



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

**HANSARD**

Edited proof transcript

Tuesday, 24 June 2025

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## **Ministerial arrangements**

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Trade) (2.01): As members are aware, Minister Pettersson is away this week due to illness. So for question time for this week, I will respond to questions in the business portfolio; Minister Cheyne in the arts, creative industries and multicultural affairs portfolios; Minister Stephen-Smith in the children, youth and families and industrial relations portfolios; and Minister Steel in the skills and training portfolio.

## **Questions without notice Government—performance**

**MS CASTLEY:** My question is to the Chief Minister.

In your time as Chief Minister and Treasurer you have more than doubled local taxes while the outcomes and accessibility of local services, like schools and hospitals, has plummeted. Housing has become much less affordable and many residents feel the government has lost interest in the community's concerns. Chief Minister, do you believe the value proposition of living in Canberra has improved since you took over?

**MR BARR:** I reject the premise of Ms Castley's question. I would just point to the range of external assessment of life in the Australian Capital Territory, including being rated as the most liveable city in the world by Oxford Economics in their more recent world city analysis, together with our wellbeing indicators and outcomes there. I do note that we continue to see very strong population growth—

**Mr Hanson:** How is the housing affordability going?

**MR BARR:** We continue to see very strong population growth and, relative to other Australian cities, our housing affordability is the best in the nation. We are very proud of our city. We do not spend our time in this place looking for ways to talk it down. We are focused on a positive future for Canberra—

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson.

**MR BARR:** which I think does stand in marked contrast to those opposite, for whom the only growth factor is the backbench!

**MS CASTLEY:** Chief Minister, given your claims, why have so many Canberrans decided to move across the border to New South Wales?

**MR BARR:** Well, they have not. The facts show that our population is growing faster and our economy is growing faster as measured by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. So a few anecdotes from disgruntled Liberals about moving does not—

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson.

**MR BARR:** —does not make it a fact, and the facts are that our population is growing rapidly. It has grown rapidly. Our quality of life is very high, and we endeavour through our budget and through our work in this place, to make the Canberra that we all love even better. Those opposite have a very different agenda.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MR BARR:** Those opposite have a very different agenda: catcalls in question time; internal fighting; and racing to the backbench.

**MR HANSON:** Chief Minister, isn't it true that Canberrans are much worse off now than they were when you became Chief Minister?

**MR BARR:** No, it is not true.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

### **Business—regulatory impact**

**MS CASTLEY:** My question is to the Chief Minister. The federal Treasurer recently announced that red tape across Australia has become a serious challenge for businesses and governments, and that federal Labor would embark on a red tape reform agenda. Does the Chief Minister agree with the federal Treasurer that red tape has become a serious challenge, and what steps is he taking to reduce it?

**MR BARR:** In some areas of policy there is excessive regulation. Some of that is historic; other elements relate to the good intent of places like this that have, over the years, put in place legislation and regulation that may not now, in 2025, be fit for purpose. Minister Cheyne and others have been involved in the process of reviewing historic legislation and regulation in this place and have brought forward reforms in this area. Of course, there has been a massive leap in technology over time. That allows for both changes in the regulatory framework and in the use of new technology in order to support the activities of government.

Of course, there will always be room for further reform. Technology will enable that. There will be debates in this place, in the Australian federation and, indeed, in the national parliament about whether our laws and regulations are fit for purpose in 2025 and beyond.

We will participate in that discussion. We have signed up to a range of national productivity reforms. We have done so in the past, but one must remember that much regulation is there for a good purpose: to protect consumers and to protect individuals from the—at times—excesses of free markets or entirely unregulated operators. In this place we hear quite a bit about areas for increased regulation; we hear quite a bit less about detailed and specific proposals for deregulation.

**MS CASTLEY:** Chief Minister, do you accept the regulatory burden in the ACT has grown substantially since you became Chief Minister, and that this harms local growth,

investment and productivity?

**MR BARR:** Local growth, investment and productivity has in fact been higher over the last decade than preceding periods. In fact, the ACT economy grew the most—the fastest—of all states and territories over a ten-year period. We continue to see nation-leading business growth, and we have seen more investment in our city's economy in recent times than at any point in our territory's self-governing history.

The facts are there: we are continuing to grow and to attract new investment. But that task is there every single day. Yes, decisions we take in this place on the regulatory environment will have an impact on our capacity to attract new investment, but it is often the case that that regulation is in place for a good reason. Often it is unanimously supported in this place. So it is a bit rich—after you have voted for something—to be told by you that you do not like its implications.

**MR COCKS:** Chief Minister, why hasn't red tape reduction been a part of your economic diversification strategy?

**MR BARR:** It has been. We have had significant focus on this. A number of taskforces and a number of pieces of work have resulted in quite significant change—whether it is in the planning system or in business regulation. We used the COVID period to make some significant changes to, in particular, the way municipal regulation operates in the territory.

So I reject the premise of the question. These are some nice budget day talking points from the opposition, but, really, the substance is not there behind these claims.

### **ACT Policing—resourcing**

**MR RATTENBURY:** My question is to the Minister for Police. The Chief Police Officer said on ABC breakfast radio on 18 June that police have asked the minister for resources to support the minimum age of criminal responsibility rising to 14 years on 1 July. What resources and training are being provided to police in advance of the age rising on 1 July?

**DR PATERSON:** I thank the member for the question. It is a very exciting time in that 1 July will see the ACT raise the age of criminal responsibility to the age of 14. This has been an ongoing piece of work, with discussion with ACT Policing for the last couple of years about how we implement this. All police officers are currently going through extensive training on the changes to the laws, and I will continue to work to support ACT police in terms of delivering these changes. There have been numerous workshops that have been held over the last few months, and we had a round table on Friday, which Minister Pettersson and I attended, which had a whole range of officials—from ACT Policing, CSD, child protection, the therapeutic support panel and the Children and Young People Commissioner—all discussing the future in terms of how we better support young people who may come into contact with our justice system.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Minister, what additional financial resources have been provided to the community sector organisations that are working with these children

and young people, specifically to ensure the transition to 14 years is successful?

**DR PATERSON:** There is significant investment in a range of community services to support young people in the ACT. I can speak directly to the budget announcement made last week around the Solid Ground program, which is supporting young people who have experienced domestic, family and sexual violence in the ACT and have come in contact with the system.

Canberra PCYC also runs a whole range of other programs which support young people who are in contact with our justice system. There are other great community organisations—such as Ted Noffs, from whom we had a range of students here in the chamber last week who came to have a chat with us.

There is also the Safer Youth Response—

**MR SPEAKER:** Do you have a point of order, Mr Rattenbury?

**Mr Rattenbury:** Yes, I do. My question was: what additional resources have been provided? I am familiar with the existing services. I want to know what additional resources have been provided.

**DR PATERSON:** The Solid Ground project—that was additional resourcing from the Safer Families Levy. And there is also resourcing going to the Safer Youth Response program, which is specifically targeted to work with these young people when they come in contact with the system.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Minister, what is the operating model for 3 am in the morning when a young person comes to police attention?

**DR PATERSON:** The Safer Youth Response program will run 24/7 to support young people who come into contact with police. There is also child protection; that is always there to support children and young people, and a range of other services, including other family members and kinship carers that are there to support young people. What we are doing at the moment, as we move to raising the age to 14, is to have a whole-of-system approach to these young people to see that they get the most appropriate care and support, and long-term care and support, so that they are not experiencing crisis and coming into contact with police.

## Visitors

**MR SPEAKER:** I want to draw members' attention to the presence in the gallery of some esteemed guests. I want to give the warmest winter welcome to our friends from Kiribati, from the business committee of our twin pacific parliament. It is wonderful to have them here in the parliament this week. They have sat in on the admin and procedure committee. They come from a country where the mercury never drops below 25. I have been to Kiribati, and there are not many puffer jackets there! The warmest of welcomes. It is good to have you here, gentlemen.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

**Questions without notice****Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples—Yurwang Bullarn program**

**MR EMERSON:** My question is to the Minister for Homes and New Suburbs. The Yurwang Bullarn program is designed to provide wraparound services for First Nations women who have experienced family, domestic or sexual violence, creating a space for connection to culture, country and support services. I have been informed that the property is managed by Housing ACT and has exposed wires hanging from walls, window blinds that pose safety risks to children, serious accessibility issues, and heating and cooling problems. In a phone call yesterday with a mother of three who uses the services, I was told that it was seven degrees inside. Gatherings like victim-survivor morning teas, yarning circles for women's health and a community-run speech clinic have all been cancelled because of these conditions. Minister, what message does the condition of this property send to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who rely on Yurwang Bullarn's essential services?

**DR PATERSON:** I will take this one. I thank the member for the question. Currently, there are teams out at the property to support Yurwang Bullarn with some repair works there. We are doing a lot to support this service. They received \$3.26 million from May 2023 to 2029 for the women's outreach program, to provide intensive case management for women and children impacted by domestic, family and sexual violence. There was also significant funding of \$1.932 million allocated in this year's budget. So we are very keen to support Yurwang Bullarn. I have been out there to one of their yarning circles. The work that they are doing out there is fantastic. We look forward to supporting them to continue to deliver this important service to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

**MR EMERSON:** Minister, will you guarantee that any future issues regarding maintenance and upgrades that are required will be funded quickly, to ensure that those funded services can always be delivered rather than being cancelled?

**DR PATERSON:** There is no threat of cancelling the service. There are some works that are being carried out, and we encourage these services to contact us if there are any problems with the properties.

**MS CARRICK:** Minister, what would you say to the vulnerable people who rely on these services and who cannot use the facility because of the property's condition?

**DR PATERSON:** The property is still being used. As I said, there are repair works going on out there at the moment, and we are incredibly supportive of this service. Multiple millions of dollars have been invested in this service over the past couple of years, and we will continue to support them.

**Elective surgery—waiting lists**

**MS CASTLEY:** My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, I note that in recent elective surgery waitlist data the percentage of people who are overdue for elective surgery has risen since you were re-elected in October 2024. Minister, why has the percentage of Canberrans waiting for elective surgery gotten worse since that time?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Ms Castley for the question. I will take the question on notice.

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, why don't you publish past elective surgery waitlist data on the Health website so Canberrans can compare your long-term performance with waitlists and track it?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** There is significant publication of elective surgery data, both nationally and locally. Ms Castley is referring to the operational data that is published on the Canberra Health Services website fortnightly, and that is done by Specialty. More broadly, elective surgery data is updated monthly in a nationally consistent way on the ACT health service data dashboard. I will take Ms Castley's question in good faith and talk to Canberra Health Services about whether we can add some kind of tracking, but the challenge is that, because it is operational data, data would then need to be reviewed to ensure its accuracy. It is very clearly marked as being operational data that has not been reviewed and quality assured. If you are going to publish trend or historical data, you actually want to cleanse that data or you end up with a very odd dataset. This is part of the challenge with Ms Castley taking the points in time data. We publish the data on the Canberra Health Services website to increase transparency about the different specialisations, but it is operational data and it is heavily caveated in that regard.

**MR COCKS:** Minister, have any rules been imposed on surgeons to reduce waitlist times, such as preventing patients being automatically classed as category 1 patients?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I am not sure about the context of Mr Cocks's question. Patients are not automatically categorised. The categorisation through triage is a process of clinical assessment. I am not quite sure where Mr Cocks is going with this, but what I can assure him and the Assembly is that there are guidelines and there is clinical practice, and patients are triaged by clinicians according to guidelines and their clinical judgement, not by somebody else.

### **Elective surgery—waiting lists**

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, I again refer you to the non-publication of elective surgery waitlist data. Minister, in February of this year, you and your government came to this Assembly begging for more than \$300 million to help pay for your health budget blowout. Minister, why are more Canberrans waiting longer for elective surgery despite you getting more than \$300 million to fix the problem?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank Ms Castley for the question. To put some other data on the table for Ms Castley: in relation to the elective surgery numbers from July 2024 to February 2025, the health service data dashboard would tell you that there have been 10,912 removals from the elective surgery waiting list. That is up 10.4 per cent. And there have been 12,212 additions to the waiting list, which is up two per cent. That would indicate why there are more people on waiting lists. If more people being added, that's probably an indication of why we're starting to see more people on our waiting list. So, even if we're getting through more elective surgery, if more people are being added than we're getting through—which is an unusual situation for the ACT over the last five or six years, but has been the case last year—then that



would be why.

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, where exactly, then, has this more than \$300 million dollars gone, given the elective surgery waitlist times have gotten worse?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** As, Ms Castley, we've talked about in relation to the additional \$227 million that was allocated to Canberra Health Services—the rest of that funding was not about additional funding for Canberra Health Services. That funding was related to the additional demand that we were seeing across our system. That funding was not specifically to increase the number of elective surgeries ahead of what we had previously committed to in the 2024-25 budget. Part of the decision that we made in the mid-year review in allocating that additional \$227 million was to ensure that we could meet the demand that was coming through the front door—through emergency, through outpatients, referrals and appointments through our non-admitted clinics—while also continuing with our elective surgery program. It was not, and was never, about increasing the through-put of elective surgery. It was about ensuring that we could continue to meet the elective surgery numbers that we had committed to while also meeting the really significant increase in demand for demand-driven services.

**MS MORRIS:** Minister, when will you stop blaming everyone else for your failure to improve elective surgery waitlist times in your six years as health minister?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I just reject the premise of Ms Morris's question, Mr Speaker.

### **Schools—infrastructure**

**MR HANSON:** My question is to the Minister for Education. Minister, I refer to reports that several Canberra schools have had to shut due to burst water pipes from freezing. This, apparently, includes leaks discovered over the weekend but there are also other reports, as late as yesterday, forcing very late notice of schools unable to open. Minister, can you confirm how many schools are affected, where they are and what the impact is to those schools and the students?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Mr Hanson for that question and his interest in our schools. Yes, it was extraordinarily cold over the last three nights of minus seven degrees and it did cause pipes across some of our schools, but also across the ACT—we heard from public housing tenants, from homeowners, from renters in other government buildings and other places, where their pipes were impacted by the very cold weather over a period of three nights.

Our schools were not immune to that and there were some schools impacted. One school, Charnwood Dunlop School, needed to inform its parents, families and children not to come to school on Monday because the repairs could not be completed in time to be sure that students would be able to attend school and have water running. Unfortunately, Giralang preschool was found to be flooded on Monday morning and so a very late notice was issued to that community. I understand that has been repaired, but I will double check and get that information to the Assembly. I think over the weekend there were about five schools—I can get that information as well to the Assembly, I just do not have them off the top of my head—and some flooding issues that were discovered on Monday when staff turned up to the schools.

The only school that was impacted and could not operate was Charnwood Dunlop School and then Giralang preschool on the Monday. So all the other schools were fully operational and repaired, but I will get the information on the exact schools and the issues and the work that was required.

**MR SPEAKER:** So, Ms Berry, can I just be clear, are you taking the additional detail on notice or are you intending to—

**MS BERRY:** Yes.

**MR HANSON:** Thank you, Minister. Can you advise what you are going to do, if you can do anything, to prevent this problem occurring again in those schools or, indeed, other schools across the ACT?

**MS BERRY:** Thank you. It is certainly something that perhaps the whole community might have to consider with regard to impacts of climate change and these more severe weather patterns, including very cold weather patterns that we have experienced in the ACT. Some work might be able to occur to avoid these situations happening in the future, but when there is cool weather over a longer and sustained period of time, it does mean that water pipes will be frozen and then occasionally those pipes will burst or they will become blocked. In most cases, it is the weather, and we cannot control the weather, but in some cases there might be some remediation that can be done to avoid that happening in the future.

**MS BARRY:** Minister, why are we now experiencing these problems, given that Canberra experiences sub-zero temperatures every winter?

**MS BERRY:** Thank you, and thank you for noting the cold weather that we have had over the years in Canberra. It is something that we are quite used to. But when it is minus seven degrees over a sustained period of time, then that does impact the pipes. It does impact pipes across the city, not just within our schools. I acknowledge the focus on our schools, and I appreciate the need for people wanting to have attention on our schools and making sure they are operational, but this impacted a range of different buildings across the ACT. I understand Property Group got 170-something calls for repairs over the weekend, which is extraordinary in itself. I appreciate people's interest, and I will get the additional information to the Assembly.

### **Schools—infrastructure**

**MISS NUTTALL:** My question is also to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood. The Greens have been speaking up about the clear shortcomings in school infrastructure in ACT public schools and clearly, Mr Hanson, we are not the only ones! The burst pipes in Charnwood Dunlop School yesterday appear to be another demonstration that more funding needs to be dedicated to school infrastructure. What is the status of the property quality standards audits, which would ideally be able to flag potential issues like this?

**MS BERRY:** This issue could not have been flagged. I was just informed by the Chief Minister, who plays very close attention to the weather patterns over the years, that this

was the coldest three days since 1957. It was an extraordinary experience for the ACT, and, as I said, it was not just schools that were impacted; a number of buildings across the ACT were impacted by the very cold weather, which we have not seen—apparently—since 1957.

The Charnwood Dunlop School pipe was on the roof of the school. It would have been frozen over three days in a row. Unfortunately, it could not be repaired during the day, because people needed to climb up onto the roof to repair the pipe. As I said, some schools that are very new schools were impacted by burst pipes, like Shirley Smith High School, and then there were older schools like Charnwood Dunlop School. It was not the school infrastructure that was issue; it was the very cold weather over a sustained period of time.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Minister, are you aware of or have you referred to the Zurich-Mandala Climate Risk Index within schools, and whether that might apply when you are talking about climate risk for schools in the ACT?

**MS BERRY:** I did not catch the first part of that question, sorry.

**MR SPEAKER:** I did not either, Miss Nuttall. Could you repeat the question?

**MISS NUTTALL:** Minister, are you aware of the Zurich-Mandala Climate Risk Index across schools in Australia and in Canberra? Could that information have been used to identify potential risks in pipes and things like that—when it comes to climate change?

**MS BERRY:** I am aware that it was very cold. I have said, in my response, that definitely things like extreme weather patterns occurring as a result of climate change are some of the things that we will have to tackle and manage going forward. I was not alive in 1957, but this is the coldest three days that I will have in my memory, at least for some time to come.

**MS CLAY:** Minister, given that previous answers to questions in estimates about how you will help schools adapt to climate change resulted in pointing to a single paragraph in a single document, when will you help schools adapt to climate change?

**MS BERRY:** I have been helping schools adapt to climate change, and there have been a number of programs funded across the ACT government and the federal government. In fact, Mr Rattenbury would be well aware of the programs around electrification in our school communities to move from gas heating to electric heating. We have been putting in shade sails, planting trees, working—

**MR SPEAKER:** A point of order, Ms Clay?

**Ms Clay:** I am so sorry, Minister; we are talking about adaptation, not reducing emissions. Could you just tell us about the adaptations? I think it is great to electrify, but that is not an adaptation.

**MR SPEAKER:** Ms Clay, I am not sure there is a point of order on relevance. We can stop the clock. Your question asked the minister how she is helping schools to adapt to climate change. She is answering the question—just not in the way that you want her

to answer it. But I believe she is answering the question. Ms Berry?

**MS BERRY:** Thank you. Before Ms Clay interrupted, I was talking about shade sails, putting covers over sports fields on the outside of schools, putting up passive cooling and making sure that schools can open and close windows to let fresh air flow through the school environment. We know this is something that our whole community will have to adapt to, and we will continue to do that within our school communities as well.

### **Budget—vocational education and training**

**MS TOUGH:** My question is also to the Minister for Education. Minister, the Try-a-Trade program has expanded in the 2025-2026 ACT budget. Why is this program important?

**MS BERRY:** The Try-a-Trade program, which was formerly known as the Understanding Building and Construction Program, is important for so many reasons. It is important because it opens up and provides more opportunities for young women in construction, whilst also challenging outdated gender stereotypes. We want young women in Canberra's public schools to see a future for themselves in construction. It provides practical skills, mentorship and industry exposure to help make that happen. It helps create a pipeline of construction workers, tapping into 50 per cent of the community who would not normally have the chance or think about trying a trade in their schooling or as they leave school. By expanding this program, we are helping to build a more inclusive and diverse construction workforce—keeping that pipeline going—and one that reflects the community that it serves. This program is also important because of its investment both in equity and in economic health and growth.

**MS TOUGH:** Minister, what does the expansion of the program include?

**MS BERRY:** The 2025-26 ACT budget will provide \$1.4 million over four years to expand and enhance the Try-a-Trade program in ACT public schools. This investment will double the program's reach to 10 more public schools, giving more year 8 to 10 students early exposure to the construction industry. Each year, up to 2,000 year 8 students will participate in a curriculum-based elective. This elective was developed by ACT public school teachers and is the only one of its kind in the country, and we are super proud of it. While 220 year 9 and 10 students will gain real world experience through structured work placements. I acknowledge and thank all of the employers in the construction industry who have given those young people the chance to try a trade at a worksite.

**MR WERNER-GIBBINGS:** Minister, how many students have participated so far? What can students expect if they enrol in the Try-a-Trade program?

**MS BERRY:** Thank you for the question and thank you for asking that question in such a prompt manner. I will answer your question later, Mr Hanson!

The Try-a-Trade program includes two elements: a year 8 program for students of all genders, and a year 9 and 10 women in construction elective, which supports female and gender diverse students. The purpose of the year 8 program is to introduce and expose young people to the construction industry so that they are aware of the options

and career pathways. The Try-a-Trade program gives students real exposure to what it is like on site and provides a direct link to further training and apprenticeships.

The year 9 and 10 program is a semester-long work studies elective, providing a targeted opportunity for young people and gender diverse students to delve further into the industry and gain practical experience; what's more, it provides them their white card, their silica training and their asbestos training so they are job-ready when they leave school if they choose to do an apprenticeship or an ASbA.

Across both elements of the program, more than 2,500 students have participated in the program over the first three years, including nearly 300 students participating in the women in construction elective. I want to acknowledge our partners in this work, NAWIC, who have also been great supporters of the program and have been great mentors to the young women who have participated in this program. I look forward to seeing the program continue and thrive.

### **Woden—infrastructure**

**MS CARRICK:** My question is to the Chief Minister, and it is about double standards. Chief Minister, in response to the Liberals' motion this morning seeking information about business cases and the economic evaluation of government investment in large infrastructure projects, you said, "We've got to provide services for the community, and the government has to do so, because no-one else will. Investment needs to stack up around community benefits, not just economic assessments." You also said, "Almost all government infrastructure investment is going to be loss-making as, if the government doesn't invest in that infrastructure, the private sector won't, because there's no profit to be made."

The community of Woden has experienced the loss of a long list of community infrastructure, including the building that Woden Community Service used to deliver their very important services, our indoor sports stadium and, more lately—the latest one—the 50-metre Phillip pool. Chief Minister, given your statement this morning, why did you decide to sell the Phillip pool site to the private sector in 2008, when you were the Minister for Planning?

**MR BARR:** I thank Ms Carrick for the question. The history of those decisions has been well-ventilated. I make the point that the facility has been privately operated through its lifecycle, and it is obviously intrinsically linked to the ice-skating rink. It has been privately owned for some time.

The broader point I was making was that the government does invest in infrastructure right across the city, including in Ms Carrick's electorate of Murrumbidgee, and specifically in the Woden town centre. In fact, there is probably not a part of Canberra that has had more investment than the Woden town centre in recent times, with the new CIT opening, a number of very significant projects, as well as government-enabled private sector investment. There may be an opportunity, through the next stage of investment in the town centre, for the government to be able to partner with community sector and private sector organisations to provide more facilities for that growing community.

**MS CARRICK:** Chief Minister, why are you publicly funding the Commonwealth Park pool, but you expect the private sector to fund the pool in Woden? What is your very confusing policy for funding recreational infrastructure?

**MR BARR:** The government has used a variety of different means to deliver public swimming facilities, including public-private partnerships. In this instance, we are replacing an aging facility as part of a priority project for the territory on commonwealth government land that is jointly funded between the commonwealth and the territory government. I do not see why Ms Carrick is so opposed to the territory—every Canberran—having a premier aquatic centre.

**MR EMERSON:** Chief Minister, when will your government invest in public recreational facilities in the Woden town centre?

**MR BARR:** In the 2025-26 budget, in the 2024-25 budget, in 2023-24, in 2022-23, in 2021-22, in 2020-21, in 2019-20, in 2018-19, and in 2017-18—we have invested in the Woden town centre in the electorate of Murrumbidgee in every budget.

### **Transport Canberra—MyWay+—retail outlets**

**MS BARRY:** My question is to the Minister for Transport. I note that the only MyWay+ retail outlets in Charnwood and Kippax are primarily tobacconists. Given that one of the cohorts who would use cash to top-up a MyWay+ card is children and young people, why is it that the only options available in Charnwood and Kippax are tobacconists?

**MR STEEL:** I thank the member for her feedback. I will pass that on to Transport Canberra and see whether there is an opportunity to engage other vendors that might be able to provide MyWay+ cards. MyWay+ has an opportunity, in a way that was not available under the old MyWay system, to provide physical MyWay+ cards. Of course, they are no longer a requirement to pay for public transport in Canberra, with other options now available for Transport Canberra customers. But I will certainly take that very specific geographical feedback and am happy to provide it to Transport Canberra to see whether other vendors might be available for the use of Charnwood residents.

**MS BARRY:** The minister might not have an answer to this, but, Minister, have any parents raised concerns about the government directing children into places that normalise smoking and vaping?

**MR STEEL:** I am not aware of any.

**MS MORRIS:** Minister, can you please further outline the steps you will take to ensure that there are alternative locations that do not expose children to such risky practices?

**MR STEEL:** I have already outlined that I will raise it with Transport Canberra and see whether there is an opportunity for an alternative vendor there, perhaps in addition to the existing one, that might be able to provide those services.

### **Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty**

**MS CLAY:** My question is to the Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy, and Water. Minister, last term the ACT government signed up to the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty which calls to end new expansion of gas. Every ACT Greens MLA signed up personally, as well as the ACT government signing up. So did many ACT Labor MLAs, including Ms Cheyne, Mr Barr, Ms Berry and Mr Steel. Why didn't you sign up?

**MS ORR:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. To be honest, Mr Speaker, I cannot remember the reason why I did not sign up at the time. But I believe I did get a question similar to this on ABC radio when I was doing Chief Minister's talkback.

*Mr Cocks interjecting—*

**MS ORR:** On the question I was asked on radio—provided that I have understood that they are both the same thing—I did say that I was happy to go away and have a look and consider—

*Members interjecting—*

**Mr Cocks:** Point of order. As hesitant as I am to make points of order on other people's questions, the question was not about what the minister was asked on radio. It was a specific question, and I ask for your guidance as to whether the minister should be directly relevant to this question not another one.

**MR SPEAKER:** If I can just get the clock stopped here. I'm sorry, Ms Clay, for the benefit of the minister but also for my benefit, can you outline again what the specific question is here? I'm a little lost.

**MS CLAY:** How about I just start from the beginning? In the last term, the ACT government signed up to the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty which calls to end the expansion of new gas. Every ACT Greens MLA signed up personally. The ACT government signed up. So did many ACT Labor MLAs, including Ms Cheyne, Mr Barr, Ms Berry and Mr Steel. Why didn't you sign up to that treaty?

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MS ORR:** For the avoidance of confusion, as I say, I can not quite remember the reasons I did not sign up. Having re-heard the question, I believe it was the government that signed up and so therefore I believe the executive members listed were the ones that did, and that might be part of the answer. Nonetheless, going to the relevance of the radio, I believe I got the same question on the radio. I know the Greens were aware of that because they have—with a little bit of social licence and artistic licence—cut-and-pasted for social media the comments I made. Those comments included—if it is the same topic, which I believe it is—that I am happy to go away and have a look at that and reconsider my position now that I have the ministerial portfolio positions that I do. I am just hesitant to say I would sign anything before having a proper read of it.

**MS CLAY:** Minister, given that many parliamentarians have already signed—including every Greens parliamentarian—this treaty clearly is open to parliamentary signing. So, will you sign this treaty now that you have been on notice since 2021 when

the treaty was first agreed to by your colleagues?

**MS ORR:** Mr Speaker, I refer the member to my previous answer.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Minister, given that you were asked three weeks ago, what consideration have you given to the matter since that time?

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MS ORR:** I think, as Mr Rattenbury would well be aware, sometimes the wheels of bureaucracy and the time we take to consider things takes more than three weeks. So, I will continue to seek advice and make consideration on that, and I dare say I will have plenty of opportunity in the future to report back on what my consideration results in.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

### **ACT Policing—police stations**

**MS MORRIS:** My question is to the Minister for Police.

The policing arrangement between the ACT and the commonwealth requires the ACT government to provide appropriate facilities for the commonwealth's ACT police employees. A 2018 assessment found that five of ACT Policing's seven stations were in poor condition, with many precincts at full capacity or not fit for use. Is the government fulfilling the policing arrangement by failing to provide the appropriate facilities for ACT police and the people of Canberra?

**DR PATERSON:** As Ms Morris has pointed out, that is a report from seven years ago, so there has been very significant investment in all ACT police stations since then. There has been a strategic asset management plan that has seen significant investment year on year. Through this budget alone, there is more investment to see works done on the City Police Station and the Winchester Police Centre. There has been significant works on Gungahlin and Woden, on HVAC systems and heating and cooling systems. There are significant works that have occurred in all our ACT police stations to ensure they are fit for purpose to support our ACT police.

**MS MORRIS:** Minister, are you confident that the Winchester Centre and the City Police Station are currently equipped to keep the people of Canberra safe?

**DR PATERSON:** They are equipped to keep ACT police operational. We have seen budget investment this year to continue to see these police stations—

**Mr Cocks:** Point of order. Again, under standing order 118, and in terms of direct relevance to the subject matter of the question, the minister has essentially redefined it. The question was specifically about two police stations, not broader operations of ACT Policing.

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Cocks, I think the minister has only just started. I think she is having a crack at answering the question. Dr Paterson?



**DR PATERSON:** All I was contesting was that the police stations are not there to keep the community safe. The police stations are there as an operational workplace for ACT police and yes, there is significant works that have gone into those police stations, and will continue to over the next year, to ensure they remain operational while we work to develop a business case for government later in this year to see a replacement City police station and headquarters.

**Mr Cocks:** Point of order on relevance, again.

**MR SPEAKER:** Yes?

**Mr Cocks:** The question was in regard to the current status, not the future plans for those police stations.

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Steel?

**Mr Steel:** On a point of order under part 13.26 of the *Companion to the standing orders*:

...ministers cannot be directed to answer a question in a particular way.

I fear that the points of order being raised by Mr Cocks are actually repetitive interruptions of the minister in answering the question in the way that she sees fit.

**MR SPEAKER:** I do not necessarily subscribe to the commentary from Mr Steel, but from where I sit here in this chair, I think the minister had a genuine attempt at answering the question. I do not think there is a point of order on relevance. Do we have a supplementary?

**Mr Hanson:** I have one, but no doubt you will want to find someone else who can give it to you Mr Speaker, before I—

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson. Let us move along.

*Members interjecting—*

**Mr Werner-Gibbings:** Is he making a joke?

**MR HANSON:** Sorry Taimus.

Minister, what interim measures are in place to ensure police coverage and community safety for Molonglo residents whilst we wait for a new police station there?

**DR PATERSON:** Molonglo falls within the Woden patrol zone, so currently the Woden Police Station is staffed to patrol Molonglo Valley. In the previous year's budget there was \$3.7 million for infrastructure, which included the City Police Station and Winchester upgrades, but also to see detailed design work and planning for the Molonglo Police Station. There is also a lot of work that needs to happen to understand what the needs will be when a Molonglo police station is stood up in terms of how the Woden patrol zone will work. There is funding in this budget to do that work. It is really exciting work for Molonglo. I would like to assure the Molonglo Valley community

that we have excellent ACT police coverage of the whole of Canberra and that ACT police are there to work with them.

### **Sport and recreation—Tuggeranong ice sports facility**

**MS MORRIS:** My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. I refer you to an article in *Region Canberra* dated 16 June on the future of the National Ice Sports Facility in Tuggeranong. In that article, the developer said the final contract paperwork from the government would be drawn up by mid-July.

Minister, could you please confirm if the government is drafting the contract, and, if so, how long has it been working on the contract and when this will be complete?

**MS BERRY:** Yes, the contract is being worked through, and it will be available, hopefully, by the end of this week. The reason it has been taking a little bit of time, for the government and the partners who expressed an interest to build the twin-sheet ice facility in Tuggeranong, is that there was some information the government were waiting for from the partners. We are still waiting on that information, but shortly they will receive a contract to go through from the government—in the meantime.

**MS MORRIS:** Minister, could you confirm what other documents or matters the government is responsible for, and when these will be complete?

**MS BERRY:** Once the contract negotiations begin, it will be—very much—at arm's length from me. There will be very little that I will be able to communicate outside of the negotiations that will be continuing—

**Mr Hanson:** Skating on thin ice!

**MS BERRY:** Yes, you are right. As I was saying, there will be very little that I will be able to communicate outside the conversations and negotiations that will be happening with the proponents.

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, what other steps will the government take to expedite this process and deliver its long-overdue commitment?

**MS BERRY:** I am not sure what else we can do except to continue on the path that we have been on. We have promised the Tuggeranong community that they would get a twin-sheet facility. We have promised the ice-skate community, and we have promised the Brave. A commitment was made through the proponents to develop the twin-sheet ice facility. We have been working with them to try to get them moving on the project. I cannot force them to go any faster than they are, but I know that the community is desperately seeking to have this resolved and for work to commence. I am hopeful that we will get to that point soon.

I know that the ice-skate community, who have the Phillip facility at the moment, are looking forward to being able to utilise a twin-sheet facility. It means that the Brave will actually have a permanent home, and also that other skate users can use the facility while the Brave are training as well. That has always been a challenge with an undersized, single facility at Phillip.

I am as frustrated as everybody else. But, apart from asking, there is not much I can do, other than continue with the negotiations with the developer and hope that we get a good outcome.

### **Energy—Big Canberra Battery**

**MR WERNER-GIBBINGS:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, could you provide an update on the Big Canberra Battery?

**MR BARR:** I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for the question. As members would be aware, the government has commenced the delivery of a distributive network of large-scale battery storage systems for the territory. This was a project committed to at the 2020 election to support our energy grid during a transition to a low emissions future.

I am pleased to report that delivery of stage 1 of the project is progressing well, with 75 per cent of the battery slabs poured at the Williamsdale site. The control room for the facility is due for delivery in mid August. The main transformer slab and bunding is complete, and the earth grid map has been installed and approved by Evoenergy. Planning for stage 2 of the project has also commenced, with negotiations underway for an expansion option that was allowed for in the existing contract.

**MR WERNER-GIBBINGS:** Chief Minister, how will the Big Canberra Battery help ensure energy security in the ACT?

**MR BARR:** Energy security in the territory depends on our ability to manage supply and demand flexibly. The Big Canberra Battery plays a vital role in providing this grid stability, responding in real time to fluctuations and supporting voltage and frequency regulation. With a capacity of up to 250 megawatts and scalable infrastructure, the battery will store renewable energy generated from sources like solar and wind, reducing our city's reliance on fossil fuels and insulating Canberra from national electricity price shocks. This is particularly important as more Canberrans adopt electric vehicles and electrify their homes. It is through investments like this that the government is futureproofing the territory's energy system, ensuring renewable energy is available when and where Canberrans need it most.

**MS TOUGH:** Chief Minister, why is energy storage such an important part of our energy security?

**MR BARR:** I thank Mr Tough for the supplementary question. Investment in energy storage is essential for our territory's energy security. It is not only about managing the grid but also about building our community's resilience against volatile national energy markets, especially during times of crisis or supply shortages that can impact the national electricity market. Investment allows us to smooth-out supply, respond quickly to spikes in demand and provide backup during outages or extreme weather events. That is why the government remains focused on addressing the intermittent nature of clean energy sources as we support the transition to a low emissions future. This investment provides assurance to the community that we are working towards this low emissions future, whilst ensuring stable energy and a stable energy supply for our

growing city.

I believe that is all the questions that can be asked, so I ask that further questions be placed on the notice paper.