



**QUESTION TIME**  
OF THE  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
FOR THE  
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**HANSARD**

Edited proof transcript

Tuesday, 3 December 2024

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## **Questions without notice**

**MRSPEAKER:** I just want to lay some ground rules ahead of my first question time in the chair as the chief presiding officer of this parliament.

I understand that question time in this parliament is not as robust as the federal question time, or, indeed, as the New South Wales parliament's question time—and nor should it be. I must reflect, from the chair, that I am not entirely happy with the level of interjections and name-calling in this parliament at question time, notwithstanding the fact that I have participated in some of that action in the last eight years.

I would like members to give some thought to exactly who is being influenced by that sort of behaviour. We are a small parliament. Our proceedings, although they are broadcast live on the Assembly's website, do not have an enormous viewership, unlike the federal parliament. So, if very few people are watching, I would ask the question: what is the point of the histrionics that we sometimes see in this chamber?

Ultimately, it comes down to bullying in the workplace, and this is a workplace that I preside over. So I just want to be clear that I am likely to be quite robust in my rulings over interjections and unruly behaviour in this place.

On the other side of the coin, my message to ministers would be if you cannot answer the question, then take it on notice and do not waste our time with two minutes of a non-answer. I state that I will be considering points of order on relevance and debating in a very robust way. I would like question time to play out with the benefit of actual answers.

## **Transport Canberra—MyWay+**

**MS CASTLEY:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and follows last Wednesday's launch of the MyWay+ product, a launch that Ryan Hemsley of the Public Transport Association of Canberra described as "disgraceful". Minister, can you please advise us what features are still not working and when the system will be fully functional?

**MR STEEL:** I thank the opposition leader for her question. I have outlined that in detail in a statement to the Assembly this morning. I refer the member to that statement, where I have identified the range of issues that have occurred since the MyWay+ system went live and the steps that we have taken to work with NEC, our delivery partner, to address them. Many of those have been addressed. Some have work in progress. The details of that are in the statement.

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, will you take responsibility and apologise to the community for the MyWay+ rollout, and give us a date when it will be fully functional?

**MR STEEL:** I thank the member for her question, and I reject the premise of it. We do have a system that is functional. It does have some teething issues. These have either been addressed or work is in progress to address them. We will provide an update to the community as those issues are identified and addressed.

There may be issues that are identified in the future, and we will work with NEC to address those, initially on a weekly basis, as I outlined in the statement, and then over a longer timeframe as we continue to deliver the project over the next ten years. We will always be responding to customer feedback on the new ticketing system and making improvements to improve the customer experience.

I acknowledge that it has not been a seamless experience for many Canberrans. However, there have been other Canberrans who have been successfully tapping on and off public transport using their credit and debit cards and also with the more traditional travel cards.

**Ms Castley:** On a point of order, I asked the minister if he would apologise. I know that the head of the public service—or the person that the minister rolled out—has apologised. I am asking if the minister will apologise.

**MR SPEAKER:** So your point of order is on relevance?

**Ms Castley:** Yes, relevance.

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Steel, do you have anything else to add?

**MR STEEL:** I have answered the question.

**MR HANSON:** Minister, what is the cost to the taxpayer of these delays to the MyWay+ functionality?

**MR STEEL:** I am advised that the project is currently within the appropriated budget. This is a 10-year contract with NEC. They are contracted to work with us to address issues arising with the new system. We are working very closely with them. We have already addressed a range of issues, and of course others are in progress at the moment.

They are a long-term partner that we have procured to develop this system over 10 years, and we will be responding to community feedback, both during this initial phase and on an ongoing basis as, to make sure that we continue to have a modern ticketing system for Canberra, which is what we went out and procured in the first place.

### **Transport Canberra—MyWay+**

**MS CASTLEY:** My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, when were you first aware that MyWay+ would not be fully functional at launch, and what did you do about it?

**MR STEEL:** Prior to the public launch, Transport Canberra advised me that they had a high degree of confidence in the system, and that is why we agreed to have a “go live” date of 27 November. Of course, then some issues arose in relation to the geofencing issue—particularly, not allowing people to tap on and off—and a major update was made to address that issue. That has now resulted in 95 per cent of validator functionality on the buses, and there are still some specific improvements being made to particular stops. We have also been working with the workforce around making sure

that they fully understand how to use the functionality of the driver console to override that system where necessary, to make sure that people have the ability to tap on and off.

And we have made a major update to the QR code issue that emerged. The first QR code issue that emerged, as I outlined in the ministerial statement, was dealt with on the same day. That was directly related to the number of users on MyWay+ using the QR code, and that was addressed by 9.40 am the same day. A further issue has since been noted in relation to the size of the QR code which made it difficult to scan. That resulted in a fix being put in place to reduce the size of the QR code, and that has been pushed through as an update to the app on the Apple and Google stores, which I understand is now available for people to use. Transport Canberra has been communicating with the public about those issues.

We will continue to look at how we can improve the experience for users, but those immediate major issues have been addressed and more work is in progress.

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, what advice did your office receive from Transport Canberra about MyWay+ in the days before it launched?

**MR STEEL:** Prior to the public launch, on 11 November I was briefed that user testing had been completed as planned and that Transport Canberra had a high degree of confidence in the system. The go-live date of 27 November, last Wednesday, was approved on the basis of that advice.

**MR COCKS:** Minister, why didn't you postpone the launch until you could ensure the system was working properly?

**MR STEEL:** I refer the member to the answer to the last question, where I said I had received advice from Transport Canberra that they had a high level of confidence in the system, and on that basis the decision was made to go live on 27 November.

### **City and government services—suburban infrastructure**

**MR WERNER-GIBBINGS:** My question is for the Minister for City and Government Services. Minister, with the ACT Labor government making major investments in new community infrastructure across Canberra's suburbs, can you provide an update on upgrades underway at our parks, playgrounds and shopping centres?

**MS CHEYNE:** I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for his first question. Suburban renewal continues apace. Construction is continuing on the \$3.2 million Yerrabi Pond upgrade in Gungahlin, including new toilets, amenities and carparking. Work is complete on several bridges, picnic settings and lighting. Construction is complete on the new dog park in Franklin and it will open to the public later this month. Construction has kicked off on the new dog park in the Lanyon Valley, which as you know, your predecessor was very keen on. New and upgraded playgrounds have opened in recent months in Watson, Kaleen, Gordon and Lyons, with work on the inner north playground continuing. We are also continuing to invest in our shopping precincts and work is now complete on the improvements at Macquarie and Monash shops. I have heard from constituents' how pleased they are with the upgrades at Macquarie shops in particular. Construction has commenced on shop upgrades at Lanyon Marketplace, Calwell,

Narrabundah and Evatt, which will incorporate a new toilet block. I am pleased to share that the Kippax upgrade is expected to be completed this month, with Hardwick Crescent reopening to traffic.

**MR WERNER-GIBBINGS:** Minister, what work is underway to improve our active travel routes to make walking and cycling safer and more convenient?

**MS CHEYNE:** I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for the supplementary. Work is well underway on major active travel projects across Canberra. The first stage of the Lake Ginninderra Park upgrade through John Knight Memorial Park and the eastern foreshore is now complete. The first section of the Garden City Cycleway on Torrens Street in Braddon is now open and a safe crossing of Limestone Avenue is under construction. Construction is also nearing completion on the Sulwood Drive path, with three kilometres of the new path opening this week and the remainder scheduled to open early next year. Planning for enhancing the walking loop at Palmerville Heritage Park is progressing with construction to commence next year. Design continues on the second stage of the Kingston Cycleway which will connect Kingston Foreshore and the Inner South to the City. The Labor government is also continuing to build and upgrade footpaths across our city to make walking safer and more convenient.

**MS TOUGH:** Minister, with the Labor government re-elected, what suburban infrastructure projects can Canberrans look forward to over the coming four years?

**MS CHEYNE:** I thank Ms Tough for her supplementary. We have an ambitious infrastructure agenda over the coming term. We will renew the Belconnen town centre with a major upgrade of Margaret Timpson Park, as well as the Emu Bank foreshore. We will deliver the next stages of shop upgrades at Kippax, Charnwood and Cooleman Court and upgrade Erindale, Chisholm, Mawson and Palmerston shops. We will build upgraded playgrounds in Kambah, Wanniasa, Bonython, Isabella Plains, Gilmore, Conder, Amaroo, McKellar, Umbagog, Charnwood, Dunlop and Florey.

In active travel, we will commence delivery of the West Belconnen bikeway, the Streeton Drive cycleway, a new path to Hall village, and will upgrade active travel in Gungahlin. We will also complete the remaining stages of the Lake Ginninderra path upgrade. Finally, we will establish \$5 million footpath funds for Belconnen, Weston Creek, Woden and Tuggeranong, in addition to funding for footpath renewal right across our city. The ACT Labor government is committed to investing in our suburbs, and that is exactly what we are going to do over the next four years.

### **Planning and development—Woden town centre**

**MR HANSON:** My question is to the Minister for Planning. Minister, we have learnt in recent weeks that Jade, the proposed Geocon development on Melrose Drive and Irving Street, will see more than 700 units added to Woden. This follows the unveiling of WoVa, an 802-unit development at the former Woden Tradies site. This project will come at the expense of the public 50-metre Phillip Pool, which is proposed to be replaced by a 25-metre pool. Minister, when was the government first presented with the proposal that Woden was to lose its 50-metre pool?

**MR STEEL:** I thank the member for his question. As part of the draft Territory Plan,

there was consultation with the community on that, which proposed to change site-specific requirements on the block where the current 50-metre outdoor pool is. That of course went through a committee inquiry process, and the final Territory Plan was approved by the Assembly earlier this year.

**MR HANSON:** Minister, what have you done to ensure that public facilities and infrastructure will meet the demands of an additional 1,500 units in the Woden Town Centre?

**MR STEEL:** We are continuing to undertake planning work in this area. Work is underway on the development of a southern gateway planning and design framework. EPSDD is currently progressing that work, which will look at the entire land use planning around the light rail stage 2 corridor, Adelaide Avenue, Yarra Glen and the Woden town centre area. As part of that, of course, we will be considering not only what the housing opportunities are but also the improvements to the public realm and other facilities along the route and in the Woden town centre. I look forward to that work progressing, which of course will consider the future housing numbers and what might be required to support that.

**MR COCKS:** Minister, are you aware of how extensive the current pressures on public facilities are in the Woden area?

**MR STEEL:** We have certainly been continuing to plan for new facilities. Part of the process that we went through in the planning system review of developing a district strategy for the Woden Valley—and, indeed, for each other region in Canberra—was to look at the existing facilities and what might be needed in terms of possible future facilities and upgrades to important community hubs like shopping centres and local and group centres which were identified for renewal as part of that plan.

It is one of the reasons that we have also committed to build a new Woden community centre—funded in the budget last year—which will provide a large meeting space and large multipurpose space that will be available to the community for a range of different purposes, and this will, of course, be auspiced by Woden Community Service. That is in combination with the investments that we are making in CIT—and I note that Minister Pettersson visited CIT and saw the great multifunctional hall that is being built as part of that facility. The government continues to make investments in that area to support the social infrastructure required with a growing population.

### **Housing ACT—waiting lists**

**MR RATTENBURY:** My question is to the Minister for Homes and New Suburbs. Minister, Canberrans are suffering through this housing crisis. Over 3,000 individuals and families are on our public housing waiting list, some of whom will be waiting more than four years before they have a secure home. Yet, through the election, the Labor party only committed to approximately 1,000 additional public housing properties by 2030.

Why are you and your government failing to invest sufficiently in public housing for the people who most need help?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Mr Rattenbury for his question and acknowledge that he is the spokesperson for the Greens party for homes and homelessness. I would correct him, on the record—the advice I have is that the number of people on the waiting list has, in fact, gone down and is no longer over 3,000. That shows that the work the government is doing in building new homes and renewing older and unsuitable properties is actually having a significant impact and effect on people who are experiencing homelessness in the ACT.

That has all been achieved in a period of time when building homes across the country, including here in the ACT, was challenged by wet weather and wars overseas, which meant there were fewer supplies. It is currently challenged by a workforce shortage in the construction industry. It was challenged, as well, by not having a partnership with the federal Labor government. The federal Labor government is also building more homes across the country. I would say that the commitment that ACT Labor has made to build at least 1,000 public housing properties by 2030 is a commitment that people can believe and that we will be able to achieve.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Minister, do you think four years is an acceptable waiting time for people who are on the public housing waiting list?

**MS BERRY:** No, I do not. I do not believe that is a good time for people to be waiting. That is why we have made the commitment we have to build more homes, not just to build more public housing but to increase affordable rentals and to support community housing providers. This means more people will get into homes that suit their needs.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Minister, how many people will be left homeless under your housing program?

**MS BERRY:** That is a ridiculous question by the Greens in this place. I have already provided, at length, detail on the work the ACT government is doing to overcome that problem and the commitments that ACT Labor has made—realistic, progressive, positive change that we will be able to make, with practical solutions that people will be able to believe.

### **Planning and development—Woden town centre**

**MR CAIN:** My question is to the minister for planning. Minister, the *Canberra Times* has reported that the government made changes to the Territory Plan immediately prior to Geocon's acquisition of the Phillip pool site. These changes allow the 50-metre pool to be replaced by a 25-metre pool and proved to be remarkably helpful for the developer. Minister, could you please inform this chamber who requested these changes and why the government agreed to make them?

**MR STEEL:** I thank the member for his question. There has been a very transparent process around changing the Territory Plan. Of course, there was community consultation, and it went to the standing committee for their consideration. This discussion about the Phillip pool has been going on for decades. I was looking last night at some *Hansard* and committee reports from around 20 years ago, and the issue of the viability of the current 50-metre pool and the need to renew that ageing asset required potential planning changes.



**Mr Hanson:** A point of order.

**MR SPEAKER:** On a point of order, Mr Hanson.

**Mr Hanson:** It is on relevance. The minister is giving us a bit of a history lesson, but the question is: who requested the changes? He has not answered that question.

**MR SPEAKER:** If it is possible for you to be more relevant as to who requested the changes, that would be beneficial, Minister.

**MR STEEL:** I am happy to take that on notice, but I understand that there have been discussions in sport and rec about the viability of pools of a certain length. Also, there has been an ongoing discussion for the last 20 years about the need to renew an aging facility, and what might be required in terms of planning reforms to enable that to happen on a site that is privately owned. It is not owned by the government. That has been a discussion in previous Assemblies, and I am sure that if an inquiry is launched as a result of the motion which we will be discussing in the afternoon, those issues can be fully considered.

**MR SPEAKER:** Minister, can I be clear: are you taking that part of the question on notice?

**MR STEEL:** Yes.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, were there any discussions between Geocon and you, your office or other ministers about these changes?

**MR STEEL:** I am happy to come back on that question, about when the public service knew about a proposal in relation to the pool. Certainly, in relation to the planning requirements, there has been a very transparent process around the change, for site-specific requirements on the block. I will take that on notice.

**MR HANSON:** Minister, has Geocon had any special treatment with regard to this development?

**MR STEEL:** No. There has been, as I mentioned before, an ongoing discussion for around 20 years regarding what the planning requirements should be on the block, and the need to be able to support the renewal of an ageing community asset, in a pool. That was transparently consulted on, discussed and brought to this Assembly, and members had the opportunity to scrutinise that before the Territory Plan was supported in August, I believe.

### **Housing affordability**

**MISS NUTTALL:** Minister, the prospect of owning a home is getting more and more out of reach for an entire generation of young people. As a young person myself, frankly, it is pretty terrifying. In Canberra, it has become easier for someone to buy their fifth home than their first.

Minister, do you think it is fair that Canberrans who cannot even afford to buy their first home are also unable to access an affordable public rental in this city?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Miss Nuttall for the question. I note that it was the federal Greens that held up federal Labor's Help to Buy program. It was the federal Greens that held up more build to rents. It was the federal Greens that held up the Housing Australia Future Fund, which will deliver more affordable rentals in the ACT.

I note Miss Nuttall's concern, and I share her concern, which is why ACT Labor and the federal Labor government are working together to build more homes across the spectrum: public housing, community housing, build to rents, affordable rentals and homes to buy. This is all through progressive policies that have been held up at every step of the way by the Greens.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Minister, given that it is easier for an investor to buy their fifth home in this city than it is for a young person to buy their first, do you think the housing market is genuinely working in the interests of young people?

**MS BERRY:** No, it is not. That is why federal Labor took the chance to put forward policy that will help people get into homes of their own. There are 40,000 people across Australia who will be able to get into homes because of federal Labor's Help to Buy program.

We know it has been difficult for people in this country, particularly with the cost of living. That is why we are making these progressive policies that will make a difference for people.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Minister, how long do you think young people should have to wait in the private rental market before they can buy their own home?

**MS BERRY:** I think that is a question that the Greens should be asking themselves, given they held up the program in the first place.

### **Transport Canberra—bus driver safety**

**MS CASTLEY:** My question is to the Minister for Transport. Recently, Canberra's bus drivers have had soft-drink cans thrown at them, they have had fish heads dumped on them, and they have regularly experienced verbal and physical violence. Just last week, I heard about a driver who was assaulted in broad daylight in Fyshwick. Minister, how many instances of abuse and violence have drivers experienced in the last year?

**MR STEEL:** I am happy to take that question on notice. But let me make it absolutely clear, in response to the Leader of the Opposition, that any form of occupational violence in any setting—regardless of whether it is on our buses or in our hospitals or in our schools or, indeed, in the broader community, such as in retail—is totally unacceptable. The sorts of incidents that we have been hearing about, including those which triggered the industrial action that we saw on Transport Canberra's bus network, are unacceptable. Unfortunately, that is something that we have to tackle as a society but also as a government.

I sat down with the Transport Workers Union—the secretary and delegates—last week, on Thursday, to discuss the issues that had been raised and talk about the implementation of the four agreed actions that we will be working with them on to try to make sure that it is a safer workplace for drivers. That includes the installation of screens on the older bus fleet—they are already provided on the new buses—as well as work that we are doing to deliver on Labor’s election commitments to undertake legislative reform around powers for transport officers, introducing a team of transport officers to be deterrents on buses in Canberra. There will also be provision of training on de-escalation to the driver workforce to make sure that they are equipped with the tools that they need to deal with this issue. None of our drivers should have to face this at work, and we will be working on that basis.

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, how often do you visit or call a driver who has been assaulted to apologise and hear their concerns?

**MR STEEL:** I am always open to have discussions with drivers, whether it is at the depots or with their representatives that I met last week to discuss the issues. I am particularly focused on how we address the issues. We have clearly demonstrated that with the agreement that we have struck—

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Steel, could you be seated. There is a point of order.

**Mr Cocks:** A point of order on relevance. The question was about how often the minister meets, not whether he is open to meeting.

**MR SPEAKER:** Minister, could I direct you be relevant to the question.

**MR STEEL:** I think I have answered the question.

**MS MORRIS:** Minister, isn’t an essential responsibility of your office to speak to those most affected by your refusal to act on their concerns?

**MR STEEL:** I reject the premise of the question. We have not refused to act. We have a very clear action plan of four points, as I mentioned in the answer to the earlier question. We will continue to meet with the workforce, both myself as minister and Transport Canberra, at the senior management level, and day to day in the depots to address these issues. We look forward to getting on with the actions that we have identified and have been supported by the Transport Canberra workforce. I note that I had this discussion with all of the drivers in a room at Mitchell in the lead-up to enterprise bargaining negotiations, where we discussed industrial issues but also discussed occupational violence issues. I am prepared to go and speak to the workforce, including having them all in one room, which can be a quite intimidating thing to do, but I think it is important to engage with the workforce, and I will continue to do that as minister.

### **Transport Canberra—MyWay+**

**MR COCKS:** My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, the Google Play Store listing for MyWay+ notes that the app may access a user’s photos, videos, files, documents and app activity, and share this data with third parties. It has full network

access and can even change settings on the user's phone, such as audio. Why does an ACT government app require each of these intrusive features to enable people to ride the bus?

**MR STEEL:** I am happy to come back with some detailed technical information, but certainly we have been working closely with NEC and Digital and Data Technology Solutions within the ACT government, in CMTEDD, to continue to look at the security features. Some data sharing will be required through secure APIs with the app, particularly connecting through to the portal and then enabling the QR code functionality to link with the user's account and of course to provide those payment options, including the debit and credit cards using features like Apple Pay which then connect to the user's accounts. There will be a need to have some data shared as part of this but in a way that is secure.

We are continuing to work with NEC to make sure those settings are appropriate for the functionality of the system. Canberrans have the option, if they would like, to simply use an ordinary MyWay+ travel card, which they can purchase from one of the retailers and use without needing to use the app if they wish. They can also use a debit or credit card without necessarily linking it to the account or using the app.

**MR COCKS:** Minister, why does the app require Play Install Referrer API permissions, given the purpose of this API is for tracking advertising and marketing?

**MR STEEL:** I will take the technical question on notice and provide some information to the Assembly.

**MS BARRY:** Minister, how can Canberrans have confidence in the secure handling of their personal data, given this government's track record on data leaks?

**MR STEEL:** I thank the member for her question. We do take cybersecurity seriously and that has been a major consideration in the design of this app. It is why penetration testing has been occurring in relation to the app, and it is why we are continuing to monitor the system as it has gone live to make sure the security settings are appropriate. If necessary, we will harden those settings to protect user information. We will continue to work with NEC and DDTS to make sure the settings are appropriate and that user data is protected.

### **Planning and development—Thoroughbred Park**

**MS CLAY:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, Labor is currently considering a proposal from the Canberra Racing Club to redevelop a Thoroughbred Park site. There has been very little information about this proposal put out to the Canberra community, so I lodged an FOI request to get a little bit more information. I was surprised to read in the papers that came back that there was advice from Treasury that says that the site is not suitable for affordable housing. Chief Minister, can you please explain to me why that site is suitable for luxury apartments but is not suitable for public or community housing?

**MR BARR:** I thank Ms Clay for the question. That would be advice from Treasury. I do not necessarily agree with that advice. The government would need to consider the

various issues associated with housing typology in any future development in that area. But, at this point, it is not a government priority. That project will go through the usual processes within this place, and the question of housing typology will be considered by this place. Treasury are, of course, welcome to put their frank advice to government, but that does not mean that it is the government's view.

**MS CLAY:** Chief Minister, how many public and community homes will there be there and how many luxury apartments will there be there?

**MR BARR:** None of that detail is anywhere near consideration by government at this point. I need to be clear—as I was with Ms Clay over the last few months—that this is a project that will take considerable time. It is not happening at any time in the near future. There will be plenty of opportunity for engagement by this place, and, ultimately, this Assembly will have to make determinations in relation to what, if any, development will occur on that site.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Chief Minister, do you think it is fair that this site will deliver luxury apartments but no affordable housing?

**MR BARR:** I would refer Mr Braddock to my answers to the previous questions. It is yet to be determined by the Assembly whether any development will occur, let alone the nature of that development.

### **Transport Canberra—MyWay+**

**MS CASTLEY:** My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, the MyWay upgrade has taken eight years so far. It has resulted in one failed procurement and a very expensive, very public launch debacle. What additional costs will be incurred before the system is fully operational?

**MR STEEL:** I thank the member for her question, but I reject the premise of the question. Of course, we have been planning for some time for the legacy MyWay system to be replaced with a new ticketing system; that is clear. There has been a series of procurements that led up to NEC being provided with a contract, which is a 10-year contract. It includes requirements on them to work with Transport Canberra to deliver the MyWay+ ticketing system and to make sure it is fully functional in delivering the seamless experience that Canberrans expect.

I acknowledge that it has not been seamless from the go-live date of last week, but they have been working around the clock with Transport Canberra to address the key issues. I have noted that major updates have been made to address those problems. We are continuing to monitor and evaluate those, and we will continue to make tweaks as required to make sure that it is providing the seamless experience that Canberrans expect. While some people have not had a good experience, others have—tapping on with their MyWay travel cards or with their debit and credit cards, which was the additional functionality that the community was asking for and that we are delivering through this contract with NEC.

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, can you confirm that part of the contract with NEC covered working around the clock to make sure that functionality could be installed quickly.

**MR STEEL:** I am happy to come back to the Assembly on notice around that very specific question. But, yes, it requires NEC to work with us to make improvements to the system over time that are in scope of the contract.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Minister, do you believe the community has received value for money from MyWay+?

**MR STEEL:** I thank the member for his question. There is no doubt there are teething issues with the system. Those have been identified and addressed or are currently being addressed through the major updates we have made to the system. While many features are functional, and some features are still yet to be rolled out which were scheduled and planned to be done at a later time, we are continuing to work with NEC to deliver the contract. We do think that it will deliver the system we set out to procure and that we contracted with NEC to deliver.

### **Disability—International Day of People with Disability**

**MS TOUGH:** My question is to the Minister for Disability, Carers and Community Services. Minister, what is different about how the ACT government is celebrating I-Day this year?

**MS ORR:** I would like to thank the member for her question, and for bringing the celebration of the International Day of People with Disability, commonly known as I-Day, to the attention of the chamber.

I-Day is a United Nations sanctioned day intended to promote community awareness, understanding and acceptance of people with disability, and support the dignity, rights and wellbeing of people with disability. I-Day is celebrated annually on 3 December, so today is I-Day. The day is observed across the globe, receiving varying degrees of formal and informal support and recognition.

The 2024 theme for I-Day is “amplifying the leadership of persons with disabilities for an inclusive and sustainable future”. Appropriately, the ACT government is marking the day as the first jurisdiction in the nation to transition I-Day to community control. As part of the commitment to community control, I-Day will be managed and supported by an organisation whose board has a majority of people with disability, and executed by a steering committee comprising a majority of people with disability, and shared leadership.

Advocacy for Inclusion is the inaugural host organisation and has proposed establishing a charter as part of this year’s celebrations. This charter has been developed to guide observance of I-Day and its control in the ACT by people with disability. Supporters are welcome to sign the charter to show their support; and, to show the ACT government’s support, I will be one of the people signing the charter.

**MS TOUGH:** Minister, what is the importance of community control and how will the charter deliver this?

**MS ORR:** Community control of I-Day is important because people with disability are

experts in their own lives, and the disability community know best how to celebrate their diversity. The ACT government recognise this, and that is why the ACT Disability Strategy included the commitment to transition I-Day to the community.

The charter that has been developed both enshrined community control and informed planning for future I-Days here in the ACT. The charter outlines the principles that will guide the planning of I-Day celebrations and observances to achieve this. The charter also sets the ambition that I-Day is a day with vision, purpose and collaboration, and a day that creates opportunities for people with disability to discover and claim identity, raise their voices and exercise power, and gain freedom.

**MR WERNER-GIBBINGS:** Minister, what else has the ACT Labor government committed to in this term that supports people with disability in the Canberra community?

**MS ORR:** I thank the member for his question. The short answer is quite a lot. The more detailed answer is that we will continue to work with people with disability, their families and carers, advocacy groups and service provider organisations to put in place a range of initiatives, including the development of a neurodiversity strategy, in close consultation with neurodivergent Canberrans, their families and carers, which upholds the social model of disability and human rights principles, and aligns with the range of work that has commenced over this last term.

We will also continue to implement the ACT Disability Strategy, the ACT Disability Health Strategy, the ACT Disability Justice Strategy and the ACT Disability Inclusion Strategy, all of which were co-designed with the community to deliver a more inclusive, accessible Canberra. We have committed to support more inclusive disability services by supporting a peer program for LGBTIQ+ people with a disability and supporting an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation to deliver culturally safe and inclusive services for First Nations people in our community.

We will continue to work on the NDIS reforms, making sure that we are advocating our position to the commonwealth on behalf of our community. We will also be looking at what we need to do under the Disability Inclusion Act to make sure that we are meeting all of our commitments, plus much more. I look forward to undertaking this and working alongside people with disability over the coming years.

## **Racism**

**MR EMERSON:** My question is to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. Australia's history of racism toward its traditional custodians is perhaps our greatest shame. The Productivity Commission published data this year indicating that First Nations people across Australia have experienced a 17 percentage point increase in racial prejudice over a four-year period. Seventy-six per cent of First Nations people in the ACT reported experiencing racial prejudice—the highest rate of any state or territory.

Minister, why do you think that is the case, and, given this alarming statistic, what progressive, practical and proven actions is the government taking to reduce racism in Canberra?

**Ms Cheyne:** I have a point of order, Mr Speaker. I seek your ruling on whether the question is seeking an expression of opinion.

**MR SPEAKER:** Indeed, like quite a number of questions that have been delivered in the chamber today, yes, I would suggest it is seeking an opinion. Mr Emerson, can you refresh my memory and give me the last sentence of that question again? I would like to hear it again.

**MR EMERSON:** Seventy-six per cent of First Nations people in the ACT reported experiencing racial prejudice. Minister, why do you think that is the case, and, given this alarming statistic, what progressive, practical and proven actions is the government taking to reduce racism in Canberra?

**MR SPEAKER:** Given that it is Mr Emerson's first question time and given that there were a couple of other questions—including Miss Nuttall's, where all three questions required an opinion—I am going to let the question stand. I am just going to ask members to please think about constructing questions without actually asking an opinion of the minister.

I think that this question could easily have been rephrased so that it did not ask for a direct opinion. I ask the relevant minister to respond now, if that is possible.

**MS ORR:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you, Mr Emerson, for your question. I think it is an important topic and one that has, following the most recent Productivity Commission report, drawn some commentary from the community and, I certainly think it is fair to say, some criticism from the community on some pretty important concerns.

I have had these concerns raised with my office, and it is something that we are looking at. We will continue to work with the community on how we can address the wider reforms that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community have expressed that they would like the government to be working on.

I believe the second part of Mr Emerson's question was about the tangible steps we are taking to actually start to address some of these things. I am very happy to arrange a briefing for Mr Emerson, because it is quite an extensive range of items—one that probably will not fit into my two minutes of answers.

But I would draw the member's attention in particular to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and the work that they have put forward for the ACT government to implement and get on with. A lot of the work we have done is around the implementation of Aboriginal controlled organisations, like the work we have done around the *Our Booris our way* report and the steering committee there to implement it.

Regarding a lot of the work that we will be doing, I think I started the job on Wednesday and went to my first meeting on Friday—the joint council ministerial meeting, looking at how we can actually start delivering more of what our community wants. An important part, and one of the topics that came up for conversation quite strongly in that



meeting, was maintaining the minimal age of criminal responsibility reforms. That is something the ACT has been very proud to achieve, and we are seeing other states and territories now look back. That is a significant concern of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that was expressed at the joint council meeting.

That is a range of things there, but I am happy to organise a more detailed briefing.

**MR EMERSON:** Thank you, Minister. I am encouraged to know that this matter is important to you as the new minister in this role. Given that the Indigenous incarceration gap and the persistent homelessness rate for First Nations people in the ACT are the highest in the country, and both increased in the most recent reporting period, I am curious about what new actions the government will be taking to close the gap in the ACT.

**MS ORR:** At the risk of announcing new policy in question time, I will take that question on notice and get back to Mr Emerson about new proposals.

Obviously, in his question, he has picked up on the fact that the ACT already has a range of initiatives in place that we continue to work on, including raising the minimal age of criminal responsibility. We will continue to work through those. We are looking, in collaboration and in unison with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, at the other matters that are important to them and how we can start to address those.

### **Population growth**

**MS CARRICK:** My question is to the Treasurer. In February 2023, the *Canberra Times* reported that the ACT's population is expected to rise from about 463,000 to 784,000 in 2060. The title of the article was, "North Canberra to grow rapidly, southern districts may shrink as ACT government plans for population of almost 800,000". Treasurer, why is the north growing rapidly but the south, particularly Weston Creek and Tuggeranong, is not forecast to increase in population by 2060?

**MR STEEL:** I thank the member for her question. A range of different factors relate to the population growth and how widely it is distributed across the city in particular areas. We have seen a large amount of growth happening on the north side with the development of Gungahlin over several decades and new suburbs being built there. We are starting to see the final stages of Jacka, for example, being developed. Beyond that, the growth of the city will shift to the west side, in the Molonglo Valley, including close to Weston Creek, where we expect to see large population growth. Under the Planning Strategy, we want to build more homes for Canberrans, and we see that, whilst that new greenfield development will support new housing, there will be more people living within the existing urban footprint of the city. So, as part of the planning system review and the development of district strategies, we have been looking at the opportunities to have more people living in existing areas, like Weston Creek, for example, and other parts of the south side, including Tuggeranong.

We do not accept the population figures as a *fait accompli*. They are a starting point for potential reforms in the planning system that can support more people to live on the south side, supported by the existing great facilities that we have and, indeed,

improvements to the facilities as well. That will be addressed through the planning priorities that I have announced, which include enabling the missing middle in Canberra—that is, well-designed townhouses, duplexes and row houses within existing suburbs that are currently not permitted—as well as looking at more housing along transport corridors and in and around shopping centres.

**MS CARRICK:** Treasurer, what is the ACT planning to do about the imbalance in population growth, and when will the population forecasts be updated to reflect interventions for the missing middle and community facilities?

**MR STEEL:** The population figures will be updated by the Treasury on a regular basis to provide us with factual information about where people live across Canberra. The next stage of planning reforms that I have announced—the planning priorities and indeed Labor’s housing policy that we took to the election—will be implemented to support more homes within existing areas of Canberra and, indeed, greenfield areas as well. It will be those reforms that will see increases in population and density within the existing footprint of Canberra, and that is not just on the south side; that is in some existing areas in the north as well.

**MS CLAY:** Treasurer and Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, are public and community homes on the light rail corridor part of these government priorities?

**MR STEEL:** Yes.

### **Transport Canberra—MyWay+**

**MR BRADDOCK:** My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, live tracking data is not available for the MyWay+ app or for third party apps. In your ministerial statement this morning you mentioned future updates which will make this available. Can you please provide further information on when and how this information will be made available?

**MR STEEL:** I will be briefed by Transport Canberra, I expect this evening, on where they are at. But I expect an announcement—which I am not intending to make in question time ahead of being briefed—is imminent to make that functionality available. This was a scheduled update to the MyWay+ app. It was not meant to go live on the 27th. It was scheduled to occur at a later time and the benchmark that had been set by Transport Canberra was to have 80 per cent of the bus fleet fitted with the MyWay+ validators, the hardware, and having those functional. I understand that has occurred. So I am now about to receive the advice from Transport Canberra about how we make that information available through an API. We will then also be providing some information and engagement through to the third party app providers who may wish to use that data feed within those third party applications, which may be used as an alternative to the MyWay+ app for journey-planning purposes.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Why was the decision made to rollout MyWay+ without this basic functionality in place on day one?

**MR STEEL:** I thank the member for his question. As I described in the answer to my last question, it was because we wanted to make sure there were more validators fitted to the fleet, but the timing on this is imminent. This will be provided very soon to the public. In the interim, since the go live date, the timetabled information has been provided on the screens in the interchanges and on buses. It will then switch over once this new data feed is available to provide the live real-time information.

**MS CLAY:** Minister, by what date will every bus have the new MyWay+ reader installed on it?

**MR STEEL:** I thank the member for her question. We made a decision with Transport Canberra not to fit new MyWay+ validator hardware on buses which were going to be retired in the fleet. So they will never be fitted out with the new MyWay+ validators, because they will be retired from the fleet and we did not want to make that investment in something that would have to be removed. I just mentioned we have hit 80 per cent of buses. Generally speaking, the time it is taking for NEC to install the validators on the remaining buses that are not due for retirement soon is around two per cent a day, so we are expecting a matter of weeks before they are all provided with the new hardware.

### **Economy—credit rating**

**MR COCKS:** My question is to the Treasurer. Last year, S&P Global downgraded the territory's credit rating. This year, they placed the ACT on a negative outlook, meaning a further downgrade was more likely than not. S&P specifically noted that this was driven by the "loosening of expenditure controls". How do you intend to repair the budget and restore the AAA credit rating?

**MR STEEL:** Of course, by delivering on the budget strategy that we outlined in the budget last year. We will continue to update that based on the economic conditions and the budgetary conditions that are presented to us as we develop the budget for 2025-26. That process has already started. Whilst we were in quite a constrained period after the election, I am currently receiving advice on establishing the timetable for the development of the budget and community consultation associated with that so that we can get underway and, as the new Treasurer, I can start preparing that, including considering the fiscal strategy going forward.

**MR COCKS:** Treasurer, do you agree with your predecessor that the ACT has a revenue problem, not a spending problem, and needs more tax revenue?

**MR STEEL:** I reject the premise of the question, Mr Speaker. I think Mr Cocks has verbalised the former Treasurer. We will continue to look at both the expenditure lines and revenue lines to make sure that the fiscal settings are appropriate to manage the budget. We will do that as we start to develop the 2025-26 budget.

**MS CASTLEY:** Treasurer, will you rule out new taxes or tax hikes while families are struggling with the cost-of-living crisis?

**MR STEEL:** What we are committed to is delivering on our election commitments,

which included quite considerable cost-of-living support. Of course, those proposals, which are election commitments now, will be taken forward and considered in the budget context. We are very mindful of the cost-of-living pressures faced by Canberrans, and that is why we brought forward a range of commitments to the election.

**Mr Hanson:** Mr Speaker, on a point of order on relevance: the question was about whether there will be new taxes or increased taxes. It was not about a bunch of measures that the government put through at the election. This is about tax and revenue.

**MR SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr Hanson. Mr Steel.

**MR STEEL:** Matters in relation to expenditure and taxation will, of course, be considered in the budget context. But we were the only party that was actually transparent about our position in relation to things like rates but also expenditure and having fully costed policies that we took forward through the election campaign and that we will implement through the budget.

**Mr Barr:** Remarkably, Mr Speaker—and taking into account your advice at the beginning—we have got through question time in an hour. I ask that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.