



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

**HANSARD**

Edited proof transcript

Tuesday, 25 June 2024

This is an **EDITED PROOF TRANSCRIPT** of question time proceedings that is subject to further checking. Members' suggested corrections for the official *Weekly Hansard* should be lodged with the Hansard office as soon as possible.

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## **Ministerial arrangements**

**MR BARR:** I need to advise the Assembly that Minister Cheyne will be absent from question time due to personal reasons. Minister Steel will assist in the City Services portfolio and I will endeavour to assist in the remainder of Ms Cheyne's portfolios.

## **Questions without notice**

### **Canberra Institute of Technology—Chief Executive Officer**

**MS LEE:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, I refer to the sudden resignation of Leanne Cover, the former CEO of CIT, on Tuesday 18 June 2024. As you are aware, Ms Cover has been on paid leave for two years pending the outcome of an Integrity Commission inquiry into her conduct in the awarding of over \$8.5 million in contracts from CIT to Think Garden and Redrouge Nominees Pty Ltd. Chief Minister, when did you, or any of your staff, first become aware of Ms Cover's resignation or intention to resign?

**MR BARR:** Nineteen June, Madam Speaker.

**MS LEE:** Chief Minister, was Ms Cover's sudden resignation due to the impending release of the Integrity Commissioner's interim report?

**MR BARR:** I cannot speculate on that matter, Madam Speaker.

**MS CASTLEY:** Chief Minister, will you commit to ensuring the impending report by the Integrity Commission into this matter will be released in full to the public?

**MR BARR:** Well, that is not a matter I have control over under the Integrity Commission Act, or indeed other laws that apply in the territory, so I cannot guarantee that for obvious legal reasons.

### **Canberra Institute of Technology—Chief Executive Officer**

**MS LEE:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, I refer to the Public Sector Management Standards which, among other matters, detail the circumstances of financial entitlements paid to SES members upon the end of their employment. Section 72(1) of the standards sets out the circumstances where entitlements are not paid, including if the employment of the SES member ended "(a) for serious misconduct, serious corrupt conduct or systemic corrupt conduct". Chief Minister, does section 72(1)(a) of the Public Sector Management Standards apply if an SES member resigns before any adverse findings have been made against them?

**MR STEEL:** I am happy to take this one, Madam Speaker. I presume that the question is in relation to the former CEO of CIT. I can inform the Assembly and Ms Lee that the board has advised me that Ms Cover is not entitled to any additional special benefits or payments but that she will be paid her accrued unpaid entitlements, as required by law. CIT are currently reviewing the legal requirements of paying out any entitlements and are yet to finalise any figure and provide it to Ms Cover.

For the benefit of the Assembly, I table the following documents relating to the employment of the former chief executive officer of the Canberra Institute of Technology:

Correspondence from Ms Lee to Minister Steel dated 25 June 2024;  
Correspondence from Ms Lee dated 24 June 2024;  
Minister's response dated 25 June 2024;  
Copy of the contract of employment between Ms Cover and the Canberra Institute of Technology, executed in 2021;  
Correspondence from the CIT board chair to Minister Steel dated 11 June 2024;  
Correspondence from the CIT board chair to Minister Steel dated 19 June 2024;  
and correspondence from Minister Steel to the CIT board chair dated 19 June 2024.

**MS LEE:** Minister, did Ms Cover have any discussions with either you or members of the CIT board about the effect of her departure in terms of the impact it would have on any entitlements; that is, whether she resigned or whether there were adverse findings against her?

**MR STEEL:** I cannot speak for the CIT board in relation to that, but in relation to me, no, I did not have any conversations.

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, what action is available to the government to recover the moneys paid to Ms Cover during her two years on fully paid leave if there are adverse findings made against her as a result of the Integrity Commission investigation?

**MR STEEL:** I refer Ms Castley to the correspondence that I have just tabled. In my letter of 19 June, I asked the board to provide me with an update on all efforts and options to recover public money expended during the course of the matter.

### **Canberra Institute of Technology—Chief Executive Officer**

**MS LEE:** Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Skills and Training. Minister, I refer to the sudden resignation of Ms Cover, the former CEO of CIT, on Tuesday, 18 June 2024. As you are aware, Ms Cover was on paid leave for two years, pending the outcome of an Integrity Commission inquiry into her conduct in the awarding of over \$8.5 million in contracts to Think Garden and Redrouge Nominees Pty Ltd. Minister, when did you or your staff first become aware of Ms Cover's resignation or intention to resign?

**MR STEEL:** My office was informed late on 18 June, and then I was formally directly notified on 19 June by the board in a letter, which I just tabled in the Assembly.

**MS LEE:** Minister, did you or any members of your staff have any discussions about Ms Cover's resignation with the chair or any other members of the CIT board ahead of Ms Cover announcing her resignation and, if so, when did those discussions happen?

**MR STEEL:** No, not in relation to the resignation. They were informed of the resignation late on 18 June.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Minister, did you or any members of your staff have any discussions

with any of your other ministerial colleagues about Ms Cover's resignation prior to her resigning? If so, with whom and when?

**MR STEEL:** As noted in the letter to Ms Lee that I just tabled, my office notified the Chief Minister's office of the resignation on 19 June.

### **Canberra Institute of Technology—ACT Integrity Commission**

**MS LEE:** My question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney-General, I refer to the statement by the Integrity Commissioner on 19 June 2024 which refers to court proceedings for an injunction into the release of the Integrity Commission's special report into the CIT investigation. Noting the suppression order currently in place, can you please confirm when you first became aware that such legal action had been initiated?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I would have to check the exact timing of that, but I became aware of it when I spoke to the chair of the Integrity Commission a day or so before the proceedings formally commenced. He had received an indication that those proceedings were going to commence, and he spoke to me, as the Attorney-General, in order to consider whether the Integrity Commission or the government would lead the legal response.

**MS LEE:** Attorney-General, was an application made by any party for legal fees in relation to this court action? If so, when, and what was the outcome?

**MR RATTENBURY:** No; there has been no application.

**MR CAIN:** Attorney-General, have you sought advice on whether the Law Officers Legal Services Directions 2023 requires amendments to ensure it is not being used to facilitate interference in current Integrity Commission investigations?

**MR RATTENBURY:** There is inference in Mr Cain's question that I do not necessarily accept, but the point I—

**Mr Cain:** Have you sought advice?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Cain, please!

**MR RATTENBURY:** I think he is asking: will the government reconsider the nature of the direction? In light of recent matters, yes, we will. I have had some very preliminary conversations with the Solicitor-General about it, but, obviously, it requires more careful consideration.

### **Canberra Institute of Technology—Chief Executive Officer**

**MS LEE:** My question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney-General, was the ACT government assisting Ms Cover with the payment of her legal fees in relation to the Integrity Commission investigation prior to her resignation?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I do appreciate the fact that Ms Lee signalled some of these

areas of interest prior to question time this week in order to ensure the best answers. I have sought advice on this matter and what I can say is that, while the Integrity Commission has made public statements regarding its investigation into CIT consultancy contracts, public hearings have not been conducted and the identity of witnesses is confidential. Upon the Integrity Commission publishing a report into its investigation, depending upon the findings, the questions that Ms Lee is asking can be addressed, but I am not at this stage able to identify a witness before that investigation.

**Ms Lee:** Point of order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Point of order, Ms Lee.

**Ms Lee:** Madam Speaker, the question was not about the conduct of the investigation. It was very, very pointed. I specifically asked: is the ACT government assisting Ms Cover with the payment of legal fees in relation to the Integrity Commission investigation.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Without directing you how to answer, are you able to provide the information Mr Rattenbury?

**MR RATTENBURY:** As I said Madam Speaker, there is an Integrity Commission investigation. They have made a public statement about that. There have been no public hearings and the identify of witnesses is confidential. That goes directly to Ms Lee's question. I am not able to discuss the identity of witnesses.

**Ms Lee:** Point of order, Madam Speaker. The question was not asking the Attorney-General to identify any witnesses; it was specifically whether the ACT government is providing assistance with legal fees.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I am going to let it stand. It is my interpretation, and I am quite happy to take advice and reflect on this, that a reference to a witness is indeed including anyone who may be involved within the hearing. Therefore, you believe you have answered that question, Mr Rattenbury.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Yes, Madam Speaker, that is the point I am endeavouring to make. Ms Lee has asked me about whether a specific individual is involved and whether the government is providing assistance. If I were to answer that question, I would be involved in identifying an individual potentially involved as a witness.

**MS LEE:** Attorney-General, has the ACT government approved assistance with legal fees for any party associated with the Integrity Commission investigation into the CIT matter?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I imagine so, Madam Speaker. I will seek formal advice on that specific question.

**MS LAWDER:** Pending the answer to that question, who made the decision about whether to pay those fees or not?

**MR RATTENBURY:** As discussed in this place recently, that is a decision of the

Solicitor-General.

### **Government—land release program**

**MR PETTERSSON:** My question is to the Minister for Planning. Minister, can you please provide an update on the Indicative Land Release Program?

**MR STEEL:** I thank Mr Pettersson for his question. I am very pleased to provide an update on the ACT's Indicative Land Release Program for 2024-25 through to 2028-29. The ACT government has a practical plan to provide land release over the next five years to support our growing community. The proposed land release through the ILRP continues to support the development of a compact and efficient city, seeking to provide more housing and a more diverse range of housing choices where people want to live. It provides economic development opportunities across the territory to support our target of 300,000 jobs.

I am pleased to announce that more than 866,000 metres squared of land is scheduled for release over the next five years to support our growing population and anticipated new homes, which are desperately needed at the moment. The program sets out an ambitious schedule of land release for more homes. In addition to the housing component of the program, other land release includes mixed use, commercial, industrial and community uses, with close to 97,000 metres squared of this land to be released in 2024-25.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Minister, how will the ILRP provide more houses for Canberrans?

**MR STEEL:** This land release program releases land to support over 21,000 new homes for the Canberra market. The government is committed to providing more houses. As Minister for Planning, I have released my statement of planning priorities. This is a priority for our government. New housing in and around shopping centres also provides an opportunity to renew our ageing community hubs. That is a priority under the statement. The program contains a range of releases in greenfield areas and in existing suburban areas, which will help us to meet our 70-30 infill target, which has been set under the ACT Planning Strategy for some time.

There will be homes within new suburbs, such as Macnamara in Ginninderry, Jacka in Gungahlin, and Denman Prospect, Whitlam and the future Molonglo town centre in the Molonglo Valley, as part of the program. This year's program also empowers community housing providers to deliver more social and affordable homes, with 608 community, public and affordable homes that have been committed to in the first year alone.

**DR PATERSON:** Minister, what measures are in place to ensure that the dwellings will be of high quality?

**MR STEEL:** I thank Dr Paterson for her question and her interest in making sure that we have great building quality here in the ACT. As members of the Legislative Assembly are well aware, the ACT government has, of course, moved to an outcomes-based planning system. This new system has a much greater focus on design, to ensure

that developments that get planning approval consider design value and design quality, as well as the design impact on surrounding neighbourhoods.

Any developments that are submitted to the territory planning authority from November 2023 are subject to the new outcomes-based planning system. The new National Capital Design Review Panel arrangements will also continue to support the assessment of significant developments in the territory. The NCDRP offers a structured process of design review, including site inspections, independent review of a proposal, and issuing independent written advice to proponents and government. Of course, developments that are put forward to the territory planning authority are also required to respond to design guides, which are a new feature of the planning system.

I am confident that, through this land release program, the developments that are brought forward by the construction industry will have to meet that new design guidance and the outcomes-based framework that we have put in place.

### **Canberra Institute of Technology—procurement**

**MR MILLIGAN:** Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Skills and Training. Minister, the Notifiable Invoices Register shows payments to the Nous Group for economic modelling, market demand and growth strategies for the CIT. The total payment was \$148,500. Minister, why was it considered necessary to once again bring in consultants to do the work that the acting CEO and board should have been doing?

**MR STEEL:** I thank the member for his question. I am happy to come back on notice with some further detail about that particular contract. There is some specialised work where specialised expertise is required to be brought in to support the decision-making of the board and the broader institute, where it does not have that expertise in house or where it is not easy to bring that expertise in house. They are doing some significant work to develop a new strategy for CIT, which has been consulted on for some time with staff, with industry and with government.

As part of that, they are looking at future opportunities—this has already been publicly funded through previous budgets and budget reviews—for the renewal of some of the existing campuses, such as Bruce and the broader precinct work that is happening there and also CIT Fyshwick, especially now that it is becoming the home of the new centre of excellence for electric vehicles; the first in Australia. They are looking at opportunities to create a new future energy skills hub at CIT Fyshwick, which would incorporate that centre of excellence.

There is some planning work associated with that that will no doubt require some external support in order to undertake the due diligence that is required. That is not necessarily something that would be part of CIT's existing capacity within its current staffing arrangements. So, from time to time, they will need to contract in that work. That is a decision that they make, as an independent territory authority. We funded them to do some work in relation to the planning around that precinct, which acknowledged that they needed that extra capability to be brought in.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Minister, what is the expected outcome of the consultation that the board themselves could not deliver?



**MR STEEL:** I thank the member for his question. I am happy to go to the CIT and get them to provide an answer on notice in relation to that.

**MR COCKS:** Minister, how much more is expected to be expended on this contract?

**MR STEEL:** Again, I will take that on notice.

### **Housing—affordability**

**MS CLAY:** My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Under the Housing Australia Future Fund and the National Housing Accord, all state and territory governments have committed to improving housing outcomes for Australians. The ACT committed to delivering 175 affordable homes between 2024-25 and 2028-29, with 35 delivered each year. The first round of applications for funding through the Housing Australia Future Fund, the HAFF, have closed and are being assessed. Did Housing ACT submit applications for funding of public housing under the HAFF?

**MS BERRY:** No; not under the first round. Ms Clay may be aware, but I will let her know, that the Housing Australia Future Fund Facility and the National Housing Accord Facility opened for round 1 on 15 January 2024 and closed in March 2024. The reason Housing ACT did not enter into round 1 opportunities with the Housing Australia Future Fund was to allow community housing providers in the ACT the best possible chance to access that fund and build more community housing in the ACT. Ms Clay will know, however, that the 175 houses funded by the ACT are part of the Affordable Housing Project Fund, which was for \$60 million and has now had another \$20 million added to it. We have announced projects in Turner, Phillip, Ginninderry and Curtin, and I look forward to future announcements in the coming weeks.

**MS CLAY:** Why didn't Housing ACT also submit funding applications for public housing, as community housing providers submitted funding applications for community housing?

**MS BERRY:** I refer the member to my first answer. Housing ACT is working towards delivering on the requirements under the accord and we will be delivering on those requirements under the accord, as well as doing some of the heavy lifting in our own space with regard to our housing funds here in the ACT. There are the projects that I just announced, with more to come.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Minister, what progress have you made on the delivery of the first 35 units scheduled for delivery in 2024-25?

**MS BERRY:** The Housing Australia Future Fund is for purchasing land to build homes, so no homes have been built yet. As members will understand, there is a process to go through before infrastructure is completed and people can move into homes. I provide regular updates to the Assembly on where Housing is up to with regard to requirements under our own Growing and Renewing program. We are providing an additional 400 public housing properties in the ACT and renewing a further 1,000 homes in the ACT. I will continue to provide those updates for the advice of members.

## **Canberra Theatre Centre—redevelopment**

**MS LEE:** My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, funding for our new Canberra Theatre first appeared in the budget in 2017-18, and by the 2023-24 budget the project still had no concrete plan. Your announcement on 15 June this year still does not commit to any construction funding for this project. Treasurer, given your track record with the stadium, the convention centre and the other 150, at least, broken budget promises you have made, will you come clean and admit that this project will never be built in the time that you are in government?

**MR BARR:** I reject the premise of the question. The budget outlined a two-stage procurement process, which commences next month.

**MS LEE:** Why have there been such significant delays by your government, which have led to no construction funding in the last six budgets, since you originally proposed the idea?

**MR BARR:** Large scale infrastructure projects need to go through a development phase before you can approach the market to seek to construct them. We are about to enter into a two-phase procurement process for the construction of the theatre.

**MS LAWDER:** Treasurer, when did the government approve the business case for the Canberra Theatre complex expansion, and will you publicly release that document and the government's response?

**MR BARR:** Those matters are cabinet-in-confidence and would not be released ahead of the market procurement, which commences next month.

## **Housing—affordability**

**DR PATERSON:** My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, the 2024-25 budget includes an extra \$20 million for the Affordable Housing Project Fund. Can you tell me why this fund is so important?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Dr Paterson for the question. The injection of the additional \$20 million, as I said in answer to previous questions, is on top of the \$60 million that the ACT government invested in the Affordable Housing Project Fund last year. This will allow us to continue to support local community housing providers to launch new build-to-rent projects across Canberra.

With high average incomes and a rapidly growing population, pressure has been increasing on housing supply in the ACT, especially for those households on lower incomes. Having affordable rent, which is classified as less than 25 per cent of the market rate, makes a massive difference to people and families, like single parents and workers in lower paid but essential professions, such as cleaning, community services and healthcare support.

**DR PATERSON:** Minister, what affordable rental projects have been supported through this fund so far?

**MS BERRY:** So far, the fund has supported projects that will deliver more than 280 affordable rental homes in the coming years. This includes 45 affordable rentals in Turner, as part of a joint venture between PCYC, CHC and the Snow Foundation. We are also supporting 54 affordable rentals in Curtin, as part of a Marymead CatholicCare development. Seventy affordable rentals in Phillip are being delivered in partnership with CHC and the Canberra Southern Cross Club, thanks to this ACT government funding.

Of course, one project that I am particularly proud of is the ACT government's \$4.5 million contribution to 22 build-to-rent-to-buy homes in Strathnairn, as part of Ginninderry's women's housing initiative pilot program, which is also a partnership between Housing Australia and CHC.

**MS ORR:** Minister, what else is the government doing to help Canberrans into housing that they can afford?

**MS BERRY:** The ACT government's \$80 million Affordable Housing Project Fund supports those households who do not quite need public housing but are still finding it difficult to get into homes of their own. When it comes to public housing, which is already home to more than 20,000 Canberrans, we are still increasing supply. The Growing and Renewing Public Housing program has already built 550 new and replacement public housing homes; we have purchased 160 dwellings from the market to add to the public housing portfolio; and we have purchased 116 land sites to build even more homes. The 2024-25 budget includes the first tranche of the social housing accelerator funding, so Housing ACT can buy more land and build even more new public housing homes.

### **Health—community health centres**

**MS LEE:** Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, two weeks ago you announced some funding for design and construction for a new health centre in north Gungahlin. Last election, Mr Barr said:

ACT Labor has committed to three centres becoming operational in the next term of Government.

The proposed location of those centres was to be in south Tuggeranong, west Belconnen, north Gungahlin or Molonglo. Minister, can you confirm for Canberrans that you are set to fail to deliver on this election commitment, given that you have only announced funding for the design of the north Gungahlin centre just this month?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Ms Lee for the question. It is an opportunity to talk about our commitment to community-based health centres—a commitment that the Canberra Liberals have never sought to match. I will correct Ms Lee, who stated that funding was provided for the design of the north Gungahlin centre. The budget will in fact provide funding for design and construction in both north Gungahlin and the inner south—that was part of our announcement—as well as for design in west Belconnen.

*Ms Lee interjecting—*

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** As Ms Lee is aware, we also have existing funding for design and construction of the south Tuggeranong health centre, in Conder. We have already opened a health centre in Molonglo.

It is true that some of the identification of sites has been delayed. Ms Lee, if she had looked at all of the things that we said in the 2020 election about some of these health centres, would have seen that we had previously thought that we would probably be able to identify a site in the inner south that we would be able to refurbish. That has not been possible, following feasibility studies and site investigation. So we had to identify a new site for that. The site selection has also been delayed in north Gungahlin. However, we are getting on with the job of design and construction of these new health centres, which the Canberra Liberals have never said that they would do and which would be at risk if the Canberra Liberals were elected in October.

**MS LEE:** Minister, can you confirm for Canberrans: is it your failure to deliver on your election commitments or your mismanagement of the health system which has caused the ACT to remain below the national average on key health benchmarks?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** Given that Ms Lee has failed to identify any key health benchmarks that she is talking about, it is impossible for me to answer that question. What I would say is that I completely reject the premise of Ms Lee's question. I reiterate that we are committed to building community health centres in south Tuggeranong, the inner south, north Gungahlin and west Belconnen, as well as the centre that is open in Molonglo. The Canberra Liberals have never committed to matching these commitments.

*Members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members!

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, why is the Labor government lying to Canberrans about their health services, whether it is when new centres will become operational or the cost of service at these centres?

**Mr Pettersson:** Point of order, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** There is a very fine distinction. Certainly, "lying to the Assembly" is absolutely out of order. The Clerk seems to split the difference of lying to the community is in order. I ask people to be very mindful of the language. We are into single digits now of sitting days left. I reminded everybody this morning of *Erskine May*, which asks everybody to be civil and respectful. We just ask that. Thank you.

**Ms Berry:** Madam Speaker, on that point of order and your response about the Clerk's recommendation, the Speaker is the one who sets the precedents in this place and can change the practice.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Yes. I—

*Members interjecting—*

**Ms Berry:** I just wonder whether this is an opportunity—

*Members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members!

**Ms Lee:** I think that is dissent, isn't it? She's got to put that in writing!

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members!

**Ms Berry:** Not at all. I am just asking for advice on whether or not that implies that there is some dishonesty.

**Mr Cain:** Do you think the Speaker is wrong?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members, if you think I am, speak up, but I would encourage you to be quiet, Mr Cain.

Members, we will let it stand, but I will be mindful, Ms Berry, and I do appreciate your comments.

Just think of *Erskine May* in the next nine sitting days that we have!

**Ms Berry:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Ms Stephen-Smith.

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In the remaining 15 seconds: I completely reject the premise of Ms Castley's question and the assertions that she has made therein. We have kept the Canberra community informed of the work that we have been doing throughout this term of government to deliver health centres that the Canberra Liberals have never committed to.

### **Child care—Australian National University early education facilities**

**MISS NUTTALL:** My question is to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Minister, many Canberran families are concerned about the announcement of the pending closure of the University Preschool and Child Care Centre. Was your office given any additional notice from the ANU that this closure was planned?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Miss Nuttall for the question. I was taken by surprise with this announcement, like everybody was, and was deeply concerned to hear that the ANU had made a decision, and then made an announcement following that decision, without consultation with the four services at the ANU. Prior to working in this space, I worked with the early childhood education and care sector and was responsible for the workers in those services. I felt that it was unnecessarily abrupt and wrote to the Australian National University to express my concern about their decision.

Also, I will meet with parent groups from the UPCCC and will visit the Heritage Early

Childhood Centre, which is one of the centres that has been impacted by this decision. I know that parents are particularly concerned, having such a strong relationship with the services. I look forward to continuing to work with parents and services and will provide any assistance or advice that I can to the ANU about how we can ensure that there are quality community-run services remaining at the ANU going forward.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Minister, what responsibility does the ACT government have to ensure that early childhood education and care providers and their communities are consulted when it comes to potential closures?

**MS BERRY:** Unfortunately, really not any; there is not much that the ACT government can do. Those are decisions for the owners of those services. However, as I have said, I will meet with the parents. I understand that the ANU has agreed to meet with the services and will provide them with the opportunity to be the first to tender for the continuing services in the first round and for the two new services that they intend to build to provide early childhood education and care in the ACT, at the ANU. I know those decisions, conversations and negotiations will continue. However, as I said, if I and the ACT government can provide any support to the ANU or those services in their decision-making, we certainly will. As I said, I have encouraged the ANU to continue to engage high-quality services that are community based and community-run, as is the case with the current services at the ANU.

### **Municipal Services—funding**

**MS ORR:** My question is to the minister acting as the Minister for City Services. Minister, what investment is the government making in city services to meet the needs of our growing city?

**MR STEEL:** I thank Ms Orr for her question. This is a big budget for City Services' delivery on commitments and strengthening the services that Canberrans rely on every day. I want to acknowledge the real drive and commitment of Minister Cheyne as Minister for City Services. I am really excited, as well, to say that construction will commence this financial year on MRF—a new recycling facility for Canberra—thanks to a \$26 million investment in the budget following the catastrophic fire that destroyed our previous facility. This new and larger facility will have state-of-the-art fire suppression along with improved plant, including improved sorting, baling and glass-washing equipment.

Headlining our roads investment is funding to kick-start work on the Athllon Drive duplication in Tuggeranong. This project will provide a faster and safer commute for all road users. It will provide improved active travel connections; it will provide improved access to public transport; and it will, of course, support private motor vehicles as well. It is expected to begin in the coming months on the southern section, with the early works on the northern section to follow.

We are also funding planning work on the future east-west arterial connection from John Gorton Drive to the Tuggeranong Parkway, which is known as the Molonglo Parkway connector. Also, there is funding in the budget to support some work around planning for road improvements in Gungahlin.

In terms of active travel, we are continuing our record investment in active travel, with \$3 million allocated for a major renewal of the Emu Bank foreshore, including a complete reconstruction of the lake retaining wall. There is \$1.4 million to construct missing path links and connections across the city; \$500,000 for new lighting; a \$2.5 million investment to deliver new toilets at Evatt shops, Ruth Park playground in Coombs, Yerrabi Park in Amaroo and an upgraded toilet in Mawson shops; and \$2 million will drive renewal of our city's playgrounds and skate parks.

**MS ORR:** Minister, with the new recycling facility funded, what does this mean for FOGO?

**MR STEEL:** I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary question. I have heard, through Minister Cheyne, how popular the FOGO pilot has been in her community in Belconnen with the participating households and how more households in Canberra are really keen to get on board with food organic recycling. With our housing needs continuing to evolve, the FOGO pilot will be expanded so that more information can be learned about how households in different housing types, particularly multi-unit developments, can engage with this service.

We are also expanding the pilot by 20 per cent, with an additional 1,150 units in multi-unit developments being added to the pilot. The procurement process on large-scale facilities is progressing, with insights from the pilot expansion to inform the future facility, and an ACT-wide FOGO roll-out. Minister Cheyne looks forward to announcing the locations and timing of the FOGO expansion in the coming weeks as we continue to promote the circular economy in Canberra.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Minister, what is in the budget to support the crews who service these assets?

**MR STEEL:** I thank Mr Pettersson for his question and for his long-standing advocacy in support of providing better services, particularly through in-source work and through public servants.

Our hard-working City Services crews work every day to keep our city functional and beautiful, and we are investing in them to support them to do what they do best in response to a changing climate. To support walking and cycling, the budget invests \$5.81 million to establish a new path replacement crew. This in-source crew will enable City Services to respond to cracked, broken and lifted paths much more rapidly and will also have the ability to construct small-scale, age-friendly improvements—for example, new ramps.

Also, \$1.16 million will expand the City Services in-house line-marking crew by creating four additional full-time positions to renew faded road and path line-marking right across our city. The budget commits \$5.824 million towards a new base line of city maintenance, reinforcing resources in our mowing, in-house traffic management and tree management teams. We have learned that the only certainty about our weather now is uncertainty, and investing in an improved base line of capability across our crews is the most critical way for us to better respond to these challenges, and to better respond to the community—and that is what we are doing in this budget.

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