



QUESTION TIME
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

Thursday, 5 December 2024

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Ministerial arrangements

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Trade) (2.01):. Ministers Orr and Stephen-Smith are not present in question time, as they are attending ministerial councils. It is peak intergovernmental meeting season this week. Minister Berry, the Deputy Chief Minister, will respond to questions in the portfolio areas of disability, carers and community services, seniors and veterans, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs. Minister Steel will respond to questions in the finance and public service portfolios, and I will endeavour—and do my best!—to respond to questions in all of the remaining portfolios: health, mental health, climate change, environment, energy and water.

Questions without notice

ACT Health and Canberra Health Services—staffing

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Health—the Chief Minister in this instance. Minister, why is it that morale in health agencies has fallen to a point where government is struggling to retain specialist medical staff, nursing staff, allied health staff and even administrative staff?

MR BARR: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question—I think! I am sure the Minister the Health would disagree with the premise of the question and would outline in some detail the success of recruitment strategies that both Canberra Health Services and ACT Health have undertaken.

Mr Hanson: If you don't know, just say so, Andrew.

MR BARR: I do not know that the facts actually support the proposition that the Leader of the Opposition is putting. I am sure that when this matter is further explored, in either annual report hearings or estimates, further detail can be provided to dispel the assertion that the Leader of the Opposition has made in that question.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, what will you do to address reports that the shortage of administrative staff means allied health and social workers are undertaking some patient discharges.

MR BARR: Clearly, we are in a period of full employment in the ACT. We have the lowest unemployment rate in the nation, so it is not straightforward to find applicants in every single area where there are job vacancies. Canberra Health Services continue recruitment campaigns locally—particularly in partnership with our university and TAFE sector—nationally and internationally to fill vacancies that we have across the health service. Where a vacancy cannot be filled, obviously work does need to be performed, and that work is performed within the Canberra Health Services team. But we continue to actively recruit locally, nationally and internationally.

MR CAIN: Minister, will you undertake to advise the Assembly on staff shortages, including measures of shortages across different occupations, and how these shortages are being managed?

MR BARR: I thank Mr Cain for the supplementary question. There are, obviously, reporting mechanisms within the annual reports and budget statements in relation to funded positions, staffing levels and outcomes that are achieved. It is clearly a dynamic system with nearly 10,000 staff in Canberra Health Services. So there will always be an element of new people being recruited and some existing staff either retiring or moving to other jobs.

I think there are appropriate reporting mechanisms, and we will continue to report through those mechanisms.

Crime—antisocial behaviour

MS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. Minister, my office has been informed of an incident of indecent exposure. This incident occurred outside a massage parlour in Dundas Court and involved topless women and condoms in public areas which host children's activities, such as a chess club and a martial arts facility. Minister, are you concerned by these reports?

DR PATERSON: I thank the member for the question. I am concerned if the reports have not been made to ACT police, because that is the appropriate avenue to report this. Thank you for raising it. You can always email my office and I am always happy to pass that information on to ACT police.

MS MORRIS: Minister, what have you done to protect children and the community?

DR PATERSON: I thank the member for the question. Crime prevention is a key responsibility of ACT Policing. I commend ACT police for doing an outstanding job in our community to reduce crime. I am sure members are aware that ACT Policing released their annual report yesterday or the day before. I am really pleased to report that crimes against people in the ACT have reduced by 11 per cent and crimes against property have reduced by seven per cent. I really commend ACT police on the work that they have done. Crime prevention is working. Over the last few years, ACT police have moved to a police services model which is more about prevention and community focused operations. It is intelligence led and evidence based. It is agile and mobile and is obviously reaping rewards for the community, because we are seeing such substantial reductions in crime.

MR COCKS: Minister, were you unaware of the incident outside a massage parlour involving topless women and condoms in public areas which host children's activities?

DR PATERSON: I was unaware.

Public schools—infrastructure

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood. Minister, you recently promised that ACT Labor would upgrade classrooms, playgrounds, green spaces, staff rooms, and toilets in public schools across Canberra, if re-elected in October 2024. You said on 23 September:

We will conduct an audit of all our public schools ... to understand the intimate

detail of every single school and what the priorities are for every school.

When will this audit be conducted and will it be published?

MS BERRY: Yes, we will be conducting an audit of all our schools, working with our school communities. Part of the work that we have been doing in government is the insourcing work with the building services officers, who have some intimate knowledge of their schools, which will help the Education Directorate work with schools to understand their priorities when it comes to maintenance and repairs of the schools. That will be an important part of the work we will do into the audit. I will have to consider whether or not the audit is made public and whether that is of use to the community, or whether it is information that is kept within the directorate and within schools to do that work.

MR HANSON: Minister, how many schools are you aware of that do not have adequate toilets or heating right now?

MS BERRY: The purpose of the audit is to understand what those kinds of issues are and what the priorities of the schools are within our community.

MS BARRY: Minister, after 23 years in government, why do you not know the condition of our schools?

MS BERRY: Previously, particularly under federal conservative governments, there was a move towards school autonomy which meant that information about schools and around infrastructure was not often passed on to the directorate. We are moving to a less autonomous approach with our public—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS BERRY: We are moving towards a more system-wide approach to how we manage our school system—

Mr Cain interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Mr Cain.

MS BERRY: We are moving towards a more system-wide approach within our schools so that all schools have contact with the Education Directorate. The Education Directorate is very clear with schools, understanding what they need as far as education supports and as far as infrastructure, maintenance and repairs. One of the ways that we have been moving towards that is through the direct employment of cleaning services across our schools, taking that work and responsibility off schools—relieving them to do the things that they need to do best, which is teaching. We are also moving building service officers into a more directly employed model to be able to provide maintenance and repairs to schools in a more timely manner, understanding exactly what the priorities are within our schools at different moments in time and then being able to fund our schools to deliver that work.

Children and young people—institutional responses to child sexual

abuse

MR RATTENBURY: My question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney, on 13 November 2024, the High Court allowed an appeal from a decision of the Court of Appeal of the Supreme Court of Victoria. The impact of this is that the Roman Catholic Diocese of Ballarat is not vicariously liable for sexual assaults committed by one of its priests. Attorney, what is the ACT doing to address this step backwards for survivors of institutional child sexual abuse accessing justice?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Rattenbury for the question. I assume that he is referring to the matter of Bird. In that case, I would note that we have recently had a meeting of the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General where the issue was raised and discussed. It obviously has national implications. Victoria is leading some work to present back to the standing committee at the start of next year. But, in the meantime, officers from JACS are already having a look at the implications and what this might mean for our own legislative program.

MR RATTENBURY: Attorney, what timeframe are you working towards to deliver legislative change in the ACT to ensure survivors of institutional child sexual abuse do not have their legal matters impacted by this decision?

MS CHEYNE: Obviously, we want to address this as quickly as we can, but we need to understand the full implications and the consequences of the outcome from the High Court. We want to make sure that we get this right, especially given that it does have national implications, and we do want, as far as possible, for the same approach to be adopted across states and territories.

MR BRADDOCK: Attorney-General, are you able to advise how many matters there are in the ACT on foot now that have been impacted by this decision?

MS CHEYNE: No.

Transport Canberra—fare-free travel

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, can you provide the Assembly with an update on the government's plan to introduce fare-free Fridays on public transport services?

MR STEEL: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for his question in relation to a key Labor election commitment that we made to deliver fare-free Fridays, which will start from tomorrow, 6 December. This is one of the initiatives that ACT Labor is implementing to support all Canberrans with cost-of-living relief. From when bus and light rail services start in the morning on Friday until they finish in the evening—in fact, to 1 am for light rail services on Saturday—passengers will not have to pay a cent to use them to travel around the city. This is also a great chance for Canberrans to try out our public transport network and the new public transport ticketing system, My Way+.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, how will fare-free Fridays benefit the community?

MR STEEL: We expect that fare-free Fridays will provide a number of benefits to the community. The primary benefit is with cost-of-living relief. Every Canberran will have the option to save on transport costs—whether that be fares, petrol or parking—and travel for free using public transport on a Friday. For a family of two adults and two children, we anticipate fare-free Fridays will save them around \$1,000 a year if they catch a bus or light rail service every day during the week for 48 weeks of the year.

Beyond just getting to and from work or school, this is really a great way for Canberrans to take the opportunity to visit a business in their town centre, or in the city, on a day when patronage is typically lower, with more people working from home. Currently, light rail services run from Gungahlin to the city every 15 minutes until 1 am on Saturday mornings, and rapid buses run every 30 minutes between the city and town centres until around 10.30 pm. Canberrans can now choose to use public transport as a free option to get home safely.

MS TOUGH: Minister, what do passengers need to do to access free public transport on Fridays?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Tough for her supplementary question. To take advantage of fare-free Fridays, we are asking Canberrans to tap on and off using their preferred payment methods, such as a debit card, credit card or My Way+ card or their smartphone, with Apple Pay, Google Wallet or a QR code. Passengers will not be charged any fees on Fridays—no matter which method they choose. We are asking Canberrans to still tap on and off public transport services so that we are able to collect data across the network that we will then use to improve network planning in the future. We will of course be monitoring patronage with that data, and it will provide us with important insights into how people are choosing to move around our city and whether they are taking up this new incentive of free fares on Friday.

Arts—Canberra Youth Theatre

MS CLAY: My question is to the minister for the arts. The Canberra Youth Theatre this week has announced a series of measures to ensure the sustainability of the organisation, including staff cuts, a reduction in training programs and a pause on public productions unless additional, ongoing funding can be secured. This 52-year-old theatre company is not receiving sufficient public funds to produce quality theatre with young people and local professional artists. Our young people will miss out; so will our culture, our artists and our economy, with the ACT's creative sectors contributing \$2.9 billion and around eight per cent to our local economy. The Greens took a policy to the election to increase arts organisation funding because we heard from the sector that they did not have enough funds to run programs or pay artists fairly, and that many organisations would fail as a result. How will you realise the ACT government's ambition to become Australia's arts capital if our leading arts organisations collapse from an ongoing lack of funding that does not meet the actual demands of the sector?

MR PETTERSSON: I thank the member for the question. The ACT government does not resile from our ambitious agenda in the arts. ACT Labor took to the election a commitment to increase funding to arts organisations by 25 per cent. The Canberra Youth Theatre receives \$300,000 annually from the ACT government. The recent announcement by this organisation, a non-government organisation, to change their

service offering does not impact that funding provided by the ACT government.

MS CLAY: Minister, why is the ACT government able to find \$8 million each year for a single industry, the horseracing industry, but it is unable to find an additional \$10 million for the entire arts sector?

MR PETTERSSON: The ACT government is proud to support the local arts industry. The current \$9 million that is provided to arts organisations in the ACT provides for a vibrant arts sector here in the community. We know that more funding will make the ACT more vibrant, which is why we have committed to increasing arts funding for organisations by 25 per cent.

MISS NUTTALL: What consultation have you done with the Canberra Youth Theatre about this issue?

MR PETTERSSON: I thank Miss Nuttall for the question. I, like other members, received an email on Tuesday evening, which was then followed by media reporting. I am currently in the process of arranging a meeting with Canberra Youth Theatre.

Cardiology—waiting lists

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, I recently spoke to a constituent with a surgically-implanted heart monitor. The monitor had a three-year working life. He only had the monitor removed 10 years after it was implanted—seven years later than it should have been. This was despite visiting his GP and getting the referral every 90 days as required—for that seven years—to renew his referral so that he could stay on the waiting list.

Why are so many Canberrans having to wait many years longer than necessary for simple procedures?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Castley for the question. I do not know the details of the specific case. I will need to take that on notice on behalf of the Minister for Health.

More broadly, the issue of health funding is one that is the subject of considerable intergovernmental discussion. I note that I take any federal government commitment to increase their share of national health funding very seriously. I want to acknowledge that in the last decade, after the 2014 federal budget, then Prime Minister Turnbull, to his great credit, did increase commonwealth government funding. He closed half of the gap that was created by the 2014 Abbott-Hockey budget. We are now seeking, collectively, as states and territories—

Ms Castley: Point of order, Mr Speaker, on relevance. I am just wondering if the Chief Minister could address the specific concerns of Canberrans waiting longer than necessary. This does not have anything to do with Tony Abbott.

MR SPEAKER: Stop the clock, please. The Chief Minister at first, at the start of his answer, suggested he would take the detail on notice. Chief Minister, you have 40 seconds to continue providing background on that if you want. I think he has been relevant to the question by taking the specifics on notice.

MR BARR: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I think the fundamental point is that waiting times across the entirety of the Australian health system is somewhat strongly linked to available funding. In the Australian federation, funding is a partnership between the Australian government and the states and territories. The idea that there were no consequences from that 2014 federal budget is rubbish. The consequences of that decision and those cuts to health have manifested over a decade. That is the point that we have been making repeatedly.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, what will you do so that patients, like this constituent, are not required to renew their referrals so frequently—every 90 days—purely to stay on the wait-list?

MR BARR: We will continue to fight for more health funding from the Commonwealth government to make up for the cuts that the federal Liberal Party put in place in 2014. The consequences of those cuts a decade ago—a massive reduction in public health funding—have been seen all decade. The most recent period of government has seen the first serious increase in funding—for bulk-billing and for health funding—other than the amount that then Prime Minister Turnbull returned to the states and territories during his brief period as Prime Minister.

Funding cuts hurt health services.

Ms Castley: On relevance, Mr Speaker, I have a point of order, if I can. My question was about this 90-day period where my constituent must return to their GP to stay on—

MR SPEAKER: Ms Castley, I do not think there is a point of order. I think the Chief Minister is being directly relevant to the question, and I think he has concluded his answer.

MR CAIN: Chief Minister, why are health outcomes getting worse when health spending has increased?

MR BARR: That is because the rate of demand for health services is growing faster than the available funding at both commonwealth and state and territory level.

Members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Members! Can we let the Chief Minister answer.

MR BARR: We continue to invest more every year in health funding. We provide more than 50 per cent. It should be a fifty-fifty funding partnership between the commonwealth and the states and territories. This is what we are fighting for now, as we have been for some time.

To be clear, under then Prime Minister Abbott the commonwealth reduced their share of funding to 40 per cent or less, in some instances. That was 10 years ago, and the impact of that has been flowing through state and territory health systems for a decade. The inescapable fact for the Liberal Party is that they cut public health funding, and the consequences are there for all to see.

Members interjecting—

Ms Berry: A point of order. It is the third day of the new government, and there are constant interjections from the Canberra Liberals. It was relatively quiet over the last two days, but today it is a barrage.

MR SPEAKER: Members, if we can try to stop this from becoming a circus, that would be good.

Big Canberra Battery—private-public partnership

MR COCKS: My question is to the Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water. The Big Canberra Battery started as a \$100 million government project, but the government ultimately entered a \$400 million arrangement with a Macquarie Bank subsidiary, Eku Energy. Under this arrangement, the financial benefits to the taxpayer are public, but the costs are commercial-in-confidence and kept from the public. Did the government prepare a business case or cost-benefit analysis for this project? If so, does it provide a positive financial return for taxpayers?

MR BARR: Yes. And the net benefit is contained in the budget papers.

MR COCKS: Minister, are you bound by any policies regarding the use of commercial-in-confidence arrangements or required to consider transparent alternatives?

MR BARR: We have been transparent by publishing the revenue stream in the budget papers. The commercial-in-confidence element relates, obviously, to the battery operator, Eku Energy, and their arbitrage in the National Energy Market. For obvious reasons, that is commercial-in-confidence, because that is clearly a commercial arrangement. There is a line in the budget papers: “Big Canberra Battery Stream Revenue”. It is there for all to see.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, how would transparency be improved if the use of commercial-in-confidence arrangements were minimised?

MR BARR: The approach by the government is to be as transparent as we can within the confines of commercial procurements in the National Energy Market, and we have been in that we have declared the capital cost of the project that is met by the proponent and we have declared the revenue stream. We have been clear that it is net present value positive for the territory. That was the basis of this. Our energy network needs more storage for renewable energy. Canberra needs the assurance of having dispatchable power in that volume. It not only helps to store renewable energy but also assists our households and our businesses should there be shortages in the NEM. We have dispatchable power in Canberra.

There are already a number of batteries operating as part of the Big Canberra Battery and there are more to come. The idea is to store more renewable energy and be able to arbitrage in the NEM to generate revenue for the territory. It is, I guess, a 21st century renewable equivalent of the ACT government owning the energy generation. We procure it from renewable sources, we store it, it is dispatchable, it helps the NEM and

it helps Canberra households. It is a good outcome for our city; it is good public policy. To touch on what Mr Emerson referred to in his inaugural speech, it is nation-leading—the sort of thing that Canberra should aspire to do. We are doing it and we are delivering it.

Coroner’s report—inquest into the death of Rozalia Spadafora

MR EMERSON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Tragically, five-year-old Rozalia Spadafora died on the evening of 5 July 2022. The preschooler went into cardiac arrest roughly 27 hours after being taken to the Canberra Hospital Emergency Department. Evidence reported in the media at that time suggested Rozalia died of myocarditis as a consequence of having contracted influenza A. Counsel assisting the inquiry, Mr Michael Fordham, indicated Rozalia could have been diagnosed with myocarditis up to 12 hours sooner than she was. It has been put to me just this week that the coroner’s report, initially due to be released in May of this year, will be released tomorrow, after the Assembly is adjourned for the year, and two months before it meets again.

Can the Chief Minister, on behalf of the health minister, please advise the Assembly if the health minister has met with the coroner to discuss the findings of this inquest and inform the Assembly as to why the release has been delayed until tomorrow?

MR BARR: I will have to take that on notice. I am not in a position to confirm. I am aware that I have been advised that the coroner will make a public statement, indeed, that the findings will be released tomorrow, but in relation to the other part of the question, I will have to take that on notice.

MR EMERSON: Has the health minister sought a briefing from the coroner, and when, and will the government commit to expediting consideration and implementation of the inquest’s recommendations, including as part of the upcoming budget?

MR BARR: I will take the first part of the question on notice. In relation to the second part, there is obviously a formal process for responding to a coronial report and the minister has advised she intends to provide a formal response to that report as soon as possible.

Rivers and lakes—safety

MISS NUTTALL: My question is to the Minister for City and Government Services. Minister, summer is well and truly here, with the heat we have experienced in the last few weeks, and that means one thing for many people, which is swimming. Devastatingly, we have seen a number of drownings in ACT rivers in recent years. Given that people have definitely started spending their weekends in the river already, why hasn’t the government’s targeted communications and awareness campaign, as recommended by the coroner’s investigation, begun yet this summer, and when will it begin?

MS CHEYNE: I will just double check exactly when it is going to start, but I was briefed about this just this week. In fact, it has started. It started on 1 December. It will run for the entire summer season. It is the “Reduce your risk around waterways”

campaign. It will be specifically targeting the culturally and linguistically diverse community through new translated advertisements and strategically placed communications, such as those located close to our university campuses and public transport. Radio advertisements, social media and online advertisements have been translated into Mandarin, Vietnamese, Nepali and Punjabi.

To enhance the messaging onsite, the Parks and Conservation Service have installed large swim safety signs at 17 key locations. To deliver the second recommendation, the Parks and Conservation Service has installed nine lifebuoys at popular riverside locations, including Casuarina Sands, Casuarina Pool, Cotter Bend and Uriarra east and west, where the river is that Miss Nuttall refers to. These devices have been placed next to swim safety signs to ensure that they are clearly visible in the event of an emergency.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, when will the Local Drowning Prevention Plan be finalised and made public?

MS CHEYNE: I will take that on notice.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, what improvements and upgrades have been made to signage around popular swimming spots and the installation of life-saving equipment at those swimming spots?

MS CHEYNE: I believe I answered that in detail in answer to the first question.

Schools—safety

MR HANSON: My question is to the minister for education. Minister, we are, sadly, all aware of the history of violence and assault in ACT schools against teachers, students and principals. The national survey has shown that more than 70 per cent of ACT teachers faced actual physical violence, compared with, for example, just 31 per cent in Victoria. Dr Paul Kidson from the ACU said that the survey showed that a strong intervention was needed.

Minister, what are you doing for the upcoming school year to provide strong interventions, as have been called for, against violence in ACT schools?

MS BERRY: I have been working with our schools over the last term of government on implementing the Positive Behaviours for Learning framework, which is a cultural change across our schools. That takes time to implement, and it takes time to change culture in our schools. We are also making sure that we support school principals through our election commitment for a school principal health and wellbeing program. We are also committed to dealing, upfront, with bullying in our schools, which can also have an impact on our teachers and school staff.

We are not talking about just picking something up off the shelf. We are wanting to implement something that actually makes considered and lasting change within our school communities around culture and what is and is not acceptable within our school communities. It has become quite an issue across ACT schools, and we have talked over the years in this place about workplace violence in our school communities. It is a difficult matter, and we are working with our schools to address the concerns they have

and with our school communities on what is expected behaviour.

MR HANSON: Minister, will you undertake to provide full, frank and open reports on school violence to the Assembly on a regular basis and outline specific steps undertaken to address that violence?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Hanson for the supplementary. We do provide public information on incident reports of occupational violence by financial year, and in any particular circumstances I am also happy to provide advice and particular briefings to the shadow minister on any particular incidents that he raises with me. I am reluctant to talk about individual schools in these circumstances. I do not think it helps the school community to address matters within a public space, and it really does interrupt their ability to be able to resolve the issues when they are constantly being talked about negatively in our community. We have seen the result that has on schools that have had those incidents in the past. When we work together to address these incidents as a community and as a government, respecting the complex issues that are sometimes involved, we can overcome these issues and schools can move on and become safer environments for students, staff and families.

MS MORRIS: Minister, why is the ACT so significantly out of step with the rest of the nation when it comes to school violence?

MS BERRY: I disagree with premise of that question. We have been doing significant work with our schools around understanding violence and how we can make sure school is a safe place for teachers, school staff and our students. We have strategies currently in place that actually have an impact on OV incidents in ACT public schools, and these include: teaching social and emotional learning; implementing the Positive Behaviours for Learning framework, which I have talked about; professional learning in trauma-informed practice and team teaching; reviewing students whose behaviours are of concern and high risk; and messaging school communities through the OV prevention awareness campaign, which we launched in February 2024.

There is no silver bullet. It takes a range of different programs, some that take some time to implement, for culture change to occur, and some need specified and specialist approaches. I understand that what we need is a safe workplace; children also have a right to an education. Sometimes those rights conflict with each other, but we work through them, and we are keen to make sure that both those rights are implemented appropriately.

ACT Policing—road safety

MS TOUGH: My question is to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. Minister, how has the ACT government invested in the road safety capabilities of ACT Policing to ensure Canberrans remain safe on our roads?

DR PATERSON: I thank Ms Tough for her question. Tragically, again this year we have seen lives lost on our roads. As we head into the Christmas and new year period, it is time to call on the community to reflect on their behaviour on the roads and the safety of others on our roads.

ACT Policing and the government take road safety incredibly seriously. That is why ACT Labor invested in a \$5 million build for the new road policing centre in Hume. This is an outstanding state-of-the-art facility which replaced the outdated traffic operations centre in Belconnen. I visited this facility within a week of becoming the minister, with the Chief Police Officer.

Since it opened in 2023, this centre has enabled police to respond quickly to major traffic incidents across Canberra. This site houses not only road policing officers but also support staff, to assist them in their operations. At this facility, police have access to cutting-edge technology and expertise to be able to ensure that Canberrans are safe on our roads. Arming our police with these facilities to do the job they need to do is a commitment that this government will deliver on.

We are currently considering the requirements of a new city police station, as well as headquarters buildings, and we are committed to providing upgrades where they are needed throughout the community, including ACT Labor's commitment to build a new police station in Molonglo. As well as additional resourcing and facility upgrades, Labor committed at the election to recruit 150 new police personnel by 2029. As minister, I look forward to delivering this.

MS TOUGH: Minister, what ACT police campaigns are happening over the next couple of months to promote community safety in the lead-up to Christmas?

DR PATERSON: I thank Ms Tough for the question. At this time of year, we know that people like to let their hair down, and there is an air of celebration with friends or family and in workplaces across our city. The summer period in the ACT historically results in an increase in alcohol-related incidents and arrests, due to the increased traffic, parties and activity around licensed venues, along with the public holidays and events such as Christmas and New Year's Eve.

Tomorrow I will be launching the Summer Safe campaign with the Chief Police Officer in Garema Place. The Summer Safe campaign has been developed so that ACT Policing can effectively educate and engage with the Canberra community about dedicated enforcement throughout the summer period. The Summer Safe campaign will run until 28 February next year and will focus on reducing alcohol-related violence, and promoting safe behaviours and road safety. Community safety is always a top priority for this government.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, how can Canberrans work with ACT Policing to report dangerous driving behaviours?

DR PATERSON: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for his question and for raising this important point. ACT Policing are really keen for community input into their monitoring of dangerous driving behaviours. In May this year, ACT Policing expanded the capability of their online reporting portal. This allows residents to upload video footage of dangerous driving behaviours. Community members who capture dashcam or mobile phone footage of driving offences, including dangerous driving, road rage, careless driving, mobile phone usage, running red lights or seatbelt offences can now upload this information directly to the portal.

Dangerous driving is the latest crime type to feature on the online reporting portal, but there are other options for people, with portals around historical sexual assaults, petrol drive-offs, property damage and vandalism incidents as well.

As of September this year, ACT police have received 555 online reports of dangerous driving. Of these reports, 318 have resulted in a traffic infringement notice, 48 have received a caution and 73 have received a warning. I think this is great evidence that the online reporting portal is actually working and achieving the outcomes. I encourage members to get out and about and tell the community to provide input through this portal.

Transport Canberra—concessions

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Transport. According to Transport Canberra, the requirement for tertiary students' concession fares is that they must be attending a public or private Australian university or CIT full time.

There are more than 200 students in the ACT who study at Charles Sturt University at the Barton campus. However, CSU students are unable to choose the concession fare as CSU is not included as one of the university options. Why are ACT students studying full time at Charles Sturt University not eligible for concession fares with MyWay+?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. I think he is aware of what the issue is, because he raised it with me previously. I believe that is something to do with the way that Charles Sturt University provides information on their student cards. I have asked Transport Canberra to work with the university to look at ways that we can provide students with that concession status. I am happy to come back with some further information on notice.

MR SPEAKER: So you are taking that on notice?

MR STEEL: Yes.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, why are no tertiary concession fares available for Canberra residents who are enrolled online or remotely in full-time tertiary studies at Australian universities?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. I am happy to come back in relation to where those discussions with Transport Canberra are up to.

MR HANSON: Minister, are concession fares available for part-time students attending tertiary institutions in Canberra? If not, why not?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. I understand that they are typically not provided with the concession status if they are part time. It has been for full-time students. The reason for that is they have to attend face-to-face learning around the city across more days of the week. Therefore, the concession applies to provide them with some relief while they do that full time. Of course, many part-time students—not all; I accept that—do also have a job as well. So they have income-earning capacity, which they can then use to pay for public transport.

Planning—Gungahlin cinema

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development. Minister, a constant complaint I hear from Gungahlin residents is: where is the cinema? A Crown lease for the site was allocated for that purpose and required development to be completed by 28 February 2024. Can you please provide an update on what the government is doing to enforce the lease conditions on that site and whether any extension to the development application for this valuable site in the Gungahlin Town Centre has been awarded?

MR STEEL: It is frustrating that a cinema has not been delivered by the private owner of the site that has the lease requirement on it to deliver a cinema. I understand that the development has experienced unexpected delays due to factors like COVID-19 and, subsequently, the challenge of securing an operator of the cinema. The Territory Planning Authority is currently liaising regularly with the developer to ensure that development approval remains active. The Authority will continue to assist with progression of the development where it is appropriate and where they are able to do so. They, of course, understand that another developer has also been engaging with the Gungahlin community and is proposing a mixed-use development on another block, which is in section 11 of the Gungahlin town centre. It is a separate site to where the current cinema lease requirements are. If another developer wishes to propose a different cinema in the Gungahlin town centre, they would need to be assessed by the Territory Planning Authority.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, is the government still satisfied that the developer has met the requirements of the deed for that parcel of land?

MR STEEL: If the building covenant timeframe in the Crown lease expires, then the lessee would be in breach of their lease and the ACT government may take action. Given that there is currently no breach by the developer, there are limited opportunities for the government to intervene at this point in time. But the ACT government is assisting with progression where appropriate.

MS CLAY: Minister, what is the ACT government doing to ensure lease conditions are actually enforced to make sure that remaining land is used properly?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. As the new planning minister and also minister for sustainable development, it has been a topic of discussion that I have already had with Access Canberra and EPSDD. They have assured me that they are taking action in relation to a range of planning requirements and lease conditions. I am happy to provide some more information through the various ways in which members have opportunities to ask questions in the Assembly, including through upcoming annual reports hearings, where that may be a topic of interest.

Planning and development—National Capital Plan

MS CARRICK: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development. Minister, one of the key principles of Canberra's urban structure in the National Capital Plan is a hierarchy of centres, with each town having a centre acting

as a focal point for higher order retail functions, commercial services, offices and community facilities. The hierarchical principle means that town centres provide retail, commercial, cultural, entertainment and other facilities to meet community needs. They also serve as a location for office-based employment. The National Capital Plan also states that:

Continued expansion of services and facilities should be provided for and encouraged in each of the town centres.

The Territory Plan cannot be inconsistent with the National Capital Plan. With the loss of recreation facilities in the Woden town centre, how does the Territory Plan remain consistent with the National Capital Plan?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. I do note the very strict hierarchy of centres that we have here in the ACT. We recently made Molonglo a town centre as well. We had to change the National Capital Plan as a result, to then allow us to do that in our own Territory Plan, to provide those facilities. The Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate has been undertaking community needs assessments. They have been doing that in the Molonglo Valley recently to inform the planning for the new town centre.

They have also been doing that ACT-wide to look at the range of different needs of the community that we may need to take into account in planning, particularly when we are providing more housing, and the recreational facilities, community facilities, school facilities and other facilities that may be required to support that as well as transport infrastructure and other infrastructure may be required as well. So that is an ongoing piece of work.

With the district strategies, we consulted with the community to understand what the current community and recreational facilities are and what we may also need to look at in the future. It identified some areas of future work, which now EPSDD is taking forward, including in the Woden district.

The government, more broadly, continues to invest in recreational facilities. We have made some specific election commitments as the Labor party that we intend on delivering in government. One I note particularly: upgrades to the existing fantastic Mawson Playing Fields—providing new facilities there, toilet facilities and change facilities—that will enable the community to get better use out of those very important and vital areas for the community. There are other things I am sure that we will be doing as well. (*Time expired.*)

MS CARRICK: Minister, we have been talking about this for nearly 20 years and we still do not have sites identified in the Woden town centre for an arts centre, an aquatic centre or an indoor sports centre. Minister, who is responsible for ensuring the Territory Plan is compliant with the National Capital Plan?

MR STEEL: The Territory Plan is compliant with the National Capital Plan, and we are continuing work to plan for more facilities and renewing aging facilities. The new Woden Community Centre—a Labor election commitment, something that we fully funded in the last budget—will provide a place for a lot of that community activity to

take place in the Woden town centre, including arts activities.

Mr Cocks: Meeting rooms! That is it, isn't it? A couple of meeting rooms?

MR STEEL: No, it is a large multipurpose facility. It is a four-storey facility that will provide a very large space for the community to use in a wide variety of activities—something you have never committed to! We also committed at the election to bring forward a feasibility study—

Mr Cain: Point of order. The question was: who is responsible for compliance? That has not been touched on at all.

MR STEEL: I think I have been relevant. I reject the premise of the question.

MR SPEAKER: It is up to me to judge the point of order, Mr Steel. I think he has been relevant. Do you have any more for us, Minister?

MR STEEL: Yes I do! I have plenty more! We committed to so much in the Woden Valley, particularly the work we have committed to around the feasibility work, looking at future indoor sporting facilities as part of consideration about a future high school in the Woden Valley. So we are continually looking at what the recreation facilities needs are in both the Woden Valley but also other regions in Canberra as well. That is an important part of the planning work that we will do; to look at what community needs need to be reflected in our planning.

MR CAIN: Minister, are you responsible for compliance with the National Capital Plan?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. Yes and the independent Territory Planning Authority, as they assess development applications as well. We will continue to work closely with the National Capital Authority who have direct responsibility for the National Capital Plan itself and of course, we also propose to them amendments to the National Capital Plan which may be required to facilitate important infrastructure investments in the territory and a range of other planning needs.

Treasurer—conduct

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, this week you have been asked dozens of questions regarding issues of significant and legitimate community interest—including MyWay+, the safety of our bus drivers and the Phillip Pool development—but you have provided almost no meaningful answers and little transparency or accountability. Treasurer, why is it appropriate for ministers to be accountable to the community through questions without notice?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question, but I reject her question. I have been very much accountable in not only answering questions from members in this place—

Ms Castley: Mr Speaker, on a point of order—

MR SPEAKER: Well, I mean—

Ms Castley: I know it is very quick. My point of order is on relevance. The question was: why is it appropriate for ministers to be accountable to the community through questions without notice?

Mr Barr: There is no expression of opinion.

MR SPEAKER: I don't think it is. Mr Steel.

MR STEEL: Again, I reject the premise of the question. I have been providing answers to Ms Castley and I have also been incredibly accountable in relation to projects like MyWay+ by continuing to front the media day after day to answer questions and provide the community with an update on how we are addressing the issues with that system.

Mr Cain: Why didn't you apologise then?

MR STEEL: It is in stark contrast with the Liberal Party, particularly in the election—

Mr Cocks: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

MR STEEL: where they never stood up in front of the media and fronted the hard questions.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Steel, if you could be seated and, Mr Cain, if you could be seated. Mr Cocks?

Mr Cocks: On relevance and under standing order 118: the minister is debating the question.

MR SPEAKER: And I would agree. If you could respond to the question—

MR STEEL: I have answered the question.

MR SPEAKER: You have answered the question. Thank you.

MS CASTLEY: Treasurer, do you accept it is essential for ministers to be transparent and directly relevant in responses to questions without notice?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. Yes, I will always answer the questions in accordance with the standing orders. That also means that the opposition leader cannot dictate how ministers answer questions.

MR CAIN: Minister, will you make a commitment to be more forthcoming and relevant in your answers to questions without notice—yes or no?

MR STEEL: I refer the member to the answer to the last question.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you, Members. We have made it through question time for the year.

Mr Barr: Noting the deterioration in the quality of questions, Mr Speaker—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr Barr: It fell off a cliff at the end there, Mr Speaker. I do ask that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.