



QUESTION TIME
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

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Wednesday, 3 December 2025

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Questions without notice

Club closures—loss of community facilities

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation.

Minister, in a supplementary question on 29 October regarding the possible closure of a bowling club in Weston Creek, Ms Carrick asked you directly what the government will do to ensure that there are community facilities in Weston Creek. You responded that it is simply not possible for the government to provide the facilities and the community contribution that these “privately owned businesses” provide.

Based on that answer, can we assume that, as your government continues to force the closure of clubs like Chisholm Vikings, it is not in a position to cushion the community against the loss of community facilities and community contributions, and that the community will simply miss out on those facilities and contributions?

MS BERRY: Can I just get the bit again that you said about Chisholm?

MR SPEAKER: Mr Parton, can you repeat that bit?

MR PARTON: Based on that answer, can we assume, as your government continues to force the closure of clubs like Chisholm Vikings, that it is not in a position to cushion the community against the loss of community facilities and community contributions?

MS BERRY: First of all I say that I do not believe that it is the government’s fault that the Chisholm Vikings club is closing. So I will just put that on the table, as well. And no, the ACT government cannot replace every facility across the ACT that might change whether it is a private business, a kebab shop, a community sports facility—

Mr Parton: We are talking about clubs here, Minister.

MS BERRY: Yes, but you are suggesting that it is the ACT government’s fault—through you, Mr Speaker—that the Chisholm club is closing, and I do not believe that is the case. The ACT government works closely with all our community sports organisations to ensure that there are facilities for our growing need, particularly in the sport and recreation space, and we will continue to do that. But we cannot be held responsible every time a privately owned or operated facility closes.

MR PARTON: Will the government ever be in a position to manage the 500 hectares of greenspace and sporting facilities that clubs provide, given that you have said it is simply not the government’s role to pick up the slack when these “privately owned businesses” close?

MS BERRY: First of all, I would say that Mr Parton is attempting to verbal me by saying “Pick up the slack.” I have not said, “Pick up the slack.”

The second part to that is that, whilst I am aware that the Chisolm club has made the decision, for whatever reason, to close their business, what happens as a result of that is not known. Once that is known and if the government can, within reason, support the operation of facilities that may have been previously privately operated, then of course

we will consider it. But we cannot pick up every single privately owned organisation's businesses when they decide to close. That is just not something the ACT government can be responsible for. That is not to say that there might not be opportunities in this circumstance for the ACT government to work with community clubs on organisations or fields that might be left as a result of a club closing. These are very early days, so I would say in this circumstance, for Chisholm in particular, that we could consider something going forward. But again, at this time, it is early days and we do not know the consequences of the closure on our community.

MS MORRIS: Minister, what is the hit to the bottom line of government from the double whammy of a huge reduction in community contributions and a massive dip in gaming tax revenue?

DR PATERSON: This question falls in my portfolio responsibility. We currently have the clubs inquiry underway and I completely reject the premise of Ms Morris's question and Mr Parton's.

Mr Parton: You talked about reimagining the club sector.

DR PATERSON: I would like to point the Assembly to the 2023 Vikings Group annual report; I do not have the latest one, because the clubs are working on more transparency in their presentation of annual reports. The club saw an increase in their gross revenue. So I would put back to Mr Parton and the Canberra Liberals that this is a business decision for the Canberra Vikings. We have seen them look to expand over the border in Jerrabomberra, and that business venture was clearly not successful.

Ms Morris interjecting—

DR PATERSON: The club sector and the hospitality sector have seen a whole raft of changes occur over the past decade, particularly with the impacts of COVID. As clubs work to understand what a sustainable future looks like for each club group, as we do the clubs inquiry, there will likely be club closures and there will likely be club mergers. This is a normal part of everyday business.

Visitor

MR SPEAKER: Before I go to the next question members, I would like to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of former member of the First Assembly, Norm Jensen. On behalf of all the members here I welcome you back to the Assembly.

Questions without notice Clubs—rates and levies

MS LEE: My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, I have met with a number of clubs in my electorate who are facing massive rate increases on land they are attempting to develop for much needed housing as a way of diversifying away from gaming revenue. One club's rates went from \$44,000 per year to over \$600,000 per year.

Treasurer, why are you standing in the way of clubs who are proactively attempting to diversify their income streams away from gaming by seeking to address the

undersupply of housing in the ACT?

MR STEEL: We are not. As planning minister, I approved major plan amendments to support clubs in the ACT to be able to diversify, including at Ainslie Football Club. It is really important to note, though, that the former EPSD Directorate had provided guidance to clubs around the implications of, for example, changing their lease—which may have implications for the value of their lease that may then result in potential taxation implications.

Every club needs to consider that, when they undertake this work to potentially rezone or change what their lease purpose clauses are, this has an effect on the value of their land. It means their land is more valuable. It means the assets on their books are more valuable. That has a taxation implication, because, as they build more homes, the government quite rightly expects that they—because there is an increment that is owned by the community in their leases—pay a contribution back to the community. That may support, for example, investment in infrastructure around where they are proposing to build more homes. In the case of the Ainslie Football Club, we have done that already by investing in both light rail—600 metres away—and in the active travel path that is directly next to that future development.

My general advice to the club sector is make sure that you read the advice from the planning directorate around your planning proposals. We also encourage them to engage directly with the City and Environment Directorate, who are piloting a clubs concierge.

MS LEE: Treasurer, why are you continuing to impose unreasonable fees and charges that go to increasing the cost of construction and reducing housing affordability?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. With this land that was given to clubs—not all of it, but a lot of it—as concessional leases. When you deconcessionalise a lease it changes the value of that lease. We treat taxpayers fairly in the territory. If the value of their lease goes up, it does usually mean that you will have to pay more in terms of the rates that apply and, potentially, there are LVC implications. Those need to be understood prior to undertaking development.

I encourage the club sector—and I have spoken to the peaks about this, to let their members know—that when they undertake this work they should engage with the City and Environment Directorate to understand the implications. If they are going to change their lease, they might want to do that closer to the time that they are actually undertaking the development, not leaving ten years or five years in between in which they may be paying increased taxes for a development that they have not yet built to provide them with a new revenue stream to diversity their revenue.

I encourage them to understand the implications of the decisions that they have made based on the current policy that exists. But, of course, our government has also committed to introducing new policy to support them to diversity their revenue streams. That includes a review of the CZ6 zone—which is often the land-use zoning that applies to club sites—to enable them to do more within that zone. For example, they could look at opportunities for retirement living or residential, which would give them the opportunity to diversity their revenue streams in the future.

The boards and the management of these clubs need to understand the implications of the decisions that they are making. We are working with them closely, through the clubs concierge in the City and Environment Directorate, to support them in making those decisions.

MR CAIN: Treasurer, have you been forced into imposing these massive rate increases as a revenue-raising measure as a result of the mismanagement of the ACT's budget over the past 14 years under the previous Treasurer?

MR STEEL: No. As I have said, in many instances the reason that they may be paying more is that they have re-zoned, changed their lease within their current zoning or deconcessionalised their lease, meaning that the value of that lease has gone up. The asset value has gone up. Their property values have gone up. So, yes, generally speaking, when property values go up more rates are required, and there are LVC implications.

Mr Cain: A point of order, Mr Speaker. The Treasurer is just repeating things he has already said. The question was very specific: has he been forced into these revenue raising rates increases because of the mismanagement of the previous Treasurer?

MR SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Community sector—pay and conditions

MR RATTENBURY: My question is, I believe, to the Chief Minister.

During the 2024 ACT election, ACT Labor committed to moving towards parity between ACT public service and community sector conditions, through the ACT community sector multi-enterprise agreement, or MEA, including funding paid parental leave, paid domestic and family violence leave, and enhanced superannuation. Can the Chief Minister outline where this is up to, and why it has still not been resolved?

MS ORR: I will take the question in my capacity as Minister for Disability, Carers and Community Services. This particular commitment, while forming a part of a number of agreements with the crossbench, was also a commitment by the Labor party in the 2024 election. It specifically indicated that we would do this through the MEA, which is currently before the Fair Work Commission. The ACT government has been joined as a party to the negotiations between the 17 employer groups from the community sector and their employees.

We continue with the process, noting that this is quite a new function within the industrial relations framework—and we continue to work through being one of the first groups to utilise being joined to this negotiation process.

MR RATTENBURY: Can the minister please provide an explanation for rejecting the employers' initial funding proposal without presenting an alternative funding model, or any constructive negotiation to resolve the impasse?

MS ORR: I will work through that, but first I would like to note that I do find it

concerning that a process that is before the Fair Work Commission and in which the government has been partaking, in good faith, is now being brought forward and questioned within the chamber—the implication being that, clearly, people who are at the table are now providing commentary to other political parties, which makes a complicated negotiation further complicated.

The government, as I said in my first answer, has been joined to proceedings. It is not a party to the negotiation; it is there as the majority funder, to inform what it is and is not in a position to fund. The proposals are to be negotiated and put forward between the employer and the employee groups. Government is then to reflect on those. The advice to me and to the cabinet has been that it is not for government to do the negotiation between the two teams, or to take over the negotiating role between the two sides of the negotiation.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, by what date will the ACT government provide a definitive funding position to the MEA bargaining process, so that the Fair Work Commission process can progress and the MEA, which is nominally expired in 2018, can be finalised?

MS ORR: In addressing the question, I note that the member has pointed to 2018. I would note that the negotiations for the MEA far pre-date the government being joined to the process. Certainly, we have been there, I believe, since 2024. So, it has certainly not been the whole time that this has been under negotiation. We will continue to work within the framework and the processes, and the positions put to us, within our own processes and considerations through cabinet. And we will provide responses as promptly as we can to the ongoing Fair Work negotiation.

Government procurement—policy

MR EMERSON: My question is to the Minister for Finance. Minister, as you know, today is the International Day of People with Disability. Last year, the City of Sydney banned the procurement of services using contractors or subcontractors that pay sub-minimum wages to people with disability, including through the supported wage system. Is the ACT government considering introducing a similar procurement policy?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Emerson for the question. I will take it on notice.

MR EMERSON: This one might need to be taken on notice, too. Minister, do any ACT government contractors or their subcontractors currently employ people on sub-minimum wages?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I will take the detail of that question on notice as well. I note that it is incredibly important, and it is something that people with disability have been fighting for, for a long time, that their value as employees and workers is recognised, and that it is vital that they are paid fair wages for the work that they do. As a matter of principle, I want to support the principle that Mr Emerson is clearly enunciating in his question, and recognise that it is International Day of People with Disability, I-Day, and the contribution more broadly of people with disability to our community is of vital importance.

MS CARRICK: Minister, is contracting or subcontracting people with disability on sub-minimum wages consistent with the ACT's Disability Strategy and Human Rights Act obligations?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I will take the question on notice. This is a contentious issue. It has been an issue on which people with disability and carers have had different views over time. I would agree with the premise of Ms Carrick's question, that employing or subcontracting people on under-minimum wages is not appropriate. But I will have to go and check whether that is a specific policy in relation to the procurement providers.

Planning—town centres

MS CARRICK: My question is to the Chief Minister and it is about implementing CBR2030. I was really pleased to read *CBR2030: ACT's strategic economic development framework*, which has a mission to plan and design connected town centres and group centres to "bring everyday life closer to home". It says:

These places will bring together housing, jobs, government services, public spaces and community facilities in ways that make everyday life easier and more connected.

I couldn't have said it better myself. You are also continuing to support the growth of Canberra's night-time economy as part of your commitment to "a more dynamic, inclusive and liveable city". Noting your 2016 *Canberra: a statement of ambition*, where you said, "Cities don't succeed by accident or by leaving things to chance—they require design, good governance and great collaboration," what are the governance arrangements to plan, collaborate and design town centres and group centres?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Carrick for her endorsement of the Economic Development Strategy in its decade-long set of iterations and progress. In fact, this question was asked at the annual reports hearings. The current administrative arrangements create the planning context and framework within the City and Environment Directorate. That was an administrative change I made at the beginning of this parliamentary term to bring the City Services and Planning areas together to create the capacity to undertake many of the objectives outlined within the Economic Development Strategy.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you, Chief Minister. I remind Ms Carrick that questions have a certain length to them, and I ask her to make sure that, as we move forward, she adheres to that.

MS CARRICK: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Will planning for the town centres and group centres include identification of sites for entertainment precincts to grow Canberra's night-time economy?

MR BARR: The work that Minister Cheyne has underway in relation to the night-time economy, with her partner minister in this portfolio, Minister Steel, progresses those opportunities.

MR COCKS: Chief Minister, what are the timeframes for developing plans to bring

together housing, jobs, government services, public spaces and community facilities in ways that make everyday life easier and more connected?

MR BARR: Evidently, that is ongoing work that has been undertaken over many decades of Canberra's history. In relation to priorities over the next few years, we have recently adopted the new Territory Plan. I have put in place a range of administrative arrangements to support the development of a number of aspects that Ms Carrick outlined in her long original question and Mr Cocks touched upon. There is legislation before the Assembly today that will support the quicker delivery of more housing, and we have some very significant investment proposals from the private sector for the delivery of more housing and community facilities in the Woden town centre, for example, that are currently before the community and will ultimately be before this place for consideration. So there is a lot happening across Canberra.

We are seeing quite a lot of interest in investing in our town centres. In Gungahlin, the Gungahlin Town Centre East development, which the Suburban Land Agency is leading, is well progressed in its planning phases. There are proposals for the Belconnen town centre and the Tuggeranong town centre, and the new Molonglo town centre was recently elevated to a town centre. So there is a lot happening across each of our town centres.

Planning—Greenway

MISS NUTTALL: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development. It is a bit long—sorry!

Minister, residents from the Waters Edge complex at 10 Ellison Harvie Close in Greenway have been in touch with me regarding concerns about a development application to construct a path on the lake side of their complex to active travel. The DA is 202442924. This DA has been conditionally approved. While residents been asking for a safe, sealed path for a while, the current proposal puts the path only a metre away from residences. This is a safety concern for individuals with mobility, sight or hearing impairments. Young children, including babies, are at risk due to the close proximity of the proposed pathway to the residential boundary. What consultation did you and the directorate undertake with members of Waters Edge and what did those instances of consultation look like?

MR STEEL: I will take that question on notice and get some information for the member. Obviously, the assessment of development applications is undertaken by the independent Territory Planning Authority. I am not directly involved that process, nor am I involved in the decision-making process, unless the project is a Territory Priority Project, which is something that we have been discussing today—because, at the advocacy of the Greens, the call-in power was removed from the Planning Act, and we set up a new process, the Territory Priority Project process, that is instead in place for that.

If the intent of the question is that I should intervene, there is no mechanism now under the Planning Act to do that in relation to the DA. But if it is in relation to getting more information about the consultation, I will take that on notice and come back to the Assembly—

Miss Nuttall: With apologies, on a point of order: the question was not about asking the minister to intervene; it was asking what consultation the minister and the directorate had done.

MR SPEAKER: Minister, do you have anything further to add?

MR STEEL: I think I have been very clear that I am not involved in the consultation. But I will come back in relation to what the independent Territory Planning Authority has done in relation to the consultation.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, do you plan to respond to the letter that Waters Edge residents sent you earlier in the year outlining their concerns? If so, when might they expect that response?

MR STEEL: I will check that. Obviously, when I respond, I will be very clear that the response will include advice from the independent Territory Planning Authority about their decision-making, which is of course independent from me as minister in relation to individual DAs.

MS CLAY: Minister, what is the plan to consult residents of Waters Edge on the construction of the path now that the DA has been conditionally approved?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. I am not responsible for the path directly, and so I will not be consulting further on a project where I am not the proponent. But I will come back in relation to the process that had been undertaken. I do not believe any further consultation is proposed in relation to the path, but you may wish to ask the proponent of the project whether they have any future plans.

Property developers—regulation

MS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development. During annual reports, you were asked about big and small developers leaving the ACT. You admitted you had heard of some developers leaving and said: “If dodgy developers leave the territory that is a good thing.”

Does the government believe every developer leaving the territory is dodgy? And, if not, why has the minister smeared honest operators?

MR STEEL: I reject the premise of the question because I do not think I did say that in the very first part of the preamble, but also the answer is no. I do not believe that the whole construction industry has dodgy developers. But what I do know, what I have heard from the construction industry, is that when there are dodgy developments it smears the entire industry. That is why we have introduced the property developer licensing act which is being implemented at the moment, to make sure that we can extend the chain of accountability in our building system to make sure that it deters dodgy development from occurring in the territory, but also, if it does occur, then that licenced developer is held to account and there is a legal mechanism for the consumers—who are the people, by the way, that we are all trying to protect—to have an opportunity to go and seek a remedy from the developer. They currently do not have

the opportunity to do that. They can go after another licensed occupation, like builders, like electricians, or like plumbers, but they cannot go after the developer. We have provided that mechanism and we want to make sure that mechanism works. We want to make sure there is still investment in the territory and housing being built in the territory. We will work with the construction industry on that. But Canberrans have had a gutful of dodgy development in this city, and we are not going to stand for it.

MS MORRIS: Why does the government continue to impose the highest level of regulatory burden on businesses who seek to increase housing supply in the territory?

MR STEEL: We are not. We are making it easier for more homes to be built, by introducing the largest planning reforms to update the Territory Plan since self-government, to enable homes to be built in areas where they were previously prohibited. We will be bringing those forward in tranches. We have done that with the missing middle, we are doing it on transport oriented development in the Inner North, we will do it on the southside as well and with more shopping centre shop-top and shop-adjacent housing opportunities for the construction sector.

But there is a social contract that comes with that, that if we allow them to build more homes that were not previously possible, those homes are built well. I think the community understands that and they have that expectation already, even where we are not providing the opportunity. For most consumers, the largest decision that they make in their lifetime is to purchase a home, and if there are defects in it, it costs them tens of thousands of dollars to be able to remedy those defects unless there is a mechanism in place for them to go and seek to be put back in the same position that they were in prior to the development occurring, allowing them to go and seek compensation, or the remedy to be repaired, from someone who is responsible for the development, whether that is the builder, whether it is another licensed occupation or whether it is now the developer under the developer licensing scheme and that is a good thing.

MS BARRY: Minister, how can you possibly be encouraging businesses and investment in the ACT housing sector while you continue to publicly admonish the industry which is required to build these homes?

MR STEEL: Because we have the support of the industry for the changes we are making—changes that you apparently do not support in the chamber today in relation to the territory priority projects bill which the industry supports; HIA, MBA, and the Property Council. The construction industry supports those changes which you do not support. They support our changes to missing middle reforms. They support our changes around transit orientated development and shop-top and shop-adjacent housing that we will be bringing forward. All of these changes will support them to build more homes for our community, but of course that comes with an expectation that we want quality building. We do not want to see clubs and we do want to see developers build homes that cannot be lived in or that leave people in desperate financial circumstances. So that is why we are putting in place consumer protections that support the Canberra community while they make this massive investment in a home for themselves and their families.

Aged care—proposed University of Canberra facility

MS TOUGH: Chief Minister, can you update the Assembly on the University of Canberra's recent aged-care announcement?

Mr Parton: That was my question!

MR BARR: Thank you, Ms Tough. It seems you have usurped the opposition leader's first question to me!

Yes, I can indeed update the Assembly. I can say with great pleasure that, consistent with the University of Canberra Amendment Act 2015—which was passed with the support of Labor and the Greens, but opposed by the Canberra Liberals—the university announced it will develop the territory's first intergenerational retirement living community on its Bruce campus, in partnership with Pariter and Opal HealthCare.

I understand this will be only the second such university-based precinct in Australia, a precinct that will bring together retirement living, health care, education and community engagement in a purpose-built environment. It will complement the University of Canberra's existing health assets, including the University of Canberra public hospital and the UC Health Hub, and it will further activate the university's health neighbourhood under the campus masterplan.

This is a 100-year lease agreement. Pariter and Opal HealthCare will develop and operate the precinct, which is expected to become a benchmark for intergenerational living models across the country.

MS TOUGH: Chief Minister, how will this partnership benefit health, education and research outcomes in the community?

MR BARR: A key challenge that is currently being faced by all state and territory governments across the nation is bed block in our hospitals, where older patients who no longer require acute hospital care remain in hospital thanks to difficulties in accessing appropriate aged care or transitional accommodation. The university partnership directly responds to that national challenge by creating 230 independent living units and a 180-bed residential aged-care facility within the University of Canberra health precinct. This development will increase capacity in our aged-care system, support smoother transitions out of hospital and ease demand on our acute care beds.

The university's agreement also unlocks substantial education and research opportunities, including student placement programs, collaborative employment pathways and new research initiatives in aged care and retirement living. This is a genuine innovation. We welcome it, and we acknowledge how it positions Canberra as a national leader in age-inclusive precinct development.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Chief Minister, how does this project align with Labor's priorities to support reform in the health and aged-care sectors?

MR BARR: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for the supplementary question. The project adds a very strong alignment that we share with the federal government—to strengthen our nation's healthcare system to deliver modern and high-quality aged care. In this

instance, both levels of government are working to improve aged-care standards and expand workforce capability, and we are doing so in partnership with the University of Canberra. By integrating retirement living, residential aged care and health services within an established university health precinct, this project delivers a contemporary model that matches the reform direction of federal aged-care policy, whilst also advancing the territory's own commitment to health innovation.

The government wants to see more initiatives like this—initiatives that build capacity in the aged-care workforce and ensure that older Canberrans benefit from the national shift towards better and more integrated healthcare services. This was only possible because of laws passed in this place a decade ago. They were opposed by the Canberra Liberals, and they stand condemned for that very poor decision of ten years ago.

Planning—Symonston and Jerrabomberra

MS CLAY: My question is to the minister for planning. The Territory Planning Authority is considering a development application to establish a light industrial/commercial business park precinct on block 12 section 111, Symonston and block 2233, Jerrabomberra. Representations have been submitted on the DA from the Friends of Grasslands and the Conservation Council who have raised concerns about the proposed development. The site is within the Eastern Broadacre area, which is subject to a strategic assessment. Given that the strategic assessment has not yet been finalised, how and why is the development application being progressed?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. Yes, I am aware of that development proposal, which will need to be assessed by the independent Territory Planning Authority. I will come back on notice around the specifics of whether it is included within the Eastern Broadacre investigation area. I recall that it was not. But I will come back with some further information.

The Eastern Broadacre investigation area is only a fairly narrow corridor. It does not include every single area on the east of Canberra. So, there will be certain blocks that do not fall within the remit of that work which is subject to the strategic assessment. That is being updated at the moment, to provide to the commonwealth for approval following further environmental and other studies that need to be updated.

MS CLAY: Given that the strategic assessment looks at the overall environmental impact in the Eastern Broadacre area and the need for offsets, are potential environmental impacts through the proposed development pre-empting the outcome of the strategic assessment process?

MR STEEL: That would depend on whether it is included within the Eastern Broadacre strategic assessment area. That is what I will come back on. But I have every confidence that the Territory Planning Authority will consider the environmental and other requirements, and overlays on that block—and will consider that in making a decision in relation to what I understand is a subdivision application.

MISS NUTTALL: How can you ensure there will not be significant environmental impacts from the proposed development, given that the studies necessary to determine

the suitability of the land for any development have not been finalised?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for the question. Strategic assessments under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act obviously cover a wider area, but of course there are our own requirements in the Planning Act where an EIS may be triggered to look into those—or there may be an environmental significance opinion, for example, and information that may be considered from the conservator in relation to individual sites that are put up through the planning process. So, I am confident that, under the Planning Act and the broader framework including the EPBC Act, there are mechanisms to consider those environmental matters as part of the assessment process regardless of whether they are included within a current draft strategic assessment that is being undertaken in the Eastern Broadacre area. But I will come back to confirm whether it is included in that area.

Housing ACT—maintenance

MR COCKS: My question is to the Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs. Minister, Housing ACT is cutting labour hire and contract staff while the territory faces growing debt and increased pressure on the budget. Is this another example of frontline public services being reduced to plug holes created by years of uncontrolled spending from Labor?

MS BERRY: No, and we are not cutting staff.

MR COCKS: Minister, how will the staffing cuts that have been reported impact wait times for people on Housing ACT waitlists? If you claim they are not cuts, what has happened?

MS BERRY: A number of staff in Housing ACT that were on contracts were mistakenly told that their contracts would end at Christmas. Housing ACT apologised as soon as they were aware of it and immediately rectified that situation, to ensure that those staff continued their employment.

MS BARRY: Minister, with the cuts that you said are not occurring, what impact will these have on the amenity and maintenance of Housing ACT properties?

MS BERRY: I have just explained the situation with regard to some employees that were mistakenly told that their contracts would end early. That situation has been resolved. The Assembly is already aware that there has been a change to housing managers' work with regard to their jobs and going out to homes, to ensure their safety and the safety of tenants. There is a doubling up of staff that go out to those services, which means that not all tenants will get a visit, as had been the case previously. Those visits from housing managers will occur on an as-needed basis, to ensure that those most vulnerable in our public housing homes get access to their housing managers. That does not mean that they cannot report to Housing various issues that they might have, just because a housing manager is not there. They are always welcome to go into Housing ACT or call Housing ACT and their housing manager, should they wish to.

Planning—CSIRO Ginninderra

MR CAIN: My question is to the Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs. Minister, the development of the 701-hectare CSIRO Ginninderra site has been on the table for over a decade. The ACT is tracking at just 49 per cent of its National Housing Accord target while this prime land remains idle, driving up prices for Canberrans and wasting taxpayer effort and money. Minister, how much taxpayer money has been spent to date on negotiations, legal processes and studies for the CSIRO Ginninderra land? And why, after 10-plus years, has the government failed to deliver a single home for Ginninderra residents at that site?

MS BERRY: Mr Cain might not know that the CSIRO land is not owned by the ACT.

Mr Cain: I'm well aware of that, Minister. We're all well aware.

MS BERRY: I guess there are three partners in negotiations for the land and releasing it to the ACT. It is a massive block of land, and it is a complicated and complex process. So I guess the negotiations more recently have taken some time—

Mr Cain interjecting—

MS BERRY: This land is not owned by the ACT, and I find it difficult to understand why Mr Cain is so angry with us when we have been reporting every step of the way about our negotiations. Yes, it is taking some time, and it should take some time; it is a large piece of land. It is not owned by the ACT.

Mr Cain interjecting—

MS BERRY: We are doing everything that we can to ensure that we are able to have success and a positive outcome from those negotiations. Of course, we—

Mr Parton: A point of order on relevance, Mr Speaker: the question was very specifically about how much money has been spent to date on negotiations and legal processes, and I do not believe that the minister is being responsive to that question.

Mr Cain: She can take it on notice if she doesn't know.

MR SPEAKER: Minister, that was an element of the question. If you do have an answer to that—

MS BERRY: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I just needed to make the point that it is not our land. Perhaps the question on the issues that Mr Cain is trying to track down could be asked of the actual owner of the land, regarding the investigations that they have done.

Mr Cain: No—how much on your efforts?

MS BERRY: However, given that he is so interested in our part in this story, I will take the question on notice and will see what information is available and could be provided publicly, and will provide that to the Assembly next year.

Mr Cain: That wasn't so hard, was it, Minister?

Ms Berry: Mr Speaker—

MR SPEAKER: Is this a point of order?

Ms Berry: Yes, Mr Speaker. The constant interruptions by Mr Cain while I was trying to answer the question, and then when I had finished answering the question, are unparliamentary and he should be called to order.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you for that. I would remind you, Mr Cain, to remain quiet while you are listening to the answer to the question that you asked.

Members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Members, I remind you we are in question time. I appreciate the humour. However, Mr Cain has a supplementary question.

MR CAIN: Mr Speaker, we are clearly all biting our tongues!

Minister, what funding risks or penalties does this pose for the territory's budget, given the ACT's shortfall at 49 per cent of its national housing target?

MS BERRY: I am not quite sure—

Mr Cain: To do with the costs of negotiation et cetera, Minister, which you have taken on notice.

MS BERRY: The negotiations are not complete, so I probably cannot respond to that in any more detail.

MS BARRY: Minister, will you table your government's proportion of the cost of negotiation and correspondence with the commonwealth on this site before the end of the sitting year?

MS BERRY: The negotiations are not complete, so I cannot agree to the request in that question.

Roads—speed limits

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Minister for City and Government Services and relates to speed limits. I refer the minister to research recently published by Dr Molloy about examining speeding behaviours by Canberra drivers and the need for lower speed limits as well as to the updated Austroads *Guide to Road Safety for Safe Speed Management*, which highlights how “reducing urban speed limits would lead to major reductions in pedestrian and cyclist injury,” and that “aspirational speeds aligned to safe system performance are 30 kilometres per hour where pedestrians and cyclists interact with traffic”.

Minister, is the academic evidence and policy advice converging behind the idea that 30-kilometre-per-hour speed zones should be the norm in urban backstreets?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Braddock for the question. Effectively, yes. The evidence has been laid bare. I would note—at least in response to media inquiries, if this information has not been published yet—that Roads ACT has been working on a new set of ACT speed-zoning guidelines that reflect the latest evidence. Those guidelines are now with me for sign-off. They include a codification of a 30-kilometre-an-hour speed limit but also a detailed review process of how to assess what the appropriate speed limit should be.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, why is the government looking to test lower speeds on a single street—being Sherbrooke Street—rather than across a broader area, which would allow for a proper investigation of driver behaviour in a lower-speed area?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Braddock for the question, and I appreciate his genuine interest in this.

Sherbrooke Street is what we have committed to. It has already had a substantial amount of work put into it in terms of the design. As Mr Emerson well knows, we are at a point where we can implement, subject to funding being secured. Given the many different aspects that we have already designed for Sherbrooke Street, we would like to test those before rolling out to other streets. I do appreciate that there have been recent petitions in this place that have called for other streets to have a speed limit lowered to 30 kilometres an hour, like in Lyneham. But, at this stage, it is best for government to assess one street rather than doing all of the design work for different streets that have different constraints and testing in that way.

MR RATTENBURY: Minister, what metrics of success will the government use to assess the trial in Sherbrooke Street?

MS CHEYNE: I will take that on notice. I think we do have metrics but I cannot recall what they are. If they have not been developed yet, I will also come back with that as well. I just cannot recall.

Vocational education and training—skills funding

MS CASTLEY: My question is for the Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations. Minister in the 2024-25 budget the government committed to spending \$63.9 million on skills. However, this year's budget papers show that the government only spent \$28.1 million on skills funding, that is less than half of what was promised. Minister, why did the government underspend on skills funding by 56 per cent? What did you cut?

MR PETTERSSON: I thank Ms Castley for the question. In a general sense, the skills space has seen a reduction in the number of people undertaking apprenticeships. This has resulted in an underspend in certain parts of the portfolio.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, what impact will the underspend on skills funding have on ensuring a properly skilled labour force to meet the housing targets?

MR PETTERSSON: I thank Ms Castley for the question. Ms Castley asks a very good question in that the ACT government is committed to improving the skills offering in

our city to provide for the future needs of our growing economy. Central to that is ensuring that, commonly, young people have access to the skills and training that they require. A key focus of that skills mix at the moment is in the construction industry, which is a focus of joint effort between both the ACT and commonwealth governments. At the ACT level, we have in the budget funded an increase in the subsidy to key construction trades to 90 per cent. We have also continued the \$250 cost-of-living payments to apprentices as well as a further \$250 payment to first year apprentices. This is in conjunction with the initiatives by the commonwealth, which are of a larger nature, but in conjunction hopefully—

Mr Parton: Point of order, Mr Speaker, on relevance. The question was very clearly about what impact will the underspend on skills funding have on ensuring a properly skilled labour force to meet the housing targets and I am not sure the minister is being relevant to the question.

MR SPEAKER: I think he is answering around that area, but he has 39 seconds to go, so he may have more to add.

MR PETTERSSON: Thank you Mr Speaker. I think I am being directly relevant. I acknowledge it was a good question and this is a priority for government to respond to the skills needs of our growing city.

MR MILLIGAN: What impact will the underspend have on housing affordability?

MR PETTERSSON: It is an interesting question. Labour costs, I guess, are contingent upon the supply of available workers and central to there being that supply of labour is them having the required skills. That is why as a government we are committed to improving the availability of that training but also to provide the incentives to encourage more people to undertake training in the construction space.

Planning and development—Macquarie swimming pool

MS BARRY: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development. The current zoning for the Big Splash site permits a building of only two stories on only up to fifteen per cent of the land. The minister recently told an annual reports hearing that a proposed redevelopment would be considered by the National Capital Design Review Panel. However, the review panel only considers projects that are five stories or higher.

Minister, can you please confirm how many stories were proposed and how much of the site would have been occupied by the building?

MR STEEL: I think that is one criterion that the National Capital Design Review Panel considers. I am happy to come back on notice to see whether one of the other criteria would apply if a proposal were put forward in relation to a two-storey development at Big Splash. I have not met with Big Splash; I do not know what they are proposing. I understand that they have made initial representations to the City and Environment Directorate in relation to potential development on the site. Obviously, that does not mean that the government supports any future development at Big Splash. I want to make it absolutely clear that the government has no intention of supporting any zoning

changes at Big Splash away from the current PRZ2 zoning, if they were proposing work that goes beyond the current allowances of the Territory Plan.

I will come back in relation to the NCDRP issue. I am not sure if I can comment on the proposal. I am not sure whether it has been made, but I will check that as well to see whether a formal application has been made through to the Territory Planning Authority.

MS BARRY: Minister, given the proposal was clearly inconsistent with the legal requirements of the zone, why didn't the government immediately rule it out?

MR STEEL: I do not make planning decisions on individual development applications, unless they are Territory Priority Projects. When a developer comes forward, they go to the independent Territory Planning Authority. They fairly assess, under the Planning Act and against the Territory Plan, whether it can be approved or not; whether it can be approved with conditions; or whether it needs to take into account a whole range of different other matters, which be environmental or otherwise. There are, of course, referral agencies that are involved in this, right across broader government.

So the government will not be pre-emptively not approving development applications that we are not involved in the direct assessment of, for me as minister. The Territory Planning Authority has a mandate that is set out in the Planning Act. They are required to follow the processes under the Planning Act. I have every confidence that they would do so professionally in relation to any proposal that comes forward.

I committed in the previous answer to come back on whether there is actually a development application that has been brought forward.

MR CAIN: Minister, what was the legal basis used by the Chief Minister to rule out rezoning the Big Splash site, and was this a decision of cabinet?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. The earlier question was about an individual development application, not a major plan amendment, which you are now asking me about. I have previously said, in the answer to the first question, that the government has no intention to change the zoning of Big Splash. I am happy to state that again: we have no intention to change the zoning of Big Splash.

Under the Planning Act, there is a process that is set out about major plan amendments. They can be brought forward by me, as minister; they can be brought forward by the Territory Planning Authority; or they can be brought forward as a proponent-initiated major plan amendment. If it is brought forward as a proponent-initiated major plan amendment, then that would be considered first by the Territory Planning Authority, and then it would go through the process and eventually end up here in the Assembly.

It is not just up to government and ministers to decide whether we would support rezoning; it is up to the entire Assembly. It would come here. I do not see a lot of support for it in the Assembly. But it would still need to go through a process, and it would have to be fairly considered under the Planning Act.

As far as I am aware, there has been no application in relation to rezoning. The ACT

government is not planning on making a change through the government-initiated major plan amendment process that I have outlined.

Housing ACT—fire damage

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the minister for housing. On 7 June this year, there was a house fire at a Housing ACT complex in O'Connor. As a result of that house fire, all the residents were relocated to other public housing. According to these residents, there has been a lack of information on the cause of the fire. Minister, have residents been provided a detailed report on the cause of the fire? If not, will the government provide a report to all former tenants?

MS BERRY: I will take that question on notice.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, what compensation is the government providing to former public housing tenants who have lost all their belongings due to the fire?

MS BERRY: I will take that question on notice, too.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, how does the government expect low-income residents to replace what they lost due to this fire?

MS BERRY: I cannot speak for these circumstances. I have taken the first two questions on notice. On the supplementary question, Housing ACT works very hard to support tenants when these kinds of circumstances might occur, including providing them with emergency accommodation and supporting them to find replacements for things that they might have lost during a fire. Also, it would be a tenant's responsibility to have insurance on their own belongings, as well. However, noting that these people are vulnerable, there are a range of supports that are available across community organisations. Housing ACT would support housing tenants making contact with those organisations, or vice versa.

We know it is a particularly stressful time for anybody in those circumstances, but particularly for people in public housing accommodation. Housing ACT takes their responsibilities very seriously in supporting tenants through that process.

Health—Southside Hydrotherapy Pool

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Minister, on 25 August, the long-awaited Southside Hydrotherapy Pool opened at the Lakeside Leisure Centre in Tuggeranong, yet there is significant concern in the community about the overall accessibility of the facility to the public. Extended and regular bookings by community groups like Arthritis ACT have significantly reduced operating hours for the public, placing an additional burden and expense on some of the community's most vulnerable residents. Minister, what is the arrangement between the Lakeside Leisure Centre, Arthritis ACT and the ACT government over the use of the Southside Hydrotherapy Pool?

MS BERRY: The hydrotherapy pool facility can be booked by people, as with any other sports facility, through Belgravia Leisure's Active World app. They can show up

and use casual entry, as well as book through the Lakeside Leisure Centre reception. In the pool itself, 12 people can use the pool at any given time.

I cannot confirm that I have had any correspondence from anybody with regard to concerns about organisations like Arthritis Australia using the pool, but I can give some attendance numbers. There is general entry use of 899, commercial entry use of 108, and not-for-profit entry of 787, showing that it is a very popular pool space and that it is being used quite well across the community, across a range of different areas.

I might take a bit of that question on notice; if there is any further information I can provide about usage of the pool that is helpful in responding to that question, I will do so. Bookings at that pool are made as they would be for any other pool usage by the community.

MR PARTON: Minister, what is the benefit of opening a public facility like the Southside Hydrotherapy Pool if it is not accessible to a large portion of the community that it was intended to serve?

MS BERRY: I would not agree with the premise of that question, given the number that I have just provided on the usage of the pool by the broader community, which was 899. There was clearly very significant use of the pool through the month of October. Commercial entry was 108 and the not-for-profit entry was 787. I would say that it is accessible to ordinary users in the community.

MS MORRIS: What can you say to the residents of Tuggeranong and Canberra's south who were promised a new facility and who, however, have been met with increased costs and restrictions on doing so?

MS BERRY: I do not agree with the premise of that question, either. I have just given some information on the usage of the pool facility, and the feedback that I have had from the community and user groups has been very positive. As I said, if there are issues that have been raised with my office and if I have any other further information that is useful, I will bring it back to the Assembly.

International Day of People with Disability—community organisations

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: My question is to the Minister for Disability, Carers and Community Services. Minister, as I am sure you know, today is International Day of People with Disability, or I-Day for short. I understand that last year responsibility for marking the day transitioned from the ACT government to community control. How will government support community-led celebrations of I-Day in the ACT this year?

MS ORR: Today most definitely is I-Day, the International Day of People with Disability. The ACT government transitioned the festivities to celebrate this day to community control last year. However, we continue to support it through funding a range of activities to celebrate the day—and not just today but also throughout the year—and supporting a community controlled steering committee, with partners for I-Day celebrations planning activities and coordinating events throughout the community to raise awareness of the issues that I-Day focuses on.

This year's theme for I-Day is "Halting Hate, Finding Kindness". This has been the focus of the activities that the steering committee has progressed, including the official opening today of the main event for the steering community. I had the pleasure of dropping in and making a few comments. I was definitely not the highest profile person in the forum, because events were opened by Michael Theo, who is an actor in *Austin*. It is fair to say he made some lovely comments about Canberra and confirmed that he did not believe we were boring, based on his time filming here. I think he very much embraced the "Halting Hate, Finding Kindness" theme, even if it is not entirely focused on disability. He was definitely embraced by those watching online, which is another way of indicating community control: they can choose the format so that everyone can participate in the way that suits them. There were a lot of love hearts, thumbs up and applause going up during his speech on the online forum.

There are a lot of roles that we will continue to have. We are the first jurisdiction to transition this day to community control, and we will continue to support the steering committee as they grow their focus on the activities and events that recognise the contribution that people with disability make to our community and the issues and matters that are important to them.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, what is the significance of transitioning to community control?

MS ORR: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for the question because it is a really important one. It goes to the core value of "Nothing about us without us" and making sure that the disability community has governance over the things that concern them. Community control of I-Day means that it is planned, designed, delivered and overseen by people with disability, their organisations and advocacy groups. It is accessible for people with all kinds of disability, including intellectual and cognitive disability, and it is an opportunity for people with disability to inform, lead and participate at all levels. It really goes to show how important it is that the community is brought in on this.

As I mentioned in my last answer, the event today highlights how these considerations become tangible with what is put forward. The event we had was online so that everyone was able to attend. They could easily attend from wherever. We had an Auslan interpreter and we had captions available. I slowed down my speaking because sometimes I speak a bit fast and people do not always understand me. I was reminded to slow down. It is about creating an environment where it is okay to say, "Hey, this is what I need. If we all do that and participate, we can have a good time."

MS TOUGH: Minister, how will the community celebrate International Day of People with Disability this year, and how can the broader community get involved?

MS ORR: I thank Ms Tough for the question. I understand the steering committee has been meeting throughout the year to plan the program and bring on board what the disability community would like the celebration to include. A lot of work has come from that. There is a showcase of creative works and new media partnership, with the *Canberra Weekly* featuring a centre-spread supplement and a celebration pass. There is a podcast series with Radio 1RPH. As I already mentioned in my last two responses, the showcased theme is "Halting Hate, Finding Kindness". This theme is all about addressing disinformation and hate speech and working towards having a truly

inclusive Canberra. There is still quite a lot to get involved in, and I would encourage members to go check it out.

Mr Barr: Mr Speaker, the time has come. I ask that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.