Service—stations

MRS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. In relation to ACT ambulance stations, you said on ABC radio on 20 May that the ACT government is looking at some of the old stations that may not be required any more. Minister, are you considering permanently closing ambulance stations because your government has failed to ensure Canberra has enough paramedics to keep them operational?

DR PATERSON: No. We have been very busy building stations. We have some fantastic new stations being built all across Canberra over the last few years. So, this is what the budget funding allocation that we announced last week is—to explore our station profile in the territory. This is to understand where stations are best placed, to ensure that we have the fastest priority-response times in the country. That is what we are focused on. That is what our paramedics are focused on, in terms of patient care and safety. So, we want to make sure that our paramedics are best placed around the territory.

MRS MORRIS: Minister, how many ambulance stations are you planning to close? If you are not planning to close them, then why did you say on ABC radio that some of the old stations may not be required anymore?

DR PATERSON: This is what the work we will do over the next year will be; to look at these stations. We have some really aged facilities and we would like to see our paramedics in the new facilities. So, we will look at which stations are required, so that we service the Canberra community to the best of our ability.

MR PARTON: Minister, will you rule out permanently closing some ACT ambulance

stations?

DR PATERSON: I will progress the work with the ACT Ambulance Service and our emergency services agencies to understand the station profile. As we have said multiple times to the Canberra Liberals, it is really not about stations for the ambulance service. It is about having the ambulances on the road; teams out on the road—

Mr Parton: Point of order. Mr Speaker, on relevance, the Minister has been nowhere near answering the question. I am not expecting her to at any point, and I would ask you to ask her to be relevant to the question, which was very simply, “Will you rule out permanently closing some ACT ambulance stations?”

MR SPEAKER: She does not have to answer it the way you might want to, which is by being explicit in terms of “yes” or “no”. She is answering it, I guess, you could interpret by virtue of the fact she has not ruled it out—or has ruled it out—that it is not being ruled out, Mr Parton. But I will leave it to the minister to answer.

DR PATERSON: Yes, we have got more work to do. So, we want to see our paramedics and our ACT ambulance service workers in the new stations, in these new facilities that we have around Canberra. So, we will do the work over the next year to understand where our paramedics and the ambulances are best positioned.

Civic merry-go-round

MS TOUGH: My question is to the Minister for Finance. Minister, can you update the Assembly on the ACT government’s work to restore and reopen the beloved Civic merry-go-round and on how these upgrades will ensure this much-loved Canberra icon can continue to be enjoyed by families like mine for generations to come?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Tough for the question. I think I am taking it as Minister for the Public Service, actually. Either way, it is great to see the Civic merry-go-round restored and reopened, ensuring it can continue delighting families like Ms Tough’s for generations to come.

The merry-go-round has been part of Civic since 1974—so as long as I can remember—and has entertained thousands and thousands of Canberrans and visitors alike. From 21 April to 22 of May, it was temporarily closed to allow refurbishment, repairs, upgrades and important safety works to be completed efficiently through a single coordinated program.

The timing of the closure was carefully planned during a quieter period of the year, following the Wonderful World Festival and ahead of the July school holidays to minimise disruption for families and visitors.

Mr Speaker, the project involved substantial mechanical refurbishment works to renew key operating components of the 111-year-old attraction and extend its working life well into the future. This included repairing and reinstating horses, straightening bent poles and restoring a full row of previously out-of-service horses.

Detailed heritage paint restoration was also undertaken across the attraction, including

the horses, elephants, steam engine, internal artwork and external structure, helping maintain the distinctive historic character that generations of Canberrans have known and loved.

This reopening reflects the ACT government's commitment to preserving Canberra's heritage while investing in family-friendly public spaces.

MS TOUGH: Minister, how will the refurbishment improve the safety, accessibility and reliability of the merry-go-round?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Tough for the supplementary question. The refurbishment works have delivered significant improvements to the safety, accessibility and long-term reliability of the merry-go-round. The government has invested almost \$550,000 in maintenance and restoration works this financial year, reflecting the complexity of working on a 111-year-old heritage attraction, to ensure it continues to meet modern operational and safety standards.

A range of practical safety and accessibility upgrades were undertaken as part of the project. This included repairs to the surrounding soft fall to reduce trip hazards within the enclosure, pressure cleaning of the merry-go-round platform and a deep clean of all ride touch-points. Accessibility was further improved through the removal and "make safe" of redundant cabling and the reinstatement of internal lighting, creating a safer and more welcoming environment for users.

Importantly, extensive investigation and refurbishment of the mechanical systems was undertaken to ensure all moving elements of the merry-go-round were restored to full operation and reliability.

The project also included comprehensive cleaning and repainting of the internal and external protective structures, including structural elements underneath the ride, helping protect the attraction from the elements while improving reliability over the long term. In addition, a new perspex skylight was installed to allow more natural light into the enclosure while providing greater protection for the merry-go-round itself.

The successful reopening of the merry-go-round on 23 May not only marked the completion of this year's two-stage project—this planned package of works also supports the development of a 25-year life cycle maintenance plan. This will include annual and five-year certification inspections, helping ensure the attraction continues to enliven our city centre for future generations of Canberrans.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, how does the reopening of the Civic merry-go-round support the government's broader vision for a vibrant and family-friendly city centre.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for the question. The reopening of the merry-go-round supports the government's broader vision, as Mr Werner-Gibbings has said, for a vibrant, welcoming, family-friendly city centre in Civic.

As one of Canberra's most recognisable and enduring attractions, the merry-go-round adds charm to the heart of the city, drawing families and visitors into the precinct and

supporting surrounding cafes, shops and local businesses. Indeed, it was wonderful to see so many children and their families enjoying the spaces of City Walk and Petrie Plaza during the school holidays and the Wonderful World Festival.

The government has been clear that we want Civic to be more than simply a business district. We want it to be a people-focused destination, with family-friendly attractions and cultural experiences that bring the community together. As someone who lives just one block from the city, this is certainly my experience of Civic—a busy place that is not only our CBD but the local town centre for more and more families. That is why we continue to invest in public realm upgrades, events, accessibility improvements and heritage restoration projects across the city centre.

Finally, I want to thank the wonderful staff who welcome children and families and the young at heart to the merry-go-round. It was a real pleasure to meet two of those staff the other day and see how happy they were to have their joy machine back in action.

Roads—congestion

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for City and Government Services. Residents in the electorate of Murrumbidgee are reporting gridlock conditions on main thoroughfares like John Gorton Drive, Cotter Road and Adelaide Avenue. As a result, congestion levels on suburban streets are rising beyond safe levels, as people seek alternative routes. This is creating a litany of consequences, from noise disturbance to crash hazards. Minister, why is this city's road network failing Canberrans?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. I certainly acknowledge that, particularly on the Cotter Road, there is quite a bit of congestion at peak times. Of course, at the end of the year, we expect the new bridge over the Molonglo River to open—an extension of John Gorton Drive that will provide access to William Hovell Drive, and another access point into the city for the many residents of the Molonglo Valley, both current and future.

It was great to receive funding from the commonwealth in the federal budget for the Molonglo parkway drive connector, which will help us to undertake the detailed design of that road, which will, in the future, provide a connection point onto the Tuggeranong Parkway. It will also provide access to the Molonglo town centre.

The Suburban Land Agency is doing their work around planning for the future subdivisions of Bandler and Sulman, with a new road that will connect John Gorton Drive through to Bindubi Street at William Hovell Drive, and provide another access point. It is also another important road for public transport.

In other areas of the road traffic network, there are a range of construction projects underway, both public and private, that are impacting on traffic. Those are temporary impacts, and many of those projects are designed to improve traffic capacity, and traffic volume flow and safety, and are critical for this city's future. Our government will continue to invest in infrastructure projects that support improved traffic conditions that connect new communities and improve road safety.

MR PARTON: Does the government take responsibility for reported increases in

speeding, collisions, near misses and hooning on suburban streets located off main roads?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. Of course, it is the responsibility of those in every vehicle to stick to the road rules and to support others and themselves to remain safe. That is included in all of our safety messaging throughout the year, and at particular times of the year when we do see some more of that antisocial behaviour occurring on our roads.

We will continue, through the work that Minister Cheyne outlined this week in relation to road safety, to continue to both educate the community and undertake investment in infrastructure improvements and other actions and interventions to support safety on our roads. There is no excuse for breaking the rules on our roads. They are there for a reason; that is, to keep everyone safe. The government also have a role to play, of course, in continuing to support safety in a range of different ways and guided by the expert Road Safety Advisory Board.

MR COCKS: Minister, why is suburban congestion being treated as such a low-priority issue for this government?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question, and it is not. It is one of the reasons why our government is investing in multimodal network planning, which fits into my responsibilities as Minister for Transport, in encouraging more people to use public transport. We are investing in projects like light rail to provide mass transit and encourage more people to use public transport, which, of course, takes cars off the road.

What we saw, when we introduced that system on Northbourne Avenue, was a massive reduction in traffic volumes along Northbourne Avenue. This has made a significant difference to our city already, and we are continuing to invest in it. We are about to have a debate about whether it should be extended to other parts of our city, not only to help deal with congestion but also to support more people to use sustainable modes of transport. Of course, we continue our work around active travel as well. There will be a need to invest in our roads as well, but there needs to be a multimodal approach to provide a whole range of different options for the community to use.

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