



QUESTION TIME
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

Wednesday, 29 October 2025

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Questions without notice

Canberra Health Services—elective surgery waiting times

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Health. CHS had a target for 2024-25 of 430 patients waiting longer than clinically recommended for elective surgery. The actual outcome was 2,020—more than four times higher than the target. Minister, how is it that this target has been missed so badly?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Castley for the question. As we have talked about before, we have achieved the highest number of elective surgeries ever, by a very long way, in 2024-25, with more than 16½ thousand elective surgeries compared to the previous highest of just over 15,300 elective surgeries. We were somewhat short of our target, for multiple reasons. However, this backlog was created some years ago both by the COVID-19 pandemic interruptions and also the fire at what was then the Calvary Public Hospital Bruce theatre complex.

We have not changed the target for the number of people overdue and awaiting elective surgery for some years. We chose to leave that target the same because, obviously, that is where we would like to get to. We have been seeing very significant efforts to increase the amount of elective surgery that we are getting through, and those efforts are starting to have an impact on the number of people waiting for elective surgery and the number of people overdue.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, has there been any accountability for such a severe failure, being that it is four times higher than the target?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: As I just said in response to the first question, we have actually explained on multiple occasions how we started the year with a backlog and we finished the year with a backlog but we had in fact achieved an absolute record number of elective surgeries in 2024-25, more than 16½ thousand. We have set a target, which is exactly the same as the target the Canberra Liberals set at the last election in 2024, of 70,000 elective surgeries over the next four years from this year. We are very confident that we will meet that target, which, as I said, is exactly the same target that the Canberra Liberals set at the last election.

MR HANSON: Minister, at what point will you take responsibility for your failure to ensure Canberrans can access elective surgery on time?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I take responsibility here in this place and on radio regularly, and I am accountable to the community for the performance of the ACT health system. We know that every health system around the country was impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic and saw increases in elective surgery waiting lists and impacts on the throughput of elective surgery. Unfortunately for us, this impact was compounded by the fire in the theatre complex of the former Calvary Public Hospital. That public hospital is now operating above the rates of elective surgery that it was previously. We are getting through our elective surgeries, both in our public system and in partnership with our private partners, and we have delivered an absolute record number of elective surgeries in 2024-25, at more than 16½ thousand.

Canberra Health Services—elective surgery waiting times

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Health. AIHW data on elective surgery waiting times shows almost one-quarter of category 1 patients were not admitted within the clinically recommended wait time in 2023-24. This compares with just 0.4 per cent in New South Wales. Minister, why are Canberrans 58 times more likely to miss out on urgent surgery on time?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: There will be various reasons across different specialities as to why category 1 elective surgeries would not have been completed on time. I will take the detail of the question on notice so I can come back to Ms Castley and the chamber with some more detailed information in relation to the various factors that impact that.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, what is the New South Wales government doing to be so much better at serving their communities than you are at serving ours?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I reject the premise of that question. There is a regular joke among health ministers that we all run the worst health system in the country, because that is the headline on all of our papers around the country—that we are, for whatever reason, the worst in the country. I think if you look at some of the headlines in NSW you would identify ambulance ramping, you would identify industrial issues under governments of both persuasions and you would identify a range of issues where the data and the commentary would indicate that the ACT is doing better than New South Wales. There are other areas where New South Wales is outperforming the ACT on specific data points in specific years, but I absolutely reject the premise of Ms Castley's question.

MS BARRY: Minister, are those headlines the reason so many Canberrans are losing confidence in your administration and are seeking health care in New South Wales?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Again I reject the premise of Ms Barry's question. I am not sure that she has any evidence of what she has asserted. We certainly do know that in the private system people do go and seek health care in New South Wales because they pay less of a gap in New South Wales. We know that in the ACT private hospital care tends to be both more likely to have a gap, out-of-pocket expenses, for people using their private health insurance and that that gap is larger. That is one of the things that creates significant pressure on the ACT's public health system as well. So it is true that people go to New South Wales, people go to Sydney, to seek care in the private system but the same reason that they do is also what creates additional pressure on the ACT public system.

Drugs—decriminalisation

MR HANSON: My question is the Attorney-General. Attorney-General, we were promised that if the ACT decriminalised ice, heroin and cocaine we would fix clogged-up courts and police activity. This is despite only eight people being charged and convicted of illicit possession as a standalone offence in 2021-22, which was the year immediately before decriminalisation.

Now the DPP is saying that they may have to turn away cases due to the sheer volume and being overworked. Has decriminalising hard drugs failed to clear up the court

system?

MS CHEYNE: I did not hear the beginning of what you said, Mr Hanson, but—

MR SPEAKER: Would you like the question repeated?

MS CHEYNE: Not really! I will take it as a preamble. Let's see how I go. If you want to 118AA me, then so be it!

I thank Mr Hanson for the question. I think that is a false equivalence, quite honestly. By making drug use very firmly a health issue rather than a criminal issue, all the evidence has shown us that the sky has not fallen in and that, in fact, diversion has been a better outcome. In terms of the DPP's workload, I would not suggest that the workload has ever been under pressure in relation to drug possession, necessarily. I would say that it is a combination of things.

Mr Hanson: We were told that is why we were doing it—

MS CHEYNE: Mr Speaker, if Mr Hanson wants to interrupt, I am happy to have a conversation.

But, certainly, what we want to do is divert people from the justice system, because all of the evidence shows us that as soon as they have contact with the justice system that becomes, itself, a criminogenic factor, and they will likely have contact with the justice system again.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, you have asked your question.

MS CHEYNE: Mr Hanson would know, if he actually read the DPP's annual report, especially the opening statement from the DPP, that there is increasing complexity in the cases—increasing complexity in terms of the matters that are being brought to the DPP, especially as they relate to domestic and family violence.

MR HANSON: I will try and read my next question slower so you can hear it, Minister.

Ms Cheyne: Just louder.

MR HANSON: Louder?

Have drug-related charges increased or decreased since hard-drug decriminalisation has taken affect?

MS CHEYNE: I would not have the policing data in front of me, but I think there is a question about, again, the difference between drug-related charges when we are talking about possession versus trafficking versus the sale, and so on. So I think that bringing it all together as one is a bit of a red herring from Mr Hanson.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, how is the government seeking to ease the pressure on the

court system after the decriminalisation of heroin, ice and cocaine has already failed?

MS CHEYNE: This is a very odd logical piecing together. To go directly to the question—as much as it is breaking my brain!—we have been successfully diverting people out of the criminal justice system for personal possession of different drug types. In terms of the DPPs workload, we have been focusing on supporting the DPP with some of the decisions that she has taken, especially as they relate to regulatory matters.

Without wanting to announce policy through question time, Mr Milligan can look forward to the bill I introduce tomorrow.

Treasury—act of grace payments

MR RATTENBURY: My question is for the Treasurer. Treasurer, the *Act of Grace Policy and Procedures Guide* sets out how you can authorise the payments if you consider it appropriate to do so because of special circumstances—ordinarily if the territory has a moral obligation that warrants authorisation of the payment. Given applications for the payments are often sought by people who have already experienced harm occasioned by the territory, how do you prioritise them?

MR STEEL: I will take the question on notice.

MR RATTENBURY: Treasurer, what are the reasons that it could take close to one year to tell an applicant about the outcome of their act of grace payment application?

MR STEEL: Each application is different. There will be a range of different considerations that may exist for some cases and not for others. Treasury, obviously, has limited resources to be able to look into every single one but does need to provide me with advice on every single claim that is being made. Some of those require comprehensive investigation of the issues before that advice can be given to me.

MS CLAY: What support is available to applicants for act of grace payments who are harmed by lengthy delays while they wait to hear the outcome of their application?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. Where possible, communication is provided to them to give them an expectation that it can take some time for those matters to be considered, and there is certainly no guarantee that an act of grace payment will be made. It needs to be considered, and I do so against the criteria that we often provide to them so that they have an understanding on what basis the decision will be made.

City and government services—lighting

MR EMERSON: My question is to the Minister for City and Government Services. Four months ago, the Assembly passed an amended motion which called on the ACT government to continue to roll out the implementation of gender-sensitive urban design across the ACT and, among other things, advocate for and collaborate with the National Capital Authority to address lighting issues and ensure women feel safe while exercising in commonwealth-owned areas like the Lake Burley Griffin perimeter. The NCA has since replaced or repaired 48 lights and installed 223 new lights around Lake Burley Griffin. Minister, can you provide a rough indication of how many new lights

the ACT government has installed in high-traffic public spaces in the last four months?

MS CHEYNE: I will take the actual number on notice. I would note two things that are part of the ACT government's streetlight maintenance improvements and enhancements. One is filling in the gaps where we have requests for lighting, particularly as it relates to areas that people might be traversing regularly, and they want better lighting in place. The other is where we are improving the streetlight network overall, when it comes to the types of lights. We are undertaking an enormous program through our contractor in terms of streetlight replacement. I will get the specific numbers for Mr Emerson, and I expect they will be broken down in that way.

MR EMERSON: Minister, when can we expect to see a detailed timeline for rolling out the ACT government's gender-sensitive urban design framework across the territory?

MS CHEYNE: I will take that on notice.

MS CARRICK: Minister, what has been the extent of the ACT government's engagement with the NCA regarding lighting and footpaths around the Lake Burley Griffin perimeter since the Assembly motion in June?

MS CHEYNE: As I pointed out at the time, the NCA manages its land, and we manage our land. I am glad to hear that the NCA has taken note of the lobbying that, in the first instance, was directed towards us. It certainly has seemed, from much of the commentary that we have had, that it is NCA-managed land where lighting improvements need to be concentrated.

I will have to take on notice whether there have been any conversations with officials, but I expect there have been, at least in the broader context of the NCA's upgrades, the strengthening of the Commonwealth Avenue Bridge and any utility movements that we have had to undertake.

Overall, I think it is still worth stressing that lighting certainly is a big part of feeling safer, but women are always unsafe at the moment in any circumstance, day or night. It is based on behaviours of people that make women feel unsafe, and if those behaviours start to change, some of these conversations would not necessarily need to be had.

Sport and recreation—bowling clubs

MS CARRICK: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation about the potential closure of the Weston Creek Bowling Club. Minister, in the last 10 years, four lawn bowls facilities have closed, including the Canberra City Bowling Club, the West Deakin Bowling Club, the Southern Cross Bowling Club in Phillip, and the South Canberra Bowling Club in Griffith. Bowls clubs are where people go to socialise. It is important for people's mental health for them to get out of the house, connect with others and participate in activities. In 2019, the ACT government commissioned a strategic facility review of bowls in the ACT, and, in its 2021 response, the ACT government stated that opportunities to assist the industry included:

- Consideration of support for capital works projects which can demonstrate a

longterm positive impact on the provision of bowls facilities in Canberra (i.e. covering greens, conversion to synthetic playing surfaces) on a case-by-case basis.

June 2025, Region media reported that the Weston Creek Labor Club is set for post-Christmas closure, including the bowling club.

Minister, is the government willing to work with the Labor Club and its bowling club to support a capital works project that includes covered greens so they can be used all year round and at night, to facilitate the financial viability of the bowling club, or are we going to lose another sporting and social facility?

MS BERRY: I would say to Ms Carrick that I acknowledge the advocacy of the bowling club members in this space; however, I cannot make decisions about providing projects to privately owned organisations outside the government's budget or grants processes. Clubs all have opportunities to access grants should they require them to have infrastructure upgrades. Then the ACT government would work with them in implementing those grants and ensuring the upgrades of their sporting infrastructure.

MS CARRICK: Minister, should the Weston Creek Labor Club close, what will the government do to ensure there are community facilities in that area, in Weston Creek?

MS BERRY: I know Ms Carrick is the champion of every privately owned business in the ACT that closes and calls on the government to take it over, but it is just not possible. However, in saying that, I would work with individual sporting clubs, should they decide that they want to open a sporting venue in the ACT, and see whether there are opportunities for them within the ACT government's land release program or any other opportunities that we might have with privately owned organisations. That is not always the case, but, where it is appropriate, the government can, in those circumstances, work with those groups.

MR EMERSON: Minister, have there been any discussions between the ACT government and the Canberra Labor Club about the future of the Weston Creek Bowling Club site?

MS BERRY: I have not. However, I have had contact from the bowling club user groups, which I am yet to meet with. I am not aware of other ministers' diaries in that respect.

Sport and recreation facilities—planning

MISS NUTTALL: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development. Minister, I understand that SGS Economics and Planning has completed a report titled *ACT community sport and recreation facilities needs assessment*. Will this report be taken into account when determining the uses for community facility land at Gowrie, Chapman, Richardson and Isaacs?

MR STEEL: I am sure that it will. It has been well known that we have undertaken that work, which will help inform a range of different planning policies as we continue to look at opportunities for land release but also through zoning reforms, the work that we are doing on transit-oriented development and the development of a new Southern

Gateway Planning and Design Framework. As part of that, we do want to consider what the community's needs are, particularly around recreational facilities and community facilities to inform that work and further consultation with the community.

The exact land uses have not yet been determined for the blocks that have been identified in this year's land release program for community facilities but will be in the future, and that will take into account any needs assessments that have been undertaken. As indicated during estimates, it is the intention of the City and Environment Directorate to undertake a briefing ahead of the release of the next round of community facility sites to gather feedback as well.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, when determining the uses for the community facility land in Chapman, Gowrie, Isaacs and Richardson will there be consultation with the local community like your colleague Minister Stephen-Smith has initiated for the Wakefield Gardens site?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. Obviously, we have a range of different organisations that have already listed their interest in the release of blocks and potentially being able to apply for those through the expression of interest process. We have a process for that that tests the community's appetite for applying for land. That is fairly open to a range of different organisations, on that list or beyond, who may wish to develop a community facility. So, yes, we will be testing that with the community through that tender process. But we will also be undertaking, as I said, an industry and community stakeholder briefing on the sites, so that there is a clear understanding about what the process is and the opportunities on those sites.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, when will this report be released on the City and Environment Directorate website?

MR STEEL: Once I have had a chance to read it.

Canberra Airport—international flights

MS TOUGH: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, could you please provide an update on the status of the Canberra Airport's international connectivity?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Tough for the question. The government continues to work closely with Canberra Airport with a simple objective: to make it cheaper and easier to travel to and from Canberra. We are pursuing that objective by working with the airport to enhance the frequency of services and to see more competition, so more airlines flying to Canberra. We know that our international visitors deliver 21 per cent of our total tourism spend in the economy. They are very, very important to thousands of jobs across Canberra. It is therefore vital to our tourism economy's growth prospects that we continue to grow international tourism and we can do so through greater, direct connectivity.

We are, of course, very much looking forward to the return of daily Qatar Airways flights in December, with Boeing 777's operating daily to Doha via Melbourne and then onwards on that airline's network which has a global list of more than 170 destinations. The return of Qatar Airways and the success of Fiji Airways offerings are clear

indications of Canberra's aviation future, reinforcing our objective of improving trade, education, tourism and business links internationally. Through our trade program we will continue to work closely with Canberra Airport and airlines on other potential international links with a particular focus on the key markets of New Zealand and South East Asia.

MS TOUGH: Chief Minister, could you please provide an update on the status of the Canberra Airport's domestic connectivity?

MR BARR: Canberra Airport is now directly connected to more domestic destinations than at any time in our city's history and they continue to work in partnership with the territory government to bolster that domestic connectivity, maintaining direct services to all major domestic capitals as well as key regional centres. In recent times we have seen the commencement of two new routes, Canberra to Geelong through Avalon Airport, flying on Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays, and Link Airways flying between Canberra and Coffs Harbour. That is a seasonal service so running through the summer period of 2026.

We will continue to work with the airport, with the Qantas group—broadly Qantas, QantasLink and Jetstar—and Virgin Australia and the smaller regional airlines on further direct connections to capital cities. So increasing the frequency of those services, as well as establishing new direct routes to major population centres that we currently do not have direct services to. There are two Queensland markets that are particular priorities at the moment, being the Sunshine Coast and Cairns.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Chief Minister, why is the ACT government's focus improving connectivity so important?

MR BARR: In simple terms, this is about jobs and a bigger economy. Through the government's investment in the Aviation Stimulus Fund we aim to achieve economic development outcomes, job creation, trade engagement, tourism expansion and education links, nationally and internationally. By improving access through Canberra Airport, we make the ACT a more competitive destination. It means more visitors, more students, more business delegations, more trade in Canberra, increased investment, more activity for small businesses, bigger and better events and more jobs and revenue through our hospitality and tourism sectors. This is big picture, aligning our economic development and tourism agenda with our education agenda and with our inbound investment agenda.

In the simplest of terms, the return of carriers like Qatar Airways, the establishment of Fiji Airways services and the growth in domestic services demonstrate that the government's focus in this area generates real and tangible outcomes, particularly for our tourism and hospitality economy, which contribute to expanding the territory's economy, creating thousands of new jobs, diversifying our economy and making Canberra an even better place to visit and to live in.

Vocational education and training—enrolments

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations. The National Centre for Vocational Education Research found that the ACT

had a decrease of 16.6 per cent in government-funded VET students for the first half of 2025. This was the largest decrease in Australia. Minister, can you explain what has led to this decrease?

MR PETTERSSON: I thank Mr Milligan for the question. I direct Mr Milligan to similar questions he has put in this place, and the answers I have provided to him. We have seen a decrease in enrolments in vocational education; we have seen a decrease in enrolments across all higher education. I would observe that the particular dynamic that is occurring here in the ACT is that we are currently experiencing one of the tightest labour markets in the country—and we have for some period of time. In this climate, there is not necessarily the need to engage in study to gain employment, which I think is a direct link to a decrease in enrolment numbers.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, why has the ACT government allowed Canberra to be the worst performing state or territory in Australia when it comes to supporting VET students?

MR PETTERSSON: I thank Mr Milligan for the question. I reject the premise; we are not. This government is committed to supporting students in vocational education. Through this budget, we are supporting students with \$250 cost-of-living payments. For first year students, we are supporting them with a further \$250 payment to support them in securing their tools.

We believe that Canberra is a growing city that needs skills. Through the National Skills Agreement, I intend to work with colleagues across the country to deliver the skills that the country needs. Here in the ACT, we have identified a range of areas where we think we have a growing need for that workforce into the future: construction, renewable energy and the care sector. We will diligently target our priorities to ensure that we have the workforce that we need for the future.

I also caution Mr Milligan about simply looking at commencements or the number of students as a sign of successful system. What is also important is that we are getting good outcomes for—largely—young people. There are young people that commence their studies but do not necessarily complete them, but that is because they go into gainful employment. That is still a good outcome. Our system needs to respond better to that in how it records data.

MR COCKS: Minister, when do you plan to achieve a rebound in VET student numbers?

MR PETTERSSON: I thank the member for the question. That work is underway and has been for some time. Enrolment numbers are guided not just by the actions of any one individual provider but by the wider system they exist within. It is imperative for the future of the ACT that we have the growing skilled workforce that we need, which is why this government will continue to invest in vocational education in our city, which the Canberra Liberals will not.

Lakes and waterways—water quality

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for the Environment. Lake Burley

Griffin is administered by the National Capital Authority, which operates in accordance with the *ACT Guidelines for Recreational Water Quality*. Does the minister believe the lake's water quality meets with community expectations? If not, has the minister considered updating the guidelines?

MS ORR: Ms Castley has asked me if I “believe”. I believe that that is asking me for an expression of opinion, which would make the question out of order.

MR SPEAKER: I do not “believe” that we can suggest that asking you as the minister—

MS ORR: Maybe you could ask Ms Castley to rephrase the question. I would not mind having her repeat it so that I can hear it again, anyway.

MR SPEAKER: Let us just repeat the question. In view of the point of order that was raised, if it is possible for it to be delivered in a different way, feel free, Ms Castley. And perhaps we can stop the clock on this one.

MR CASTLEY: Is the lake's water quality meeting community expectations? If not, has the minister considered updating the guidelines?

MS ORR: I have not received an information or briefing to me that would go to the point that Ms Castley is making, or indicate that there are concerns that would require me to look at the guidelines, noting it is also Lake Burley Griffin and the management is done in conjunction with the National Capital Authority. I can take the substance of the question on notice and come back if there is anything further to add.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, will you update the guidelines, which have not been revised since 2014, to improve water quality and Canberrans' enjoyment of our lakes? They are 10 years old.

MS ORR: I will take the substance of the question on notice. I would, however, point to previous discussions on the topic of water quality in our lakes, particularly within the last estimates period, where we did canvass this topic. As we discussed during that conversation, there is work going on around studies and looking at our water quality. We are continually looking at how best to manage these issues.

MR MILLIGAN: How much engagement have you had with the NCA in relation to water quality?

MS ORR: Again, a lot of the engagement will occur at official-to-official level. I can take the substance of the question on notice and seek advice from the officials.

Mr Cocks: The question was you.

MS ORR: While some people may have the view that I have to do everything individually without any assistance in my role as the minister, we know that the public service is there to support the minister. It would be unrealistic for me to be doing absolutely everything within the detail of every single last part of my portfolio.

Southlands Mawson and Cooleman Court—upgrades

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development. Minister, on 20 August 2024, your government promised to “upgrade the shopping precincts at Southlands Mawson and Cooleman Court”. Treasury costings show that you promised to spend \$2.5 million, starting in 2026. Minister, has that money been put in the budget for these projects, and will you guarantee that these upgrades will not be delayed or cancelled, like so many others in this year’s budget?

MS CHEYNE: This is for me. I will take it on notice. I do not have it in front of me, but I can easily find it.

In terms of our shopping centre upgrades, yes, we have committed to a large range of upgrades right across the city; it is the same with playgrounds and toilet upgrades. We have announced a good chunk of those through the budget process. In our forward planning, we have looked to provision that money as best we can. Going to the question that Mr Hanson asked, about whether we expect there to be delays, not in terms of the funding allocated, but given all the changes, influences and disruptions on construction and other flows of goods and labour over the last six years, I do not think I can guarantee strict timelines on anything anymore.

MR HANSON: Minister, you will probably take this on notice: can you provide details of exactly what these upgrades will do?

MS CHEYNE: I certainly can, if they are part of the envelope provisioned in this year’s budget. If that is the case, I would be expecting that, if it has not already been done, we would soon be revealing some designs for that. Either way, I will come back with a specific answer.

MR COCKS: Minister, exactly when in 2026 will the upgrades commence?

MS CHEYNE: I expect it will be when the contract is signed.

Justice—bail

MR HANSON: My question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney-General, could you provide an update on the review of the Bail Act, including the time and scope of future reports and the finalisation dates and details of that review?

MS CHEYNE: I am not going to announce government policy in this place, but the update that I can give Mr Hanson is that in December I intend to provide a formal statement to the chamber about the direction of those reforms. We have a significant pipeline of reform underway, including a bill I flagged for introduction tomorrow in a related space, together with a suite of reforms that should support our justice sector. I know that people are looking forward to hearing about the direction that we are taking with our bail reforms. I have already made one announcement, as part of the release of the discussion paper, about what we would be looking at reforming. I have certainly provided direction to the directorate based on the feedback that we received in response to the discussion paper. Also, I think it is worth noting that we received many requests for late lodgement of feedback to that discussion paper, which we granted because it

was from many of the key stakeholders that we wished to hear from. So, while it may seem, on the face of it, that it has been some months now since that period closed, after that, for another few weeks—I think up to a month—we were still receiving submissions, and we wanted to consider them.

MR HANSON: Minister, will the review provide a comprehensive dataset on bail in the ACT, including applications for bail by type of offence, breaches of bail, and offences committed while on bail—information the Canberra Liberals have been asking for, for well over a decade?

MS CHEYNE: As Mr Hanson knows, and has known for longer than I have—I have certainly become very aware of the courts' reliance on paper. This is something that I desperately want to do something about. It is why we are quite reliant on ACT Policing data whenever there are questions on bail. In terms of what the review will show, again this is about legislative reform to the operation of the Bail Act, not necessarily the operation of the courts and how we are able to provide data. But I would assure Mr Hanson that any time the Canberra Liberals, or indeed anybody, asks us about data that relates to bail, we do our very best to provide the information that we can—

Mr Hanson: That's not true. We've had a series of motions and you haven't provided that information.

MS CHEYNE: Not to me.

MS BARRY: Minister, do you agree that presenting comprehensive and accurate data on the operation of bail in the ACT would improve the review's analysis and recommendations?

Mr Pettersson: Point order: asking for an opinion.

MR SPEAKER: I will uphold that in the interest of questions being written in that way. That is the message that I would send to the opposition. I am ruling that question out of order.

Health—Southside Hydrotherapy Pool

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Minister, I understand the hydrotherapy pool opened on Monday, 25 August in Tuggeranong. Can you tell the Assembly about the facility?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for the question. I went to the Southside Hydrotherapy Pool on 11 August and was joined by Minister Stephen-Smith as well as Ms Tough to announce the completed construction and the opening of the pool. I want to acknowledge and thank Minister Stephen-Smith for all the work that she has done in bringing this important facility to the community.

This new hydrotherapy pool, which is located in Canberra's south, can be found at the Tuggeranong Lakeside Leisure Centre. The facility complements the hydrotherapy pool at the University of Canberra Hospital, ensuring Canberrans can access hydrotherapy services close to where they live. This new hydrotherapy pool has been designed in line

with the Australian Health Facilities Guidelines standard to ensure accessibility, safety and comfort for all users.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, why is this facility important?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for the supplementary. Hydrotherapy is a powerful tool for recovery, rehabilitation and pain management. The new pool provides people with mobility issues to access an important form of recreation. It also supports people to better manage chronic pain caused by illnesses such as cancer, migraine, osteoarthritis and arthritis and those recovering from injury or surgery.

Importantly, the facility also includes a Changing Places facility, which is a specialised, accessible public toilet for people with disability who have high physical support needs. It transforms the pool from a standard health amenity into a truly inclusive space, one that supports carers, promotes independence and aligns with our commitment to equitable community infrastructure.

In 2022, the ACT government held a series of public consultations to inform the development of the new ACT Disability Strategy. During these conversations, the community expressed a strong need for more Changing Places facilities in the ACT to enable greater participation of people with disability with high support needs, their families and their carers.

MS TOUGH: Minister, what does the facility include?

MS BERRY: The key features include additional accessible and standard parking spaces; ramps to access the centre and the pool; underfloor heating and water temperature regulated to be at 33 to 34 degrees; accessible bathrooms and changerooms; and safety and accessibility support features like handrails, a bariatric rated hydraulic hoist to assist with transfers to and from the pool and slip-resistant flooring; and storage for mobility aids, including wheelchairs and mobility scooters.

I am also happy to let the Assembly know that, for the month of September, the Southside Hydrotherapy Pool had a strong attendance utilising the facility, with re-occurring bookings from community and other user groups.

Light rail—option to extend to Mawson

MR BRADDOCK: My question is for the Minister for Transport. Minister, I refer you to the draft environmental impact assessment for light rail stage 2B. The draft EIS does not show the option for a light rail extension to Mawson, despite the work done by the government to investigate this option. Why is an optional extension to Mawson not shown in the draft EIS?

MR STEEL: Because, as far as I am aware, it does not require an EIS, Mr Speaker. The environmental issues are not as significant in that area. If there is further planning work that is required once the government actually makes a decision about whether it wants to undertake that extension, which will be part of the business case decision-making process, then we would undergo the necessary planning approvals, but they are not on the critical path in the same way that the EIS and EPBC process is for

stage 2B from Commonwealth Park to Woden.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, what would be the benefits of extending light rail stage 2B to Mawson?

MR STEEL: Well, they would be considered as part of the business case. That is the purpose of a business case, to look at what the benefits of a project are and how they can be maximised through the implementation of the project. The government has not yet made a decision to extend light rail down to Mawson but we will consider it as part of the business case process, which will also look at the costs of that extension.

Of course, the obvious benefit is transport benefits. It could provide access to a greater portion of the population in south Woden who live up to one kilometre from that light rail corridor, particularly on Athllon Drive and in the area around Mawson group centre. It may also provide stabling opportunities in the future for the broader light rail network—so having a stabling yard at the southern end of the line so that you do not have to wait for light rail vehicles to come from the Mitchell depot in the morning to start their run. There may be a range of land use benefits along the corridor that will be considered. We will be looking at that already as part of the Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework, which will extend down to Beasley Street in Torrens and Farrer—looking at the land use opportunities along the route and that will inform the consideration of the business case.

MISS NUTTALL: What is the government's target date for releasing the final version of the EIS?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question and I refer her to the timeline that I outlined in the Assembly and tabled in a previous sitting week this year, where I did update the Assembly on a slightly longer timeframe for the finalisation of the EIS, but that did not affect the overall timing of the project being delivered.

Transport—Belconnen transitway

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, I note the government's commitment to the Belconnen transitway, including undertaking design and construction of stage 1 for immediate bus priority measures, following the conclusion of a feasibility study jointly funded by the commonwealth government.

Minister, what is the latest status of this project, and is the feasibility study on schedule?

MR STEEL: I will take the question on notice. I understand the study is underway.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, recognising that the North Canberra Hospital development is also a priority of the government and is also located on Haydon Drive, how is the government ensuring that the hospital project will not slow down construction of the transitway?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. I have not had any indication that there would be a direct conflict in the delivery of that. Of course, the delivery of any improvements to the Belconnen transitway will be subject to future budget processes

and consideration around funding. I am assuming that at that point there would also be advice about the construction methodology and how it may link in with the broader precinct planning that is occurring at the hospital.

MS CLAY: Minister, is it still your current plan that stage 1 of the Belconnen transitway along Haydon Drive will be built before the end of the term?

MR STEEL: We will see what comes out of the feasibility study first, and that will inform decisions about future funding and delivery of the items in there. Until I have actually seen the content of that feasibility study, I cannot comment.

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