



QUESTION TIME

OF THE

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

Thursday, 23 October 2025

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Questions without notice:

Veterans—bulk-billing services	1
Dwellings—building approvals.....	2
Housing ACT—repairs and maintenance	3
Parking—Theatre Lane car park closure	4
Dwellings—building approvals.....	5
ACT Fire & Rescue—hybrid electric fire truck	6
Domestic Violence Crisis Service—help line	7
Lake Ginninderra—water quality	7
ACT Policing—support.....	8
Woden Town Centre—planning and development	10
General practitioners—ADHD diagnosis.....	12
Courts and tribunal—Public Advocate and ACT Courts pilot project.....	12
Crime—ram raids	13
Stromlo district playing fields—development.....	13
UNSW—Canberra City campus.....	14

Questions without notice

Veterans—bulk-billing services

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Seniors and Veterans. Minister, veterans in the ACT are finding it increasingly difficult to find a GP that accepts their Veteran White and Gold Cards, leaving many struggling for access to mental health care. GPs say this is due to the ever-increasing cost of running a practice in the ACT, with DVA rebates also not keeping pace. As one GP put it, “We’re making decisions between paying our own mortgages and continuing to serve the veteran community.” Minister, what is the ACT government doing to ensure that veterans in Canberra can access GPs who accept veterans’ healthcare cards?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Just as the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs is not responsible for every policy area that impacts Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the Minister for Disability, Carers and Community Services is not responsible for every policy that impacts people with disability. Similarly, the Minister for Seniors and Veterans is not responsible for every policy area that impacts veterans.

I thank Mr Hanson for the question. I have been concerned to hear from veterans groups and organisations about an increasing inability to use their cards to access general practice services and primary care. The ACT is working very closely with the commonwealth government to improve access to GP care more broadly, and particularly access to bulk-billing. The tripling of the bulk-billing incentive will come into effect under the commonwealth government from November this year. That incentive will enable all Canberrans to get better access to primary care, including our very important veteran community.

I believe that I have had a request for a meeting from a veterans organisation, possibly to discuss this issue and access to health care more broadly. I am very happy to have that conversation. If there is anyone that Mr Hanson would like to put me or my office in touch with specifically, to have a conversation about how we could advocate for veterans, including for access to primary care, I am very happy to do that as well.

MR HANSON: Minister, have you or the Minister for Seniors and Veterans raised this specific issue with the federal ministers?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I do not believe I have raised this specific issue with the federal minister. I will check and correct the record if I have, in the context of the many times that I have advocated for better access to primary care in the ACT and to address the paucity of GPs and the lack of bulk-billing services in the ACT. Those have been ongoing topics of conversation with governments of both stripes since I have been minister and, indeed, before that. I do not believe I have raised this issue specifically, but I am very happy to do so, with both the federal Minister for Health and Ageing and the federal Minister for Veterans’ Affairs.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, how is the ACT government working with ACT Health to ensure that local healthcare providers are aware of veterans’ entitlements and know how to support them?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: We have a general practice policy unit in the Health and Community Services Directorate, and two really fantastic GPs provide great advice to the Health and Community Services Directorate and the ACT government. That supports our engagement with GPs and the broader primary care sector, including practice owners. We have been having conversations about the complexity of Medicare billing. I have not had a conversation with them about this specific issue to date. It has not previously been raised in this way, but I am very happy to have a conversation with that team as well about how we can work with the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Capital Health Network, which is the primary health network for the ACT, to get better information out to practices about the support that they can provide to veterans and how they are reimbursed for that.

Dwellings—building approvals

MR COCKS: My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, the latest economic indicator summary shows that building approvals in the last 12 months are significantly lower than the previous years, dwelling commencements have fallen 36 per cent and new investor loans are down almost 40 per cent. What impact does a slowing housing market have on the government's fiscal position?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. What the latest dwelling commencement figure shows is that it rose to 3.9 per cent in the June quarter or 565, which is below average but still increasing higher than most jurisdictions in the country, I think, bar one. So things are improving as we see monetary policy easing. We are seeing quite a significant investment pipeline of new homes in the ACT. I particularly note Scentre Group's proposal, announced this week, to build thousands of new homes in the Woden town centre. Large proponent-led major plan amendments have been brought forward, which are now being considered by government in a range of different areas across government to deliver more housing in the territory, and the government is delivering on our planned reforms to support more housing.

Some of those major plan amendments have not yet gone through. Missing middle housing reforms is one of those. We expect that it will be handed over to the Assembly committee soon, and they may undertake an inquiry into that. But we would like to see that progress in a timely way so that there is certainty of the planning opportunity that will be available across over 70 per cent of blocks in Canberra to be able to deliver more homes.

What I have heard from the construction sector is that they are waiting for those reforms to go through before then building more homes. They have started their planning work in preparation—which is fantastic—but they are waiting for those reforms to go through, which of course need to be endorsed by the Assembly under the Planning Act. Once those are in place, we expect to see an uptick in activity in that area.

MR COCKS: Treasurer, what are the implications of a slowing housing market for the forecast growth in residential rates and stamp duty?

MR STEEL: Every year, in the budget, Treasury will of course update its expectations around the growth in the number of rateable properties. So we will do that in due course.

But I note, as I pointed out to Mr Cocks only in the last sitting week, I think it was—because he had assumed that the overall rates revenue was increasing only because we put up rates in terms of the percentage increase that we consider every year—that it actually increases based on the number of rateable properties as well. It is great that he has actually found that out and agreed.

MR HANSON: Treasurer, is current growth below estimates and, if so, what impact has that had on revenue?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. We will consider that in the budget and make adjustments. So I will not be making an announcement now about future work Treasury will be doing as part of the budget process. What I would say is that the property market grew very strongly over the last five years in the ACT. It was at pretty much record highs in the sort of post-COVID environment. With interest rates being high, we have seen a relatively significant reduction in the level of commencements, but there has still been a strong pipeline of approvals, and we expect those approvals to start commencement in the future.

Housing ACT—repairs and maintenance

MR RATTENBURY: My question is to the Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs. Minister, I have been contacted by an advocate on behalf of a couple in their 80s and 90s who have been unable to use their front porch since it was demolished by Housing ACT almost half a year ago. Without a porch, rain comes into the house and pools inside, and they are unable to store a mobility scooter that one of them relies on. Minister, they have written to you, they have spoken with both Housing ACT and Programmed and they have lodged a notice to repair, but despite their best efforts, the porch remains unusable and they do not have a date for repair. What steps should the couple take now given all the other avenues they have tried have been unsuccessful?

MS BERRY: As Mr Rattenbury will know, I will not discuss individual matters in the Assembly or in public. However, if they have written to my office then I will follow up with them about the issues they have raised.

MR RATTENBURY: Minister, do you consider it acceptable that Housing ACT, as the lessor of the property with responsibility for carrying out repairs under the Residential Tenancies Act, has not carried out these repairs despite knowing about them for almost half a year?

Mr Pettersson: Point of order.

MR SPEAKER: Point of order, Mr Pettersson.

Mr Pettersson: Mr Speaker, Mr Rattenbury is asking for an expression of opinion.

MR SPEAKER: It is difficult to argue with you, Mr Pettersson, on this particular matter, because the way the question has been framed is indeed asking for an opinion. I am going to ask the member—

MR RATTENBURY: If you would like I can reframe the question?

MR SPEAKER: Please.

MR RATTENBURY: Minister, why has Housing ACT not met its obligations under the Residential Tenancies Act to undertake a repair in a reasonable timeframe?

MS BERRY: I refer the member to my first answer.

MS CLAY: Is a delay like this a reflection that there should be more funding provided in the budget to Programmed and their contractors?

Mr Pettersson: Point of order: seeking an expression of opinion.

MR SPEAKER: I do not believe that this one is asking specifically for an opinion. I am going to let it stand. I do not know if you want to repeat the question, for the benefit of all of us, Ms Clay.

MS CLAY: I will repeat the question as many times as you need me to, Mr Speaker. Is a delay like this, in property maintenance, a reflection that there should have been more funding in the budget for Programmed and their contractors?

MS BERRY: I will refer the member to my first answer.

Parking—Theatre Lane car park closure

MR EMERSON: My question is to the minister for planning. Most days, as part of my commute, I travel through the Theatre Lane car park, which remains partially open to pedestrians and cyclists. No construction-related activity has commenced in a significant portion of the now cordoned off accessible car parking spaces. Minister, why has the government permitted the entire car park to be closed, including some of the very few accessible car parking spaces in this part of the city, when it is clear that this is not required—certainly not yet?

MR SPEAKER: Pick a minister, any minister! Mr Barr.

MR BARR: As the theatre projects sits within my responsibilities, I will take the question. The early works include some investigative drilling and a range of other things that may not be completely visible to Mr Emerson. I am happy to provide some further information on notice as to why particular areas are required to be closed. But one need not take too big a leap of imagination to say that if they were not closed off and someone, for example, had an accident in an area where work was being undertaken or was soon to be undertaken then I would be being asked a very different question in question time.

I will take the specific detail on notice. I did respond to a question yesterday around the relocation of, in particular, the accessible car parking spaces. I refer Mr Emerson to the detail there. There are, indeed, hundreds of accessible car parking spaces distributed around the CBD, and the ones that were in the Theatre Lane car park have been moved to the City Hill and Hobart Place car parks.

MR EMERSON: Chief Minister, did the government consider the impact on people who require accessible parking before closing off the car park in its entirety, noting that GP accreditation, including for the family practice across the road from this Assembly, is contingent on the provision of accessible parking close to the practice?

MR BARR: Yes, we did. The relevant government agencies, who are both the approval side and the proponent side, sought to adhere to the requirements. That is why there was a relocation of those spaces, and if there needs to be any further detailed discussion and any further changes to particular car parking spaces within the broader precinct that can certainly occur. But it has to be understood that we cannot have people traipsing through construction sites, because there is considerable risk associated with that.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, what analysis was done, prior to approving the full closure of this car park, on exactly how many accessible parking spaces would be required for people with a disability or an impairment who travel into this specific part of the city for work or for medical appointments, given the additional pedestrian time required by those people?

MR BARR: There was a determination to completely replace every single accessible car parking space, as well as others that were provisioned for other specific purposes, that included: the permits for this place; general practitioner; accessible; and a range of other car parking requirements—loading zones and the like.

Obviously there are limits to exactly where those additional car parking spaces can be. We cannot put them in midair. We cannot put them in locations that are not safe and accessible. But they have been redistributed, and they are within several hundred meters of the Theatre Lane car park.

Dwellings—building approvals

MR COCKS: My question is to the Treasurer, and it follows on from Mr Hanson's very reasonable attempt to get the Treasurer to respond to his supplementary question. Treasurer, what assumptions were made in the budget that has just been, about the strength of the housing market? Do you have any data that says those have not been borne out over recent months?

MR STEEL: I refer Mr Cocks to the budget papers, where it outlines what the expectations are, and the forecast for the following year. Of course, it is a forecast and there will be assumptions underpinning that—and a lot of those are explained in the budget papers. I am happy to take it on notice and come back if there is any further detail that I can provide.

Treasury, of course, provides me with updates on the latest building data and statistics published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. They are not just looking at data on a quarterly basis—or a monthly basis, depending on the metric. They will look at it over the year, and then, of course, that will feed into their assumptions about further years. Of course, they will take some level of conservatism in relation to some of those figures as well and look at what the trends have been over a longer period of time.

So, I am happy to come back on the first part of the question. But, no, they have not

provided me with any indication at this stage that the most recent ABS release of building activity in Australia, released on 15 October, would lead to a direct change to their assumptions.

MR COCKS: Treasurer, when will Treasury review the accuracy and performance of its assumptions and forecasts about the housing market, and brief you on significant deviations or need to change those forecasts?

MR STEEL: Through the budget process.

MS MORRIS: Treasurer, will you provide any such advice to the Assembly?

MR STEEL: It is considered as part of the budget process. Of course, we publish the budget papers with any updates that are required published in the papers themselves.

ACT Fire & Rescue—hybrid electric fire truck

MS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. The hybrid electric fire truck has been off-road more than 80 per cent of the time that it has been owned by the ACT. It has only been able to operate without the assistance of a traditional fire truck for seven days, and it has been offline since June due to a traction battery fault. Minister, is the hybrid electric fire truck back online? If so, since when?

DR PATERSON: I thank the member for the question. I have not received advice yet that it is back online, but I will follow it up and, if there are any updates, I will provide that advice to the chamber.

MS MORRIS: Minister, what is the government's plan to manage all future breakdowns, once the warranty expires at the end of 2025?

DR PATERSON: I will take on notice exactly what ESA's plan is. The fire truck is currently under warranty. There was a problem with the batteries. Unfortunately, batteries cannot be sent by plane, so they have had to come by boat to Australia. That is why there has been a more significant delay in receiving these batteries.

MR HANSON: Minister, has the government considered returning the fire truck for a refund or replacement before the warranty expires at the end of the year?

DR PATERSON: No. The fire truck makes an important contribution to our fleet. With respect to the days that Ms Morris referred to that this fire truck has not been in service, it did not enter the territory and then go straight into service. There was a significant commissioning period when we had to get every single ACT Fire & Rescue officer trained on this specific fire truck. That is why it has not been on the road for the majority of that time. There have also been delays with mechanical issues with the truck.

The ACT was a leader in Australia in terms of acquiring an electric fire truck. This fire truck is something that will offer our ACT Fire & Rescue officers significant work health and safety positives, in that they do not have to carry their gear upstairs into a fire truck. This is the way of the future, and we are looking forward to having this fire truck back in the ACT and back in operation.

Domestic Violence Crisis Service—help line

MS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence. The government has known since May 2024 that the DVCS crisis line was missing too many calls, when a review warned that this can have serious implications for victim-survivors' safety and wellbeing, as well as their trust in the service. This month, DVCS confirmed that only about half of the calls are answered, with some victims waiting days. Minister, why commission reviews if you will not implement the recommendations?

DR PATERSON: We have, and that is why we have prioritised frontline service funding in the budget. The budget saw an additional \$30.5 million over four years to address domestic, family and sexual violence. A proportion of that funding has gone to DVCS to support their operations and the incredibly important work they do in supporting victim-survivors in our territory.

MS MORRIS: Minister, can you update the Assembly on the progress of implementation of other recommendations of the May 2024 SVA review?

DR PATERSON: What review is Ms Morris talking about?

MR SPEAKER: Ms Morris, could you repeat the question, please.

MS MORRIS: Minister, can you update the Assembly on the progress of implementation of other recommendations of the May 2024 review?

DR PATERSON: I am not clear on the May 2024 review. I am not clear about what Ms Morris is talking about. If she specifies the review, I will take it on notice.

MS MORRIS: On the review that I referred to in my first question.

DR PATERSON: Which was?

MR SPEAKER: Minister, it might be prudent for you to take it on notice and perhaps get further advice from Ms Morris.

MR COCKS: Minister, when can we expect to see the crisis line answer rate improve?

DR PATERSON: We will continue to work to support DVCS and the other services we know are under significant pressure.

Lake Ginninderra—water quality

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water. I have been contacted by a lot of people in Belconnen about the recent dog deaths in and near Lake Ginninderra. A lot of people are worried. I am worried, as I take my dog swimming and paddleboarding there as well. What action is the ACT government taking now and over the next few months to reduce algae blooms and harmful bacteria in Lake Ginninderra?

MS CHEYNE: This is lineball between me and Ms Orr. Given the premise of Ms Clays question, I will take it. But, depending on what the others are, they might be for Minister Orr. To the premise of the question, obviously, none of us have come away from the news of the dogs passing away from being near or swimming in Lake Ginninderra without being deeply affected, and our heart goes out to those families.

What I would note about this type of blue-green algae, tychonema, is that it is something that occurs on the floor of the lake and in the sediment of the lake and it is always there. So it is not something that is necessarily produced like some of the other blue-green algae types that we see floating across the lake that have that blue-green tinge or that other oily appearance. This looks, as Dr Su Wild-River said on the radio the other day, like poo or faecal matter. It is at the surface of the lake when it has broken away from the lake floor or broken away from the sediment. So, to the question about how to reduce that algae, that is different to a question about how to reduce other types of algae, I suppose.

MS CLAY: Noting that the only funded Healthy Waterways project is in Tuggeranong, how is the government taking action to improve water quality for Lake Ginninderra and our other waterways?

MS ORR: The program that Ms Clay has referred to, Healthy Waterways, and looking at the Tuggeranong region, is one specifically related to that catchment. The government is doing work across all our catchments, noting that that program is focused on removing pollutants entering into our waterways system, which, as Minister Cheyne noted in her response, is not necessarily how you would respond to this particular type of algae and the dangers that come from it.

As I noted in my response to questions earlier in the week on this topic, we do have various parts of government out monitoring the lakes and doing inspections. They will continue to do that, particularly over the summer—so, in season—as we work through what are quite complex issues around the management of our water system and doing that to the best that we can with the information that we have.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, what are the environmental impacts of tychonema on our native ecosystems, including fishes and native vegetation in our waterways?

MS ORR: Mr Speaker, I will take that one on notice and I will seek some advice from the experts in my department on this.

ACT Policing—support

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: My question is to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. Minister, on 1 October, you announced the new ministerial direction for ACT Policing. Can you update the Assembly on your priorities for ACT Policing?

DR PATERSON: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for his question and his interest in the ACT government's priorities for ACT Policing. As minister for police, I have complete confidence in the officers of ACT Policing which keep our community safe every day.

The ministerial direction is issued under the policing arrangement between the ACT government and the Australian Federal Police. The new ministerial direction for ACT Policing has strengthened the ACT government's commitment to building a safe, just and resilient community.

Key initiatives under the new direction include: supporting a domestic and family violence investigation unit with specialist training in coercive control and technology assisted abuse while continuing to work with partner agencies to support victims and hold offenders accountable; supporting the development of the National Firearms Register and uplifting the ACT Firearms Registry to ensure a fit-for-purpose regulatory regime that enhances community safety; implementing culturally informed policing practices, strengthening engagement with the Chief Police Officer's Advisory Board and supporting justice reinvestment strategies to reduce over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system.

The ministerial direction also includes addressing recidivist dangerous driving, reducing road trauma, supporting reforms relating to raising the age of criminal responsibility and countering violent extremism. I look forward to continuing the work with the ACT Chief Police Officer, Scott Lee, ACT Policing and the broader AFP to achieve our shared goal to ensure Canberra remains the safest city in Australia.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, the ACT government has made a record investment in ACT Policing in the recent budget. How will this funding enable ACT Policing to keep Canberrans safe?

DR PATERSON: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for his supplementary. During the budget debate I was very pleased to speak in detail concerning the record investment made by the ACT government into our police in our city. The ACT government is strongly committed to supporting ACT Policing to keep Canberrans safe.

The government invested \$112 million over four years to meet the 11.2 per cent pay increase for ACT police officers in line with their new enterprise agreement. Just over \$5 million has been invested in a new sexual assault and child abuse team to support victim-survivors of sexual offences. This is in addition to the more than \$7 million allocated in the 2024-25 budget to implement recommendations of the Sexual Assault (Police) Review.

\$1.14 million has been allocated to design and plan for our new city police station and headquarters and \$2.5 million to consider options for infrastructure requirements for the Molonglo Valley. We will make sure we provide ACT Policing with the facilities and capabilities they require to keep our community safe.

MS TOUGH: Minister, can you update the Assembly on the progress the government is making to achieve the commitment of 150 new police officers by 2029?

DR PATERSON: I thank Ms Tough for her question. The ACT government is strongly progressing to meet our election commitment around police numbers. At the 2024 election ACT Labor committed to recruit an additional 150 police officers. I am pleased to report that ACT Policing welcomed 89 new recruits in the 2024-25 financial year, and very excited to report that since then an additional 29 recruits have joined ACT

Policing. The recruits graduated from their college in a ceremony at the National Gallery just last week. It was an honour to attend this ceremony with the new AFP Commissioner. I look forward to attending many more graduations over this term and welcoming more recruits to ACT Policing.

Woden Town Centre—planning and development

MS CARRICK: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development. In the 2016 *Canberra: a statement of ambition* the Chief Minister said:

Cities don't succeed by accident or by leaving things to chance – they require design, good governance and great collaboration.

Under our new outcomes-based planning system, we are seeing an outcome for the Phillip Pool site which was not based on a proper needs analysis and clearly does not meet the needs of the community. We also have major development proposals from the Hellenic Club for Phillip section 7, and the Scentre Group concept master plan, both of which propose to include community facilities.

Minister, how can you give the community confidence that we will have better outcomes with these developments, with the right facilities being built in the right place to meet the needs of our rapidly growing community?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Carrick for her question. A lot has changed since 2016, and there is actually a new statement, *CBR switched on*, which replaced the previous statement of ambition. It still has design at its centre, as does the new planning system, and the National Capital Design Review Panel has been put in place. This is a relatively new body, led by the chief architect, which is providing design guidance on any proposal that involves the development of buildings over five stories. That is having a significant impact already, with really improved design outcomes. This is important for the new residents but also for surrounding residents and people who will be using the areas directly next to those future buildings.

That review panel will assess some of the proposals that Ms Carrick has mentioned. It has already been involved in engaging with—I understand—Geocon, the proponent and lessee of the Phillip Pool on their proposal. Scentre Group—I know—understands that they will need to engage with them in relation to their proposals that are currently out for consultation. So would, of course, the Hellenic Club in relation to their work on their proposals on their own block and the block that they have bought—village green. That was subject to quite a significant design process led by the Suburban Land Agency.

So, yes, design is still at the centre of the planning system. It has been embedded in everything that we do through the design guides, a new feature of the planning system requiring development to respond to them.

MS CARRICK: Minister, has the National Capital Design Review Panel holistically assessed the planning for the Woden town centre to ensure we get great outcomes, or will their assessment be piecemeal, one DA at a time?

MR STEEL: We are assessing quite large precinct proposals that are coming forward,

and that includes subdivision design applications, which are DAs and which may cover quite a significant area. They have involvement in that. They were involved in our project—The CIT Woden campus—and I think we have achieved an excellent design outcome there, with benefits for the wider community and not just the students and staff in that building.

So they are involved in those precinct-level proposals, and they will continue to make a significant contribution to improving the built form of Canberra, as we build more homes and more commercial development, and, as we expect to see, more private development occurring, particularly in the town centres—

Ms Carrick: I have a point of order. I asked whether they would be assessing the whole precinct—the Woden town centre—for great outcomes, or whether it would be one DA at a time. We did not get an answer on whether it would be the whole precinct or one DA at a time. The CIT was one DA.

MR SPEAKER: Ms Carrick, I have taken your point of order on relevance. Mr Steel, I do not know if you wish to provide any more?

MR STEEL: The CIT did have one DA. It has multiple DAs. There was a subdivision development application. There was design guidance provided by the National Capital Design Review Panel, and it was a precinct-based approach. So, yes, they look at DAs, but DAs can include subdivisions, which are larger, precinct-based proposals. So, yes, they are involved in that discussion.

MR EMERSON: Minister, is the government willing to negotiate on the public land that Scentre Group seeks to develop in the Woden town centre, in order to get the best outcomes for community facilities, or will that be left to chance?

MR STEEL: It will not be left to chance. It will be left to the process under the Planning Act and regulations. There are a range of processes that Scentre Group will have to go through for their proposal. It is great that the first stage, before they come to government formally, is that they will be consulting with the community. That is important.

This will require major planning amendments to the Territory Plan to facilitate what they are proposing, which will also have its own level of community and Assembly involvement. It will require development applications. Part of it—and I stress that it is only part of it—requires some level of direct sale of government land that is adjacent or contiguous to their existing centre. That would be considered under the proposals in the Planning Act and regulations. There are a range of criteria in there that have to be met, and they would have to demonstrate to government that they have met those criteria. Then that would be considered by government, and government would make a decision as to whether the land should be sold to them, not sold at all, or, indeed, be put out for a competitive sale—depending on the block.

I understand that there are four blocks that they are, potentially, seeking to purchase, including some of the existing surface car parks in Woden that they currently license from the territory. That will be considered in due course, but, at this stage, I understand that those direct sale applications have not yet been made, so it would be too early to make a judgement on those.

General practitioners—ADHD diagnosis

MISS NUTTALL: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, during estimates it was great to discuss that government was seeking EOIs from GPs who would be interested in managing and prescribing medications and diagnosing ADHD. I have had really positive feedback from a few of my constituents down in Tuggeranong about this initiative. With that in mind, how many EOIs have been received so far? And is there a decent geographic spread of providers across Canberra?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Thank you, Miss Nuttall, for the question. I am not able to provide an answer right now on the exact numbers. I know there has been really strong interest from across the general practice community on this, but I will take the question on notice as to exactly how many EOIs have been received.

The chief psychiatrist is confident that we are getting a good response, and I certainly also get a really positive response from the GPs that I speak to.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, what is the timeline for the EOI process, and when might we expect GPs to begin this trial?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I am afraid I do not have that detail in my head right now, so I will take the question on notice.

MR RATTENBURY: Minister, perhaps when you respond on notice, can you indicate how many of the GPs who are interested in the program are bulk-billing?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: No, I cannot. It will be impossible for me to be able to answer that question. Particularly because what we know is that GPs, generally speaking, are not “bulk-billing” or “not bulk-billing”. Many GPs will bulk-bill some patients and not others. So, they will make a judgement on the basis, in part, of whether they think the person they are seeing requires bulk-billing to be able to access health care—or whether they are a relatively high-income person who can afford to pay for their health care and is willing to do so.

I imagine that this is a broadening of the scope of practice for general practitioners. It is not going to be a specific item number that will be billed in a particular way. And there will be no requirement in terms of the expansion of scope in practice capacity for it to be a bulk-billed service, so we will not be able to determine how many GPs are likely to bulk-bill, or the number of patients that they are likely to bulk-bill for this particular activity.

Courts and tribunal—Public Advocate and ACT Courts pilot project

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Attorney-General. The Public Advocate and ACT Courts pilot project highlighted the significant number of vulnerable court users who are disadvantaged in accessing justice. According to the annual report, the project led to improved outcomes for both court users and the court, but its funding ran out at the end of September, and it has since stopped. Attorney-General, why have you ended this program?

MS CHEYNE: I do not have the information with me, so I will take it on notice, because I want to be accurate. I know exactly what program Mr Braddock is talking about. I want to make sure that I am 100 per cent right in what I say. At the moment it would just be a guess.

MR BRADDOCK: Attorney-General, what is happening in the meantime, since the funding has run out and no further supports are in place?

MS CHEYNE: I will take that on notice as well.

MR RATTENBURY: Attorney-General, what is the government's long-term plan to help these vulnerable court users?

MS CHEYNE: Thank you, Mr Rattenbury. I will take that on notice, in the context of the reasons why I am taking the first two questions on notice.

Crime—ram raids

MS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. A coffee shop in Casey was subject to a ram-raid attack the night before last and not for the first time. The owner said, "We need to stop this. It's happening a lot in Canberra right now and it's not safe the way it should be." Minister, what do you say to victims of crime who feel unsafe and let down by this government?

DR PATERSON: I thank Ms Morris for the opportunity to say that I am very sorry that this has happened to the owners of that cafe. It was a pretty dramatic incident that occurred and I understand how devastating that is to them personally and to their business. But it has been really lovely to see how the community has rallied around this coffee shop in support of them. It demonstrates the strength of our community during hard times.

MS MORRIS: Why do more than half of Canberrans now feel that crime is a growing problem in our communities?

DR PATERSON: Again, I thank Ms Morris for the opportunity to speak to Canberrans and let them know that crime is actually significantly decreasing in the territory and has been over the past decade. The ACT is the safest city in Australia. That is in large part thanks to ACT Policing and thanks to our brilliant community services that support our community.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, what are you going to do differently to ensure that local people and small-business owners are able to feel safe in Canberra?

DR PATERSON: I will continue to support ACT police to investigate these incidents and ultimately resolve them. I think that is what the community would like to see: resolution and understanding who did this.

Stromlo district playing fields—development

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Since it was promised in 2016, the ACT government has put more than \$1 million into designing the Stromlo district playing fields. Despite this, the DA is not supported by multiple ACT government agencies, including the former TCCS, Emergency Services, Evoenergy, Icon Water and the Conservator of Flora and Fauna. Minister, why don't you have the support of your own government's agencies?

MS BERRY: Often with development application processes there will be departments of the ACT government that will respond to those applications based on different needs and then the proponent of the development application will work with those agencies to ensure that they can be satisfied that the project is going along nicely or make the adjustments that might need to be made that are raised by those departments. It is perfectly reasonable for other ACT government departments to be part of that process.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, it has been almost a decade. How much longer will it be before local families will get what they were promised in 2016?

MS BERRY: I do not have the actual date of when the project was to be completed. I think it is 2027, but I will double-check and bring that back to the Assembly.

MR COCKS: Minister, what was the government's original estimated cost for the playing fields and what is your current estimate?

MS BERRY: I will take that question on notice.

UNSW—Canberra City campus

MS TOUGH: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, can you please provide an update on Stage One of the UNSW's Canberra City campus project?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Tough for the question. The University of NSW Canberra City Campus project is a significant strategic investment in Canberra's future. It strengthens our higher education offering and it cements Canberra as Australia's knowledge capital. The government was pleased to participate in the formal commencement of Stage One of this transformative new campus. It is one that will offer modern facilities, student services and retail, and connect education, industry, government and community. I particularly commend UNSW Canberra for their strong focus on priority areas such as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, climate, public policy and defence at the new campus. These are all critical fields for Australia's future, skilling people for jobs in knowledge intensive sectors, which aligns with the government's broader goals for economic diversification and to build a resilient and future-ready workforce.

MS TOUGH: Chief Minister, what are the benefits that this important project will bring to the Canberra community?

MR BARR: Thank you. The project brings a substantial social and economic benefit. The new campus will play a key role in revitalising the southeastern edge of our CBD, significantly enhancing activity in the precinct and connectivity to the city centre. The project is expected to create 350 jobs throughout the construction phase and once complete, generate even more local jobs, attracting over 6,000 students and educators.

This is thousands of additional students, workers and their families provided an opportunity to study, to collaborate and to live in a much more active area, providing a significant boost to the city's building, hospitality and small business sectors. The project will also support the growth of the territory's largest export market, international education, which already welcomes around 20,000 international students from more than 100 countries who choose to study in Canberra each year.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Chief Minister, does the government expect any collaboration opportunities to stem from this campus development?

MR BARR: Yes, Mr Speaker, in short. I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for his interest. CIT and UNSW Canberra are already working on a number of collaboration opportunities in some of the fields I have outlined, and this week we have seen further collaboration across the sector with CIT and UC announcing a new suite of guaranteed pathway arrangements making it easier for students to move between vocational and higher education. This UC CIT partnership spans high demand areas including nursing, early childhood education, leadership and management, graphic design, accounting, project management and government.

Seeing our higher education providers so publicly strengthen their relationship and collaboration opportunities, which is consistent with the national Universities Accord, is an incredibly encouraging development for Canberra, one that will ensure our higher education system is more connected and flexible for future generations of students who choose to study in Australia's knowledge capital right here in Canberra.

On that happy note, Mr Speaker, I ask that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.