



QUESTION TIME
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

Thursday, 30 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.

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Ministerial Arrangements

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Trade) (2.00): Minister Paterson is away from question time today due to personal reasons. Minister Berry will take questions in the Women and Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence portfolios; Minister Cheyne will assist in the Police, Fire and Emergency Services portfolio; and Minister Orr will assist in the Corrections and Gaming Reform portfolios.

Questions without notice

Economy—cost of living

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Chief Minister. CPI data published yesterday by the ABS showed that prices rose by 2.8 per cent in Canberra over the past 12 months—almost double the rate from the previous quarter. Is it still the government's position that the cost-of-living crisis is over?

MR BARR: Certainly the quarterly figures from yesterday were higher than the market was expecting. I do note that inflation in the ACT is lower than the Australian average. Indeed, even in that quarter, I think the increase in Canberra was lower than many other cities. Cost of living remains a challenge across the nation, but it is somewhat less—a fraction less—in the ACT than it is elsewhere, as measured by the Australian Bureau of Statistics inflation data.

MS CASTLEY: Chief Minister, is the 15 per cent rise in electricity costs making it harder for local families to balance their family budgets?

MR BARR: It certainly is the case that electricity bills are one of the larger areas of expenditure for any household or business. So it is important that we continue to see the rollout of cheaper energy generators. There is no doubt that, of all of the new forms of energy generation, renewables are the cheapest.

What we also need to see is more battery storage, and we are pleased with the progress of the Big Canberra Battery project. I do note that, yesterday morning, the Deputy Chief Minister and Minister Orr were able to unveil another element of the Big Canberra Battery program at Stromlo High School in Weston Creek. This is a further practical example of community and public institution level large batteries together with the grid-level batteries that we are seeing deployed here in the ACT.

MR HANSON: Chief Minister, does the government intend to do anything further about the cost-of-living pressures still felt by local families?

MR BARR: Obviously, I would not use question time to announce future government policy, but we do continue to be focused on areas of cost-of-living pressure. We have a number of existing initiatives and we have a broader policy agenda, particularly around—as I mentioned in answer to the earlier question—supporting more renewable energy generation, because that is the cheapest form of new energy generation. But we also acknowledge the need, as part of a broader energy market response, to see more battery storage.

I would add that the commonwealth government has a particularly useful program at a household level that has significantly reduced the cost of household batteries. From the last figures I saw, more than 100,000 Australian households have already taken up that scheme since it commenced on 1 July, and ACT households are, as you would anticipate, enthusiastic adopters of this offer.

Taxation—rates and levies

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Treasurer and is also about CPI data. The ABS reports that the cost of local rates and charges was up 7.6 per cent over the last year, similar to the average for the period since the government embarked on tax reform. How much longer will the government keep hiking rates and charges for local families?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question and note that in every budget we will consider increasing indexation to a range of ACT government rates and charges. That will also be considered in the context of the 2026-27 budget process as well. Of course, as we do that we are trying to balance both the cost of delivering critical services to the community, being able to fund those costs and also not wanting to put additional burden on to households and businesses who are paying those rates and charges beyond what is necessary to support the services that Canberrans rely on. I do note though that throughout the year, when including the September quarter CPI figures, that Canberra is on the lower end of the scale in terms of the increase to CPI which is at 2.8 per cent, when cities like Brisbane went up throughout the year 4.7 per cent, 4.5 per cent in Perth and 4.3 per cent in Hobart. So we are at the lower end of the scale in terms of the increase to inflation that we have seen across the country and indeed, we are below the Australian increase of 3.2 per cent overall.

MS CASTLEY: Treasurer, did you consider the fairness of hiking taxes this much, for this long, when you decided to introduce or increase 25 taxes in this year's budget?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. She might recall that at the time of the budget I was very clear that for a number of years the ACT government had been taking pressure off households and businesses by not increasing rates, in some cases freezing some of our fees and charges for around five years during the pandemic and the inflationary period that followed, in order not to put additional burden on business. But we did need to make some decisions in this budget as monetary policy was easing and there was further room in people's budgets to be able to make sure that the territory could continue to fund the services that they rely on, including things like free public health care that also assists them to access services without any additional cost. It is something that our government prioritises to make sure we can support people with the health care that they need, when they need it.

MR COCKS: Treasurer, why in your response to Ms Castley's question did you suggest the increases to rates were indexation when they are running at double the rate of CPI?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question and point him towards the budget papers where there was an average increase of 3.75 per cent but there were additional measures that were undertaken as well by the government. That 3.7 per cent average rate increase was consistent with the commitments that we made to the community at

the election. A range of other decisions were also made and that broadly reflected the need to continue to make investments in our health care system, which Canberrans expect to be delivered.

Housing ACT—waiting list

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Homes and New Suburbs. Minister, in November 2024 there were 2,975 households on the public waiting list. On 31 March 2025, there were 3,189 applications for public housing and on 30 June 2025 there were 3,402 applications. The public housing waiting list has been increasing this term. How many households are on the public housing waiting list now?

MS BERRY: Thank you. Right now, 3,486 are on the public housing waiting list. Of those, 100 are on the priority housing needs waiting list. However, Housing ACT has been working hard to get more people on the priority housing needs list into homes quicker, and over the last two years they have been able to halve the rate of time that a priority housing needs applicant waits. In 2023, it was around 8½ months. Now, it is around 4½ months waiting time. That is a significant development that Housing ACT has worked on to get people who have a priority housing need into homes quicker. That is due to the growth that has been happening now in our public housing Growing and Renewing program. There is still a way to go before we complete the Growing and Renewing program and begin the 1,000 new homes by 2030. However, what we are starting to see is that growth is meeting the needs of priority housing. It does not meet the needs of all our housing applicants, but it is certainly making a difference.

Obviously the number of housing applicants has increased and has increased quite a bit in the ACT; we are not immune from the crisis that is impacting the rest of Australia. However, we have a range of policies in place to build more homes across a range of different areas, including public housing, to meet the needs of people in our community who might not be able to get into a home of their own.

MS CLAY: Minister, how are you monitoring Canberra's total housing needs across the community housing and the public housing waiting lists?

MS BERRY: Thank you. Understanding the waiting lists is particularly important. Community housing providers manage their own waiting lists. However, we have had conversations between Housing ACT and Community Housing Canberra to understand how we could better work together with regards to the needs across our waiting lists.

Community housing providers growth—or existence—in the ACT is relatively new. Community Housing Canberra started here in the last 10 years or so. When they started in the ACT they had 420 homes. Community housing providers in total now have 1,968 homes, and 821 of those are public housing properties managed by community housing providers.

So we are certainly building in the public housing space, and there are opportunities for community housing providers to build more homes for people who need them in the ACT, across the board. We need to continue to work on these partnerships that are having the best outcomes for housing growth in the ACT, particularly with a federal government that has provided a number of funding initiatives, alongside the ACT

government's funding initiatives for growth in public housing and community housing.

We are really starting to see the impact of that. However, we are battling against the tide, with ever-increasing growth in the number of people in our community who need to get into a home and cannot afford to do that on their own.

MR RATTENBURY: Minister, since the Growing and Renewing program commenced, how many public housing dwellings have been built or purchased?

MS BERRY: Thank you. Since July 2019 to 30 September 2025, the Growing and Renewing program has completed construction of 815 dwellings, purchased 209 dwellings, purchased 120 land sites, demolished 303 dwellings for redevelopment and sold 663 end-of-use public housing properties. As of 30 September 2025, a further 193 homes are currently under construction, and 19 homes are in the design and planning stage. Again, as of September, the public housing portfolio stock number was 11,885, above the baseline of 11,704, with a target of at least 13,200 by 2030.

Lyneham High School—Seek program

MR EMERSON: My question is to the minister for education.

Lyneham currently offers the Seek program, which provides a pathway for neurodivergent students who find mainstream classrooms challenging but whose strong academic abilities mean they are poorly served by the limited offerings available through learning support units. Mark Krumholz recently contacted my office because he was advised the program will be discontinued after this year. His son has flourished in the program after struggling in mainstream classes and being insufficiently challenged in learning support units. The intellectual and social sanctuary that the Seek classroom offered his son has been critical to enabling his growth. If Seek closes, his son and the kids like him who depend on it will receive poorer education unless their families can afford, and choose, to enrol them in private schools. Mr Krumholz and his wife believe strongly in public education and they want their son to continue his education with his friends at Lyneham High. Minister, will you intervene to ensure the Seek program continues at Lyneham High.

MS BERRY: Mr Emerson will know that I will not comment on individual manners in a public way in the Assembly. However, I would note I am aware of the Seek Program and of the decision of the school to discontinue that program. All our schools are available and accessible for all students, regardless of their needs. I encourage families who do need additional supports to talk with their school, with their school leadership team and/or with the Education Directorate to make sure that their child is getting everything that they need. All our schools have resources to provide that additional support. I would encourage families who want to have that additional support for their children at our schools to seek that out.

MR EMERSON: Minister, do you agree with Mr Krumholz that his son and other neurodivergent children should be a priority and that this should be demonstrated through the continuation of the Seek Program, not just because it is the ACT government's duty to provide education, but because the ACT education system should be embracing and nurturing their differences?

Ms Cheyne: Go on, Mr Speaker.

Mr Pettersson: Don't make me do it for you.

A member: That was a bit of a preamble.

Mr Pettersson: It's a nice question; it's just against the standing orders.

MS BERRY: Yes, it is a nice question that does ask me for an opinion on a—

Mr Hanson: Well, then it's out of order.

Ms Cheyne: And so it's out of order.

Ms Castley: It's out of order.

MR SPEAKER: Are you making a point of order?

Ms Cheyne: Yes.

MS BERRY: I haven't finished yet! I have had four of you recommend that I do so, so yes, I will make a point of order. The question asked for an opinion—even though it is a nice question—and I ask your ruling, Mr Speaker, on whether it is in order.

MR SPEAKER: I would probably rule that it is out of order, but given you have suggested that it is a nice question, if you want to answer it, you can.

Mr Hanson: Mr Speaker, you can't decide that if it's a nice question then it's in order and if it's a nasty question then it is out of order. Then I'll never get a question answered!

MR SPEAKER: Let me just draw a line through it and say that it is out of order.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, what specific programs are available to neurodivergent children who are academically gifted here in ACT public schools?

MS BERRY: Well, there are a range of programs, and our schools do provide a range of different supports for students with different abilities across all of our public schools. That is the purpose of the public school system—that every child, regardless of their ability, has a place at their local school. Members may recall that I have talked at length about the pilot program of inclusion staff in our Tuggeranong network schools, and about the impact that that is having on students and the whole school community—ensuring that that school is inclusive of every student regardless of their needs. It is not just the individual student—the family and the whole school get supported with professional support from psychologists and inclusion experts.

We are planning to roll that out in Belconnen and across our whole network, but it is making a difference; I have seen it for myself. The impactful changes that I am seeing at those schools that are working through that culture shift amongst their school

community are having a huge positive impact on individual students. Again, I would suggest that families work with their schools to get the best possible supports that they can. Outside of school, there might be a range of other different supports that are available to them that they can work with the school on making sure that they are working together.

Miss Nuttall: A quick point of order, if that's okay. I seek your guidance, under 118AA, as to whether the minister has answered the question specifically of what programs are available to neurodivergent students who are academically gifted.

MR SPEAKER: I note your raising of that point of order, and we will assess that before the end of the sitting day.

Mr Emerson: I was going to raise this at the end, but I have the same question regarding the first question, which was whether the minister would intervene in relation to the continuation of the specific program.

Ms Berry: I said no.

MR SPEAKER: Again, we will take that on board. I would note that the minister commenced her answer by stating—as she often does, rightly—that she will not comment on individual matters in her portfolios. But I am not making a ruling on it at this stage. We will have a look at it and come back at you before the end of the sitting day.

Mr Rattenbury: On that point, Mr Speaker, I understand your observation, but Mr Emerson's question did not ask the minister to comment on an individual circumstance. He asked her whether she would intervene to protect the program, not the individual student.

MR SPEAKER: I understand, and we will examine in due course.

Alexander Maconochie Centre—staff conduct

MS CARRICK: My question is to the Chief Minister, and it is about leadership. Chief Minister, the Supreme Court of the Australian Capital Territory found that Ms Julianne Williams was entitled to declaratory relief for the use of force and the strip search to which she was subjected on 11 January 2021 at the Alexander Maconochie Centre. These actions were found to be incompatible with her rights under the Human Rights Act 2004. Her Honour Justice McWilliam observed that “if there is anything to take away from the conduct that occurred, it is that those who are applying the policies and their requirements daily need all the support they can get from those who lead them”. Chief Minister, have you publicly apologised to Ms Julianne Williams for the conduct at AMC that was incompatible with the Human Rights Act? If not, when will you do so?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Carrick for the question. I believe the government has issued a statement and responded to that matter. I think it may also have been the subject of some discussion in this place.

MS CARRICK: Chief Minister, what steps have been taken by your government to ensure that the treatment endured by Ms Williams will never be repeated?

MR BARR: As this is a matter that sits with another minister, I will take the detail on notice.

MR EMERSON: Chief Minister, are you providing the progressive leadership and supports needed for employees to implement government policies at AMC in accordance with the Human Rights Act?

MR BARR: Yes.

Roads—Athllon Drive duplication

MR COCKS: My question is to the Minister for City and Government Services. Minister, Athllon Drive is an important arterial road connecting Tuggeranong and Woden. It has taken Labor well over a decade to get around to duplicating this road, as advocated by the Canberra Liberals since at least 2012, and it is nearly a decade since the government claimed it would take light rail to Tuggeranong via Athllon Drive, but the development application indicates the duplication will be unable to accommodate a tram. Minister, did you, your directorate or your contractors seek input from Transport Canberra on the design of Athllon Drive?

MS CHEYNE: Mr Speaker, may I seek clarification? Does he mean on the design of the duplication of Athllon Drive?

MR COCKS: Yes.

MS CHEYNE: My understanding is yes. I think I expanded on this in my additional comments yesterday—that there has been some added complexity as we have moved through the design phase. We are starting to understand more from Transport Canberra and now iCBR about the design of the road network and being able to accommodate future public transport options. The short answer to Mr Cocks's question is yes. Did it begin back in 2012 or 2016, when we were first discussing it? I would not know, but I believe that it has been part of recent design conversations, in terms of both the feasibility and getting us to the point where we are today.

MR COCKS: Minister, were any requests for engagement or advice refused by Transport Canberra or did they result in no response?

MS CHEYNE: I will find out. I will take it on notice.

MR HANSON: Minister, on how many occasions outside of formal cabinet meetings have you met with the transport minister to ensure that the projects are compatible?

MS CHEYNE: I note that, until recently, the minister, Mr Steel, was both ministers. I assume he was contending with the two issues in his head at one time. I certainly know that it has been a priority project for him to see it delivered. I do not believe that we have had any detailed discussions outside of the cabinet room, but there have definitely been plenty of discussions in that place that I am not talking about and that you just

asked about or made reference to. I would say that it has not been without discussion. Equally, I would expect that it is at the officials' level that the complexities of these issues are worked out rather than, necessarily, Minister Steel or me sitting down with a bit of sketch paper.

Schools—bullying

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Education. I refer to the final report from the rapid response to bullying review from the federal government, published earlier this year. The review includes plans for Australian schools to act on bullying complaints within 48 hours and that measures such as suspensions or expulsions “can be appropriate in some circumstances”. Minister, how long does it currently take to respond to bullying complaints in ACT schools?

MS BERRY: We talked at length at the education ministers meeting about, depending on the circumstances and investigations that might be involved, whether 48 hours could be a clear line in the sand of when a bullying complaint could be responded to. I think the guide will be that in at least 48 hours there would be some kind of response to individuals about an investigation or something occurring. Again, it would depend on different circumstances—on the timeframes, whether a complaint was made, who was involved and, for example, whether there was an investigation outside of the school taking place, and which individuals were involved in a particular complaint.

So I cannot provide an absolute number, because it would depend on the circumstances. But certainly the advice is to, as soon as possible, at least get back to victim who has made a bullying complaint. It may not have the whole answer or outcome of what actions are being taken, but at least the person who has made the complaint is being heard—and then further action being taken to address both the individual who has been impacted by the bullying and also the people who have perpetrated the bullying behaviour.

MR HANSON: Minister, what are the current guidelines for suspensions and expulsions in ACT schools?

MS BERRY: We do not expel students from ACT public schools. Suspensions are used for schools to work with individuals to come up with a safety plan to ensure the safe return of an individual who has been suspended from school for, say, bullying behaviour and then to have a re-entry interview with students to make sure that there is a safe environment, that teachers are prepared and that there are the appropriate occupational violence systems in place to make sure that everybody is safe. But, no, we do not expel students in public schools. We have a human right here in the ACT that education is a human right. So managing behaviour in schools is done through that suspension process, which is available on the website, but also through the work that the ACT public schools are doing in implementing positive behaviours for learning.

The federal government's initiative around bullying is a communications and awareness program of work as well as individual programs that can be used by schools to address bullying as it occurs. That is one response to bullying. It is not the silver bullet, but it will certainly have some impact. When I talk to school communities about bullying, it needs to be more than just a program dropped into a school; a culture shift

is required across the board within our schools but also outside of the school gate as well, including in places like this where we can show leadership and an example of appropriate behaviour.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, are the rules on responses, suspensions and expulsions applied equally across all schools and, if not, why not?

MS BERRY: The answer is that it will depend on the circumstances. A different approach would need to be applied in each different circumstance. It would also depend on the nature of the incident that has occurred. Across all of our schools there is a guide of principles and processes to follow. But each individual circumstance would most likely be unique, and so the response to each of those might need different approaches and responses.

Housing ACT—funding

MS BARRY: My question is to the Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs. Minister, your own directorate raised concerns about the financial sustainability of Housing ACT in question time briefs for 2 to 4 September. What have you done since receiving those briefs to address the financial sustainability of Housing ACT?

MS BERRY: We are obviously meeting, my office and I and Housing ACT representatives and the Health and Community Services Directorate, to understand the challenges going forward, and then working with Housing ACT to ensure that our tenants needs are being met and that Housing ACT staff needs are being met. We are still working through those processes and what would be appropriate. Obviously you cannot just disemploy people if they are employed to do a particular job, but we are working out different kinds of ways that the work could be implemented that still provides those important services to people in our community who need them.

MS BARRY: Minister, what are you doing to reduce the impact of your policies on the workloads of your staff imposed by your “two to attend” policy?

MS BERRY: We are working closely with Housing ACT to understand the needs of our tenants and I think I have answered questions in this place previously, or in questions on notice, where we have a two per household visit policy to ensure the safety of our staff and concentrating those efforts on housing tenants who are most in need of that additional support. That does not mean that Housing ACT cannot be contacted by other tenants who might have issues to raise. That has always been the case. It just means that the attention will be focused on those most in need.

MR COCKS: Minister, how do you ensure that your actions respond adequately to the concerns of your own officials?

MS BERRY: I might just get that question asked again. It did sound a little bit like asking for an opinion, but—

MR SPEAKER: Again, Mr Cocks?

MR COCKS: Thank you. I do not believe it is an opinion. Minister, how do you ensure that your actions respond adequately to the concerns and advice of your own officials?

MS BERRY: I have confidence in the information that I am provided about the work going ahead. I also have quarterly meetings with the public housing tenants group. In fact, I am having one tomorrow with a group of public housing tenants who are very upfront with any issues that they are experiencing or that any of their peers or colleagues are experiencing within Housing ACT properties. So, in addition to being provided advice by a highly professional workforce within Housing ACT, I also get advice from public housing tenants themselves, to understand what is happening, what is working and where we could do better.

Transport—Canberra-Sydney rail

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, can you update the Assembly on the ACT government's work to improve the Canberra to Sydney rail connection?

MR BARR: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for the question. Improved rail connectivity between Canberra and Sydney is a key priority under the *ACT and NSW memorandum of understanding for regional collaboration*. Passenger rail services between Canberra and Sydney operate across three separate rail networks and on highly congested rail lines used by freight, regional, intercity and suburban train services.

ACT officials are involved in discussions with all relevant stakeholders, including Transport for NSW, the Australian Rail Track Corporation and the commonwealth government to support strong collaboration—which will be essential to coordinating and delivering improvements to rail services. The ACT and NSW governments have established a steering committee to develop options to improve the Canberra-Sydney rail services, with a focus on the short and medium term. The steering committee is identifying specific initiatives to reduce travel times, to improve reliability, to increase frequency and to ensure the train service meets the needs of existing and future passengers. ACT government officials are leading the work, which will identify and provide practical recommendations to improve rail services. To be very clear, the work is focused on identifying incremental improvements to the existing rail service that are achievable within a shorter timeframe.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Chief Minister, what benefits would a faster and more reliable rail service bring to local residents, visitors and the broader regional economy?

MR BARR: A faster and more reliable rail service will create, obviously, more reliable travel between two of Australia's most productive city economies. It will also make frequent travel between Canberra and Sydney on the train more practical.

For Canberra residents, it means greater connectivity, shorter travel times, more dependable services and better access to employment, education and opportunities along that rail corridor. For visitors, a modernised and efficient rail connection will strengthen Canberra's position as a tourism destination, which would, of course, support the tourism industry, our events industry and business travel, and would contribute to the continued growth of our visitor economy. For the broader regional

economy, improved rail connectivity will diversify industries, strengthen supply chains and build a more resilient regional workforce.

Ultimately, this is about more than just faster travel; it is about creating a stronger and more integrated Canberra region.

MS TOUGH: Chief Minister, what are the key economic and environmental benefits of improving the Canberra-Sydney rail line?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Tough for the supplementary question. Improved rail infrastructure and transport connectivity will help revitalise underutilised areas and unlock land for housing and commercial development, while supporting a more compact and connected urban growth corridor.

For the ACT and region, a modernised rail connection will deliver real and measurable benefits. It will strengthen the regional towns along the rail corridor. It will make it easier for people to live regionally and to work in the ACT, supporting population growth across that corridor whilst easing pressure on Canberra's housing market.

For Canberra's visitor economy, a faster and more comfortable rail option will attract more domestic tourists. It will support us in hosting more conferences and major events, all of which will generate local spending and create jobs in hospitality, accommodation and services.

Upgrading the rail line will deliver environmental and urban planning benefits. Rail travel produces fewer emissions per passenger than petrol or diesel car travel or air travel, and a faster service would make it a more attractive and a more sustainable alternative. Over time, a faster and more efficient rail system powered by cleaner technology will be an important part of meeting our goal of net zero emissions by 2045.

Tuggeranong Lakeside Leisure Centre—facilities

MISS NUTTALL: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation,

Minister, I have received feedback from constituents that the female toilets in the Tuggeranong Lakeside Leisure Centre are very sub-par in their conditions. Is it the government's intent to improve the condition of these toilets? If so, when?

MS BERRY: Thank you for that feedback. I have not received that feedback previously. I understand there were some upgrades at the Tuggeranong leisure centre. I cannot recall which year, but I know that there had been some upgrades at the centre. I can take that advice on notice and ask my directorate to investigate the quality of the toilets. Then a future decision could be made to provide those upgrades.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, will the takeover of the Lakeside Leisure Centre by Belgravia affect pool and gym membership options like it has at the Active Leisure Centre in Erindale? What options would members have to essentially retain their legacy membership options?

MS BERRY: I do not believe there will be too many significant changes. It is a slightly

different circumstance, with Belgravia managing—not taking over, but managing—Tuggeranong leisure centre on behalf of the ACT government as a public owned property. In the case of the Active Leisure Centre at Erindale that was a that was a service that was previously managed by the P&C of the college, through a long historic arrangement. The ACT government has then now provided the contract for Belgravia to manage that service, and they will obviously be making changes at that service to ensure that it does provide an efficient and appropriate service to the ACT community but also particularly the school students and staff at Erindale College.

As I said, I am not aware of any changes. If Miss Nuttall is aware of any that she wants to bring to my attention, then I would encourage her to email those to my office, and then I can seek advice on them.

MS CLAY: Minister, how closely are you referring to the government’s existing *Aquatic Facilities Planning Framework 2013-2033* when you make contract and maintenance decisions for these local aquatic facilities?

MS BERRY: Well, as Mr Clay may or may not be aware, the ACT government will be working on a new aquatic strategy for the ACT and will begin that work to, I guess, upgrade and replace the existing strategy, which is from some years ago now. I would say that a lot of things have changed since 2013, when that strategy was first implemented,. So a new strategy will be developed, and we will work with our aquatic user groups to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our city now and into the future.

Lyneham High School—gymnasium upgrade

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood. Minister, I refer to your promise of a new gym for Lyneham High, which has since been changed to “only an upgrade”, and called a “broken promise” by school parents. A former principal has stated:

We all have every right to feel betrayed, disillusioned and duped by the proposed “refurbishment” of a floor ...

... “at best” showed a lack of understanding of the unsuitability of the existing gym.

At worst, these words are a clear indication of disrespect for the school community and an insult to suggest that the “lipstick on a pig” approach would provide anything other than ongoing unsafe and unsuitable sporting facilities ...

Minister, why are you proposing a floor that has been deemed unsafe and unsuitable?

MS BERRY: First, I need to correct the record again, Mr Hanson. I did not promise a new gymnasium at Lyneham. That is a message that has been circulated through the community by various people, and it is not true. I did not make that promise. I understand that the school does have an aspiration for a new school gym. However, the decision that was made for an upgrade of the existing gym is the commitment that I and the Labor government made.

That does not mean that a future gymnasium could not be built at Lyneham. It is just

not the thing that is being delivered as part of the ACT government's current commitments. In any case, the current gymnasium does serve a purpose, and these upgrades will provide more opportunities for the school to be able to use that gymnasium in a range of different ways.

As I said, I need to correct the record. Regardless of what people think—I have said this publicly numerous times—that was not a broken promise by me because I did not make it. That does not mean that I have not heard that the school community wants a new gymnasium. I just need to make sure that the message is clear that that was not a commitment that the government made. The commitment was made for an upgrade to the current school gym.

MR HANSON: Minister, is the existing gym safe and is it suitable?

MS BERRY: It depends on the purposes for which you would want to use the gymnasium. Yes, it does need an upgrade, which is why the government has made that commitment. But it is not suitable for other sporting activity because that is not the use of that particular infrastructure. As I said, we will be upgrading that to make sure that it is fit for purpose for different kinds of uses.

We can continue to work with the Lyneham school community on their aspirations for their school, as we do with every other school across the city, within reasonable expectations that we need to manage. The bucket of money is not limitless, so we need to manage that, within the budget constraints that the Education Directorate has. With any project that we conduct across the ACT, there is a budget, and we need to make sure that we manage it appropriately.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, what do you say to the parents and teachers who feel betrayed, disillusioned and duped?

MS BERRY: I understand that they may be feelings that people have. That has been, I think, exacerbated by incorrectly advising people that I have made a promise when I had not. That is desperately unfair. It does not matter how many times I say it; I do not seem to be able to correct the record. But I will say it again: it was not a promise that was made by me. The commitment that was made was for an upgrade of the existing gymnasium.

Again, I have offered publicly—in fact, I will write to the school and offer to go down there and speak with the school community personally about their aspirations for their school environment. Perhaps I can clear up some of this myth and legend, and we can work towards the future of another fantastic public school in the ACT. Lyneham has a great reputation. It is a fantastic school, and I want to see it continue to be that way.

Planning—Thoroughbred Park

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development. The Territory Planning Authority has released major plan amendment 08 for the Thoroughbred Park Precinct. The Territory Planning Authority has refused to accept an application from the Canberra Racing Club for a major plan amendment for Thoroughbred Park but has formalised the documents provided by the Canberra Racing

Club as background papers for major plan amendment 08. What does “formalised” mean? And what sections of the Planning Act govern that?

MR STEEL: I am sure that the member is not asking for a statement of legal opinion, but I will take it on notice and see what I can provide in terms of getting advice from the Territory Planning Authority about their powers under the Planning Act. But they do have the power to refuse a proponent-initiated major planning amendment, and that is what they have done. In lieu of that, they have decided to undertake their own major plan amendment which would incorporate the Thoroughbred Park Canberra Racing Club site, but also the adjacent sites to make sure that there is an integrated approach to the planning of the entire precinct. I think that is good, but, of course, the community can have their say on the amendment at the moment and make their comments accordingly.

I appreciate that the Greens have the position that they oppose the Canberra Racing Club and will presumably oppose any continuation of recreation in that area. The government and the Territory Planning Authority are not proposing to rezone the Canberra Racing Club in a way that would prohibit racing, and I appreciate that you have a different view on that, but there is a community consultation process at the moment and the community can, of course, have their say on what is being proposed. I think the Territory Planning Authority is right to consider the previous work done by the Canberra Racing Club, in terms of their planning work. This is a fairly high-level change to the Territory Plan, but, in the future, if this were supported following any community feedback, and that being considered and the planning committee making any recommendations, we would expect that a subdivision design application would come forward from the club for their site, which would have a far higher level of detailed design for the community to have their feedback on as well.

MS CLAY: Minister, did the Territory Planning Authority carry out any due diligence on the studies that it has formalised?

MR STEEL: I expect so. I am happy to take that question on notice and come back with some further detail about the due diligence they have undertaken.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, noting that one of the formalised documents is a response by the Racing Club to comments from agencies, does the Territory Planning Authority endorse the responses provided by the Racing Club?

MR STEEL: I cannot speak for the Territory Planning Authority without their advice, so I will seek their advice and come back to the Assembly.

Government motor fleet—electric vehicles

MR RATTENBURY: My question is to the Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water. Minister, can you provide the Assembly with an update on the progress of the ACT government transitioning its vehicle fleet to zero-emission vehicles?

MS ORR: I will take that question on notice and seek the most up-to-date information from the directorate.

MR RATTENBURY: Minister, what is the current government policy on the use of petrol, hybrid and electric vehicles in the ACT government fleet?

MS ORR: Again, I will take that question on notice and come back with the detail.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, when do you expect the transition to a zero-emission vehicle fleet to be complete?

MS ORR: Again, I will take that on notice with the other questions and get the most up-to-date information to respond.

Vocational education and training—remedial massage

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations. Minister, many people in the remedial massage sector were disappointed with CIT's decision to not continue offering the Diploma of Remedial Massage. This is a course which appears on the government's critical skills list and provides enormous benefits to Canberrans. Minister why was the Diploma of Remedial Massage cut from the CIT's course offerings?

MR PETTERSSON: I would like to thank Mr Milligan for the question as Mr Milligan is highlighting the high regard that CIT is held within our city. As Mr Milligan would know, the Diploma of Remedial Massage is offered by more than just one provider in this city. It is not just CIT that offers this diploma. At the centre of these community concerns, I think, is a really important point to highlight, that here in this city, our community values the public provider of vocational education, Canberra Institute of Technology. The Diploma of Remedial Massage is held in the highest regard in the industry, and I acknowledge the representations from industry that would like to see this course continue at CIT. As members would be aware—

Mr Hanson: Point of order.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Hanson? If we could stop the clock.

Mr Hanson: The minister has had a little while. The question is why was it cut and he has not come to that point yet.

MR SPEAKER: The minister has a minute to get to the answer and I am sure he will. Minister.

MR PETTERSSON: Thank you Mr Hanson and thank you Mr Speaker. I am, of course, getting to that very particular point, but I think members would appreciate the context to my answer. I have engaged constructively with local industry and CIT on this matter. As members would be aware, the decision of individual course offering is not a decision for me. It is the decision of the CIT Executive and the independent governing board. The powers and the decisions that I am able to make are in relation to the fields of study that CIT must provide for. I understand that consultation is continuing and I am hopeful that there will be—

Mr Hanson: On the point of order. You have explained who makes the decision. Why was it cut?

MR SPEAKER: You have made your point of order. Mr Pettersson, you have 20 seconds remaining.

MR PETTERSSON: Mr Speaker, inherent in the question is an incorrect assumption. The course has not been cut. There is a distinction that should be made. There were not students enrolled in the course. The course was not necessarily cut.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, what community consultation took place before the decision of the CIT to cut the remedial massage course? It is not on offer at the moment is it?

MR PETTERSSON: I do reject the premise. I do not believe the course has been cut. There is a difference between a course being cut and students having not been enrolled in that course. There is a difference, and I appreciate that members would like to debate that point, but there is a difference. Mr Speaker, there is ongoing consultation between CIT and local industry. I have been briefed on how those consultations are going. I am optimistic that there will be a positive resolution, noting that the Diploma of Remedial Massage is offered by other providers in the ACT. This is really a question of local industry showcasing how great the qualification from CIT is, such that they are determined to see the public provider continue to provide it because they do not want to rely upon other providers. This is an endorsement of the value that CIT has to our community and I am confident that continued consultation will deliver a good outcome in the course offering of massage that CIT will continue to provide. They have made no decision and will not make a decision to cease the field of study of massage at CIT.

MR HANSON: Minister, will students and businesses be impacted by any further cuts in critical course offerings at CIT, or in perhaps your words “courses where no one is enrolled”?

MR PETTERSSON: CIT continuously monitors its course offering to ensure that it is fit for purpose. I am proud to see that CIT has a laser focus on future-focused industries important for the future of the ACT with its new priorities through the centres of excellence in cyber and electric vehicles. I am confident that the course offerings that CIT will take into the future are fit for purpose and I will work constructively with CIT and the wider Canberra community to make sure that course offerings are fit for purpose.

Suburban infrastructure

MS TOUGH: My question is to the Minister for City and Government Services. Minister, can you outline some of the key suburban infrastructure projects delivered over the past 12 months and the difference they are already making in our communities?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Ms Tough for the question and for her advocacy for suburban improvement, particularly with—between yourself, Mr Speaker, and the members behind me—the number of young people we have had here recently in the chamber supporting local infrastructure upgrades.

Over the past year, the ACT government has continued to deliver the suburban infrastructure that keeps Canberra moving and that makes our city a better place to live. We have focused on the projects that make a practical difference to people's daily lives: upgrading local roads; improving safety on our footpaths and intersections; and investing in new community spaces. There is the new Inner North Playground in Watson; the Yerrabi Pond District Park in Gungahlin; upgrades to dog parks in Lanyon and Franklin; and the new shared paths and pedestrian crossings connecting key schools and shops across Canberra. In delivering public amenity upgrades to shopping centres like those at Evatt, Calwell and Narrabundah, and completing the duplication of Gundaroo Drive, our government has shown that we do not just talk about delivering for our suburbs; we do it.

Our focus is on improving the day-to-day lives of Canberrans, ensuring that they can get around our city safely and that we have the facilities and amenities that the community deserves.

MS TOUGH: Minister, what new suburban infrastructure projects and upgrades can Canberrans expect to see delivered over the next 12 months?

MS CHEYNE: Over the next 12 months, Canberrans will see continued investment in the local infrastructure that underpins quality of life in every suburb. We have provided for this in the budget and in our future planning. We look forward to getting through a serious program of design and delivery.

In particular, we will be progressing the planning and delivery of the play space upgrade program and the footpath renewal, infill and missing links program across Canberra. Work will also continue on improvements to local road infrastructure and pedestrian safety, including additional pedestrian crossings and intersection improvements.

Canberrans will begin to see progress on upgrades to shops throughout the territory, with design work underway for major upgrades at the Erindale, Mawson and Charnwood shops. We will deliver lighting improvements in Kambah, Yerrabi Pond, Florey, Page and beyond, with construction expected to commence on those in early 2026.

These are practical, on-the-ground projects that make neighbourhoods more accessible, more sustainable and more enjoyable.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Why is this continued investment in local infrastructure so important, and how does it support the government's broader vision for a more connected, sustainable and liveable Canberra?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for the question. Of course, this investment is not just about bricks and bitumen; it is about building the kind of city we want Canberra to be. We deliver because good local infrastructure is fundamental to how people experience their community every single day. As each and every one of us here is a local member, that is what our inboxes are largely full of.

It is about how children get safely to school, how families spend time together in public

spaces, how local businesses thrive and how our city stays connected and inclusive as it grows. Our approach is about shaping a more liveable, sustainable and equitable Canberra, one where every suburb benefits from the services and amenities that make life easier and more enjoyable, with a government delivering for all of Canberra.

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