



QUESTION TIME

OF THE

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

Wednesday, 22 October 2025

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.

Wednesday, 22 October 2025

Ministerial arrangements	1
Questions without notice:	
Schools—safety.....	1
Director of Public Prosecutions and Legal Aid—funding	1
Safer Families Levy—evaluation.....	2
Working with Vulnerable People scheme—registration fee.....	3
Cashless gaming—costs.....	4
Canberra Health Services—orthopaedic surgery	5
Woden Town Centre—Scentre Group	6
Planning—block 45, section 54 Belconnen	7
Public housing—maintenance.....	8
Sport and recreation—Gungahlin United FC.....	9
Parking—Theatre Lane car park closure.....	10
High-risk weather season—preparedness	11
Community events—SpringOUT.....	12
ACT public service—work health and safety	13
WorkSafe ACT—compliance	14

Ministerial arrangements

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Trade) (2.00): I wish to advise members that the Treasurer is away from question time again today for personal reasons. In his absence, Minister Stephen-Smith will take questions in the Treasury portfolio, Minister Orr will take questions in the planning and sustainable development and heritage portfolios; and Minister Cheyne will take questions in the transport portfolio.

Questions without notice

Schools—safety

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood. Minister, on 18 August you wrote to the Speaker regarding the Assembly's resolution on school safety order laws. In the letter, it was confirmed that a jurisdictional review of the laws was undertaken and that the government would consult with key stakeholders. Could you update the Assembly on the findings of this review?

MS BERRY: I will have to take that question on notice, but I thank the member for the question.

MR HANSON: My pleasure, Minister. Could you also advise when the government will consult with stakeholders on these laws.

MS BERRY: Yes; I will.

MR COCKS: Minister, what are the next steps following this consultation?

MS BERRY: That will be defined by the consultation, but, of course, I will report back to the Assembly if that is appropriate.

Director of Public Prosecutions and Legal Aid—funding

MR HANSON: My question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney, during the last sittings, this Assembly unanimously agreed to my motion that the DPP and Legal Aid be given adequate funding to fulfill their vital roles. Last week, the DPP and the Australian Federal Police Association called for that funding to be provided urgently. The DPP said:

Presently, we are simply not funded to deal with the number of files that are coming into the office ...I'm tired of saying the same thing ...I'm tired of not having that message listened to.

The AFPA said:

It is not fair to victims in the ACT who see their cases delayed or weakened because the DPP doesn't have the resources to keep up.

Attorney, what resources will be provided to the DPP and Legal Aid and when will it

be available?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Hanson for his ongoing and, I believe, genuine interest in this. As I have flagged previously and repeatedly and, as I think was understood in the Assembly when we debated the motion Mr Hanson brought previously, there are only a handful of mechanisms through which funding can be provided or appropriated.

We have obviously been through a budget. The DPP has received funding through that budget. We do have budget processes underway, and we are working closely with the DPP, Legal Aid and other justice agencies on appropriate funding, as we work through the current state of our justice system. Also, it is not just about more funding and more staff; it is also about efficiencies with our court processes. For that reason, there is more to do where we think that we will be able to support the DPP, Legal Aid, ACT Policing, the courts and others with those initiatives.

I think you are looking at me because perhaps I have not answered a specific question. If Mr Hanson wants to raise a point of order, it is because I have forgotten it.

MR SPEAKER: Sorry, I missed that last bit.

MS CHEYNE: If Mr Hanson raises a point of order to remind me of what his question was, if I have not been directly relevant to it, I am very happy to be reminded.

MR SPEAKER: In the 18 seconds remaining I can tell you that the question was: what resources will be provided to the DPP and Legal Aid and when will it be available?

MS CHEYNE: Thank you. That is a hypothetical, and I cannot announce government policy in the chamber.

MR HANSON: Attorney, have you been provided any advice on what matters will be prioritised due to a lack of resourcing in the DPP?

MS CHEYNE: I think these conversations are ongoing. Obviously, the major change that occurred this year was in relation to regulatory prosecutions, and the responsibility for that has moved to the Government Solicitor's Office. I was briefed on that by the Solicitor-General earlier this week—and that is going well. My support for that was to assist the DPP with managing the caseload. We are having ongoing discussions about the DPP's support and where its time and efforts are best spent. Of course, I am having those conversations with the justice agencies that are affected by it as well.

MS MORRIS: Attorney, why did the DPP, the AFPA and Legal Aid all have to go out in public to call for more resourcing even after this Assembly agreed to extra resources being provided?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Ms Morris for the question. It was all in response to annual reports being published. So that was the timing. Those interviews were all off the back of comments at the beginning of the annual report for the DPP—and I would refer members to that, so that they get the full picture.

Safer Families Levy—evaluation

MS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence. Minister, you have advised the public accounts committee that consultants have been engaged to develop a framework by mid-2026 for evaluating the effectiveness of initiatives funded by the Safer Families Levy. The levy was introduced in 2016. Why will it take the government 10 years to develop a framework to evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives funded by the levy?

DR PATERSON: As I said in the hearing, the levy has gone through a range of iterations over the years and that, at the point that we are at currently, we are in development of the ACT Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Strategy. As part of the work of the strategy we are working with the consultants Impact Co who will be designing an evaluation and monitoring framework. This will be to understand, when the strategy is in place and the plans are in place, how that is being implemented. So we want to understand that our next ten year plan for the territory in addressing domestic, family and sexual violence is actually achieving the outcomes that we want it to achieve. That is why this evaluation monitoring framework will be critical to government's policy development and decision making.

MS MORRIS: Minister, how does the government currently determine the allocation of the funds raised by the levy?

DR PATERSON: We have the principles that have now been outlined, which I introduced to the Assembly earlier this year, and have been developed as a result of the Auditor-General's findings. One of the recommendations from that was to develop a set of guiding principles for the levy. Further to that work, we are developing the ACT Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Strategy, which will guide government investment to address this issue in our community going forward for the next decade.

MS BARRY: Minister, is it this government's policy to spend public money without knowing whether it is effective or not?

DR PATERSON: Absolutely not. This government bases its funding on its evidence-base. So that is why you can go to the ACT Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence website and see the range of evaluations that have occurred on programs. We strive to evaluate the majority of programs that are run to address domestic, family and sexual violence, and what we are doing with the work of the strategy will be solidifying that. That investment across the ACT goes to a range of preventative measures, a range of crisis response measures, perpetrator intervention measures and healing and recovery measures. What we want to do with the evaluation and monitoring framework is to see all of those aspects of what will form part of the strategy monitored and evaluated to ensure that we are effectively addressing this issue.

Working with Vulnerable People scheme—registration fee

MS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. Documents obtained under freedom of information show that senior staff in your directorate were unaware of the proposal to levy an \$11 fee on volunteers for their Working with Vulnerable People card. The day after the budget, one official wrote to colleagues: "I'm not sure if you've seen the budget, but the ACT government is now

charging volunteers \$11 for WWVP cards. Are people upstairs aware of this yet?"

Minister, when were you first made aware of the proposal to charge volunteers \$11 for their Working with Vulnerable People card?

DR PATERSON: I was made aware through the budget process.

MS MORRIS: Minister, did you have any input on the proposal to charge volunteers \$11 for their Working with Vulnerable People card?

DR PATERSON: The fee proposal was developed by Access Canberra. I was not involved in the ERC discussions around this. I found out when the budget was ratified by cabinet, and ESA were made aware then.

MR HANSON: Minister, after the decision was announced, what feedback did you receive from volunteers within your portfolios?

DR PATERSON: I have been going around visiting SES and RFS stations in particular and receiving feedback on a whole range of different measures and challenges that our volunteer services face. I also have a ministerial volunteer group that runs three times a year, which has volunteers who represent all of our volunteer organisations under ESA. They include the mapping and planning support aspect of volunteers, our RFS volunteers, our Volunteer Brigades Association, our Community Fire Units, our community Fire Brigade Historical Society and SES volunteers. We all sit at a table, and I receive feedback from emergency service volunteers. This is a great forum to understand what is going on broadly across the organisation.

What I can say is that we have the most amazing, resourceful, intelligent and committed volunteer organisations within our Emergency Services Agency. I have reiterated to them, through my visits to their units, brigades and stations, just how committed the government is to supporting them.

Cashless gaming—costs

MR RATTENBURY: My question is for the Chief Minister. During the last sitting period when asked about likely costs for implementing a cashless gaming model, the responsible minister, Minister Patterson, said that it was, "not a matter for government; the cost will be borne by the clubs to implement this system". The minister then went on to indicate she had no intention of seeking to understand the likely cost. Chief Minister, do you consider it acceptable for the government to implement a significant policy change with no analysis or understanding of the likely cost?

MR BARR: I thank Mr Rattenbury for the question. I think the premise and the way the question is framed does not accurately describe the process of policy development. It is one thing for assessment of cost to government; it is another for assessment of cost outside of government. There is a process underway and engagement that is occurring. The cost will vary depending on both the regulatory requirements and the system of procurement. The point the minister is making is that clubs may choose different pathways and different providers, and the costs may well vary so the government may not necessarily be in a position to provide an exact cost for an external party in relation

to the matter. And that could vary considerably. And establishing a cost might render that process very expensive for the government.

MR RATTENBURY: Will you apply your usual standard of requiring a cost analysis as part of any cabinet process for this proposed policy?

MR BARR: We certainly have a process of assessing a policy proposal and its implications, but, of course, depending on the nature of the regulatory intervention, the costs may be lesser or greater, and may depend entirely on the commercial decision of a club or a club group.

MISS NUTTALL: Will you ensure that those costings are made publicly available?

MR BARR: I am not sure that we will be able to, because they will be a commercial decision of the clubs'. So, the government cannot force them to reveal their private contractual arrangements, but I am sure they will talk and engage with the government—and indeed probably more broadly, publicly about what they might anticipate the costs would be under different regulatory models.

Canberra Health Services—orthopaedic surgery

MR EMERSON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, on 18 March this year, in response to concerns raised by one of our constituents who had waited six years for a hip replacement, you indicated that “if you go on the pooled waiting list and you’re willing to have your surgery done by another surgeon, it will be done a lot more quickly”. Later that week, this constituent was contacted by CHS and informed that “there are no pooled waiting lists”. Seven months on, are pooled waiting lists now in place for all orthopaedic surgeries taking place in the public system?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Emerson for the question. I think he knows that the answer is no. As I have previously indicated to him, and to the Assembly, I was using pooled waiting lists as a broad term rather than as a technical term, in terms of the work that the territory-wide surgical services team has been able to do for some time, if people contact them and they are on a particular surgeon’s waiting list and they are looking to see if there is an opportunity to get their surgery done more quickly. There was a process by which they could give the team at Canberra Health Services a call and find out if there was a shorter waiting list.

It is still the case that, in orthopaedics, there is not a single pooled waiting list. However, work is underway, and continues to be underway, between Canberra Health Services and the orthopaedics team to move to a situation where everyone on the public waiting list is being seen in order of wait, according to urgency, which is what people would expect. Indeed, I had a conversation with a constituent over the weekend who was very surprised to learn that that was not the way that the public surgery waiting list operated. When we talked through some of the culture and practice regarding the way that it has worked in the past, they were actually in agreement that, if you are on a public list, you should be on a single public list and you should be seen in turn, according to urgency.

MR EMERSON: Minister, when will these new official pooled waiting lists be in effect, or likely to be in effect, for all specialties?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I cannot give a firm timeline on that. I thank Mr Emerson for his ongoing interest. One of the things that we have absolutely committed to our surgical groups is that the Canberra Health Services leadership will continue to work in a collaborative manner with them to bring everyone along to ensure that there is a shared understanding of what is happening.

What I can advise, in relation to orthopaedic surgery wait times, though, is that, as of 29 September 2025, the number of patients who were ready for care and on the waiting list had decreased by eight per cent from 30 September 2024—a reduction from 2,139 patients ready for orthopaedic surgery to 1,961—and that Canberra Health Services is doing the same level of orthopaedic surgery for the first quarter of the financial year as they did for the previous corresponding period. In terms of any interruption to orthopaedic surgery, there has not been an interruption, in terms of the numbers. In the first quarter of 2025-26, 477 patients were removed from the waiting list, compared to 473 in the same period in the previous year.

MS CARRICK: Minister, how many surgeons currently employed by CHS are refusing to use pooled waiting lists?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Carrick for the supplementary question. I would not characterise it in that way. I think there has been a culture and practice built up over many years at Canberra Hospital and North Canberra Hospital—previously Calvary Public Hospital—about the way things operated. Clearly, both specialists and patients have an expectation based on the way that things have been operating to date.

There is a collaborative conversation underway about moving to a different way of operating. But I would not characterise the way that specialists are engaging in that conversation in the way that Ms Carrick has. I want to emphasise instead that this is a collaborative process that ultimately is about equitable treatment for patients and putting patients at the centre of care.

Woden Town Centre—Scentre Group

MS CARRICK: My question is to the Chief Minister. Yesterday, Scentre Group, the operator of Westfield Woden, released a concept master plan for the redevelopment of their Westfield shopping centre. It contains 17 new residential towers up to 55 storeys high. This will bring the number of residential towers in the town centre to over 50. The concept master plan says, “The future light rail corridor along Callum Street is reinforced with built form density.” Chief Minister, according to your calendar, you met with Scentre Group twice in the last year. What advice did you give Scentre Group about how they should approach their plans to redevelop their Woden property?

MR BARR: Yes, I did meet with Scentre Group, principally to work with them in relation to increased housing opportunities, both in Belconnen and in Woden, associated with build-to-rent projects in particular. Scentre Group are a publicly listed company on the Australian Stock Exchange. They are a credible and multiple retail and housing developer across Australia. The advice I gave them was to undertake pre-development application consultation with the community, which is exactly what they are doing.

MS CARRICK: Chief Minister, did you discuss with Scentre Group the idea of including community facilities in their concept master plan in exchange for increased building heights and/or reduced lease variation charges?

MR BARR: Scentre Group put forward a proposal, consistent with their previous proposals in other Australian cities, that they would contribute, as part of any new housing development, to providing community facilities. They have raised the possibility of effectively undertaking an even greater level of community facility provision as part of an offset to a lease variation charge. There is precedent for this in the ACT. That occurred with the Queensland Investment Corporation in relation to the Canberra Centre expansion, to list one example, but there are others.

Of course, no decision has been made by government and it remains simply a proposal that would need to go through a major plan amendment process and then an individual development assessment in relation to the matters. But, as a question of principle, it is already firmly established in the ACT over many decades—in the CBD, in Belconnen and in other parts of Canberra—that developers can make a contribution to community facility provision as part of the redevelopment of a precinct. This occurs in every other Australian city all the time. It should not be new or anything interesting or exciting in the context of the concept, because it is well established in Canberra and around Australia, and indeed around the world.

MR EMERSON: Chief Minister, to the best of your knowledge, what interactions has the inter-directorate Woden town centre working group had with Scentre Group prior to the release of their concept master plan for the redevelopment of the Woden town centre?

MR BARR: Could Mr Emerson repeat the first part of his question.

MR EMERSON: What interactions has the inter-directorate Woden town centre working group had with Scentre Group, to the best of your knowledge, in relation to this plan?

MR BARR: I thank Mr Emerson for the question. I needed to be clear on exactly which group he was talking about. I will need to take that on notice.

Planning—block 45, section 54 Belconnen

MS TOUGH: My question is to the Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs. Minister, what is the plan for block 45, section 54, Belconnen—the vacant site next to Margaret Timpson Park?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Tough for the question. I am pleased to inform the chamber that block 45, section 54 in Belconnen will be released via an expression of interest process early in 2026—between January and March 2026. This EOI will be open to registered community housing providers. This means that the 60 dwellings that the site can accommodate will be community housing. I will not have the exact numbers on the breakdown of the social and affordable content until after the EOI is complete, but I can share that the government anticipates a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom units.

MS TOUGH: Minister, why is providing this site for community housing important?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Tough for the supplementary. The release of the site to CHPs will help provide much-needed and well-located affordable housing, contributing to the government's goal to enable 5,000 additional public, community and affordable rental dwellings by the end of 2030.

This site is located next to Margaret Timpson Park and is opposite the Westfield Shopping Centre. Having new families and households living in this spot will activate the park and add vibrancy to this wonderful neighbourhood. It is also a fantastic location for new residents, with good access to shops, services and public transport, which delivers the quality of life the ACT government has committed to for all Canberrans.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, how will the community get to have their say on what the development looks like, especially given that the upgrades to Margaret Timpson Park are happening at the same time?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for the question. The Suburban Land Agency is working closely with the City and Environment Directorate to ensure that the development of section 54 is well integrated into the Margaret Timpson Park upgrades. I understand CED's concept designs for the Margaret Timpson Park project will be shared with the community on YourSay by the end of 2025 and, of course, there will be plenty of community consultation as part of the development application process for the site after the EOI process.

Public housing—maintenance

MS BARRY: My question is to the minister for housing. Minister, yesterday you told the Assembly you "did not believe" the public housing maintenance budget had already been exhausted. Minister, are you aware of a meeting last week between officials, Programmed facilities and subcontractors, where they were told the budget had been expended and there would be no new work?

MS BERRY: I will take that question on notice.

MS BARRY: Minister, what happens to the tenants of public housing units when essential maintenance is not undertaken for budget reasons?

MS BERRY: Thank you. Public housing maintenance is occurring across public housing. I have repeatedly asked members in this place that if they are contacted by tenants of ACT public housing where works have not been taken out to work with my office and we will make sure we follow up and ensure that work is conducted or that it has been followed up with the tenant at least. I am not aware of any work that has not been completed once it has been raised with my office. But again, I just put that call out to the Assembly that I would follow that up with housing and Programmed should it be brought to my attention.

MR COCKS: Minister, how much did the government allocate for public housing maintenance this financial year, how much has been spent to date and has any money

been reallocated?

MS BERRY: That information is available in the budget papers. I can do that work for the Assembly and I can find it. The amount that has been allocated for public housing is in the budget papers. If I have information at this time of what has been expended then I will provide that to the Assembly. So I will take that part of the question on notice and if I have that information available, I will provide it.

Sport and recreation—Gungahlin United FC

MISS NUTTALL: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Regarding the collapse of the Gungahlin United Football Club, the ABC reported a government spokesperson as saying the government had “worked constructively” with Gungahlin United Football Club over recent years and had “offered payment plans” for sports ground hire.

If the government worked constructively, what is it that the government actually did and what help was that, given the debt was first reported as \$200,000 and is now being reported at \$550,000?

MS BERRY: First of all, I will correct that facts in this matter. It is not a \$500,000 debt to the ACT government; it is \$180,000 in unpaid fees to the ACT government. I am not sure of the makeup of the rest of the funds that the Gungahlin United Football Club owes. That is a matter for the Gungahlin United Football Club as well as Capital Football.

The ACT government worked with the club, as they would with any other club that was experiencing financial difficulty in arranging repayment plans. This is what the ACT government did in this circumstance, and what the ACT government does in every circumstance, should that be the case with any sports club.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, did the government provide governance or financial training for club executives who were trying to deal with the situation, or was this more an exercise in watching constructively—albeit from the sidelines?

MS BERRY: I completely reject the end part of your question, Miss Nuttall—through you, Mr Speaker. It is unnecessary in finding out information about what is happening with Gungahlin United Football Club, or, indeed, the support that the ACT government does provide.

In many circumstances, if there are issues around governance or financial challenges that clubs experience and it is brought to my attention—again, this is a matter for those clubs, not the ACT government—but if it is brought to my attention or to the sport and rec team, then, yes, they do work with them on a range of advice and support for financial controls or around governance. That is a regular offer from the sport and rec team.

So, again, I think it is completely disingenuous to put that at the end of your sentence, Miss Nuttall—though you, Mr Speaker. If you wanted to ask a question about support for the club, you did not need to put the bit on the end.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, what conversation has the government had with Capital Football as the peak body—given they are the peak body and receive government funding to run the sport in the ACT?

MS BERRY: Again, the ACT government does not interfere in discussions or decisions with sporting groups across the ACT. However, I have contacted Capital Football and asked them if they would keep me up to date, where appropriate, on the situation regarding Gungahlin United Football Club.

I know this has been devastating news for the Gungahlin community and for those 1,500 to 1,700 children and families that have participated in the sport, and, indeed, for the football community across the ACT. That is why I have asked Capital Football if they would keep me advised and up to date on any other further news or anything else that might arise as a consequence of this announcement.

I did meet with the interim board before they made their announcement on Saturday, and I have offered to keep talking with them. I know that the sport and rec team has offered to work with them where appropriate. That is about as far as the ACT government can go with regard to these organisations. They have their own responsibilities. We work with them where it is appropriate and where we can, understanding that this is a significant impact on football. I have seen all the other clubs across the ACT reach out to provide support for families who might want to play football for another club.

But there is some time between now and the winter season commencing next year for the junior and community sports side of things, so I am hopeful that a resolution will be found and that there will be a proponent that comes forward. Again, that is our hope, and if there is anything that the government can do, where it is appropriate, we will support that.

Parking—Theatre Lane car park closure

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Business, Arts and Creative Industries. The ACT government has closed the entire Theatre Lane car park this month, for construction of the new Lyric Theatre. Minister, how many general public, accessible, and loading zones car spaces have been closed?

MR BARR: I will take that question. I will take that question on notice, in terms of the exact number. But, yes, there are car parks that are closed as a result of needing to build that facility. That is the nature of a development.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, how many accessible and loading zone car spaces are left within a reasonable distance to the Canberra Theatre and local businesses?

MR BARR: There is certainly a program to relocate those, and there is public information in relation to that. I cannot quickly Google it, but it is available online and I may be able to provide that before the end of question time.

MS LEE: Minister, why did the government agree to the total closure of the Theatre

Lane car park, as opposed to allowing a number of disability and short-term parking spaces to be retained?

MR BARR: There are operational requirements associated with the early works. There are, of course, work health and safety requirements. I understand there may be some capacity to maintain some car parks within that broader or immediate precinct. There certainly will be a period of disruption for several more months in relation to light rail stage 2A, but then my understanding is that car parks will become available in that precinct that are not part of the theatre early works project. So, there will be car parking back in that area, just not right at the moment.

High-risk weather season—preparedness

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. I note the recent record-breaking heat across the country, as well as the sudden stratospheric warming event which has only happened in the Southern Hemisphere twice before, in 2002 and 2019, each time resulting in devastating bushfires for the Canberra region. Is there an updated outlook for the higher risk weather season?

DR PATERSON: Yes, there is. I believe that I tabled a response in the last sitting, detailing the outlook for the weather season. The outlook is for cool and wet weather during summer again; nonetheless our Emergency Services Agency is well prepared, and it is monitoring the current situation.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, did that outlook take into account the changes to the stratospheric warming event that are happening in the Southern Ocean?

DR PATERSON: While I am not a weather woman, I believe that the advice I received is that there are cool stratospheric atmospherics coming up from Antarctica. I will take that on notice and provide some weather advice to the Assembly.

MR RATTENBURY: I am bemused by the minister's flippancy. Minister, has the ACT government done all it can to prepare for a potential severe heat event this coming summer?

DR PATERSON: Yes, the ACT government is very committed to preparing for heat events, storm events and any range of emergency events that our community may face over the summer months. Our Rural Fire Service does a lot of work to prepare our community in the event of a bushfire. We have just released the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan, which outlines the plan for the government over the next decade, in terms of how we prepare for bushfires. There will be messaging out in the community over the coming months, detailing bushfire risk. As we have seen, we are now part of the Fires Near Me app. We now incorporate with New South Wales to be able to provide community information very promptly around the risk of bushfires.

The helicopters and aerial support for bushfires will be coming into our jurisdiction at some point soon. I am sure I can update the Assembly on that. There has been significant work. The SES is also prepared for storm events in particular, encouraging the community to clear their gutters and remove any trees near their houses, which supports bushfire preparedness as well.

Community events—SpringOUT

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: My question is to minister for LGBTIQA+ affairs. Minister, people always look forward to SpringOUT, and I understand this year's festival launches today. How has this government supported SpringOUT to deliver the festival? And why is it so important to this city?

MS ORR: I thank the member for his question. The SpringOUT festival does, in fact, launch today. I will be joining event partners, sponsors, volunteers, SpringOUT members and members of the LGBTIQA+ community and allies at the official launch this evening after we adjourn today. I understand the Chief Minister will also be showing his continued support of this event. The government is committed to making Canberra the most LGBTIQA+ welcoming and inclusive city in the nation, and that means that everyone feels valued, celebrated and reflected. This commitment is also reflected in action 4.3 of the Capital of Equality Strategy's First Action Plan: to resource events run by and for the community that celebrate the diversity of the community. The ACT government, in spirit with this, is proud to fund the SpringOUT event on an ongoing and annual basis.

SpringOUT is important to us because it is important to Canberra. This year will be the 26th SpringOUT festival. The festival's legacy is one of pride, equality and acceptance over many years across Canberra communities. SpringOUT's importance to Canberra is in the community's spirit, resilience and shared values of safety, support and equity for all. These principles remain relevant through initiatives like SpringOUT.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, what is on the festival program?

Members interjecting—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS ORR: I dare say that, if Mr Hanson were quiet, he might find it an event he wants to attend. If he is quite interested and does want to go—or if anyone in the chamber wants to; it is a public event—he can go along. There is a full snapshot of the festival's program available on SpringOUT's website. I encourage everyone, including Mr Hanson, to look at the program and attend any events from the busy line-up. Some of the highlights—I can see Mr Hanson has his phone out and he might be putting this straight in his diary—include the SpringOUT flag-raising ceremony, which is on Thursday, 30 October here at the Legislative Assembly. Fair Day is not to be missed on Saturday, 1 November at Glebe Park. The Office of LGBTIQA+ Affairs' roundtable is on 5 November, again here at the Legislative Assembly. Queer Reads is on at BOOK FACE Gungahlin on 6 November for anyone who likes to read a good book and have a chat about it. Canberra Qwire's performance is on Saturday, 8 November at the Albert Hall. And the FUSE Big Gay Breakfast is on Sunday, 23 November at Tilley's.

With respect to the turnout, I can tell you that SpringOUT's attendance across every event last year came to around 11,000 in total. We will not know this year's turnout until the festival closes, but, if it is anything like last year, and with more stalls at the Fair Day and all the other events that are going on, I would not be surprised if we beat

that number—maybe by at least one if Mr Hanson comes along!

MS TOUGH: Minister, as well as supporting SpringOUT, what else is this government doing to support and celebrate the LGBTIQ+ community?

MS ORR: I have spoken about how the government is supporting SpringOUT and how this reflects our commitments to make Canberra the most LGBTIQ+ welcoming and inclusive city in the nation by ensuring everyone is valued, celebrated and respected, and these principles also inform the government's facilitation of several projects and initiatives that support and celebrate the community in its diverse intersections. Some of the important achievements over this year include the forming of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ advisory group, supporting Women with Disabilities ACT and Inclusive Rainbow Voices to deliver a new peer support program for LGBTIQ+ people with disability, launching The Unsaid Says A Lot campaign, and delivering the 2025 ACT LGBTIQ+ community survey.

I would like to acknowledge the good work of the Chief Minister in this space and his leadership, having recently taken over the portfolio. There is a very proud and progressive platform to build from, and I look forward to working with everyone as we do that.

ACT public service—work health and safety

MR COCKS: My question is to the Minister for Industrial Relations. Minister, table 8.3 of this year's *State of the service report* revealed a 48 per cent increase in the number of contacts of bullying and harassment in the ACT public service—now 4.8 times the number it was a decade ago. Minister, has WorkSafe ACT investigated the systemic issues that may be contributing to the drastic rise in bullying and harassment and the accompanying psychosocial risks?

MR PETTERSSON: Can I get the tail-end of that question again?

MR COCKS: Minister, has WorkSafe ACT investigated the systemic issues that may be contributing to the drastic rise in bullying and harassment and the accompanying psychosocial risks?

MR PETTERSSON: I thank Mr Cocks for the question. I will take it on notice. I am aware of their activities in relation to the public service. The specific question on a systemic review I will need to take on notice to provide an accurate answer.

MR COCKS: Minister, what actions have you taken as the minister responsible for safety in the workplace to prevent bullying and harassment becoming an even greater problem in the ACT public service?

MR PETTERSSON: I would like to thank Mr Cocks for the question. As members would be aware, I do not issue operational directions to WorkSafe with regard to individual matters or individual entities. I outlined my expectations and priorities to WorkSafe, and that is available to members.

Mr Cocks: On a point of order on relevance, Mr Speaker: the question was not limited

to WorkSafe, but actions with the minister's portfolio responsibilities.

MR SPEAKER: Given that clarification, if there is anything else you want to add, Minister—

MR PETTERSSON: I shouldn't but I will add that I would direct the member to the Minister for the Public Service with regard to that particular question.

MS MORRIS: Minister, on how many occasions have you met with the Minister for the Public Service to discuss the drastic increase in bullying and harassment?

MR PETTERSSON: I would like to thank the member for the question. I have frequent meetings with all of my colleagues and we canvass an array of issues—portfolio matters being central to that.

WorkSafe ACT—compliance

MR COCKS: My question is to the minister for industrial relations. Minister, the WorkSafe ACT Public Service and Public Sector Strategy is outlined in the annual report for 2024-25 and has four objectives. Essentially these are: increasing knowledge and understanding of WorkSafe's role; embedding good work health and safety practice; securing public sector stakeholder commitment to improving compliance rates; and enforcing compliance. Minister, why has WorkSafe not adopted a formal objective of reducing bullying and harassment in the ACT public sector?

MR PETTERSSON: I would like to thank Mr Cocks for the question. The role of WorkSafe is a regulator. The primary responsibility for work health and safety responsibilities within any organisation is the responsibility of that organisation.

MR COCKS: Minister, why is it necessary for WorkSafe ACT to have a strategic goal to gain commitment to compliance as part of a formal strategy? Would you not expect compliance to be a bare minimum for the public service?

MR PETTERSSON: I would like to thank the member for the question. WorkSafe works collaboratively with both public and private sector interests. I understand that there is a productive relationship between WorkSafe and the ACT Public Service, acknowledging that WorkSafe has a particular role and responsibility as the regulator and the public service has responsibility for the administration of their responsibilities as PCBU's.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, what concerns has WorkSafe ACT raised with the executive group manager in relation to systemic WHS issues?

MR PETTERSSON: I will take that on notice.

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