



QUESTION TIME
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

Thursday, 22 October 2026

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Questions without notice

Crime—knife crime—Lanyon High

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. Minister, can you confirm whether there was an incident at Lanyon High School today where a year 8 student was allegedly stabbed with a knife?

DR PATERSON: Yes, I can confirm that.

MR PARTON: Minister, are you, or perhaps the education minister, able to tell us what support has been given to the victim, their family and the school community, and what advice has been given to the school community?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I am happy to take this question. As Mr Parton has indicated, an incident occurred this morning at Lanyon High School. ACT Policing were called to the school and they have been managing their response to the incident. The incident resulted in student injury requiring medical support from emergency services, and the student was transported to hospital with non-life-threatening injuries by ACT Ambulance Service paramedics. My thoughts are obviously with that student and their family. Schools should be a safe place for everyone—students and staff.

The school has been in contact with families about this incident. However, unfortunately the PHP global vulnerability that I was talking about this morning affected the capacity of the Sentral messaging system, so the message to families was unable to go out in as timely a way as we would have hoped. As a result of the vulnerability, Sentral messaging and Parent Portal services were temporarily disabled this morning as a precautionary measure, but I can advise that messaging has now been restored and Sentral are working to restore Parent Portal as soon as possible. I understand that a message has gone out. The school has been in contact with families about the incident and a further email will go out before 3 pm this afternoon. I understand this incident has caused some distress among parents at the school, and particularly the delay in being able to get in touch with all parents. I very much understand, sympathise and apologise for that distress.

ACT Policing is of course encouraging anyone with information about the incident to report to Crime Stoppers, and the school is providing supports for students, staff and families impacted.

MRS MORRIS: Minister, has the person of interest been apprehended, and is the person of interest subject to any bail or good behaviour orders?

DR PATERSON: There is obviously an ongoing police investigation, so it is a matter for ACT Policing at this point in time. I am sure they will issue a media release once that information is known.

Small business—ACT Small Business Strategy

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the minister for business. Last month, the government published the 2026 progress update for the ACT Small Business Strategy. It noted that one action item, to commission research about business survival rates, is

still yet to commence, three years now after the strategy has already commenced. Given the recent deterioration in local business survival rates, why hasn't this commenced, and when will it?

MR PETTERSSON: I will take that on notice.

MS CASTLEY: Why did the 2026 update report that this item has yet to commence, when the 2025 update reported that it was already in progress?

MR PETTERSSON: I will take that on notice.

Corrections—restraint of detainees during childbirth and medical procedures

MS VASSAROTTI: My question is to the Minister for Corrections. The treatment of pregnant women in custody has become the subject of national scrutiny through the federal parliamentary inquiry into the Crimes Amendment (Prohibiting Shackling During Childbirth) Bill 2026, which has examined restraints during labour and childbirth across Australian jurisdictions. The inquiry did not recommend prohibiting the practice via commonwealth intervention, noting that this is the remit for states and territories. Our local inquiries have found that this is not explicitly banned, and there have been instances of women being shackled during hospital treatment. Can the minister confirm that ACT legislation or policy does allow for restraints on a detainee during childbirth or other medical procedures or transport to these procedures?

MS TOUGH: I thank the member for her question. It is something that, since becoming Minister for Corrections, I have had a real interest in understanding how this works here in the ACT, particularly with talk nationally around the shackling of women during childbirth and the recent case in Queensland. I think every mother felt particularly strongly around that case. I have been talking to my officials, and with pregnant women in the ACT we have quite—I guess in a good way—a small number of women who enter the AMC pregnant or with young babies, so most things are done on a case-by-case basis. I will take the detail on notice on what exactly the policy says. I just do not have the exact policy, but it is something that I am acutely aware of.

MS VASSAROTTI: This is something you may also need to take on notice. If this does occur or is permitted, would it be reported?

MS TOUGH: I will take that one on notice.

MS CLAY: Minister, will the government commit to explicitly banning the use of restraints during medical treatment and transfer to medical treatment?

MS TOUGH: While I cannot announce government policy during question time, as I have said before, I will take on notice what the current policy is and undertake to see if there is anything underway at the moment.

Suburban Land Agency—Affordable Home Purchase Scheme

MS CARRICK: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, families in the

Affordable Home Purchase Scheme have now endured years of delays, financial hardship and significant stress while waiting for homes they still cannot occupy. I have been contacted by purchasers who have been blocked from having their own independent inspectors inspect their homes before signing completion notices. These purchasers are now being threatened with breach of contract notices and potential buyback action if they do not make final payments on homes they say remain incomplete. Chief Minister, what are you doing to ensure owners are able to have their own independent inspections completed before signing completion certificates?

MR BARR: I think the matters were reasonably extensively canvassed on ABC radio this morning by the chief executive of the SLA. We are obviously applying the highest level of resource within the SLA, including the time of the chief executive and a number of staff, to working with the remaining small group of individuals who are having the unfortunate experience that Ms Carrick has outlined. The behaviour of the builders in this instance is not acceptable. There are a range of legal avenues available under the standard MBA contracts that are in place. I understand it is a complex legal matter. It is not for me to provide legal advice and I certainly would not do so nor seek to do so in answer to a question in question time, but there is individual case management in place to endeavour to resolve the issues, the legitimate issues that Ms Carrick has raised on behalf of those individuals.

MS CARRICK: Chief Minister, what are you doing to ensure buyback clauses will not be invoked on these properties?

MR BARR: Well, again, the SLA is working very hard with the individuals and the builders to seek to find outcomes that avoid that situation, and I think Mr Davey was very clear about that on ABC radio this morning. I do not sit above the law. I do not have omnipresent powers to address issues between a builder and a homeowner under a legal contract but I would expect the law to be enforced. There are, of course, all of the avenues available under consumer law for these individuals and there is individual support being provided by the SLA, including, as Mr Davey outlined on radio this morning, the SLA providing its own inspection service as well.

MR PARTON: Chief Minister, what other action will you take to resolve the ongoing disputes between purchasers, the builder and the SLA so that these families and individuals can finally move into the homes that they have spent years waiting for?

MR BARR: I have outlined the actions. The SLA has individual case management, down to a handful now. I acknowledge it is still a difficult issue for those handful, but the work to get them into their homes is underway. And of course, the government is meeting their rent and has done for some time. This is an unfortunate situation. I do not think anyone wishes that it had occurred. The scheme itself, I think across more than 180 participants, has generally been positive but there are certainly lessons to be learned, and we appear to have one builder in particular who is being very difficult to deal with, both for the SLA and for the home purchasers.

Government procurement—conduct in procurement

MR PARTON: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, your government's response to Operation Kingfisher follows findings that the former head

of the Education Directorate and the former chief of staff of the education minister engaged in serious corrupt conduct in relation to the Campbell Primary School modernisation project.

The Master Builders Association has condemned your response, saying it has “effectively marked its own homework, declared ‘nothing to see here’, and expected the Canberra community to simply move on”. After the report was released, your government asked directors-general to assure the Acting Head of Service that no similar probity issues existed in current procurements. Directors-general simply reviewed their own directorates and reported back that there were no concerns. This is the very definition of marking your own homework.

Chief Minister, why has the ACT government relied on secret internal reviews rather than supporting a fully independent, comprehensive review of government procurements across all directorates?

MR BARR: We have an extensive process underway. I reject the MBA’s assertions.

MR PARTON: Chief Minister, apart from asking yourselves, what evidence can you provide to demonstrate that the serious issues of corruption identified by the Integrity Commission were an isolated incident and, indeed, not business as usual?

MR BARR: I reject the premise of the opposition leader’s question. Processes are underway. We have independent agencies, including the Auditor-General and the Integrity Commission. If there are any issues that anyone wishes to refer about any procurement in the history of self-government, they can refer them to those agencies, if they are not satisfied with the processes that are underway now.

MRS MORRIS: Chief Minister, why has your government chosen to ignore the serious corrupt conduct findings stemming from the former Deputy Chief Minister’s office, rather than taking the genuine systemic reform needed to restore public confidence in this government?

MR BARR: We have not ignored that. There is a comprehensive range of processes underway, including significant reforms to procurement that have passed through this place. Undoubtedly, everyone is very interested in this, including every member of this place, every stakeholder group and, indeed, the independent oversight agencies. The process is ongoing. There are still further reviews being undertaken, and there will no doubt be further discussion and commentary. But I reject the assertion in the member’s question.

Alexander Maconochie Centre—breastfeeding

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Corrections. The 2019 *Human rights principles for ACT correctional centres* states:

Unless the best interest of the child require otherwise (with a crucial consideration being the safety of the child), a mother who is a detainee has the opportunity for her baby or young child to remain with her, and if not, full supports should be provided for breastfeeding and open contact.

Where mothers are incarcerated in the AMC, does the AMC have the ability to keep babies with their mothers, and support breastfeeding?

MS TOUGH: I thank Ms Clay for the question. Similar to the previous question, it is something I have taken quite an interest in just recently, since taking this portfolio. Given the comparatively small number of women in custody compared to other jurisdictions, we do not have a lot of pregnant women or women with babies and infants in the AMC for long periods of time, particularly around the time that they give birth—but I acknowledge it does happen. As a result, support arrangements are generally considered on an individual basis rather than through a dedicated mothers and babies unit like we see in other states.

But it is something that is considered, and it is available. There is the ACT Corrective Services women's and children's program under the policy, which does allow for that flexibility and individual case-by-case management.

We do have supports for pregnant women and women who are breastfeeding, as well, which are considered on a case-by-case basis—with flexibility available where operationally appropriate, which can include daily visits with the infants during the unlock period in a private room, with mothers supported to maintain contact with their children through family visits and other approved means in accordance with the Corrections Management Act.

MS CLAY: Are there any instances in the last five years where women have not been able to have support for breastfeeding, in the AMC?

MS TOUGH: I will take the detail of that on notice.

MS VASSAROTTI: Do you have information about how many mothers of infants are in custody, on remand or incarcerated?

MS TOUGH: I will take the exact details on notice, so I have got the right figures.

Government procurement—conduct in procurement—Campbell Primary School

MRS MORRIS: My question is to the Chief Minister. Master Builders ACT has called for clear pathways to remediation and redress for local businesses that suffered loss or harm due to your government's corrupt conduct during the Campbell Primary School tender process. Given that Manteena faced—

Mr Barr: Point of an order. I think that is an assertion that is not backed by fact—to call the government corrupt.

MR SPEAKER: Could you rephrase that, Mrs Morris? I will get some advice on it, but labelling the whole government as corrupt—

MRS MORRIS: Corrupt conduct, as established by the Integrity Commissioner.

MR SPEAKER: The specific language was “your government's corrupt conduct”.

I will get some advice on that. It is borderline. I think there was an inference in the way that it was expressed that the whole government is corrupt. That is certainly not the case. I ask that it be rephrased and limited to the specific incident. Thank you, Mrs Morris.

MRS MORRIS: Master Builders ACT has called for clear pathways to remediation for local businesses that suffered loss or harm due to the corrupt conduct that occurred within the former Deputy Chief Minister's office during the Campbell Primary School tender process. Given that Manteena faced unfair outcomes through no fault of their own, will your government issue a formal apology to Manteena? And, if not, why?

MR BARR: The government will take advice on the legality of those matters and what implications there would be for the territory before making any further comment.

MRS MORRIS: Chief Minister, how can local Canberra businesses have any confidence in competing for territory contracts when your government has engaged in corrupt conduct and there is currently no—

Mr Barr: Again—

MR SPEAKER: Mrs Morris, I just ruled that, if we are going to talk about this, let's be specific about the incident and not try to create the inference that this is broader than it is. Be very careful with the question that you are asking.

MRS MORRIS: Thank you. Chief Minister, how can local Canberra businesses have any confidence in competing for territory contracts when corrupt conduct in the former Deputy Chief Minister's office has occurred and there is currently no confidential independent pathway for businesses to raise concerns about live tenders?

MR BARR: There are multiple pathways, and thousands of local businesses are participating in procurement processes across all government agencies every single year.

MR PARTON: Chief Minister, how many other local business have unfairly suffered loss or harm from corrupt conduct that may or may not have occurred and may or may not have involved your government?

Mr Steel: A point of order—

MR SPEAKER: That is hypothetical. If you reflect on it, Mr Parton, I think it is hypothetical.

Mr Parton: As the question was written, it would have been ruled out of order.

MR SPEAKER: I am ruling it out of order. You are asking a hypothetical question.

Mr Parton: So we cannot say that there has been corrupt conduct or we cannot allege that there may or may not have been?

MR SPEAKER: Anyway, I have ruled.

ACT public service—staff conduct

MR EMERSON: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, in response to a budget estimates question taken on notice this year, you indicated that 69 separate misconduct processes relating to ACT public sector staff were suspended over the last five years because the person being investigated resigned from the public service.

Why does section 72 of the Public Sector Management Standards allow a senior executive to receive a termination payout of at least six months salary, even if their employment ends while they are under investigation for misconduct?

MR BARR: I will need to get legal advice on that matter, Mr Speaker. I will take it on notice.

MR EMERSON: Chief Minister, was the outgoing Head of Service under investigation at the time of her resignation?

MR BARR: I have nothing to suggest that is the case. I do not think that is a particularly dignified assertion to make under parliamentary privilege.

Mr Emerson: A point of order. It is not an assertion; it is a question.

MR SPEAKER: Continue your answer and just answer the question—not reflect on the question.

MR BARR: I am not aware of any suggestion of that account. Whilst on that basis I cannot categorically rule everything out, I find the intent of the question, and what it is undoubtedly now going to raise, to be quite offensive. So, I will say: absolutely not to my knowledge.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, how much leave did the former Head of Service take, and what form of leave was taken immediately preceding her resignation?

MR BARR: Several weeks of sick leave and several weeks of personal leave.

Sport and recreation—swimming pools

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Minister, how is the government upgrading government-owned public pools?

MR STEEL: I thank Mr Wernner-Gibbings for his question and his interest in aquatic facilities in the ACT.

During the winter season the ACT government has invested over \$400,000 in upgrades across three seasonal pools to keep the facilities ready for the summer period, as we see thousands of Canberrans flocking to them at places like Dickson, Canberra Olympic pool and Manuka. I also joined Mr Werner-Gibbings at the Erindale Leisure Centre just recently to announce the scope of upgrades to that facility, which we know is well used by the Tuggeranong community.

Public pools are a vital community asset, particularly in a territory that is not next to the ocean; although of course we do have some fantastic riverine environments in which to swim as well. We have undertaken a range of upgrades over winter at three seasonal pools, as well as a general program of maintenance at facilities at Gungahlin and Stromlo. Our current government pools were mostly built prior to self-government, and they have been cornerstones of our communities for generations. Our commitment to upgrading our existing pools will ensure that future generations of Canberrans can continue to benefit from aquatic recreation in the territory.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, what upgrades have been undertaken and are planned for at Erindale Leisure Centre?

MR STEEL: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for his question. The ACT Labor government has invested \$1.1 million to deliver immediate upgrades and long-term planning for the Erindale Leisure Centre. ACT Labor committed in 2024 to upgrading the facilities at Erindale, and last week's announcement demonstrates our commitment to delivering these improved facilities so that Tuggeranong can continue to enjoy this fantastic community asset. A substantial refurbishment and modernisation of the gym and fitness area is included in the upgrades, with all new equipment complemented by an interior refresh, including flooring, lighting and painting. Accessibility improvements will also see the installation of automatic doors, something that was raised by the community. Members have consistently identified improvements to the gym facilities as a top priority, and the government expects that these upgrades will allow for a growth in membership and utilisation.

The package progresses design, development and planning required to secure the facilities for the long term, and this includes improvements to the change rooms, steam room and structural infrastructure such as the roof. Community feedback has helped to identify the priority upgrades, which will grow membership over time, while planning for future improvements. To support this, \$197,000 has been set aside to directly fund smaller scale capital upgrades, as requested by users.

MS BERRY: Minister, what upgrades have been completed at Dickson pool?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Berry for her question and recognise her longstanding commitment and work in this area. At Dickson pool improvements were undertaken during the winter shutdown period to ensure no patrons were affected by the upgrade works. Some of the upgrades that have been completed there include three new colourful electric barbecues, which will help the staff and patrons to enjoy the facilities. There have also been landscaping works, which I went out to see earlier this week at the pool, which have seen a major upgrade to the grass and tree areas, which are, of course, a great feature of the pool and addition to the aquatic facilities.

If you have ever been to Dickson pool, you will see how much everyone enjoys using the outdoor garden spaces for recreational use. They get incredibly well used, and they do need to be refreshed. It is great to see that work that has been undertaken there. Repainting of the toddler pool concourse has also been undertaken, and we really look forward to seeing thousands of patrons using our outdoor pools, including Dickson, over the summer.

Government procurement—conduct in procurement

MR PARTON: My question is for the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, Operation Kingfisher identified how easy it was for external parties to influence ACT government procurement processes. The government must now demonstrate that its decisions are driven by transparency, fair competition and value for money, not by the political influence of any union or industry group.

Will you rule out allowing the CFMEU's political influence or objections to stand in the way of reforms that are needed to ensure independent and transparent government procurement?

MR BARR: Of course I will. The government has never been influenced by the CFMEU.

MR PARTON: Has the government received representations from the CFMEU opposing changes to procurement arrangements following Operation Kingfisher, and will the Chief Minister disclose the substance of those representations?

MR BARR: I certainly have not received any, Mr Speaker.

MR CAIN: Will the Chief Minister commit to making any changes to procurement arrangements on the basis of independent evidence and the public interest, regardless of whether the CFMEU supports those changes?

MR BARR: Yes, the changes that have been made to date, and changes that will be made in the future would be in the public interest.

Building and construction—property developer licensing scheme

MR PARTON: My question to the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development is in regard to developer licensing. Minister, you have placed a great deal of importance on individual personal responsibility and the fact that the buck must stop with someone. Can I ask: has the government considered government minister licensing legislation, meaning that you, as Treasurer, would be personally liable for any ACT deficit, as well as the \$77 million on the failed HRIMS project and the tens of millions that were wasted on the MyWay+ project, for which you have personally been censured in this chamber? If this government hasn't—

Mr Pettersson: A point of order, Mr Speaker. Questions should not contain ironical expressions.

MR SPEAKER: Looking at that, I am not sure whether it is ironical or not. I will give it a little bit of thought, and I will get some advice and see what the Clerk thinks. It is on the borderline of it. I will allow the question. I accept that it has a political tinge to it, but a lot of questions do, in question time. I will allow the question.

MR PARTON: Mr Speaker, I have completely forgotten where I was up to, so I might just go back a little. Can I ask: has the government considered government minister

licensing legislation, meaning that you, as Treasurer, would be personally liable for any ACT deficit, as well as the \$77 million on the failed HRIMS project and the tens of millions that were wasted on the MyWay+ project, for which you have personally been censured in this chamber? If this government hasn't considered such personal liabilities on ministers, can I ask: why not?

MR STEEL: We are accountable to the parliament, and we are accountable to the people at elections. What I have always sought to do, as minister, is make sure that consumers are protected. That is why we have introduced the property developer licensing scheme, introduced by Minister Vassarotti, when she was the minister for sustainable development, and continued by our government, with the commencement starting from 1 October.

It is because we do not want to see an Opal Tower in the ACT. We do not want to see that. It is critical, therefore, that we ensure that there is a chain of accountability that includes those who stand to benefit most from a development, particularly the larger-scale residential developments in the territory. We have seen defects in residential developments here in the ACT, and enough is enough. We are going to hold property developers accountable for their work, like we already hold builders accountable, and other occupations that are currently licensed. We are also looking at extending that licensing to other occupations, particularly those occupations that are of high risk in residential developments, like waterproofers, brick- and block-laying, and carpentry, for example. That is supported by industry.

I appreciate that property developers do not want to be held accountable for their work, but our government committed to introduce this scheme, and we are delivering this scheme. I appreciate that property developers do not necessarily like our government as a result of that. But I can live with that because we are protecting consumers, the people who we represent and to whom we are accountable.

MR PARTON: Why is strict personal liability good for developers, but not for you?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. We are accountable. I just said that, in the answer to the previous question. What we are seeing in the ACT is far too many defects on class 2 buildings, apartment buildings in the territory, and where consumers have had to pay tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of dollars to rectify those defects. Owners corporations have spent, in some cases, years trying to get an outcome to have those defects addressed by chasing the developers, builders and nominees through the courts. We have a system now where we can hold the property developers accountable, and we are moving towards incentivising defect liability insurance so that those defects do not occur in the first place.

This is, in part, a preventive scheme, to try and stop this kind of behaviour occurring in the first place. I recall that the Liberals did not vote against the property developer licensing bill when it was introduced. But they spoke against it in the chamber at the time, and now they are continuing to spend a lot of time in this place debating and speaking against the scheme. This is an important scheme to make sure that we boost consumer confidence so that when they buy a home, it is well built. That is critically important for the trust in the construction sector that we want to build, to encourage more people to buy a home off the plan.

MRS MORRIS: How can the market possibly deliver the 30,000 new dwellings by 2030, including all the missing middle homes, when we only have 14 currently registered developers?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. That reflects that the scheme has only just started this month, and you do not need to be licensed until you have an active development. A large number of applications are currently being assessed beyond those, and we expect that number to grow over time. Of course, there are requirements that need to be met under the licensing scheme, including having a ratings assessment undertaken, which is part of the integrity of the licensing scheme which we think is really important.

Critical to achieving our target—it is not your target; you were not interested in building more homes—of enabling 30,000 homes, which is our target—

Mr Cocks: A point of order, Mr Speaker. The minister, very clearly now, is debating the point. He is making assertions about not being interested in building more homes which are patently untrue. I would ask that he respond to the question, rather than debating.

MR SPEAKER: Minister, stick to the answer. The Liberal Party policy is not—

MR STEEL: Part of achieving a goal like enabling 30,000 homes is making sure that the community has confidence that, when they go and purchase a home, particularly off the plan, it is not going to be riddled with defects. That is part of why we are not just focusing on planning reform, land release and direct investment in non-market housing—although we are—we are also making sure that we are building consumer confidence, and property developer licensing is part of that, as well as extending licensing to other occupations.

Health—specialist waiting times

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, recent media reporting has revealed that approximately 65,000 Canberrans are waiting for a specialist outpatient appointment, with some wait times now in years. Noting there is an outpatient services review underway, what immediate measures are you considering, to reduce wait times? Or do Canberrans just need to get used to waiting years for an appointment?

DR PATERSON: No. And if Mr Parton had actually attended the briefing that we put on, on Monday, then he would have had some of this information relayed to him about the significant work that is going on to reform our outpatient waiting list. I spoke to Mr Parton's staff and Ms Vassarotti and her staff on Monday about the work, which is in line with recommendations made by Michael Walsh in the Walsh review.

CHS has recently commissioned an outpatient review, looking at all the waiting lists, reviewing referral criteria and examining efficiencies that can be implemented using better technology. This first tranche of the review will develop an evidence-based outpatient clinical services plan for Canberra Health Services, including assessment of

current service performance; future service modelling; demand forecasting; and recommendations to improve access, patient flow and long-term sustainability. This is expected to be completed in 2027.

We have also established an outpatient oversight committee which includes clinicians and consumers, to oversee this work and develop a systemic program of outpatient waiting list audits and reviews, as well as a review of critical referral criteria across all outpatient services. That work has begun and will continue to progress over the next 12 months.

MR PARTON: Minister, what immediate measures will you implement to reduce clinically unacceptable wait times while the outpatient services review is underway?

DR PATERSON: Yes, so that work is happening immediately. We have clinical reviews happening for each of the outpatient waitlists. Well, they are starting. They are starting with one; they will work through all the outpatient lists. So, we have started and begun that process. That is reviewing the clinical criteria for each of the waiting lists, and then those individuals on the waiting lists will be contacted regarding whether they meet the criteria or not. Many individuals on the waiting list will have gone and received treatment through private hospitals or gone back to their GP to seek other medical solutions, in the time.

We recognise that there are 65,000 people on our waiting lists, and this is not acceptable. Addressing this is exactly the work that has been ongoing from Canberra Health Services. This is addressing the recommendations of the Walsh review.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, will you commit to publishing regular specialty-by-specialty data on waiting times, patient numbers and progress in reducing the backlog?

DR PATERSON: Well, that is what we want to get to. So, that is why we are reviewing the clinical criteria for each of the waiting lists. We will then review each waiting list, and then we will—

Mr Parton: How long with the waiting list be, by then?

DR PATERSON: Well, this is the work that is happening over the next 12 months. This is the work that we are committed to. We want to be publicly reporting this. At the moment, there is not much point because the wait lists are pretty inaccurate. So, what we want to do is work through this process of the Walsh recommendations to get to the point where we can publicly report outpatient waiting lists to the community.

Suburban Land Agency—Affordable Home Purchase Scheme

MR PARTON: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, my colleagues—including Ms Carrick—have been receiving communication and have been consulting for years with Canberrans who signed up to the SLA's affordable housing scheme in Whitlam, some all the way back in 2022, yet now, in late 2026, despite the SLA promising that those people would be in their homes by 2023, they have not moved in. We understand that the government is covering the ongoing rental costs for 11

participants in the scheme. One of those unfortunate victims said to me this morning:

It has been a wrecking ball in my life, both professionally and personally. This is cruel and inhumane. I want my life back. I can't get anywhere talking to the SLA, they don't care at all.

Chief Minister, why does your government not seem to care about the damage done to these lives?

MR BARR: As I said in response to Ms Carrick's question, the government certainly acknowledges the difficult circumstances that have come largely from a breakdown, as it would appear, in the relationship between a builder and those home owners. The SLA is actively involved at the highest level in seeking to resolve the situation and has provided significant financial assistance. Everyone wants these matters to be resolved as quickly as possible, and, as the CEO said on radio this morning, many of them will be in the coming weeks, as those construction projects conclude. The SLA will continue to provide individual support throughout this process until it is resolved.

MR PARTON: Chief Minister, why is the government not covering the legal fees of the victims of this failed scheme, given your effective admission of guilt through the rent payments?

MR BARR: I will seek some advice in relation to legal fees. I am certainly not announcing policy here. We may not be in a position to make uncapped guarantees around legal fee matters, but certainly the SLA is seeking to work with the two contracted parties, being the soon-to-be home owners and the builder, in order to resolve this matter. It would be fair to observe that this has gone on for longer than anyone would have liked. We hope it will be resolved, and the SLA is working very hard to make that happen.

MS CARRICK: Chief Minister, what will the final ACT government's cost of covering the rent payments for the victims of this scheme be?

MR BARR: It would certainly be in the thousands of dollars. I will not know that until the process is concluded. I understand, from memory, that a budget appropriation was provided at one point, reflecting this unfortunate situation, but I will not be able to report on that until all the matters are resolved. The agency would then normally report in their annual report in relation to that matter.

Health and Community Services Directorate—staffing

MR PARTON: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, the ACT public service is undergoing significant leadership changes, including the departure of the Head of Service and the Director-General of Infrastructure Canberra, while the Health and Community Services Directorate is pursuing voluntary redundancies.

What assessment has the government made of the operational and service delivery risks arising from these leadership changes and workforce reductions?

MR BARR: Certainly, in relation to workforce management, directors-general are

undertaking that task as we go through a period of change. This of course follows some machinery of government changes at the beginning of this Legislative Assembly term.

In relation to executives retiring, that is a normal part of the life cycle both of individuals and agencies, and we have in place, obviously, acting arrangements and recruitment processes to fill those couple of vacancies.

MR PARTON: Chief Minister, what measurable savings does the government expect from the Health and Community Services Directorate's redundancy program, and how will it demonstrate that those savings will not compromise frontline services or increase reliance on contractors?

MR BARR: The agency seeks to operate within its appropriated budget that this place appropriated in the sittings last month. In relation to use of contractors, there will be some occasions where certain specialised work is undertaken, but it must be undertaken within that agency's budget.

MR COCKS: Chief Minister, will you provide the Assembly with a consolidated account of the expected savings, implementation costs, positions affected and service delivery risks associated with the redundancy program?

MR BARR: Each agency would report against that in relation to its output classes and its annual reports, and through the annual budget processes.

ACT women's plan

MISS NUTTALL: My question is to the Minister for Women. Minister, on 15 September Minister Pettersson stated that the government is in the "early stages of developing the next women's plan for gender equity". Minister, considering that the plan is due to be implemented in almost two months, in 2027, at what stage is the development for the new plan? And has the government begun consultation on the plan?

MS TOUGH: I thank Miss Nuttall for that question. Coming into the role as a new minister is very exciting. There are a lot of things to learn and get my head around. One of the things that I have been having active conversations with officials about is the next women's plan. I have started having some early conversations with different parts of the sector around what that looks like. I am hoping to have something in place to consult on very soon, but please be assured that it is something I am working on.

MISS NUTTALL: Is the plan to release the women's plan at the start of 2027? And if so, is consultation far enough along at this point in time?

MS TOUGH: I cannot announce government policy in question time, unfortunately.

MS VASSAROTTI: Will the new women's plan for gender equity address corrections reforms, including banning restraints during hospital visits?

MS TOUGH: I cannot announce government policy in question time, but it is something I can definitely consider and could be considered in that process.

ACT Ambulance Service—staffing

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. Minister, a contract valued at \$267,530 was awarded by the ACT government to consultants to “consider opportunities to improve the operational efficiency of the ACT Ambulance Service.” This has created a great deal of concern with some ambulance officers. Minister, what does this contract mean for the ACT Ambulance Service workforce?

DR PATERSON: This is follow-on work following the budget process to look at the staffing of ACT Ambulance Service. The idea behind this work is that it will inform future budget business cases. We know ACT Ambulance Service is a workforce that is under considerable strain at the moment. We announced 32 new positions in the last budget, but one of the recommendations by Treasury through that process was to have a more detailed look at the ambulance service and the staffing profile. So that is what that money is designed to do. I would add that we have been very transparent, working very closely with the union on this and working closely with staff as well. That work will be carried out I believe before the end of the year, or early next year, to inform subsequent budget processes.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, why was it necessary for the government to acquire an external review when a roster review and workforce strategy were both completed by in-house staff with expert knowledge?

DR PATERSON: Yes, so I guess it is a bit more extensive. The roster review looks specifically at the rostering. This will look at the staffing. As the roster review highlighted, there are challenges with staffing in ACTAS. So it was determined that there needed to be more analysis done to understand exactly what is needed to support ACTAS paramedics.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, how will staff and their representatives be able to provide input into the process?

DR PATERSON: I will take that on board. I will take that on notice, sorry.

Suburban infrastructure

MS BERRY: My question is to the Minister for City and Government Services. Minister, can you update the Assembly on how the ACT government is investing in everyday infrastructure to improve Canberra’s suburbs?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Ms Berry for the question. While major infrastructure projects often attract the most attention, and we have plenty of those underway, we also know that some of the improvements that matter most to Canberrans are much closer to home. It is the footpath that makes it easier to get to the local shops, better lighting in a public space—the things people use every day.

That is why we have committed \$38.2 million over four years to active travel infrastructure, improving existing paths, filling missing links and upgrading lighting across our city. We are also making progress on major connections like the garden city

cycleway. Construction of stage 1D is well underway and, once complete, stage 1 will provide a continuous connection from Ainslie through Braddon to the city, linking into the Bunda Street shared zone.

We are investing almost \$4 million in playground improvements across eight Canberra suburbs, including new playgrounds in Gilmore and Wanniasa, and upgrades in Amaroo, Bonython and other neighbourhoods. That is alongside important new facilities in Belconnen, including the all-abilities playground in Florey. That is something that I know Ms Berry is very keen to see, as well as looking forward to the new play facilities at Umbagog District Park and the enhancement of Margaret Timpson Park, with a new playground, public toilet, barbecue facilities and improved accessibility.

Importantly, these are not priorities that have been determined in isolation. They have their origin in our regional plans. Of course, we also draw on our community consultation, infrastructure condition assessments and reports through Fix My Street to understand where improvements are needed and how they should be delivered to support people to move around, to keep public spaces accessible and to ensure our neighbourhoods work for the people who live in them.

MS BERRY: What progress is being made on upgrading Canberra's suburban shopping centres?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Ms Berry for the supplementary. We have committed more than \$18 million across the last two budgets to improving shopping centres throughout Canberra. That includes upgrades at Palmerston, Griffith, Mawson, Charnwood and Erindale. The next round covers Kingston, Kippax, Cooleman Court and Chisholm.

At Palmerston, designs have been completed and shared with the community, and they include improved paths and accessible parking, a new pram crossing, a new play space, picnic facilities and landscaping. At Griffith, the designs include accessibility improvements, repairs to paving and mosaics, new seating and improvements to the existing pergola. Construction at both centres is expected to commence in early 2027. We have also completed community consultation at Mawson, Charnwood and Erindale, and that feedback is helping to determine what happens next.

At Charnwood—and I think Ms Berry will be particularly pleased to hear this—we have heard residents make it clear that fixing the shopping centre car park is the first priority, so we are progressing that work, ahead of the broader precinct upgrades, with construction expected to commence later this year, and works planned for completion in 2027. Detailed design for the remaining improvements at Charnwood, alongside Mawson and Erindale, will continue throughout 2027.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, how is community consultation helping to shape these shopping centre upgrades and ensure that they reflect the needs of local residents and businesses?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for the question. We know that what works for one centre will not necessarily work for another. Our local shops, like their suburbs, have their own identities and idiosyncrasies. That is why we ask local residents

and businesses about their priorities before finalising what improvements will be delivered. It is why we work with, and will continue working with, local traders and residents as designs are developed, because they are the people who understand how these spaces are used every single day.

We have seen some quite clear messages from our recent consultations. At Mawson and Erindale, pedestrian connections, lighting and general amenity have emerged as the most important priorities. At Charnwood, the decisive feedback about the car park is why we are bringing it forward, rather than delivering everything as one larger package. Rest assured that the other priorities that emerge—safety and lighting, and broader improvements to amenity and pedestrian connections—will still be progressed. It is not simply about asking people what they think and then proceeding with what was already planned. It is about being prepared to adjust the priorities and the delivery program in response to what people tell us.

We will take that same approach with the next round of upgrades at Kingston, Kippax, Cooleman Court and Chisholm. Consultation on those shopping centre upgrades is expected to begin in early 2027.

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